Water for Women: Fiji

Improving the health, equality and wellbeing of communities in Fiji through Strengthening Community Resilience and Inclusion through Improved WASH Services

Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is essential to health and wellbeing.

Water for Women is partnering with Habitat for Humanity Australia to deliver Strengthening Community Resilience and Inclusion through Improved WASH Services in Fiji, reaching thousands of people in 50 communities across Ra and Ba Provinces.

Gender equality and social inclusion are central to Water for Women. Actively involving all people within communities (women, men, marginalised groups, people with disabilities) ensures more equitable and inclusive processes, which lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes in WASH.

Water for Women is the Australian Government’s flagship WASH program and will be delivered over five years from 2018 to 2022.
The Australian Government is committed to delivering effective and sustainable WASH access. Water for Women will contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6), water and sanitation for all.

Despite suffering recent major natural disasters that hinder development in the country, Fiji enjoys relatively high levels of water and sanitation access. There has been significant investment in rural WASH infrastructure and village water committees, but these are often under-skilled and under-resourced. Communities need support to better manage and maintain water sources, considering competing demands on its use as well as the increased threat to supply from climatic shocks and stresses.

Strong and persistent cultural barriers restrict the uptake and behaviour change around specific hygiene issues, made even more challenging during and post-disasters.

- Girls report a lack of knowledge in proper hygiene throughout menstruation;
- Women are more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence;
- People with disabilities and the LGBTIQ+ community face discrimination and exclusion from WASH services.

Women and marginalised groups are particularly vulnerable and these challenges are particularly acute in rural areas.

"The Water for Women Project will bridge the gap between the Fijian Government, CSOs and the community, providing a solid platform for women, children and the most marginalised in local communities to transform how they access and use WASH services."
- Sokimi Alfred, WASH Program Manager

In Fiji, Water for Women will support opportunities and benefits in WASH for everyone in the community, with its emphasis on gender equality and social inclusion.

This project will address the WASH needs of 8,700 people in 50 communities. These locations were chosen due to their remoteness, high numbers of informal settlements and identification as highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as droughts, sea level rise, coastal inundation, severe storm surges and tropical cyclones.

The focus of the project will be on the most marginalised within the target communities, specifically women and girls, people with disabilities, and people from the LGBTIQ+ community.

By empowering marginalised groups to be actively engaged in WASH technical roles, WASH governance structures and management, and behaviour change throughout their own communities, it is expected that this will lead to a change in attitudes and greater equality and social inclusion within these communities.