Planning for climate-resilient urban WASH in Pacific Islands

Water for Women is partnering with the International WaterCentre at Griffith University (IWC) through existing research projects across the Pacific. This research, along with other research findings, has indicated that access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in urban and peri-urban informal settlements across Melanesia is broadly inadequate. Additionally, there is little evidence that the WASH service delivery that does exist for urban and peri-urban informal settlement is future-proof. They are not planned with resilience to shocks and change in mind, such as climate change or the needs of changing populations within water catchments.

In 2021, this project was awarded an Innovation and Impact grant to further strengthen the use of new evidence, innovation and practice in sustainable and inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and, in doing so, contribute to improved learning and practice globally.

Led by the International WaterCentre at Griffith University, this project is working closely with partners to develop recommendations for integrated and collaborative planning processes for climate-resilient WASH in marginalised urban environments.
The exploratory research is being conducted in urban areas of Vanuatu, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, all of which have large informal urban and peri-urban settlements, as well as designated areas of new urban growth.

Working with The University of the South Pacific and Solomon Islands National University, this research is combining different types of information, including community photo voice data, to spatially characterise existing and potential WASH service delivery models and their resilience, in settlements and associated markets, and, exploring how such geographical visualisation and mapping can be used in collaborative WASH planning processes by governments with their stakeholders.

Common to all four countries is the goal to explore participatory processes that combine mixed data using spatial systems to inform climate resilient planning. However, research activities and outcomes will be country-specific, recognising the exploratory and scoping nature of the research and the contextual diversity across countries and in urban informal settlements.

The project includes four key components:

1. Integrated and collaborative planning information and processes to better understand how urban planning for future and existing formal and informal settlements occurs in each country (all four countries).

2. Characterising existing WASH service models and their resilience, including assessments of climate resilience (Vanuatu, Fiji).

3. Exploring the integration of existing information to support planning (Vanuatu, Fiji).

4. Identifying integrated and collaborative planning processes, including opportunities within existing systems to pursue WASH planning that is collaborative and considers climate resilience, future populations, and catchment links (all four countries).

This research is developing recommendations for integrated and collaborative planning processes for climate-resilient WASH in marginalised urban environments. This extends the impact of past research by scaling up evidence on opportunities for contextually relevant processes that could be used in Pacific countries to integrate resilient WASH service delivery into urban and catchment planning.