Engaging Corporate Actors for Inclusive WASH Services in Workplaces and Host Communities

Water for Women is the Australian Government's flagship Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program aimed at improving the health, gender equality and wellbeing of Asian and Pacific communities through inclusive, sustainable WASH. Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6) calls for "universal" access to safe WASH. People spend half their waking lives at work, therefore access to WASH in the workplace is fundamental to the achievement of SDG 6. As 1.8 billion people lack access to safe drinking water and 4.1 billion are without access to adequate sanitation, there is an established, direct cost that impacts business through increased absenteeism and decreased productivity due to illness and cultural practices.

Led by International WaterCentre (IWC), this research project will engage with the private sector, in particular hotels, to investigate how they can implement gender equitable and socially-inclusive (GESI) WASH-at-Work programs that contribute to the sustainable development of the tourism sector and in host communities in Fiji and Indonesia.
How can the private sector be engaged to deliver inclusive WASH outcomes that contribute to the sustainable development of tourism and host communities in Fiji and Indonesia?

The private sector presents a major opportunity to integrate gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) into water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) development, particularly in the workplace. The private sector can also play a critical role in improving broader health outcomes in developing economy countries.

In Fiji and Indonesia, the tourism sector is a key driver of economic development. Tourism is also geographically dispersed, employs a substantial number of women, and is a significant consumer of water and source of sanitation waste.

However, in both countries, engagement between government stakeholders and the tourism sector to create effective GESI WASH-at-Work programs is informal to non-existent. The lack of engagement provides the opportunity to introduce the concept of a value proposition framed by the concept of water stewardship and targeted toward factors that hotel managers consider when making decisions. It is expected that this framing can further be used to improve recognition of the range of benefits of investment in GESI WASH-at-Work for the tourism sector as well as surrounding communities and local stakeholders.

In-country government and peak body stakeholders will be heavily engaged to develop policy guidance for scaling up initiatives throughout each country. The project will holistically consider the environment in which GESI WASH-at-Work programs and the tourism sector exist to ensure that policy guidance is wanted by and helpful to local decision makers.

After developing a robust value proposition, the project will work with local hotels and communities to build upon existing WASH-at-Work programs and co-design program guidelines tailored to the country, sector, and other contextual specificities of Fiji and Indonesia. The objective of the guidelines will be not only to improve the GESI WASH outcomes in hotels, but also “over the fence”, in communities that host the hotels.

People spend half their waking lives at work, therefore access to WASH in every workplace is fundamental to achieving SDG 6. We want to work with businesses to improve the lives of their employees because even a slight increase in workplaces with appropriate facilities would have a significant global impact.”

Mark Pascoe, CEO, International WaterCentre

Tourism has an important position in the sustainable development of Fiji and Indonesia. I am excited to investigate how we can leverage the sector to improve the WASH outcomes in local communities, working towards SDG 6, and improving the lives of everyone in Fiji and Indonesia.”

Utami Dwipayanti, Indonesian Research Lead, Centre for Public Health Innovation, Udayana University

Water for Women is proud to partner with the International WaterCentre, Griffith University, the University of the South Pacific (Fiji), the Bandung Institute of Technology (Indonesia) and the University of Udayana (Indonesia) on this research project.

Australia believes that equitable WASH access is of crucial importance to develop communities. Water for Women and our partners provide innovative solutions to WASH delivery and use research to contribute evidence to the global WASH sector. By working together and building evidence, we can create better, more sustainable WASH outcomes whilst also contributing to strengthened gender equality and inclusion.

Type 1 Awards comprise research that answers critical sector questions and examines emerging challenges and trends. They support research that serves the needs of partner governments, donors, CSOs, international agencies and sector stakeholders.

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