

## Empowered Communities WaSH On

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The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Fiji has meant that our Habitat Fiji teams have been unable to proceed with community engagements for the past six months. However, the resilient communities and people we work with continue to prove that with access to the right information, a common goal and a community spirit (in Fijian we say **Yalo Vata**) - anything can be accomplished. In this project update we share how some of these communities have managed to improve their WaSH situations with just a little bit of training and very little to no additional resources.

We applaud these communities for getting on with it, for improving their wash situations regardless of the global situation. As our COVID-19 restrictions begin to ease up, we're looking forward to going back into these communities to help build from these efforts.



*Image: Participants of a Habitat Fiji community engagement in Kese Village. Check out a story from Kese Village on page 2.*

## Kese Village practises SODIS

Solar Water Disinfection or SODIS sounds very scientific but it's something anybody can do. It's putting water into a closed or sealed plastic water bottle or container and sticking it in the sun for 6 hours. This can kill up to 99.999% of the bacteria in it. For Kese Village in the Yasawa group of islands, Solar Water Disinfection is now commonly practised to ensure their water is as safe as possible for drinking.



Source: LUZI and MEIERHOFER n.y. (Fundacion SODIS and EAWAG/SANDEC)



Lewatu of Kese Village says that they normally sun out all drinking water for 6 hours. During overcast and rainy periods they boil all drinking water.

Training around Solar Water Disinfection is carried out by a Habitat Fiji team during the second or third engagement with the community.

## Everyone has a hand washing station in Marou

Most of the 18 communities that Habitat Fiji is working in has running water, however for many of these communities (and this is quite common in settlements and villages in Fiji) access to taps is shared. In some instances one or two taps are shared among a few households along with a common shower and toilet. Sometimes these shared taps can be a bit of a distance for some of its intended users and even more inconvenient for people with disabilities, mothers caring for children and elderly people.



Hand hygiene and hand washing has gained a lot more attention with the COVID-19 pandemic, but this is a challenge for these households with shared access to running taps. The villagers of Marou in the Yasawa group of islands have setup hand washing stations for each household and the village kindergarten. Washing hands is now convenient for everyone in Marou. This reduces the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19 and other germs, bugs and diseases.

58 year old Abakuki Waqavakatoga shared these thoughts: "Seeing the wash station as I approach my home reminds me to wash my hands before I enter." Abakuki went on to explain how the wash station has helped his family practise better cleanliness. 32 year old Vaseva Bose says she is happy to see the initiative her youngest child has taken to ensure that there is always water at the wash station and that the family are using the facility.

Creating hand washing stations is part of Habitat Fiji's youth focused engagement (CE2b) also known as WAI Fiji training.

## Josua and Eremasi make pit toilets better

48 year old Josua has a diploma in welding and fabrication and 29 year old Eremasi is a carpenter by experience. The 2 gentlemen were inspired after attending Habitat Fiji's WaSH training and are now using their combined skills to improve existing pit toilets in their village of Nativi. By creating ventilation and adding cement foundations these basic latrines have become much more hygienic and pleasant to use.

After seeing a pit latrine poster during Habitat Fiji's WaSH engagement the two began designing their plans to create a ventilated pit latrine prototype. By the second day of the engagement, Josua and Eremasi created their first pre-cast flooring slab.



The duo have made a commitment to upgrade all pit toilets in Nativi village. They are now looking to the villagers to fund-raise and purchase the needed materials.

Their example shows that with the right kind of training and access to information, communities can get creative with their combined experience and skills to improve their WaSH situation.

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