

## **WASH Futures Case study**

### **World Vision Australia – World Vision Vanuatu Laetem Dak Kona (Light Up the Dark Corners), Water for Women Sanma & Torba Provinces, Vanuatu, South Pacific**

#### **Introduction of project:**

People with disabilities, SOGIESC people, and women in Vanuatu continue to face inequalities in social, cultural, economic and political spheres of life. Vanuatu is a highly traditional society, with customary beliefs (referred to as *'kastom'* in Bislama), practices, values and structures (including traditional governance) dominating community life.<sup>1</sup> Vanuatu is comprised of 83 islands with limited sea, air, and ground infrastructure linking its population of around 320,000 to each other and the rest of the world. 65% of ni-Vanuatu do not have access to improved sanitation facilities. 75% of all households rely on rain water collection as their primary source of water. People with disability are two times less likely to have access to improved sanitation than people without disability. SOGIESC people are severely underrepresented and often violently stigmatised across the country. Vanuatu also has the dubious honour of ranking first among 171 countries in the World Disaster Risk Index as it's susceptible to cyclones, earthquakes, droughts, volcano eruptions, tsunamis flooding and landslides.

People with disabilities, SOGIESC people, and women require safe, purpose-built environments to enable access to WASH facilities. Access to WASH is fundamental: it can enable or prevent participation in other areas of life, including school, training and paid work. This is why WASH is the avenue through which World Vision seeks to address agency, empowerment, and inclusion for women and people with disability in Vanuatu.

The Laetem Dak Kona (LDK) project, funded by the Australian Government's Water for Women Fund, is being implemented by World Vision Vanuatu with and through its key partners in two northern provinces of Vanuatu, Sanma and Torba from 1 July 2018 through 30 December 2022. Gender-equity and social inclusion are the focus. People with disabilities and women will be project staff, lead advocates in communities, and core implementing partners. They will cast "light into dark corners"<sup>2</sup> and lead similar groups to raise their own expectations, voice, and agency for removal of WASH barriers. At the policy level, the project focuses on developing a better evidence base on the situation of women and people with disabilities and their caregivers, the barriers that they face in accessing services and opportunities, and interacting with formal/informal decision-making institutions. At a social level, WVV engages by working through partners to offer concrete examples of how inclusion can be achieved in the WASH sector in part by challenging unhelpful social norms and power structures.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from 'Initial Gender and Social Inclusion Assessment for Vanuatu NGO Green Climate Fund Consortium' July 2017  
Rochelle Braaf, Gender Consultant

<sup>2</sup> Laetem Dak Kona, the title of the project, is the Bislama translation of this phrase.

## **Story of inclusion:**

The LDK project has sought to influence inclusion in Vanuatu two significant ways:

1. Establishing the nation's first statistically valid evidence on disability prevalence and the lived experience of people with disability
2. Providing an example of how an organisation like World Vision Vanuatu – which is 96% national staff members and one of the largest NGO's in Vanuatu – can be a catalyst for transformative inclusion by modelling gender-equitable and disability inclusiveness at all levels.

At the outset of the project in 2018, World Vision reached out to the Vanuatu Society of People with Disability, the Vanuatu Ministry of Justice and Social Welfare, Vanuatu National Statistics Office, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine International Center for Evidence on Disability to create the [Water, Women, and Disability Study](#). This study interviewed 54,000 individuals (more than 85% of the total population) in Sanma and Torba provinces to quantify [the prevalence and demographics of disability](#) through the Washington Group Questions, understand access to and [experience of Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)](#), menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and continence management amongst persons with disabilities, alongside the situation of persons without disabilities and in particular women.

The results of this study paint an astounding picture of the importance of accessible WASH as a key to inclusion of people with disability at home, in the community, at work places, and in schools. As expected, this rich evidence has been used to advocate for improved services for people with disability by many organisations across the country, including the Vanuatu National Statistics Office officially adopting the Washington Group Short Set for the first time in the 2020 census. Unexpectedly, though, the process of designing, partnering on, and implementing the study would set off a cascade of necessary change on the journey to becoming an inclusive organisation.

## **Story of change:**

WV Vanuatu was committed to ensuring that each study enumeration team had at least one enumerator with a disability in order to ensure that carers and people with disability felt comfortable speaking with the study teams. Normal recruitment processes resulted in no people with disability applying. After reaching out to DPO partners, dramatic shifts were made to the recruitment process in order to target people with disability in Vanuatu. Advertisements were published through disabled peoples' networks, application time was extended, oral applications were accepted along with written applications, and interviews were held in an accessible facility with transport provided for those who could not access transport otherwise. This experience demonstrated how our "normal" recruitment process had actually been exclusionary and has resulted in significant adjustment to how WV Vanuatu recruits.

As a result of this recruitment process, of the 64 enumerators (37 Women and 27 Men), 12 were people with disabilities (9 as enumerators for the survey and 2 in field supervisor roles,

representing 15% of all enumerators and 20% of all supervisors respectively. Suddenly, World Vision Vanuatu had 12 people with different impairments as employees. It became apparent very quickly that Human Resource policies and physical infrastructure did not provide reasonable accommodation for these individuals that the team now knew and respected on a personal level.

As a result of seeing colleagues face barriers in the work place, a major policy review was undertaken including the development of a Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy that mandates accessible infrastructure, particularly sanitation facilities because lack of accessibility to a toilet in one office had meant that a key DPO partner could not come to the World Vision office for lengthy meetings because he could not access the toilet. The Staff Leave Policy was updated to include Carer's leave as long-serving staff members began to feel safe to acknowledge the people with disability for whom they were caring in their own households.

Change snowballed from here. As people with disability have become friends and colleagues through work under the LDK project, inclusion is no longer a challenge... it is a way of working and a right that the team upholds automatically.

This was put to a true test when Vanuatu's borders closed due to the spread of COVID in March 2020 and Sanma Province was hit by Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Harold in April 2020. Closed borders meant international humanitarian assistance and supplies were severely limited. All World Vision Vanuatu staff in Sanma province lost houses, livestock, food gardens, and many family members lost employment. And yet, only 3 days after the cyclone, World Vision Vanuatu staff – led by the Sanma-based LDK team and DPO partners– began lobbying the National Disaster Management Office and the Sanma Provincial authorities to use the scarce relief supplies in stock to target households where people with disability lived, using the information from the Water, Women, and Disability Study as evidence for priority. In the end, the Sanma Provincial Government, encouraged by other partners such as Unicef and the Vanuatu Red Cross, agreed to target distributions to these households first, set up relief distribution sites in accessible locations, do household drops when accessibility was an issue, and to collect clearly disaggregated data.

In 2015, when World Vision Vanuatu responded to Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Pam, inclusive and targeted distributions did not even enter the collective mind. [Inclusive approaches for people with disability were largely overlooked](#), and distribution sites were set up in areas that were accessible for relief drops but not necessarily to the people needing relief. The comparative infographics – TC Pam which doesn't provide disaggregated data – and TC Harold which emphasises different types of people assisted – speak volumes to the organisational change that has taken place as a result of walking alongside and working with people with disability on a daily basis.

**World Vision**

## Cyclone Pam Road to Recovery - 6 months on

With your support World Vision reached 55,000 people with essential humanitarian support. But the journey is far from over and as Vanuatu rebuilds and regrows we are continuing to support communities to recover and be more resilient for future disasters

**With your support World Vision has:**

- Assisted 55,000 people across three provinces with their recovery!
- Provided more than 80 preschools and primary schools with essential supplies
- Supported Government, World Food Programme and local organisation food distributions to 47,940 people
- Helped 23 communities access clean water

**We've also distributed 47,000 essential household items including:**

- 7650 Hygiene kits
- 6700 Tool kits
- 6500 Tarpaulins
- 6000 Jerry cans
- 4170 Blankets
- 3700 Kitchen sets

Learn more: [www.wvi.org/vanuatu](http://www.wvi.org/vanuatu)

**Australian Aid**  
Disaster READY
**NEW ZEALAND**  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE  
Aid Programme
**World Vision**
**Canada**  
HUMANITARIAN COALITION
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## VANUATU TROPICAL CYCLONE HAROLD RESPONSE

### EMERGENCY RELIEF INTERVENTIONS

6 APRIL - 12 JUNE 2020

<b>1894</b> tarpaulins	<b>586</b> shelter toolkits	<b>359</b> solar lanterns	<b>2844</b> blankets	<b>1131</b> ending violence packs	<b>850</b> jerry cans	<b>829</b> hygiene kits	<b>409</b> water filter & bucket	<b>566</b> mosquito nets

**1708**  
households in South Santo Area 1 & 2 and South East Santo have received relief items

**7575**  
individuals benefited from relief items distributed

<b>202</b> female headed households received relief items	<b>39</b> households headed by a person with disability received relief items	<b>159</b> people with disabilities benefited from relief items	<b>300</b> elderly people benefited from relief items	<b>4005</b> children benefited from relief items

**1708**  
individuals received key messages about **WASH, gender and protection, covid-19 and health** during distribution of relief items