



Reach for the Stars

Creating healthy school environments for children in the Pacific through resilient WASH in Schools programming

unicef 
for every child

Issue

Increasingly variable rainfall, cyclones, floods, droughts, and decreasing water quality are so significant that they threaten the economic development and the health of their population.¹

On 20th and 21st of February 2016, Fiji was hit by category 5 Tropical Cyclone (TC) Winston and two thirds of the country was devastated. As a result of the cyclone, 494 primary and secondary schools (55 per cent of all schools in the country) were damaged or destroyed, disrupting schooling for approximately 85,000 students. Damages to classrooms, toilets and water source systems at schools meant disruption to education and more importantly, disruption to hygiene practices such as handwashing at critical times and proper hygiene management by girls critical to children's health.

Maintenance or rehabilitation of child-friendly water, sanitation and handwashing facilities and continuance of daily healthy hygiene habits remain challenging for schools and communities especially following cyclones, floods or other emergencies.

"Before the cyclone, we [schools] had enough resources [...] but now, it's kinda hard to get those resources back" (16 year old girl, in-depth interview, Ba)².

UNICEF Pacific has demonstrated quality WASH programming in schools effectively addressing these challenges. In Fiji, WASH interventions in schools affected by TC Winston successfully built-in hazards and risk assessment and systems management including menstrual hygiene management support for girls in schools. More than 20,000 students benefitted from UNICEF's support to TC Winston affected schools. Beyond Fiji, in Kiribati, UNICEF-led advocacy and capacity building efforts have resulted in schools designing low-cost tippy taps for handwashing using their own resources to now constructing improved and weather resilient handwashing facilities and toilets. These activities in Kiribati and in Vanuatu also include working with communities to install and manage rainwater harvesting tanks and other drinking water safety and security planning. WinS Three Star programming is now scaling up in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Safe drinking water, clean toilets and daily hygiene practices such as handwashing after toilets at schools are extremely important for children's health as it helps prevent diarrhoea and other diseases, and provides an environment that is motivating for students, teachers and staff. Clean water and sanitation facilities have also been proven to improve attendance and learning outcomes for children. When WASH interventions happen in school environments, children are likely to champion these behaviour changes in their homes as well.



Action

The Government of Fiji (GoF) has demonstrated its commitment to improving learning environments for children through the development of Fiji's school health policy (2016) and Free Education Grant assistance programme to schools.

UNICEF Pacific, with funding from Australian National Committee for UNICEF Limited, will support the GoF to operationalize its commitments to improve health and education outcomes for children in Fiji through a 3-year WASH in Schools (WinS) initiative based on the WinS Three Star Approach.

The WinS Three Star Approach offers an innovative opportunity to reinforce daily healthy hygiene habit such as handwashing after toilets and before meals; reducing open defecation in schools through incremental facilities improvements and regular cleaning of toilets; and

¹ Adapting to Climate Change in Water Resources and Water Services in Caribbean and Pacific Small Island Countries, 2009

² Unpublished, Francois, Maria Carmelita, Amber Lauff, Brooke Yamakoshi and (who else??). 'WASH in Schools Empowers Girls' Education in Fiji: An

assessment of menstrual hygiene management in schools.' UNICEF Pacific, Suva, Fiji, May 2017



Reach for the Stars

Creating healthy school environments for children in the Pacific through resilient WASH in Schools programming



promote safe drinking water by incorporating safe drinking water and security planning.

The “Reach for the Stars” programme expands on sector support provided for quality education in Fiji and beyond Fiji to other countries through a learning exchange; and reinforces empowering children as agents of behaviour change for sanitation, hygiene and drinking water practices in schools and the wider community.

The proposed programme benefits 453 primary schools and 7 early childhood centers for education (ECCE) or approximately 112,000 students and their communities in 6 Education District covering all primary schools in Viti Levu and the Yasawa islands.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts (MoEHA) and in collaboration with other stakeholders, UNICEF will support healthy school environments through:

- technical support to national and provincial government and school authorities to develop and/or update national, provincial and school level WASH policies, guidelines and standards;
- strengthening and developing government capacity to conduct robust monitoring and evaluation of WASH;
- developing training packages and deliver training for school management and government institutions on operation, maintenance and monitoring of WASH systems and resilience;
- empowering school communities (students and teachers) through sports;
- developing a set of tools for advocacy to target audiences on inclusive WASH interventions integrating gender, disability and reaching the most poor; and
- improving facilities through the lens of climate resilience, gender and disability

Projected Results

Learning and health outcomes improved in 453 primary schools and in 7 early childhood care education centers through water supplies, adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Communities and schools are more resilient to the potential impacts of climate change and disaster risk through training on resources allocation and operations and maintenance.

Menstrual hygiene management and other gender sensitive interventions integrated in target schools daily routine and management plan.

Rainwater harvesting, drinking water safety and water conservation promoted as practice and teaching children about environmental adaptation.

Partnerships

UNICEF will leverage existing partnerships to deliver the programme results. MoEHA will be the lead implementing partner and will provide quality assurance, monitoring through district education officers and manage the infrastructure component. Local development partners will be selected based on WASH in Schools expertise, community presence and capacity to work with and support MoEHA and continue supporting enabling environment and scale up WASH in schools beyond the programme.

Budget

USD 1,690,000.



For more information, contact:
Marc Overmars, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Specialist
Email: movermars@unicef.org