

Hands-on approach to hygiene

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Efforts to install modern health infrastructure into developing communities may be aided by getting local village entrepreneurs involved.

The development sector has learned that simply providing an amenity does not work if the "advancement" does not have local buy-in.

A new Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) project involving four Pacific countries – Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Fiji – is therefore adopting a "sanitation marketing" approach that is looking for ways to make sanitation attractive to local [entrepreneurs](#).

The project's principal investigator is WaSH engineer Dr Dani Barrington, a research fellow appointed jointly by Monash University and the International WaterCentre (IWC).

Sanitation marketing – working with local entrepreneurs to build businesses around the provision of sanitation – is a proven approach in Asia and Africa, she says, but one that faces challenges in the less densely populated Pacific region where the Melanesian culture of sharing can hinder the creation of profit-oriented businesses.

"We are working with [local communities](#) and with local enabling bodies [the ministries of health, environment ministries and water authorities] to find out what will work. In effect we are looking for a way to bridge the [communities](#)' needs and priorities with the capacity of authorities or businesses to meet these needs."

The Pacific WaSH markets initiative is a three-year project under the auspices of IWC and Live & Learn, an NGO. It involves researchers at Monash, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill) in the US and the University of the South Pacific in Fiji.

Over the coming year, the researchers will bring communities and enabling bodies together to find common, workable ground. "It's not about us telling people to use toilets. It's about facilitating their decision-making and their approach to finding a long-term solution," Dr

Barrington says.

"My hope for the project is that we can leave the communities with a well-researched understanding of what will work for them, and a clear plan of action."

Provided by Monash University

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