



Men from Alofi South discuss gender roles and responsibilities for village water management. ©Tiy Chung/SOPAC

Community to Cabinet: Village Water Management Planning in Niue

Niue's size and resource base enable it to be among the front runners of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) implementation in the Pacific. Where other countries are piloting IWRM in "demonstration" areas and gaining confidence by IWRM-walking before they start IWRM-running, Niue's pilot area is Niue: so Niue is learning to walk and run at the same time.

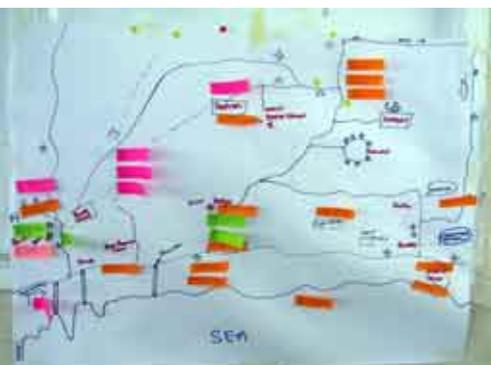
The multi-sectoral apex body, Niue Water Steering Committee (NWSC), was formed almost immediately after IWRM project start-up, in May 2009 and mandated to guide the various aspects of national water and wastewater policy, planning and management.

With 'top level' interventions underway Niue turned its attention, in February 2010, to the 'bottom' and two pilot communities, Alofi North and Alofi South committed to preparing Village Water Management Plans (VWMPs). Thereby making real the vertical dimension of 'integration' that is explicit within an IWRM approach and expressed as "Bring together stakeholders from different sectors and groups to plan and manage water [...]". Or, more succinctly, from Community to Cabinet, from Cabinet to Community.

The Chair of each Village Council called 20-30 participants to attend a 2-day workshop to produce their VWMP. Invited participants represented different groups in each village (older, younger, professional, business, self-employed, family-based, men, and women) and around 20-30% of the community households. Participants ranged from Directors of government departments through octogenarian householders, prominent business people and youth leaders.

On day 1 of each workshop, gender groups analysed and prioritised the water issues and opportunities that they faced. The gender groups recombined to review their outputs and through consultation reached consensus on the village priority issues. On day 2, mixed groups identified the outcomes they wanted for each priority water 'issue' or 'opportunity' and proceeded to develop an action plan for achieving their desired outcomes.

Action plans in both communities included activities that could be initiated by the community with minimal and readily available support (eg materials for a Village Water Use Efficiency awareness campaign); activities that simply required capacity development from PWD Water (eg village level training in basic plumbing maintenance skills); activities that would reach desired outcomes only if government departments take the lead (eg water quality testing and reporting of source-to-tap samples; zoned and secure solid and hazardous waste disposal systems); and activities dependent on supplementary financial and/or technical resources from government or donors (eg. upgrading of septic tanks and rainwater storage).



Alofi South water issues and actions map. ©Tiy Chung/SOPAC

‘Don’t be a drip: don’t waste a drop’

‘Be Water Wise’

‘No water, no future’

‘Water. We drink together, We act together’

‘Water care is people care’

Community slogans developed by participants.

In a lighter mood, overnight thinking led to a whole array of possible slogans from which the communities will select one as a signature for its plan and its activities.

The challenge now for Niue is to maintain the impetus that the planning process created and to convert it to action. Each village has identified a task force to carry its VWMP forward by finalising the details of its content, steering its implementation, monitoring its progress, and regular reporting to the Village Council.

The IWRM Project Management Unit (PMU) is committed to facilitating the process of getting NWSC approval for VWMPs and their submission to Cabinet for endorsement. The unit will also match VWMP priorities with national budget allocations and ensure that VWMPs are linked to the soon to be prepared National Water Plan. Finally, it will support villages prepare project proposals to access funds from other sources. Nominated PMU staff be liaisons for each community and attend Village Council meetings and water task force sessions. With these anchors in place, plan implementation is expected by mid-year; and results soon after!



Women listen to presentations at Alofi North. All sectors of the community were well represented at the planning meetings. ©Tiy Chung/SOPAC

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