

# Pacific Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Coalition addressing sanitation in the region

AS member of the global Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) has mobilised partners in the region to coordinate activities in the Pacific on water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and established the Pacific WASH Coalition.

The International Year of Sanitation 2008, creates an excellent opportunity to strengthen collaboration between a wide range of regional and international agencies to improve delivery of water supply, sanitation and hygiene activities. Partners in the Coalition include the Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSP), the Fiji School of Medicine (FSMed), Live and Learn Environmental Education (LLEE), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC). Increasing interest in water and sanitation support provided to the region by donors and other organisations resulted in a large number of overlapping interventions and it becomes increasingly important to ensure that work carried out on this area is well coordinated in order to avoid duplication.

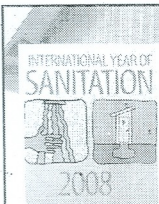
The Pacific WASH Coalition is utilising existing partnerships such as established under the Pacific Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Water Management and is building on ongoing work programmes and activities in Pacific island countries.

Networks are profiles of organisations and how they are contributing towards sustainable development and some actions that have been taken or will be under taken in the areas of water and sanitation.

**Live and Learn Environmental Education (LLEE)** is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation which promotes greater understanding and action toward human and environmental sustainability through education and dialogue building. Live and Learn Fiji worked with SOPAC to develop school and community educational projects. World Water Day for the Pacific region and delivers educational projects with a focus often on water.

**Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSP)** is a network of South Pacific island non-governmental organisations and overseas agencies working in partnership across the South Pacific. The main functions of the FSP Secretariat is to coordinate the planning and delivery of regional development projects, based on the needs identified by the members and their constituencies and to respond to issues at a regional level by advocating for impact and change reflecting the identified needs.

FSP currently works in five areas which are Health, Disaster Risk Management,



It is always essential to keep toilets clean at all times.



Washing hands properly can reduce the incidence of diarrhoea by around 42-47 per cent.

Governance, Coastal Resource Management and Innovative Rural Development Initiatives.

**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** are the world's largest humanitarian organisation, with 186 member national societies. All their work is guided by seven fundamental principles: humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. The Solomon Islands Red Cross is currently being supported by the Federation and sister national societies in improving water and sanitation provision damaged during the tsunami of April last year. Also during the recent response to Tropical Cyclone Guba, the Papua New Guinea Red Cross was supported by Australian Red Cross in supplying the local hospital with an emergency safe water supply. The national societies of the Pacific are currently developing plans that will expand their activities in water and sanitation in several countries during the next two years.

**World Health Organization (WHO)** is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based

policy options, providing technical support, conducting surveys and monitoring and assessing health trends. WHO in partnership with SOPAC and New Zealand Ministry of Health is currently implementing regional initiatives to improve drinking water safety and quality for Pacific Island Communities.

**The Fiji School of Medicine (FSMed)** is a Tertiary Health Institution striving towards Excellence in Training and Education of Health Professionals in the South Pacific. Fiji School of Medicine train health and medical students both at undergraduate and postgraduate level on the importance of water and sanitation in the causation of communicable diseases. This is offered in a number of courses for Public Health programmes and Medical programmes throughout the six years of training. These courses are mainly community based where students conduct community assessment and look at a number of health issues that contribute to ill health including water quality for drinking and bathing and sanitation arrangements in various communities. Research students doing Public Health research have in the past conducted a number of studies to look at the relationship between water and sanitation to a number of communicable diseases.

Fiji School of Medicine fully recognises the impor-

tance of water and sanitation in the health sector and will continue to actively involve in the training and research activities in future.

**United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)** is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from an early childhood through adolescence. As the world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS.

Lack of proper sanitation contributes to the deaths of thousands of women and children every day from largely preventable causes, including diarrhoeal diseases. Through more than 1.2 billion people worldwide have gained access to improved sanitation between 1990 and 2004, an estimated 2.6 billion people — including 980 million children — have yet to be reached.

This is one of the single biggest development challenges facing the world today. In emergencies we provide urgent relief to communities and nations threatened by disrupted water supplies and disease. Since the April 2007 tsunami in Solomon Islands, UNICEF has been and continues to work with partners to pro-

vide safe drinking water and proper sanitary and hygiene facilities in the Western and Choiseu Province. Sanitary facilities for internally displaced people, water purification tablets, bathing soaps, water containers and water pumps were provided by UNICEF during the tsunami recovery phase.

In Fiji, UNICEF plans to work with relevant Ministries and partners to provide for proper sanitary and hygiene facilities in schools. Clean water, proper sanitation and hygiene are linked in many ways to people's livelihoods and sustainable development in general. It is an important input not just for Target 10 of Millennium Development Goal 7, which is to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation but for all of the Millennium Development Goals.

Through strategic coordination within country programmes UNICEF can make significant contributions to the health and environment objectives of the Millennium Agenda.

**SOPAC is the Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission.** SOPAC is an inter-governmental, regional organisation providing support to Pacific member countries in the field of geosciences. Under its Community Lifelines Programme, SOPAC provides technical

support to country counterparts in the field of water resources management, water services and water governance. The water sector programme has established a multi-year programme with other partners funded by a variety of donor organisations including amongst others AusAID, NZAID, ADB, EU, Taiwan/ROC and Japan.

The water sector is currently implementing regional programmes covering community participation, gender, wastewater and sanitation, awareness, water resources assessment and monitoring, water quality monitoring, water demand management, water safety planning and integrated water resources management and has currently 15 staff members.

**Some achievements of the Coalition include:**

Submitted a Pacific WASH proposal to Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) to upscale work in the area of water and sanitation especially on advocacy and media campaign. For 2008, WASH campaigns will be carried out in Tonga and Tuvalu.

Information exchange and better collaboration has already begun in many Pacific island countries.

Joint activities in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene within members of the Coalition are foreseen.

