PaCWaM+
PACIFIC COMMUNITY WATER MANAGEMENT-PLUS

Guidance note

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENTS / DIAGNOSTIC FOR RURAL COMMUNITY WATER MANAGEMENT IN PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

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CONTENTS

Community Diagnostic Assessment to support rural community water management engagements in Pacific Island Countries

Maintaining rural community water supply systems has proven to be much more difficult than constructing new systems (Harvey & Reed, 2007). In Solomon Islands, it is estimated that less than half of the 65%-70% of rural communities who have received water supply schemes in the past still have functioning water systems (MHMS, 2014:7). This poor sustainability has been attributed to numerous factors, including: a lack of government resources to maintain systems; inadequate awareness by communities that they are responsible for maintaining systems, and the lack of adequate and appropriate training of community members (MHMS, 2014). These same factors have been identified as key issues informing community water system sustainability in Fiji and Vanuatu (e.g. DWS, 2021; MoIT, 2016). Earlier PaCWaM+ research supports these findings and identified further influential factors of note (see Love et al., 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c).

Haque and Freeman (2021) reiterate that context and delivery of WASH interventions are seldom described thoroughly enough to inform appropriate scale-up and replication. They detail how numerous promising approaches have been rapidly scaled without an appreciation of how context impacts implementation (Hueso and Bell 2013; Sinharoy et al. 2017).

Whilst WASH actors may recognise that interventions need to be carefully tailored to their specific environmental, social and political contexts, and most external actors – government or Civil Society Organisations (CSO) do conduct some form of a community assessment before progressing further engagement, these typically identify fairly generic factors, such as basic demographics, basic governance structures, and demand/need (relating to the sector of relevance, e.g. water access, sanitation access, hygiene behaviours).

PaCWaM+ research identified some structural and contextual factors that should be understood before implementation of a community water management project. These factors combine so that each community can have a unique existing situation and dynamics, and water projects or programs need to be adjusted to suit these.

PaCWaM+ research identified the following factors which should be added into conventional Community Assessments/Diagnostics, in order to guide further engagement:
- Water sources, ownership and access: now and in the past
- Past experience with development projects
- Zone and Tribal groupings
- Geographically dispersed communities & social networks beyond village boundaries
- Water financing, and
- Governance structures.

Community diagnostic assessments - What they are and what they are not

Development practitioners have long used various community assessment and/or diagnostic-type 'tools' to better understand rural community needs and context, all in the aim of improving program delivery and development effectiveness. Examples include rapid rural appraisal, participatory rural appraisal, community needs assessment, community mapping, strength-based assessments, and more.[i] These activities are often undertaken by implementors prior to an intervention. However, it remains an open question as to whether implementors have the necessary resources and adaptive capacity to adjust or tailor their activities to address, respond to, or leverage any identified contextual specificities. Regardless, in Melanesia – where much appears the same yet everywhere is different – context matters. No two villages are the same; each village or 'community' is constituted by a suite of particular socio-historical and environmental features (Stasch, 2010). Knowing which of these characteristics may inform community water management (CWM) outcomes has the potential to assist in improving program delivery.

Many factors or characteristics – e.g. geography, land tenure regimes, history, socio-economic conditions, demography, climate – are foundational or structural in nature, meaning they change slowly over time, are beyond the immediate control of actors, and are generally impossible to influence within a single project cycle. Nevertheless, being alert to these factors *before* implementation may allow for alternative and more effective ways of engaging with and/or advising a community on water management matters. Drawing on insights from the [Pacific Community Water Management Plus project (PaCWaM+)](#) *this Guidance Note discusses some of the key factors or features that may be determinate in shaping water management failure and/or success* in the island Melanesian countries of Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu.

Importantly, this Guidance Note is not a comprehensive list of variables or characteristics that shape CWM outcomes, nor is it a 'how to' guide for practitioners that explains in detail how to identify and measure such factors.[ii] Rather, this document is an emerging collection of insights concerning some contextual factors that, based on our research, appear to have some determinacy in shaping water management outcomes. We call on other researchers and practitioners to share their experiences and constructively engage with the insights offered herein; only with a larger pool of regionally specific data can we collate a more robust and empirically sound suite of learnings.

The terms "diagnostic" and "assessment" are commonly understood as "something related to the identification of a problem or disease." Our usage of these terms is not intended to imply that communities are sick or in need of 'fixing'. By 'diagnostic assessment tool' we simply mean to signal that the features or characteristics discussed below are worthy of attention prior to an intervention, with the supposition that 'good development' would have the resources, adaptive capacity, and agency to monitor, evaluate, learn and adapt throughout the implementation process. Improved knowledge of a beneficiary-community's context should be able to enhance development effectiveness. This is not a new idea. But there is a paucity of data and critical reflection on water management in the context of island Melanesia.

Diagnostically-useful information

The following section describes information that research has indicated is useful to gather and understand prior to proceeding with community engagement on water management.

1. Water sources and access: now and in the past

A community's experience with past water situations – good or bad – and engagement with development actors and 'projects' can shape community expectations and motivation.

Water sources

Multiple water sources support community resilience but at the same time can make encouraging collective action more challenging (e.g., "We mainly use the borehole water, why should we contribute to cleaning and repairing the dam?"). Rural communities that rely predominately on a **single water source** (e.g., gravity-fed spring to tap) can find it easier to foster effective governance and stimulate collective action than in communities with **multiple sources** (e.g., gravity-fed dam to tap and boreholes). When households have alternative water access options, even if inconvenient and/or considered un-safe, collective action can be harder to generate.

Some communities have a separate committee for each different water source, many do not. There is currently no decisive guidance on what governance arrangements may be more effective than others in such contexts; however, if there are multiple committees, they must be harmonised to ensure consistency in messaging and action, and, be equally accountable to the community.

Water and land ownership

Land ownership is fraught with grievances and conflict in some rural community settings, for example many areas of Solomon Islands. Access to water that originates on another's land, or contested land, is therefore also fraught.

During the community assessment phase of engagement, it is important to determine the origin of water sources the community is currently using, or seeking to use, and to identify as best as is possible the owners of that land where the water originates, and of any lands through which the water flows (especially for surface waters). Moreover, water catchments do not always overlap with cultural areas/land tenure. There is evidence of reluctance to contribute to fundraising for improved water source infrastructure located on other people's land. For water management programs, it is important and helpful to understand the micro-local nuances of land tenure and involve the right landowners in water planning activities.

Identifying these actors at the community diagnostic assessment stage, and gaining an understanding of the nature of the relationships between the community and these landowners, can influence how engagement proceeds.

Equity in water access

Villages where the water supply **access is unequally distributed** across a community (e.g. tap stands are not equitably distributed) struggle to motivate collective action (by all) and can attract vandalism and self-sabotage.

For example:

- Systems built by an international NGO in a village in north Guadalcanal and north Malaita (Solomon Islands) were both vandalised by community members, not long after installation, by people whose houses received no, or far less, tap stands than other areas of the village
  - Specific areas of a village often correspond to familial and tribal affiliation (e.g. zones/groups, below); this can make such practices even more socially complex and tense
- In a village in Isabel (Solomon Islands), people from one area/ one tribe were reluctant to contribute to fundraising and community-led water maintenance activities until they received the same ratio of households to stand pipes as other areas of the village.

Understanding the current and historical context of water access and equity can help identify areas of potential social tension, whilst also providing an avenue for discussing how and why the collective action required by the CWM model may or may not be working.

Past water situation experiences

There may be a correlation between a community's past experiences with 'better' or 'worse' water service levels and levels of water service /access satisfaction.

The Phase 1 PaCWaM+ research investigated community water management in eight villages in Solomon Islands; of these three villages with comparatively 'better' water services and outcomes recorded lower water system satisfaction levels than the other villages that had worse water service levels. Interestingly, they had all experienced **significant water system breakdown** and **significant water security hardship** in the remembered past. And, two of the communities who had, in the past, experienced a **better water system** (in terms of greater access, more functional water points, less disruptions and leaks etc.) also both had low water system satisfaction.

Conversely, the communities that regularly had, or were used to, mediocre water services reported medium to high satisfaction levels. The noteworthy observation is that communities that have not experienced a much better or much worse water system, were relatively happy with their current water services even when it did not meet the requirements of safe and sustainable water services.

After one of the villages that had experienced water system failure after vandalism from disgruntled villagers, many households relocated to be closer to a nearby river. Many people became ill and although the water was not confirmed as the source of this sickness, the community applied for a new water system through the government. Since the new system was eventually installed (10 years ago), it has been well-managed, and the community consistently contribute to paying a monthly water fee. There are other factors at play here but remembered water hardship is likely a contributing factor in the 'good' CWM evidenced in this case.

Research from natural resource management suggests that community and individual experiences of degraded or depleted resources may shape the effectiveness of resource management rules (see Albert et al., 2013). Similarly, experiences of (especially) poor water situations may influence the effectiveness of community water management regimes.

More research is warranted, but if this trend was replicated across a larger sample size it may suggest that past experience informs people's perceptions, expectations, and levels of motivation and collective action with regards to water management. When engaging with communities who have a remembered experience of 'worse' or 'better' water situations, this could be used as a mobilisation tool during community engagement. Conversely, when engaging with communities that have not experienced worse or better water

systems, yet have inadequate water services, there may be little motivation to change or improve the status quo and additional motivational activities may be required.

2. Past experience with development projects

A community's past experience with development projects can influence people's expectations and motivations towards future projects.

Based on PaCWaM+ research, a number of challenges arising during or following past development projects were identified as ultimately impinging on the success of future development interventions (WASH and non-WASH). Some examples of key issues / challenges included:

- Land and chiefly title disputes exacerbated by development projects
- Lack of timely and effective follow-up from the external facilitators
- Inadequate or inappropriate engagement processes
- Lack of capacity / training to install and maintain systems and materials
- Materials provided subsequently sold and the money used for other purposes
- Unused or uninstalled materials (e.g., toilet pans) from incomplete development projects
- Project 'capture' and unequal distribution of resources to households in a village
- Allegations of the misappropriation of funds by a project 'middleman'
- Inappropriate situating of materials (e.g., toilets installed in high water table areas), and
- Cultural barriers in implementation or adoption of materials.

These types of negative past experiences can significantly reduce a community's motivation and cooperation for future development projects.

The community assessment phase is an important opportunity to become aware of a community's past experience with development projects and can help both implementors and communities appreciate what worked, what didn't, and why, potentially shedding light on how the approach might be reshaped to enhance effectiveness.

3. Within-community spatial levels of social cohesion: Zone and Tribal groupings

Working at smaller socio-spatial levels than the whole village—such as zones/areas or tribes—may provide a more effective mechanism for triggering and sustaining water management activities and may also overcome some forms of social exclusion.

Zones/groups/areas

Village "zones/groups/areas" are often used as socio-spatial administrative groupings within a village, with clusters of households working together on a set communal task, such as fundraising or community work (e.g., village clean-up activities). For example, Group 1 is tasked with providing garden produce for a village celebration, Group 2 is responsible for cooking, Group 3 for providing fresh fish, and Group 4 purchasing rice. Church dues and community fundraising targets (e.g., to build a community hall, a church) are often also calculated using zones/groups (or tribes) as units of organisational focus and action. In many villages, this socio-spatial demarcation has its origins in the colonial and missionary era, whilst in some others it has been

instigated by village leaders more recently. In some locales, zones follow tribal affiliation (e.g., four tribes represented by four zones).

Most formal village committees operate at the scale of the 'whole village' (e.g., water committee, school committee, health committee, village council etc.) and were established when most villages were much smaller than they are today. Larger-villages often struggle to animate collective action, self-govern effectively, maintain socio-ecological equilibrium, and support a strong sense of 'one-ness'. Cooperation and attention become more narrowly focused on the familial and close-by level. It is noteworthy that activities that require the most collective action – fundraising and community work – are often still undertaken through zone/group (and/or tribes, see below). Additionally, the PaCWaM+ research found numerous examples of people managing communal money at the zone level rather than the village-wide level; this was considered more accountable and "safe" (a response to past experiences of real or perceived financial miss-management).

In one of our early study villages in Solomon Islands, it was explicitly suggested that "each zone should have its own water committee to look after the water, so people use it wisely." In the neighbouring village, disgruntled villagers in zone 2 formed their own water committee in frustration at the weak character of the village-wide water committee. We subsequently piloted the use of working with and animating zones as part of a community water security planning process.[iii] Following evaluation, some of the benefits of working at the zone level raised by respondents included:

> *People are more willing to do the work when done in the zones. At the community level, some will be reluctant […] In the zones we have the same families. Therefore, they are willing to carry out the action plan. (Female, Water Committee member)*

> *We do the clean-up on the zone level. The community use the zones to clean the water taps, so if any tap in any area needs to be cleaned up, individual families around that zones are responsible for cleaning their water taps. For community work, the community only help to carry sand and gravel up to the borehole area. (Male, Water Committee member)*

> *Those of us in the same zone are one family, so it is easy for us to talk and collaborate to plan to fundraise to raise money for a contribution so that when the committee go around to collect money, our zone will already have money. We are a family, so talking will not be a problem, but talking to the whole community will be hard. (Female, Water Committee member)*

Related to this recommendation is the observation from PaCWaM+ water service data that water service levels vary spatially across a community. Involving representatives from different locations, or zones if they exist, across the community, is important to ensure the WASH situations and needs of everyone across the community are recognised and addressed. An important additional benefit of involving small, spatially-based groups such as zones, is the potential to address some forms of social exclusion that exist in community-wide forums/activities (see below).

Development actors should be cognisant of what existing socio-spatial administrative levels and processes are already in place and discuss with community leaders how these micro-contextual factors might be incorporated into any CWM governance structure.

Tribe/familial groupings

Like zones, tribal/familial groupings are often operationalised in collective action in regard to specific issues, such as house building, fundraising for marriage, assisting with school fees, paying the Provincial levy in Fiji, etc.

In Fiji, what amounts to 'community work' is referred to as *solesolevaki* (literally translated as 'working together'), and is typically done along *mataqali* (clan/land-owning unit) lines.[iv] Moreover, many members of a *mataqali* are often (but not always) clustered together in a given part of a village (or *koro*).

The utility of working at the tribal/clan level was also evident in Solomon Islands. In one notable instance, a woman from the Kidapale tribe – a former teacher – was instrumental in building and establishing the Shamael Habu Primary school, without any support from the government or donors. The whole project was almost solely supported by members of the Kidapale tribe (note that urban-based people from the Kidapale tribe were critical in this, (refer to section 4. Geographically dispersed communities).

For engagement seeking to bring about community action, smaller social groupings typically have stronger bonding social capital, and thus are more amenable to collective action. There are arguably numerous benefits of explicitly considering zone and/or tribal representation in terms of WASH and CWM interventions:

- There is already existing social cohesion and collective action at this micro-proximal level
- There is greater potential for agency and accountability among individuals
- Levels of water system service differ within a village, typically in alignment with zones/areas and their proximity to water sources.

Social inclusion/exclusion at different levels

Focusing aspects of community engagement and development activities at smaller and/or differently aligned levels rather than simply the 'whole village' may have other advantages. At the village-wide level, senior men dominate decision-making processes (e.g. Dyer, 2018; UNICEF, 2018, 2019). Women can and do have influence on community decision-making processes through "indirect" or "passive" means, via their husbands, brothers, and sons, but they also have different degrees of agency at different levels (e.g. village-wide, zone/area, household). At a tribal and/or zone level, women are surrounded by extended family members. Whilst there are norms regulating social interaction (e.g. kin related avoidance and deference customs) women typically attract more respect and have a "right" to have their voice heard more than they do at the village-wide level.

It must also be noted that although these smaller social-units can constitute a positive mechanism for advancing social inclusion, tribes and zones – as well as other factors such as religious denomination (which often tend to cluster around proximal households) – can also be turned into factors of **exclusion**. For example, in a village in Isabel (Solomon Islands) there is a clear demarcation between what are considered the "higher class" and the "lower class" people, with households in zone 3 primarily belonging to a tribe considered to be the latter. This has consequences for WASH access and CWM. As one female respondent noted, "people residing in zone 3 are always neglected when things like solar panels are distributed to the community, so they have decided not to join in any community work" (Love et al., 2021b:14). Additionally, there are fewer tap stands in zone 3 relative the rest of the village. Such obtuse inequity and exclusion limits co-operation and collective action. The arrival of 'recent' immigrants who have either married in from other islands (beyond socio-historically delineated marriage norms) or simply relocated (e.g. Malaita, Tikopia) are also vulnerable to exclusion. At its most extreme, this in-group/out-group categorisation can turn into a bipolar settler-immigrant narrative and fuel societal tension (Allen, 2012).

Being aware of such issues prior to implementation is critical to enabling constructive and inclusive consultation. Moreover, ensuring that a water committee has not only more women members but also takes into consideration zone/group and tribal representation, may promote more inclusive and accountable management.

4. Geographically-dispersed communities & social networks beyond village boundaries

Due to relatively high-levels of outmigration (circular and permanent) in PICs, many urban-based residents remain an active and influential part of the rural village and constitute an important part of the 'whole community'

Population growth and rural-urban migration in PICs are amongst the highest in the world; over the last 30 years urban growth rates have consistently averaged nearly twice annual population growth rates (World Bank, 2020). Norms of obligation and reciprocity flow from town to village and village to town, acting as a safety-net and a source of socio-economic resilience and adaptive capacity. Data on domestic remittances are scant, but our Phase 1 research found that half of all surveyed rural households received remittances (the majority from kin in town), and around a third of rural households sent money to town (Table 1**).** Whilst often familial in focus, such support can and does encompass community-wide development initiatives, including water and sanitation.

Table 1: Select data on village-town linkage[v]

Solomon Islands	Fiji	
57%	41%	% of households (HHs) who have close family members in town
48%	47%	% of HHs who receive remittances
30%	35%	% of HHs who send money to town
44%	25%	% HHs where "people pay for other things" [vi]

- In Fiji, rural-urban/diaspora linkages are strong, and often quite formalised
  - There were numerous examples of urban-based emigrants working together to raise money to improve the WASH situation back in their rural 'home' village.
  - Rural-urban 'hybrid' Village Development Committees – where membership is made-up of rural dwelling and urban-based kin – are common[vii], and constitute an adaptive response to high-levels of outmigration and operated as an important post-disaster buffer.[viii]
  - Communities with large numbers of family members residing outside the village (town or overseas) have a greater range of supportive actors to assist with fundraising and other activities (e.g. writing project proposals). This was reflected in better rural WASH services.
  - Both rural and urban based village members stated that they believed they should all be involved in discussions about community development. This rarely occurred.
- In Solomon Islands, rural-urban/diaspora linkages are strong but there was little evidence of extra-local assistance in the realm of rural water and sanitation; instead, the focus was on supporting other community initiatives such as building churches, community halls, and schools. WASH was not a priority.
  - There were a few examples of non-residents being formal members of rural village committees, but this was the exception rather than the norm.
  - There was much less trust evident between rural and urban-based community members in Solomon Islands relative to Fiji.
- Many villages / areas have place-based social media groups that provide a cheap, quick and effective way of sharing information.
- The percentage of households receiving remittances – along with other data such as community-to-town remittances, the percentage of households where 'people pay for other things' and fundraising levels – can all serve as proxies for bonding social capital.

More culturally representative demographic data can inform community engagement and water management for a range of reasons:

- Urban-based community members have the potential to be a cost-effective and culturally-appropriate connector between enabling actors and village-based community members; the feasibility and effectiveness of this depends on the nature of the relationships between urban and rural-based community members, the nature of how the urban-based connection is used to support community water management and WASH (e.g. information, training, supplies, finance etc), and the comfort that both have with urban-based community members as 'go-betweens'.
- Communities with strong and active linkages with people outside the village have more avenues for raising funds for water system maintenance/upgrade.
- Urban emigrants should be involved in discussions about WASH-related activities (e.g. the introduction of a water fee, by-laws outlawing non-sanctioned connections) - their support may be critical.
- Action Plans (e.g., derived from Water Safety Planning activities) should be shared with people in town, for their support.
- Any efforts to raise rural WASH as a social and political priority needs to focus as much, if not more, on people in town as people in rural areas.

To engage with the 'whole community' means engaging with not just people in the village but also with people in town and the diaspora.[ix] Many of these extra-local residents regularly return to their home village during holidays and at other auspicious occasions or following retirement (all putting considerable stress on WASH services) and can remain very influential in village affairs. The point is the rural 'village' extends well beyond its material and spatial borders and WASH actors are not engaging with the whole community unless: a) they know how many people are considered 'from' the community but reside elsewhere; and b) have an understanding of the role and influence of these extra-local community members.

Social media, formal and informal social networks and groups, National and Provincial Day celebrations and other places where large numbers of people aggregate (e.g., marketplaces) are all supplementary avenues through which WASH actors can seek to raise the priority of, and drive improvements in, rural community water management. Social marketing approaches, not just educational models of social change, should be utilised.

Knowing if a target village has an extensive and active non-resident support network, and including them in community development discussions and activities, can further community water management objectives. In PIC contexts, urban-based community members are a critical – albeit currently ignored – part of the rural WASH enabling environment.

5. CWM financing

The CWM model dictates that communities are responsible for the operation and maintenance of their water system following installation. How the ongoing capital investment required for system longevity is raised and managed must be tailored to local specifics

Some form of water tariff or fundraising is necessary to support rural community water system functionality. Acknowledging that all villages are different, it is important to understand the socio-economic particulars of

a village before commencing discussions or advising a community how they can best support their system. Communities close to urban centres, with many waged workers and access to markets and relatively higher incomes, are not necessarily more able and willing to support water system maintenance than more remote and 'poorer' communities.

However, it is worth noting that in both Solomon Islands and Fiji, **the two communities with the lowest (comparative) level of household income and wealth had amongst the 'best' community water management and water system functionality**. It was social rather than economic factors that were driving collective action and CWM outcomes in these cases. Put differently, it is not so much peoples' financial status but rather the priority of water in a community, the perceived trustworthiness of the water management group and the real and perceived benefits stemming from household investment in a CWM system, that is determinant.

Some key factors of note relating to financing water systems and management from the PaCWaM+ research include:

- In Fiji, financial contributions to support water systems in the form of household water fees or targeted fundraising was very common – much more than in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu – reflecting:
    - the (generally) higher socio-economic status of Fiji residents
    - more institutionalised character of collective financial self-help, and
    - the homogeneous governance structure of iTaukei villages relative to Solomon Islands.

- In Solomon Islands, more than half of the Phase 1 villages and many Phase 2 villages reported having had a water fee in the past, but it had failed within a year, due to:
    - reported impropriety
    - a lack of fiscal accountability;
    - inconsistency in the frequency of collecting a fee
    - non-payment
    - water fees deemed excessively high, and
    - inadequate maintenance and repair, deflating community motivation.

The **type of water system** can also inform CWM finances. The diesel required for pumping borehole water to a reservoir tank requires frequent financial inputs. However, there is an immediate material gain following the provision of funds - the water runs (for a short time). In piped gravity-fed systems, by contrast, the impacts of financial inputs can be far less obvious.

- Communities relying on a 'pay-for-access' borehole water system may require extra capacity building in regards to both financial management and communication and households made more aware of the necessity of financial collective action
- Communities with poor financial skills and reporting regimes struggle to generate the funds required to support system longevity.

But it is important to reiterate that a community's socio-economic status does not determine the achievement of 'good' CWM outcomes: it is typically other factors – levels of social cohesion, the ability to motivate collective action, trust in others – that are more influential.

Key information, which should be ascertained during a community diagnostic assessment, prior to advising on water system finance include:

- What is a community's extant fundraising obligations?
  - Villages are largely self-funded; it is the community, not the State or private enterprise, that build the church, the community hall, and raise funds for celebrations and travel to church related events. The introduction of new fiscal obligations – such as a water fee or regularly water system fundraising - must be discussed with the whole community and be flexible enough to accommodate wider societal activities of local value.
  - What experiences with fundraising for water has the community had in the past? This could be incorporated into a discussion session, as an opportunity to reflect and co-develop new approaches.
    - Importantly this may include some negative experiences, especially where accountability and transparency were not good. This negative history of collective financing may be a significant barrier to future fundraising initiatives. It's almost never appropriate to try to 'correct/fix' past negative experiences – and very difficult to know what happened. But new efforts to fundraise collective water finances may need to offer assurances and new ways of doing things, so that history is not able to repeat itself.
  - If fundraising is often conducted along tribal or zone level, and/or there is elevated suspicion about community-wide governance capacity, discuss the potential value of organising WASH-finances at smaller organisational levels (e.g. tribe or zone).

- Accountability is critical. Current guidelines (e.g. Solomon Islands RWASH water committee training manual) highlight the importance of reporting back to the community on funds, but many WCs require follow-up support and monitoring before this practice will become a norm. Consider talking to key social groups in the community with highest social capital – such as the Church – and explore how this issue is addressed in other aspects of community life, e.g. fundraising for church, schools, halls and other communal infrastructure.

6. Existing governance structures

Most Community Assessment approaches will include some assessment of governance structures. It is important these consider the following:

- It is more likely that new structures – new Water/WASH committees where there aren't any – may be less sustainable than working within existing committee structures. Where there are no existing water/WASH committees, it is worthwhile exploring the mandate of existing committees and their capability, capacity and interest to take on water/WASH-related issues.
- There may be influential people who do not reside in the village - they may have to be engaged to maximise program effectiveness and sustainability.
- If there are multiple committees with some linkage to water and/or WASH, they must be harmonised to ensure consistency in messaging and action and be equally accountable to the community.

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[i] See: Chambers (1992, 1994) for rapid/participatory rural appraisal; Altschuld and Watkins (2014) and Costa and Serrano-Garcia (1983) on community assessments.

[ii] There are numerous methodological approaches that can be used to identify these features, including interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions.

[iii] Undertaken in partnership with Plan International and Live and Learn Environmental Education – Solomon Islands (see Community-based Water Security Improvement Planning – Implementation Guides: Vol1; Vol2; Vol3 or DWSSP+ – Supplementary activities to Drinking Water Safety and Security Planning – implementation guide Fiji)

[iv] Love et al. 2021 pp.48 – 49

[v] Data drawn from our socio-economic households surveys undertaken as part of our formative Phase 1 research activities, see Love et al. (2020, 2021a).

[vi] Examples of 'other things' include paying for school fees, mobile telephone credit, and (Fiji only) electricity bills. These can be easily paid by people in town.

[vii] There are some communities that have adopted this hybrid rural-urban membership structure for all their village committees (e.g. Nalatowa) (Love et al., in press)

[viii] For example, VDCs responded by assisting to redress water security issues in schools following the ash fall from the Tongan volcanic eruption, see Love et al., in press)

[ix] Aalbersberg, et al (1997) were amongst the first to recognise this in the context of Fiji.