



# CASE STUDY

## Raising the Bar

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### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Water, sanitation and hygiene issues affect different people in different ways. To be effective, WASH interventions must be gender-, age- and diversity-sensitive, and involve women, girls, boys and men of different ages and backgrounds equally. Yet while responders generally agree that programs should be inclusive of everybody, the principle is often not put practically into action. CARE International is part of a global WASH cluster that has developed a set of WASH minimum commitments to be used as a tool to make gender sensitive and inclusive programming tangible, simple and practical. CARE International in Vanuatu is one of the organisations piloting the tool, and is sharing it with our program partners to help raise the bar of good practice across the WASH sector in Vanuatu.

### Minimum Commitments: practical tools to make inclusion simple

Conflicts and natural disasters affect girls, boys, women and men differently. For example, the very young or very old may have difficulties in accessing facilities; adolescent girls and women collecting water may have to walk long distances unprotected, placing them at risk of attack or limiting their time for other tasks. Simply providing WASH facilities does not guarantee they will adequately and effectively meet everyone's needs. Responses should take into account issues such as gender, gender based violence, disability, and age. This broad participation meets basic sanitation needs, prevents disease, and plays an important role in the protection and dignity of individuals, particularly girls and women.

Yet, in the rush of responding to the most urgent needs, often insufficient analysis and attention is given to these issues in the sector. There is often a lack of capacity on how to take gender, age and diversity issues into account, and gender and social inclusion is overlooked, considered too complex, too abstract or too time consuming. To help make gender sensitive and inclusive programming tangible, simple and practical, the global WASH cluster developed a set of minimum commitments for the safety and dignity of affected people in 2014. CARE International in Vanuatu is one of the organisations tasked with piloting the commitments in practice, introducing them into our WASH program in March 2016.

The minimum commitments reflect key priority issues in the sector and aim to place affected people at the very centre of the response, through a collective reflection on quality and inclusive programming with questions. The commitments are a



The minimum commitments help to guide WASH team members in consulting with vulnerable groups. © Mark Chew/CARE

set of five core actions for WASH sector members to systematically apply at each phase of the project cycle. They are based on understanding the needs or barriers marginalised groups may face, the gender dynamics that may lead to vulnerabilities, gaps that currently exist in the WASH assistance being provided – that, is what sector teams don't do well.

The 5 commitments are:

1. Consult separately girls, boys, women, and men, including older people and those with disabilities, to ensure that WASH programs are designed so as to provide equitable access and reduce incidences of violence.
2. Ensure that girls, boys, women, and men, including older people and those with disabilities have access to appropriate and safe WASH services.
3. Ensure that girls, boys, women, and men, including older people and those with disabilities, have access to feedback & complaint mechanisms so that corrective actions can address their specific protection and assistance needs.
4. Monitor and evaluate safe and equitable access and use of WASH services in WASH projects.
5. Give priority to girls (particularly adolescents) and women's participation in the consultation process.

CARE International in Vanuatu introduced the minimum commitments into the WASH program in a training workshop that brought together not only CARE staff but also other WASH responders in Vanuatu, including the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the Vanuatu Red Cross, and the National Disaster Management Office. While CARE already had a gender focus, the minimum commitments have helped to articulate priorities in social inclusion in CARE's WASH program as well as CARE's other programs.

"Before the commitments were introduced, it was sometimes difficult for the team to make sure we were addressing all aspects enough. But now the tool acts as a guide to ensure that we are taking care of all aspects," says Andrew Koda, CARE's WASH Team Leader.

"For instance, staff have consulted with female community members in designing the girls' school toilets with a tap and washing space inside the toilet to cater for the needs of menstruating girls. The Washington Group questions have been added into our evaluations so that we can identify people with a disability and what needs they have, and the design of toilets now has features like ramps and handrails for people with disabilities. And when recruiting staff, we are prioritising gender balance in forming teams and defining their requirements."

The WASH team now holds regular review exercises to check on progress with gender and social inclusion, and the minimum commitments are used as a guide in joint planning with other programs. The lessons CARE and other WASH agencies in Vanuatu have learned have also been shared through a follow-up workshop.

"Introducing the minimum commitments has helped our teams plan and work together," says Julian Tung, CARE's WASH Program Manager. "CARE's WASH strategy has now been updated as an integrated team effort that will shape the future of the WASH program."

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