

# Fostering WaSH marketing exchange systems in informal Melanesian communities:

## Enabling environments that foster sustainable, effective and inclusive WaSH marketing exchanges

**Who is this brief for?** This brief provides guidance to enabling actors – people in civil society, external support agencies, community governance structures, utilities, governments, the private sector, and academia, who design, implement and support WaSH policies and programs.

**Purpose of this brief:** WaSH enabling actors can use this guidance to create and support an enabling environment and marketing exchange system that improves WaSH outcomes in urban and peri-urban informal settlements in Melanesia. Figure 1 summarises the components of the WaSH marketing exchange system; this brief focuses on those components relating to the enabling environment – enabling actors, functions and rules – that are necessary to foster sustainable, effective and inclusive WaSH marketing exchanges of all types, so that they deliver wellbeing impacts.

**Recommendation 1:** Enabling actors, including community members, should work together to create a marketing exchange system that has specific **assets**, or features, that will maximise sustainable, effective and inclusive WaSH marketing exchanges in informal settlements.

**Recommendation 2:** Enabling actors, including community members, can create and support these assets of the marketing exchange system by performing twenty-two **functions**; these functions should be performed in a coordinated and integrated way.

**Recommendation 3:** To guide *how* enabling functions are achieved, enabling actors should consider using **informal rules** as well as **formal rules**, which are usually used, so that each function can be performed in a way that suits the local context and will therefore be performed more successfully.

**Recommendation 4:** To ensure all functions are performed, enabling actors should **agree who should perform each function**. In this process they should consider involving actors not previously engaged in WaSH, but who perform similar functions for other purposes. Participatory stakeholder mapping can be a useful tool for this process.

## Background

### *WaSH in urban and peri-urban Melanesia*

Urban migration for employment and education has substantially increased urban and peri-urban populations in Melanesian countries. The low affordability of urban housing, combined with the complex and often conflict-prone land tenure system in the region, has led to an increase in informal settlements<sup>1</sup>.

Informal settlements in Melanesia are often on urban fringes, are not planned by government, are on private,

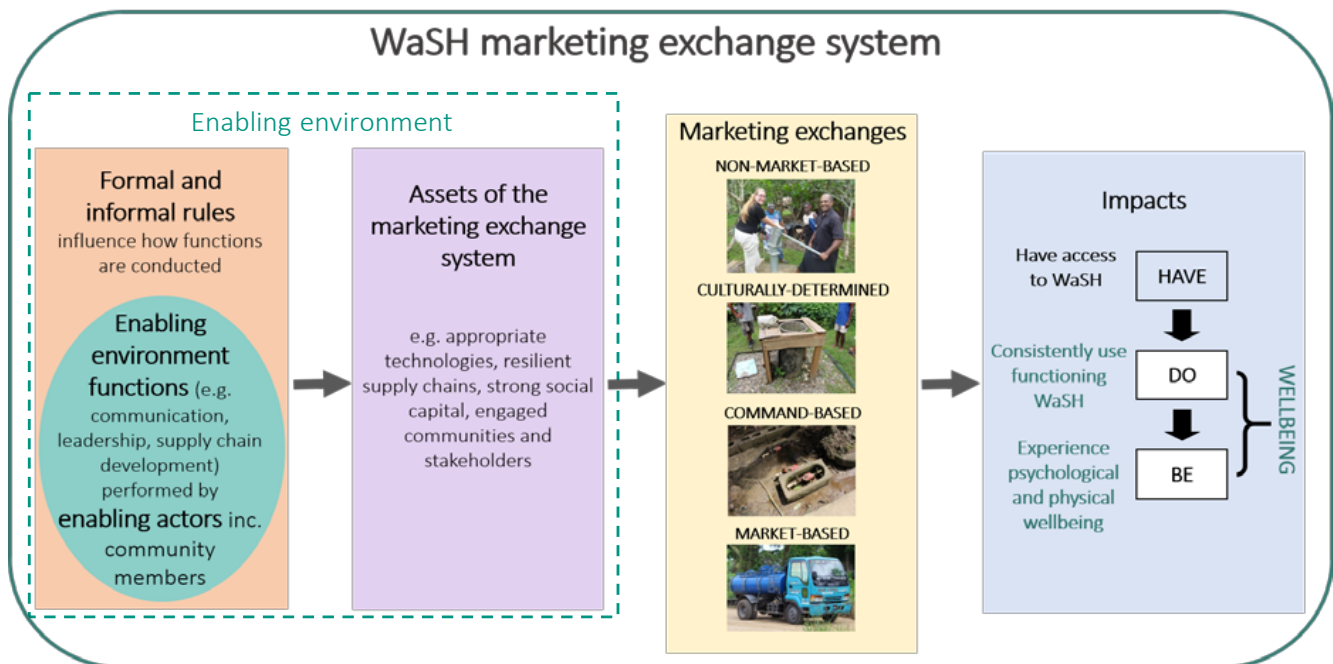
government or custom-owned land so that residents have insecure land tenure, and lack basic infrastructure<sup>1</sup>. Residents generally earn little or no income. Some settlements are on the boundaries of city council and provincial administrations, and so, fall between urban and rural policies. Their rapid growth has exacerbated the challenge for WaSH service provision<sup>1</sup>. Most settlements lack connections to mains water and sewerage lines, due to the land tenure, and cannot access council solid waste collection programs. Water-related diseases are common, leading to compromised health and wellbeing<sup>1</sup>.

Supported by



**Australian Government**  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade





**Figure 1: The WaSH marketing exchange system.** WaSH marketing exchange systems are comprised of functions, performed by actors using rules, which creates assets that enable all types of WaSH marketing exchanges, which should generate not only access to WaSH, but also wellbeing impacts. Note, Command-based and Culturally-determined exchanges are also non-market-based exchanges; for the purposes of this communication ‘non-market’ refers to other types of non-market exchanges, such as donations and charitable exchanges.

## Research approach

We used participatory action research (PAR), where the researchers, residents of informal settlements, businesses and enabling actors, work together to define a problem, design a solution, and implement change<sup>2</sup>. We worked with two informal settlements in each of Suva (Fiji), Port Vila (Vanuatu) and Honiara (Solomon Islands). An abbreviated research activity was undertaken in one settlement in Madang (Papua New Guinea). Residents of these settlements had expressed a desire to improve their WaSH situation.

We also worked in partnership with WaSH enabling actors (e.g., private actors, civil society organisations (CSOs), multi-lateral organisations, government agencies, water and sanitation utilities, educational institutions and community leaders and members). The research describes WaSH marketing exchange systems operating in informal, urban Melanesian settlements and identifies ways they can be fostered and strengthened with the support of enabling actors (Figure 1).

## Key findings

The enabling environment is comprised of enabling actors, functions they perform, rules they that guide them, and the assets they create and sustain (Figure 1). The key findings below provide greater detail about these different components of the enabling environment.

**Key finding 1: The exchange of WaSH services and products is maximised when the marketing exchange system has specific assets.**

Assets are both tangible (e.g. appropriate technologies and a competent and sufficient workforce) and

intangible (e.g. strong social capital and consumer empowerment). These assets allow members of the target population to be most responsive to engaging in WaSH marketing exchanges. Thirteen assets were identified (Figure 2) that foster sustainable, effective and inclusive marketing exchanges in informal settlements. While all assets support all four types of exchanges, certain assets are more important for certain types of exchanges. A well-functioning enabling environment generates all of these assets.



**Figure 2: Assets of the marketing exchange system**

**Key finding 2: The assets of the marketing exchange system are created and sustained when enabling actors perform specific functions.**

In producing marketing exchange system assets, enabling actors perform particular functions. A function is an action or activity of a person or institution. We identified 22 functions that produce marketing exchange system assets. These functions can be categorised into Governance, WaSH services and products, and Data (Figure 3).

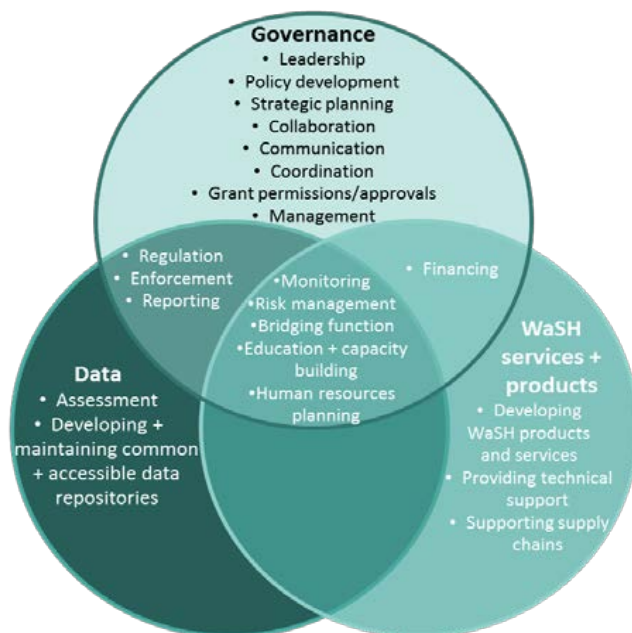


Figure 3: Functions

Stakeholders assumed that these three sets of functions operate independently and therefore enabling actors could perform these functions in isolation from other enabling actors (in silos). However, it is evident from Figure 3 that some of these functions can occur in an integrated way to support governance, services and products, and data processes. Many of the 22 functions also support multiple outcomes. For example, education and capacity building supports consumer empowerment and a competent and sufficient workforce directly, as well as several other outcomes indirectly. If some of these functions are not being performed well, the enabling environment can in fact become disabling and some WaSH marketing exchanges may cease to be inclusive, sustainable and effective, or may cease altogether in some settlements.

**Key finding 3: The way functions are performed is influenced by formal and informal rules.**

The way functions are performed by enabling actors is influenced by rules, which can be formal (e.g. policies, regulations, community by-laws) or informal (e.g. customs or religious beliefs, organised corruption) (Figure 4). Informal rules are socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels<sup>1</sup>. Informal rules may be particularly important in informal settlements, where there are fewer formal rules, formal rules are not implemented or both, supporting needs

**Formal and Informal Rules**

- In informal settlements activities often happen through informal rules (e.g. customs or religious beliefs, organised corruption)
- In the enabling environment there is a tendency to use only formal rules (e.g. policies, standards)
- There is a need to leverage informal rules in addition to formal rules

Figure 4: Rules

such as land security and access to basic services. Many rules, both formal and informal, are specific to a particular community or situation. Formal rules are within officially sanctioned channels, while informal rules are enforced outside of these channels.

For example, enabling actors in Fiji were divided on whether the function of *coordination* with informal settlements was most effective when carried out formally or informally. One enabling actor in Fiji argued that coordination should not be formalised because *“once you formalise things, there's a lot of obstacles you need to go through. I think the current state in which we are operating is good enough. I think what the main ingredient there is commitment. If you feel that something that you're doing is important, it doesn't have to be formalised.”* On the other side, a Fijian enabling actor stated that: *“They [coordination processes] will need to formalise. In order to sustain it. And also to ensure the commitment from our stakeholders we need that formalisation. That's the way forward.”*

**Key finding 4: Actors that may enable WaSH marketing exchanges include people from government (local, provincial or national), civil society organisations, external support agencies (e.g. donors, development banks, NGOs and multilaterals), utilities, academia, private sector and local businesses, and from within settlements (community leaders and members) (Figure 5). A diverse group of WaSH enabling actors is best able to perform all 22 functions that support WaSH marketing exchanges.**

Some functions operate within settlements, some outside settlements, and many span both settlements and external environments. Consequently, many actors are required to ensure all functions are performed well. Some functions will require several actors working together, and in some cases different actors may perform the same functions using different rules to support different marketing exchanges, or because of the local context.

For example, in Papua New Guinea, the Independent Consumer and Competition Commission regulates the tariff that the water utility can charge to a household for providing piped water. When a householder in an informal settlement provides water to their neighbours, the price is then informally regulated by the community through social norms.



Figure 5: Enabling actors

## References

1. Water and Sanitation Program, *Delivering water and sanitation to Melanesian informal settlements: Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea*. World Bank: Washington D.C., U.S.A., 2015.
2. Reason, P.; Bradbury, H., Introduction: Inquiry and Participation in Search of a World Worthy of Human Aspiration. In *Handbook of Action Research*, Reason, P.; Bradbury, H., Eds. Sage: Thousand Oaks, C.A., U.S.A., 2001; pp 1-14.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the communities and enabling actors we have worked with for their enthusiasm and involvement in this project.

This project has included work completed by Semisi Meo towards the attainment of a Doctorate of Philosophy.

## Want to know more?

For more information, please contact Project Manager, Dr Regina Souter, at [r.souter@watercentre.org](mailto:r.souter@watercentre.org) or visit [www.watercentre.org/portfolio/pacific-wash-marketing](http://www.watercentre.org/portfolio/pacific-wash-marketing)

## Research Project and reports

Research represented in this brief was conducted as part of the larger research project: “Fostering WaSH marketing exchanges in informal Melanesian settlements”.

This research was funded by the Australian Government under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Development Research Awards Scheme, project number: 201200898. The research was managed by International WaterCentre and conducted by International WaterCentre, Monash University, Water Institute at the University of North Carolina, University of the South Pacific, Divine Word University and Live & Learn Environmental Education (LLEE).

This research received ethics approval from Monash University, the University of North Carolina, the University of the South Pacific, Divine Word University and the relevant authorities in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

### *This brief can be cited as:*

Shields, K.F., Souter, R.T., Barrington, D.J., Sridharan, S., Saunders, S.G., Meo, S., Bartram, J. (2017). *Policy Brief: Enabling environments that foster sustainable, effective and inclusive WaSH marketing exchanges*. International WaterCentre: Brisbane, Australia.

