

# Fostering WaSH marketing exchange systems in informal Melanesian settlements

RESEARCH BRIEF

January, 2017



This brief describes the key findings of research undertaken to understand how local water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) marketing exchange systems can be fostered and strengthened to increase the health and wellbeing outcomes of Melanesian communities, especially informal settlements in or near Melanesian cities.

Based upon key findings, we make 11 recommendations for enabling actors, those people and organisations designing and delivering WASH policies and programs, that will improve WaSH and associated health and wellbeing outcomes for communities.

## CRITICAL MESSAGES FOR WASH PROGRAMMERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Large peri-urban and urban informal populations are not addressed through WaSH policies in Melanesian PICs.

The private sector is vibrant and making significant contributions to meeting WaSH needs through market-based and hybridised exchanges.

However, informal marketing exchanges play a major role in delivering WaSH goods and services in urban and peri-urban informal settlements; many of these informal exchanges are socially and culturally-determined, and are self-managed and self-supported by informal rules within settlements.

These informal exchange systems reduce the effects of inequalities within informal settlements.

The WaSH enabling environment and informal settlements themselves have been conditioned by past experiences to

expect a “welfare-approach” which may have disempowered them to take action in a self-determined manner.

There is potential to foster and leverage existing informal exchanges to increase WaSH benefits and wellbeing, using participatory and collective approaches.

Realising and sustaining the WaSH benefits for wellbeing outcomes depends upon policies that address the specific issues of informal settlements and ensure that all actors perform particular roles and functions that enhance community-based WaSH exchanges.

Participatory action research provided insights that would not otherwise have been available. It established a platform for action, agency and self-determination, which has fostered the WaSH marketing exchange system, leading to diverse benefits to communities.

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# A framework for WaSH

Previous efforts to improve WaSH situations have tended to focus on supporting, or requiring, one type of marketing exchange, or on strengthening one aspect of the enabling environment. However, WaSH marketing exchanges are part of a larger system, and by focusing policies, programs and efforts on specific parts of the system without understanding how they interact with other parts, leads to some efforts not supporting the WaSH and wellbeing impacts intended.

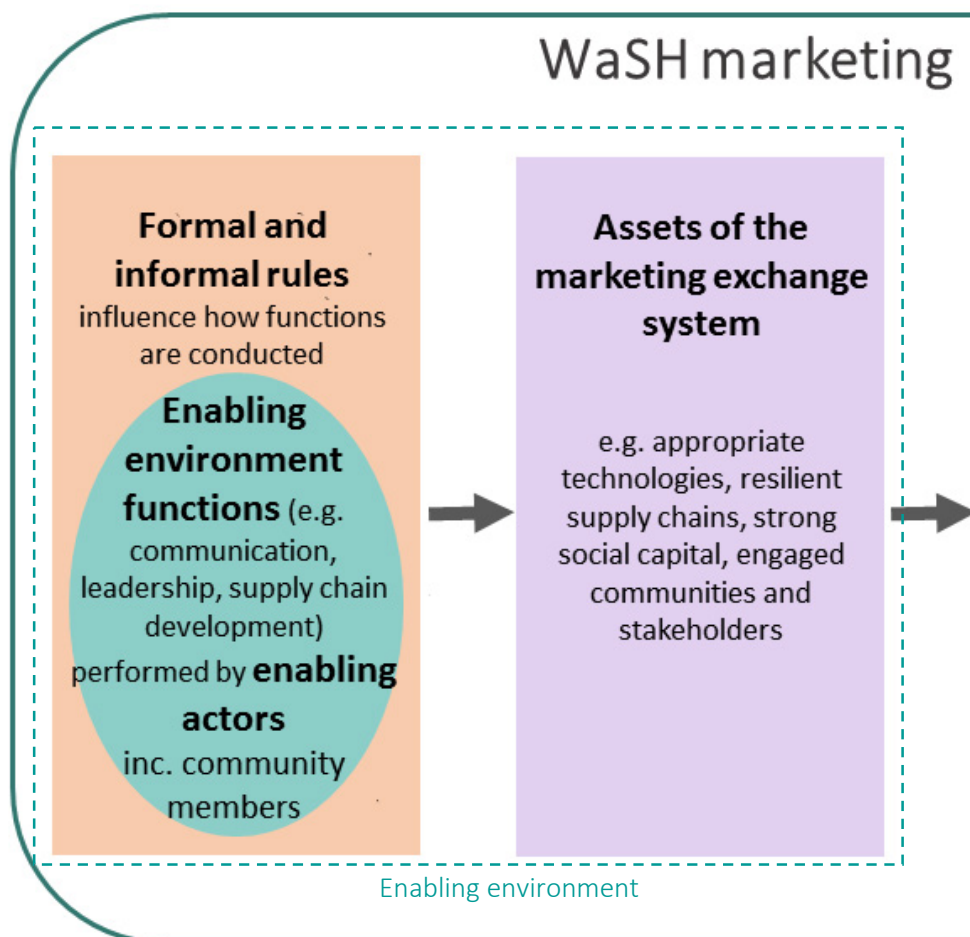
## Accessing and using WaSH products and services happens

Figure 1. 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.

### The enabling environment

is comprised of enabling actors, functions they perform, rules that guide them, and the assets they create and sustain. The enabling environment operates at many different scales, from households and families, communities, settlements, local/provincial government, national and global scales.

**Enabling actors** are those people that directly or indirectly support WaSH marketing exchanges. They 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. But, importantly, there are also enabling actors within settlements; these are community members that directly support WaSH marketing exchanges, such as by coordinating and communicating with other enabling actors, community members and businesses, but they also indirectly support WaSH marketing exchanges, for example by building



social capital and cohesion within settlements.

The actions that enabling actors undertake in order to support WaSH marketing exchanges, are **enabling environment functions**. There are a range of functions that need to be performed, and enabling actors need to coordinate to ensure that these functions are conducted well.

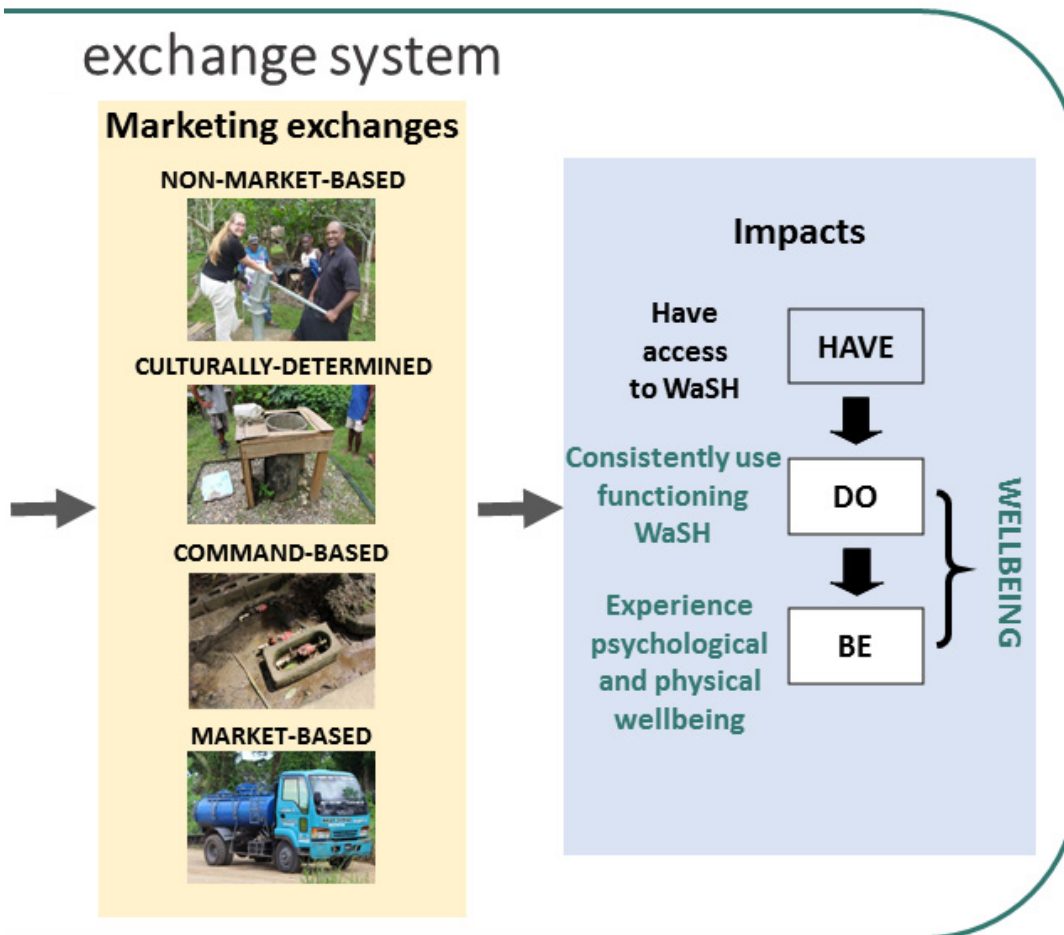
The way that these functions are carried out is influenced by **rules**. Rules can be formal in that they are officially recognised in some way (e.g. policies, regulations, community by-laws), or rules can be informal, in that they are socially-shared practices that are not given any official status (e.g. customs or religious beliefs, organised corruption).

When the enabling functions are conducted well, the enabling environment will have specific **assets**. These are the characteristics or features of an enabling environment that supports all types of WaSH marketing exchanges in ways that achieve sustained, effective and inclusive WaSH impacts.

# Marketing Exchange Systems

WaSH policy-makers, programmers and practitioners can use this framework to guide their design of policies and programs that improve WaSH health and wellbeing impacts by understanding and recognising all of the parts of a WASH marketing exchange system, their interactions and how they are formed and supported.

within a WaSH marketing exchange system



## Impacts: Access & Wellbeing

Gaining access to WaSH services or products is only one part of the process to achieve wellbeing from WaSH, and should not be confused with wellbeing itself. Access to a WaSH product or service does not automatically lead to a greater quality of life or the achievement of wellbeing. People must be able to consistently use the WaSH service or product, and in a way that provides psychological and physical wellbeing. The Sustainable Development Goals require us to ensure that WaSH access improves “physical, mental and social wellbeing”.

## Marketing Exchanges

Marketing exchanges describe the ways in which people gain access to water, sanitation and hygiene products and services. Within any one community or settlement, people will use different types of marketing exchanges to gain access, even to the same WaSH product or service.

- **Market-based exchange:** A buyer and a seller transact in products and services on the basis of a pricing mechanism established by competitive markets or negotiation.
- **Command-based exchange:** A regulated institutional authority makes available products and designs prices and services by a provision motive.
- **Culturally-determined exchange:** A provider and recipient exchange value in ways sanctioned by local traditions and social norms.
- **Non-market-based exchange:** a supplier donates products or services to help in some circumstance of disadvantage and receives no explicit payment, e.g. charitable or philanthropic exchanges. 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.

# KEY FINDINGS &

## **Towards WaSH programs that enhance and measure sustained wellbeing**

Although residents of Melanesian informal settlements involved in past WaSH programs may have acquired access to improved WaSH, they may not have achieved their wellbeing potential.

## **Building on existing marketing exchanges in Melanesian informal settlements to improve WaSH**

Residents of informal settlements use diverse marketing exchanges, often in hybrid combinations, to meet their WaSH needs.

Residents of informal settlements have various motivations for participating in WaSH marketing exchanges.

## **Using participatory processes to engage informal settlements and enabling actors in improving WaSH**

Social cohesion enables residents in informal settlements to engage in WaSH marketing exchanges, and WaSH programs.

A participatory process can empower members of the target population to plan and act in a self-determined manner to improve their WaSH situation

Opportunities for face-to-face discussions involving residents and enabling actors led to collaborative planning and action that was based on mutual understanding of roles, responsibilities, opportunities, capabilities and aspirations.

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

The exchange of WaSH services and products is maximised when the marketing exchange system has specific assets.

The assets of the marketing system are created and sustained when enabling actors perform specific functions.

The way functions are performed is influenced by formal and informal rules.

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).

WaSH policies which that specify particular types of WaSH implementation approaches or marketing exchanges may hinder inclusive WaSH.

WaSH policies which only address certain populations may lead to some populations being overlooked by the policy environment.

WaSH policies in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea are challenged in achieving inclusive WaSH because they focus on some subpopulations and don't allow sufficient flexibility in how people access and use WaSH services and products.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Towards WaSH programs that enhance and measure sustained wellbeing**

**1:** WaSH programmers and practitioners should consider balancing measurable success indicators between the WaSH products and services that people have access to with what they are able to do, or have acquired an opportunity to do, as a result of the program. Understanding such indicators may allow WaSH programmers and practitioners to be adaptive in dealing with unintended consequences so as to maximise the wellbeing of the target population.

## **Building on existing marketing exchanges in Melanesian informal settlements to improve WaSH**

**2:** WaSH practitioners and programmers should consider seeking out pre-existing marketing exchanges and supporting them such that they help to meet WaSH needs (many of these marketing exchanges may already be related to WaSH).

**3:** WaSH practitioners and programmers could consider learning about local motivations for engaging in WaSH marketing exchanges and leverage these toward achieving the WaSH aspirations of the target population.

## **Using participatory processes to engage informal settlements and enabling actors in improving WaSH**

**4.** WaSH practitioners and programmers should build on existing social cohesion between residents in Melanesian informal settlements to achieve WaSH improvements (rather than seeking to engage with individuals or families). Where social cohesion within a target population is not strong, WaSH practitioners and programmers could invest resources in developing better working relationships between members of the target population; this should improve the effectiveness of WaSH programs. **5:** WaSH practitioners and programmers should consider periodic face-to-face meetings between members of the informal settlements and enabling actors as this is an effective way to understand each other's roles, responsibilities and needs, and can support each other in progressing WaSH priorities and action plans.

**6:** WaSH practitioners and programmers should consider participatory processes as a tool to expand the opportunity of informal settlers to think and act for themselves in terms of improving their WaSH situation.

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

**7:** 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.

**8:** Enabling actors, including community members, can create and support these assets of the marketing exchange system by performing 22 functions; these functions should be performed in a coordinated and integrated way.

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

**10:** 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.

**11:** Policies that intend to improve WaSH should be country-wide to ensure no populations are overlooked, and they should not prescribe specific marketing exchanges (such as market-based) or implementation approaches, but should aim to foster all marketing exchanges by prescribing support for functions and assets of marketing exchange systems.

# RESEARCH: WHY?

## NEED FOR RESEARCH

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>.

## The PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

A participatory approach to development entails a collaborative and democratic process by which local knowledge and preferences are kept central, local ownership is valued, and target populations are empowered to enhance their wellbeing through self-reflection and action<sup>2</sup>. Many governments, funding agencies, and civil society actors acknowledge participatory approaches as important in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Participation can either emerge organically within communities, with only a little stimulation from external actors (e.g. community-managed sanitation), or be driven by governments and CSOs as part of a large-scale policy initiative (e.g. subsidised water supply). Although some level of external influence is often needed to scale-up the positive outcomes of organic participation, an entirely externally-driven participatory approach isn't always conducive to building lasting social cohesion.

*SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS TARGET 6B: "SUPPORT  
AND STRENGTHEN THE  
PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL  
COMMUNITIES IN IMPROVING  
WATER AND SANITATION  
MANAGEMENT"<sup>3</sup>*



## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & QUESTIONS

### Objective

To understand and help to foster the conditions under which sustained, self-determined WaSH markets can operate among Pacific Island communities and consequently allow the achievement of sustained and self-determined social and economic development.

### Questions

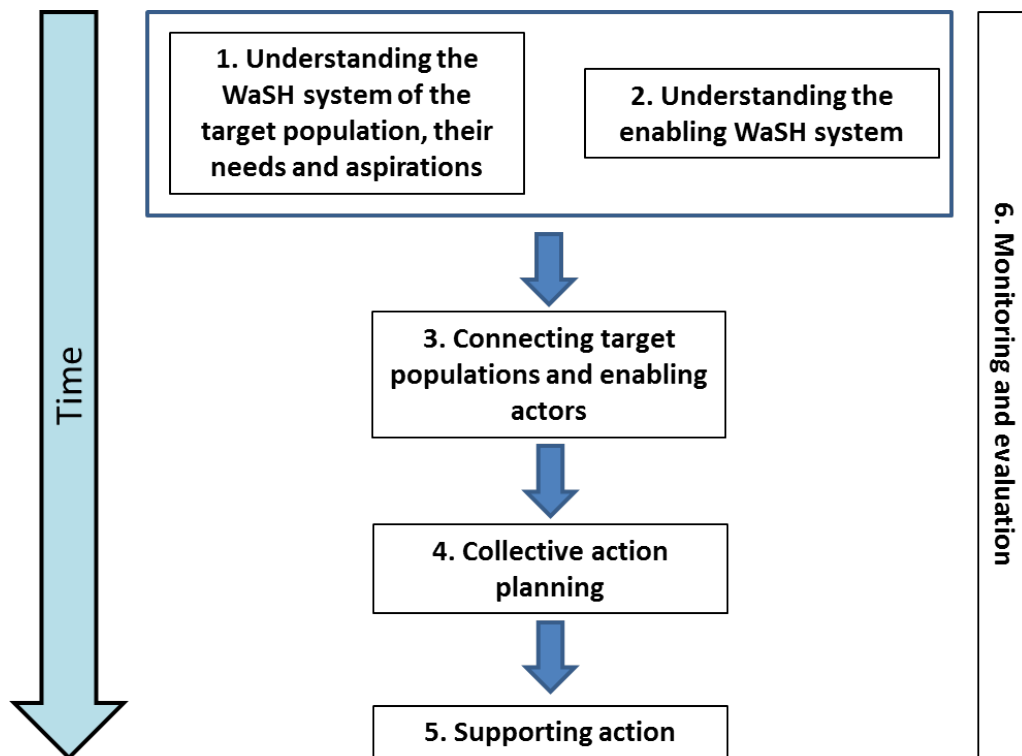
1. What are the key features of established and emergent water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) exchange systems in impoverished peri-urban communities in the Pacific region?
2. What potential sustainable solutions exist within exchange systems? How can this potential be tapped and nurtured?
3. What roles can the community and the local enabling environment play in contributing to the success of WaSH initiatives?

# PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

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>4</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 (PNG). 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).

We fostered WaSH marketing exchanges through a six-phase participatory process. For more details on the activities involved in each phase, please refer to the guidebook for working on WaSH in informal settlements<sup>5</sup>.

Throughout the research we collected data using a large range of methods including Focus Group discussions, householders and key info interviews, photographs of WaSH infrastructure, drawings, maps, and lists created by research participants, audio and video recordings of research activities and researchers' daily field notes and post-fieldwork summaries.



INITIAL COMMUNITY MEETING IN SOLOMON ISLANDS TO HEAR FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS THEIR WASH SITUATION AND ATTITUDES TO IMPROVING IT

# Research project and reports

This brief summarises the key findings and recommendations from the 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) Australian 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:

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## 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?

The following reports, briefs and video have been prepared for stakeholders interested in WaSH marketing systems, or WaSH in the South Pacific. All are available from the project website (below).

1. Barrington, D.J., Bartram, J., Meo, S., Saunders, S.G., Shields, K.F., Sridharan, S, and Souter, R.T. (2017). **Fostering water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH) marketing exchanges using participatory processes: a guide for working with residents of informal settlements in the Pacific.** International WaterCentre: Brisbane, Australia. ISBN: 978-1-921499-05-0
2. Souter R, T., Barrington, D.J., Sridharan, S., Shields, K., Saunders, S. G., Meo, S., Bartram, J. (2017). **Research Brief: Fostering WASH marketing exchange systems in informal Melanesian settlements.** International WaterCentre, Brisbane, Australia.
3. Shields, K.F., Souter, R.T., Barrington, D.J., Sridharan, S., Saunders, S.G., Meo, S., Bartram, J. (2017). **Policy Brief: Melanesian WaSH policy environments to foster inclusive WaSH marketing exchanges.** International WaterCentre, Brisbane, Australia.
4. Shields, K.F., Souter, R.T., Barrington, D.J., Sridharan, S., Saunders, S.G., Meo, S., Bartram, J. (2017). **Policy Brief: Enabling environments that support sustainable, effective and inclusive WASH marketing exchanges.** International WaterCentre, Brisbane, Australia.
5. Barrington, D.J., Sridharan, S., Saunders, S.G., Shields, K.F., Meo, S., Bartram, J., Souter, R.T. (2017). **Programmers’ Brief: Using participatory processes to engage informal settlements and enabling actors in improving WaSH.** International WaterCentre, Brisbane, Australia.
6. Sridharan, S., Barrington, D.J., Shields, K.F., Saunders, S.G., Souter, R.T., Meo, S., Bartram, J. (2017). **Programmers’ Brief: Towards WaSH programs that enhance and measure sustained wellbeing.** International WaterCentre, Brisbane, Australia.
7. Barrington, D.J., Sridharan, S., Souter, R.T., Saunders, S.G., Shields, K.F., Meo, S., Bartram, J. (2017). **Programmers’ Brief: Building on existing marketing exchanges in Melanesian informal settlements to improve WaSH.** International WaterCentre, Brisbane, Australia.
8. Barrington, D.J. (2015). **FAQ: Understanding “exchange systems” in WASH marketing.** International WaterCentre: Brisbane, Australia.
9. IWC (2017). **Project video: Improving the wellbeing of people and communities in Melanesia through WaSH marketing exchanges.** International WaterCentre, Brisbane, Australia.

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