



Water For  
Women

# Do No Harm for Women's empowerment in WASH

Pilot  
July 2019

## Five principles of the DNH toolkit

1. Supporting women victims/survivors of violence
2. Transforming gender inequality
3. Increasing women's participation in programs
4. Changing men's attitudes and behaviours that support gender inequality and VAW
5. Partnering with experienced VAW providers

**Our thanks to International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) for supporting the use and adaptation of its Do No Harm toolkit, Habitat for Humanity Australia and Fiji for undertaking the pilot, Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) for providing technical advice and capacity building on gender equality and violence against women issues. Water for Women is the Australian Government's flagship WASH program.**



# Introduction

A central commitment to the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation for all) is to “leave no one behind.”

Access to safe, secure water and sanitation can make a significant difference to the lives of everyone, including women and girls - alleviating work and care burdens, improving health, reducing risks of violence, and freeing up time for education, employment and livelihood opportunities. However, the empowerment of women and marginalised people can come at a cost, if we do not pro-actively address backlash and potential harms involved in challenging entrenched gender and social norms, such as increased workloads and risk of gender-based violence for women.

This is why ‘Do no harm’ is a key principle of the Water for Women Fund Towards Transformation in WASH strategy (<https://bit.ly/2YPCooV>).

With funding support from the Australian Government, Water for Women supported one of its CSO partners, Habitat for Humanity Fiji (HFHF), to undertake a pilot in Do No Harm (DNH) on women’s empowerment in WASH. The pilot supported the use and adaptation of IWDA’s DNH toolkit: Integrating the Elimination of Violence Against Women into Women’s Economic Empowerment Programs (<https://iwda.org.au/resource/do-no-harm-toolkit/>)<sup>1</sup>

Habitat was well placed to undertake the pilot, because of its explicit focus on supporting women’s economic empowerment in its WASH project.

Through Habitat for Humanity Australia, the Fund supports Habitat for Humanity Fiji’s WASH project, Strengthening community resilience and inclusion through improved WASH services in Fiji. HFHF has been developing a community WASH training package, and its

WASH project aims to support 100 women across the 50 target communities to participate in a plumbers’ course that is being developed by the Fiji National University (FNU). It was envisaged that the pilot will:

- ▶ Complement the training package, through identifying safe ways to support the participation of women and marginalized groups in community WASH processes,
- ▶ Strengthen the enabling environment at community level for supporting women to participate in the plumbers training course and find employment afterwards (by addressing harmful norms that might contribute to backlash and increased risk of violence as a result of women’s increased empowerment).



Do No Harm training for Habitat staff

<sup>1</sup> This toolkit builds on research conducted with the ANU’s Department of Pacific Affairs and the support of DFAT and which explored the relationship between women’s economic empowerment and violence against women.

# Purpose

To support development on good practice in gender transformative programming (promoting gender equality and challenging harmful norms). This pilot supports learning on the application of Do No Harm in WASH programs, with a focus on understanding and addressing barriers relating to women's participation and empowerment. Violence against Women (VAW) is a specific barrier that is addressed through the IWDA DNH toolkit.

# Methodology

The pilot took place from 15th July until 31st August. It included the following components:

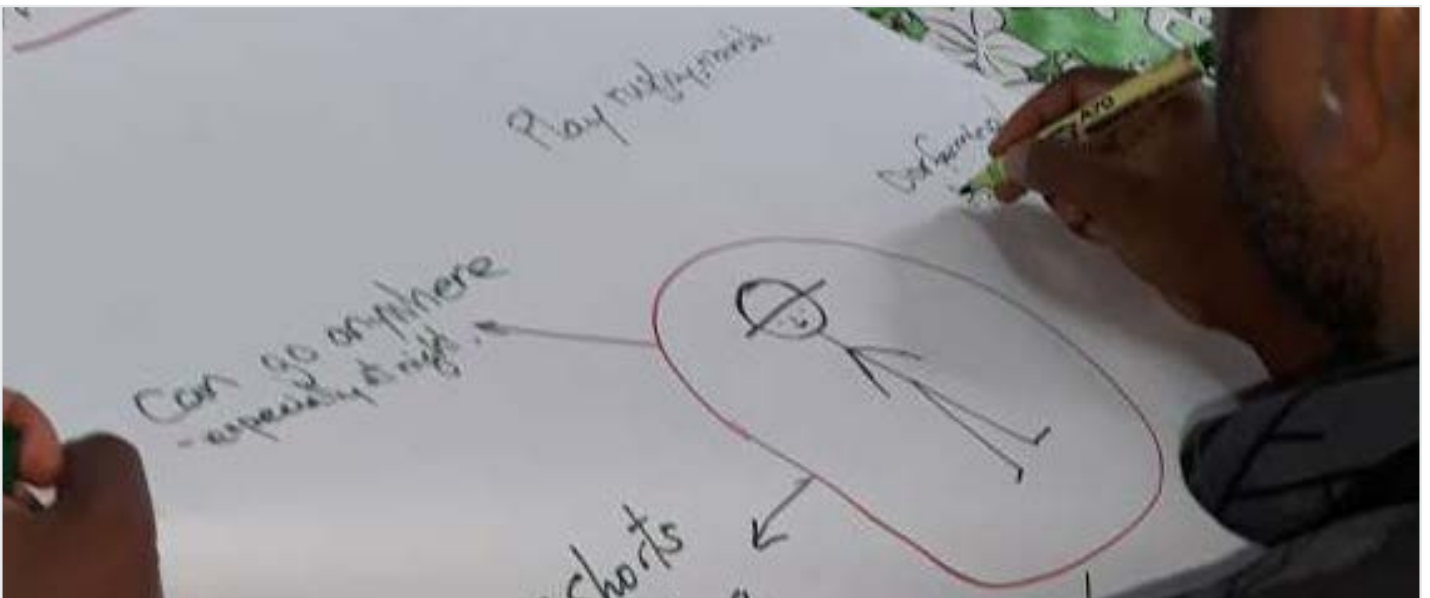
**A five-day training** for 12 staff in (1) gender and VAW sensitization led by facilitators from the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC), and (2) the relevant tools in IWDA's DNH toolkit, led by Tess Walsh (consultant and author of the toolkit).

**A one-week field trial** that was conducted simultaneously in two target project communities

**A two-day reflections/lessons learned workshop** with Habitat staff pilot participants.



Women's discussion on benefits and challenges in participating in WASH training and WASH committees



Habitat staff member reflecting on male privileges

# Overarching outcomes of the pilot

## Four overarching outcomes from the pilot were:

### 1. Transformative organisation

The prevalence of VAW in Fiji is high, with the FWCC reporting that 64% of women who have been in intimate relationships have experienced physical or sexual violence from their partner. Furthermore, domestic violence (DV) is considered a taboo topic in Fiji. Most of the HFHF staff reported that the training was an 'intense' process, and referred to the learning as an "eye opener".

The pilot process enabled the HFHF staff to sensitise themselves to the issues and impacts of gender inequality and gender-based violence, reflect on how these impact on women's participation in their WASH project, and understand how this can increase if a DNH lens is not applied to support women's participation.

The importance of developing this transformative thinking at the organisational level cannot be underestimated for supporting transformative change at the community level. Many HFHF staff mentioned that the journey starts with themselves, so that they can support positive change in the communities in which they work.

**"Trying to have the correct perception myself before I go into the community. Everything starts with me".**

Female staff member

**"When it comes to privilege, some women do not have their say when it comes to decision-making. We need to work on ourselves before we go into the communities"**

FWCC Facilitator

### 2. Partnership with a VAW Organisation

IWDA's Do No Harm toolkit emphasises the critical importance of partnering with experienced VAW service providers, who bring expertise in rights-based approaches to violence response and prevention.

The process reflected a high level of commitment and recognition from HFHF staff of the value that FWCC brings to their work in community WASH. HFHF staff indicated their enthusiasm to explore an ongoing partnership with FWCC.

**"Before I used to look down at FWCC. Now I understand how important they are for women and men, and what we can do as men to change."**

Male staff member

At the reflections workshop, staff acknowledged VAW as a specialist area in which they need further support from FWCC in developing their understanding. In their evaluations, HFHF staff consistently referred to the usefulness of FWCC's referral pathways for identifying and supporting women who might be at risk in the community.

**"[I can] try and be more aware of those women participants who might be going through DV and give suggestions on referral pathways"**

Male staff member

### 3. Applying a Do No Harm lens

FWCC played a key role in sensitising staff about gendered issues and inequalities, which provided the 'why' for staff to actively support women's participation in WASH. This is an essential precursor for Do No Harm.

IWDA's DNH toolkit provided the 'how' for staff to support women's participation and empowerment in contextually appropriate ways, with women's safety at the forefront in planning. The two tools selected for application with the community were: creating women only spaces for discussion and carrying out a gender and power analysis with both men and women (in separate groups).

Both these simple tools helped the HFHF facilitators (and the community members) to gauge the level of support for women's participation in the community from women's and men's perspectives. The HFHF staff facilitators commented that the results from this process has helped them to be more mindful of the quality of women's participation, and to reflect more on strategies that focus on engaging men to be supportive of women's participation.

Through the process of engaging with FWCC, HFHF identified other contextually appropriate ways to implement a Do No Harm lens in their community engagement (see below).

**"DNH is vital to be incorporated into programs: GBV and VAW and DNH into WASH brings about gender transformative WASH."**

Female staff member



## 4. Ongoing capacity development of different stakeholders

HFHF expressed the need for ongoing dialogue about VAW and Do No Harm with different project stakeholders, including capacity building of WASH partners, and engaging with other rightsholder organisations, such as DPOs and organisations representing people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and expression (SOGIE). Again, this reflects the level of meaningful engagement with FWCC, as they are able to see how important the training has been for them, and they are enthusiastic to take this work forward both for the Water for Women project, but also more broadly.

### More specific outcomes at the organisational level

A deeper understanding of gender inequality issues and impacts of violence against women has led to HFHF expressing the need to develop organisational policies for domestic violence and sexual harassment, as well as for staff debriefs after community visits.

At the reflections workshop, staff identified the following DNH strategies that support gender transformative programming in WASH, some of which they acknowledge the need for further capacity development with FWCC and other rightsholder organisations:

- ▶ Engage with community leaders and men in supporting women's empowerment
- ▶ Identify community 'influencers' for positive role modelling and messaging
- ▶ Provide violence referral information for women perceived to be at risk
- ▶ Facilitate sex separate focus group discussions
- ▶ Facilitate Gender and power analysis of men's support for women's participation
- ▶ Develop Behaviour Change WASH materials, that challenge gender norms, through promoting men in care roles and women in non-traditional roles
- ▶ Explore opportunities for promoting gender equality and respectfully challenging gender norms in formal and informal spaces (eg. kava sessions)
- ▶ Strengthen monitoring for measuring the quality of women's participation and men's support for women's participation
- ▶ Strengthen disability and SOGIE inclusion in Do No Harm programming



Men's group discussion on benefits, challenges and solutions for women participating in WASH activities

### More specific outcomes at the community level

Preliminary observations by HFHF staff included:

- ▶ Men showed positive engagement in supporting women's participation: female plumbers' course and female representation on the WASH committee

**"I will try to take it up to the community leader and give my support to the two women chosen for the FNU plumber's course and I will also request if these two women can be part of the water committee as well."**

WASH Committee Head, Nacula

**"I appreciate the thought and proposal to have women taught about plumbing"**

Male community member, Nativi

- ▶ Women and men were more aware of women's workloads, and what this means for women's participation in WASH activities. Men appeared to be open to being more involved in care roles and women being supported to potentially be in non-traditional/leadership roles.

**"[I have learned to] help my wife, family and community by doing what I normally think they could do"**

Male community member, Nacula

**“It has given me encouragement that I can do both the responsibilities of men and women”**

**Female community member, Nacula**

- ▶ Women and men were more aware of domestic violence as a community problem.

**“[I learned about] how we can assist with people suffering with DV in our community”**

**Female community member, Nativi**

**“I have learned about the poor attitude of the community towards violence against women and it is important that we should look for ways to solve this immense issue.”**

**Male community leader, Nacula**

- ▶ There was increased community knowledge of referral pathways for support.
- ▶ Women expressed strong enthusiasm to be candidates for the plumbers’ course, or supporting other women to be candidates if they were unsuccessful for selection. They understood that the selected women would bring back their learning to benefit other women.
- ▶ Two male leaders reported that they had decided to miss church, so that they could sit with their families and discuss the “enlightening” messages from the workshop.
- ▶ Women were able to speak more freely in women only groups, but it is still important to be aware of the hierarchy of young and older women, and whose voice is given more weight.



Mixed group discussion in Nacula community

## Next Steps (Habitat)

The team agreed on the following priority actions to take forward:

1. Explore a more intentional partnership with FWCC for gender/VAW sensitisation of WASH implementing partners
2. Support further capacity building and reflection opportunities for HFHF and WASH implementing partners on gender equality, VAW, Do No Harm approaches, and inclusion of disability and SOGIE issues
3. Develop WASH behaviour change materials that challenge gender norms: men in care roles and women in non-traditional/leadership roles
4. Strengthen their Community WASH training package, by integrating a Do No Harm lens

There were also practical actions identified (which do not require any additional resourcing), such as:

- ▶ Being more conscious about using women only and men only spaces during community workshops
- ▶ Ensuring that there are women and men facilitating community WASH training processes
- ▶ Sharing messages of gender equality and against VAW as part of the project work
- ▶ Promoting messages /actions that reduce women’s work and increase the work done by men
- ▶ Taking referral information from FWCC to share informally in the community

## Reflections for wider learning

The following have applicability for wider learning:

### Transformative organisations

The pilot highlighted the importance of staff being given the opportunity to delve deeper in their critical thinking and reflection. That is shifting their focus from a ‘business as usual’ model to understand the gendered realities in the communities where they work, and their role in supporting positive and safe change. They acknowledge that this is ongoing work that needs to happen at the personal level. But the organisation plays an important role in personal and systemic change, by creating an enabling culture of transformative thinking. This requires ongoing investment in capacity building of staff and in developing inclusive organisational policies (domestic violence, sexual harassment, disability inclusion etc).

**“I was taught or learned at home that only males are given a lot of privileges than females. These privileges were then taken into my marriage. I am glad that this was brought up as it might be something that is pulling our relationship back”.**

**Male staff member**



“The privilege the man and woman each have. How man have more favour than woman, more freedom. Woman have freedom but have limits or not at all. Men always have/ receive good things and the left over are given to women”.

Female staff

### Partnership with rightsholder organisations

The meaningful engagement of FWCC in facilitating staff learning on gender and VAW at a deeper level was a key feature of the pilot. It was about understanding the value of the specialist expertise of the rightsholder organisation and how this expertise has the potential to improve WASH processes and outcomes. But the partnership must have a reciprocal arrangement of benefit. At the reflections workshop, the FWCC facilitator commented that it would have been good to have a “crash course” on WASH issues beforehand, and this would have led to a more integrated training for staff.

### Planning and more planning

Related to the above point, the effective integration of Do No Harm into WASH (in this case, on VAW issues) depends on the two-way engagement between the rightsholder and WASH organisations. It is not just about the WASH organisation receiving capacity building support from the rightsholder organisation, but it is also the rightsholder organisation which benefits from capacity building support on WASH issues. This requires resourcing and planning investments.

### Culturally relevant messaging

Culture and religion are critical to community norms and practices, and can be used as an excuse when VAW occurs or when women try to access support and services. Being able to address issues of culture and religion as both barriers and enablers to women’s rights and agency is necessary and requires time. The FWCC facilitators were skilled at this from years of experience, and HFHF staff also indicated the need to work with progressive faith-based organisations to develop inclusive messaging that is culturally relevant.

### Monitoring of Do No Harm

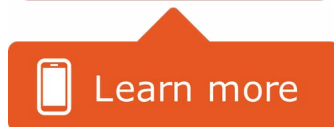
A strong theme coming out of the pilot was the need to strengthen monitoring processes which can capture the quality of women’s participation, and this is not just in terms of how they are participating in WASH activities. Monitoring with a Do No Harm lens means that this is broadened out to include the level of men’s support for women’s participation, which is integral to women’s agency and wellbeing. This will also help the WASH project and staff to be alert and respond to any unintended consequences related to resistance and backlash, as a result of women’s increased participation.



Habitat staff and women in Nacula Community

Access the Water for Women Towards Transformation Strategy

Watch the Do No harm Pilot'



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