

EVENT SNAPSHOT

EVENT DETAILS

Inclusive WASH Workplaces in the Pacific

8 June 2022

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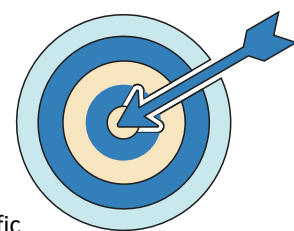
Research Director

Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of
Technology Sydney (UTS)Event recording and resources are available [here](#).

Access to water and sanitation services is vital for everyone, but parts of our communities need special consideration. Although women and girls are primarily responsible for domestic work relating to WASH, less than one in five people working for water utilities in the Pacific are women. Most are in administrative and management positions, with just 14% working as engineers. One-third of Pacific water utilities have no female engineers at all.

Webinar Overview

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is actively supporting water utilities in the Pacific to improve the inclusion of women and marginalized groups in the workplace. In June 2022, ADB, in association with the Pacific Water and Wastewater Association (PWWA) and the University of Technology Sydney's Institute for Sustainable Futures, hosted an online discussion about gender and social inclusion in the workplace, highlighting case studies from Fiji and Solomon Islands. The event was attended by approximately 50 participants from 11 Pacific countries, including representatives from five Pacific water utilities.

**The webinar explored several key topics:**

- Practical strategies that have been adopted by Pacific water utilities to promote gender equality
- How water utilities measure improvements in gender equality
- Benefits to utility operations and productivity from increasing workforce diversity
- Workplace conditions that support women to achieve their potential in the workplace
- Case studies from Fiji and Solomon Islands on practical measures being taken to address gender equality.



Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) is aiming to increase the number of women filling technical roles. (Photo: WAF.)

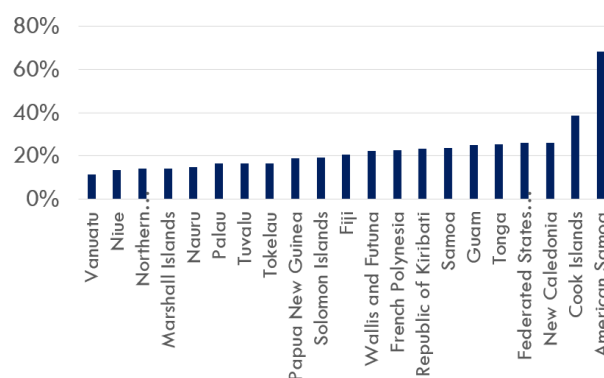
The webinar featured the UTS Sustainable Futures *Inclusive WASH Workplaces* Interactive Database offering practical workplace gender inclusive strategies. The database can be accessed [here](#).

New data from PWWA's 2020 Benchmarking Survey shows that gender equality has improved in Pacific water utilities in recent years. The latest benchmarking data from 2020 shows 22% female staff in Pacific utilities, a seven percentage point increase since the first survey (2015).

Another positive improvement is in the number of women working in technical and high-level positions in Pacific water utilities. As of 2020, 14% of female employees were working as engineers, while another 20% worked in senior administrative roles.

However, challenges remain. Women still have limited representation in senior leadership and technical roles, no PWWA utilities have dedicated lactation rooms, and only 25% provide paternity leave.

Percentage of female staff per country



Percentage of female utility employees across Pacific water utilities. (Source: PWWA 2020 Benchmarking Survey).

Case study: Water Authority of Fiji

With targets defined in a Gender Action Plan, WAF is progressively increasing its female workforce, now at 14% and up 3% since 2019. As of mid-2022, WAF also has three female engineers, with a target of recruiting another 12; it has two female executives; and one female board member. These achievements have been facilitated through the work of a dedicated eight-member Gender Taskforce, who has been developing and implementing policies to ensure better female representation. WAF's current gender equality aims include 30% of new roles being earmarked for women; increased promotion for women in higher-skill and technical roles; and sufficient funding allocation for gender mainstreaming initiatives across the utility.

Case study: Solomon Water

Since 2017, Solomon Water has been implementing their new policy on a positive work culture, the *Solomon Water Way*. A key part of the policy aims to improve gender equality in the workplace. Results are encouraging, with women now making up 22% of Solomon Water employees (up 1% since 2017), representing 50 out of 228 staff, including 12 women in leadership roles, eight in technical roles, and 42 in administrative roles. Solomon Water has now developed its first Gender Action Plan with the objective to increase job opportunities for women in traditionally male roles, and provide training on gender equality and gender-based violence. Solomon Water also requires all customer surveys to include at least 50% female respondents.

Learning Snapshots

- "In Fiji, women value water more than men." – Manasa Tusulu, WAF. In many communities, women can provide different perspectives on WASH challenges and potential solutions. Women's personal experiences often differ from men's, often due to socio-cultural norms and gender roles. By including more women at all levels in WASH workplaces, their perspectives provide different – and valuable – insights.
- Collecting disaggregated indicator data for benchmarking and monitoring progress is key to achieving gender equality. Without data, WASH workplaces cannot measure how they are performing on equality and inclusion, nor can they easily determine what other steps can be taken. Initiatives such as PWWA's annual benchmarking use clear indicators to measure progress, making results easy to understand and spurring significant workplace change.

Upcoming Events



To register your interest in attending upcoming events please contact: lfernando@adb.org.

Past ADB Pacific WASH webinars can be accessed here: [Pacific WASH Webinars](#)

ADB continues to support government and water service providers in the region to build resilience, capacity and knowledge to manage threats in our changing world.