

\$18.7M

IN GRANTS GIVEN
TO WATER AND
SANITATION
PROJECTS

PICTURED:
Thanks to a
community-
led pilot
project,
Bundrou
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NOT JUST A TOILET

In 2017, non-government organisation Wantaim PNG joined forces with the Rotary Club of Manly, NSW, and the Rotary Club of Boroko, PNG, to address poor sanitation on Bundrou Island in the Manus Province of northern PNG.

Armed with a global grant, and with the help of two Australian volunteers, Richard Vaughan and Des Wirges, work began on a community-led pilot to teach teams of elders to install Clivus Multrum CM40 composting toilet units.

Using natural materials to minimise maintenance costs and showcase traditional skills and crafts, the first double block for women took five days to complete. A train-the-trainer approach then brought in the involvement of young men, who worked under teams led by village elders.

"This is culturally appropriate training, it's the way young men in PNG have typically learnt; working alongside the older men who pass down traditional skills and knowledge, >

COVER STORY

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World Toilet Day 2019: Leaving no one behind

World Toilet Day, celebrated on November 19 every year, is about inspiring action to tackle the global sanitation crisis and help achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6, which promises sanitation for all by 2030.

Established by the World Toilet Organisation in 2001, World Toilet Day was made an official UN day in 2013. UN-Water leads a taskforce of international agencies to campaign around a common theme.

The theme of World Toilet Day 2019 is "Leaving no one behind", which is the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This year, the aim is to show that a toilet is not just a toilet; it's a lifesaver, dignity-protector and opportunity-maker.

< while also cementing relationships and building respect," Wantaim PNG founder Lynne Shori said.

Over a three-week period, three double, community-sized toilets were built by these teams, delivering safe, hygienic sanitation to the 150 women and girls in the three villages on Bundrou Island and giving young men the chance to learn valuable skills, which would be used to generate incomes and improve their livelihoods.

This first phase of the project delivered invaluable learning, which was incorporated into the next phase; the building of the men's toilet blocks. Today, all three villages have both men's and women's toilet blocks putting Bundrou on track to be the first island in Manus that is 100 per cent open defecation free.

But Lynne sees the benefits being far broader than health impacts alone.

"We're seeing young men reconnect with elders over the transferral of new skills and re-learning near-lost crafts like bamboo weaving. If the Government of PNG's goal of increased self-reliance is to be achieved, opportunities like this that help re-unite communities are critical."

Another unexpected benefit was the positive impact on social harmony. Mothers in particular expressed relief that night-time nature calls no longer take young girls on unlit walks to the edge of the village. Meanwhile, the elderly and less abled members of the community are enjoying the amenity of sensor solar lights in the toilet blocks and the comforts of the pedestal. These days, a visit to the toilet on Bundrou Island has become a time for relaxation and contemplation.

The main concern at the outset of the project – that the toilets would smell – has long since been overcome.

"With proper training in how to use these toilets, and with the solar fan and wind-operated whirly bird accelerating the drying process, dry composting toilets don't smell. Our pilot communities have seen this and as a result we saw adaptation quickly reach 60 per cent and continue to rise," Lynne said.

With the support of two MPs, Wantaim PNG is now seeking funding to test the scalability of its train-the-trainer approach by expanding the pilot from 320 people to 4400 people.

"If this next phase is successful, our

Grassroots Power

Off the back of Wantaim PNG's initial work, Ecoflo management made the decision to commence production of the Clivus Multrum toilets in PNG. The first PNG-made Clivus Multrum composting toilet rolled off a Lae production line in August, setting the scene for future job growth and deepening PNG's nascent private sector.

Rarely do we hear of rural communities in PNG driving private sector growth.

The communities of Popeu, Loamat and Bundrou are punching above their weight, delivering urgently needed services themselves, proving the real power of grassroots engagement and inspiring us all.

These communities have done their part. With Wantaim PNG's support, they are seeking funding to prove this model is scalable to the local level government. Let's wish them well.

three pilot villages of Popeu, Loamat and Bundrou will have made a major contribution to helping close PNG's sanitation gap and improving health outcomes," Lynne said. "They will also have improved law and order, helped keep young girls in school, protected the environment, delivered a nutrient-rich material to support climate adaptation plantings and food security, and inspired young men to step into leadership roles.

"These are all major challenges for communities across PNG, and this pilot addresses each one."

But what excites Lynne the most is the tangible demonstration this pilot provides to communities themselves.

"This demonstrates how powerful communities can be when they work together. This pilot is about grassroots governance in action and it's delivering in a major way."

For more information about this project and funding opportunities, contact Lynne via lynne.shori@outlook.com.au.