



3rd Vanuatu Health Research Symposium 26-28 October 2022 Luganville, Santo, Vanuatu

Prevention of Waterborne Disease: Safe Drinking Water

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Abstract

Background: Safe drinking water is key to preventing common diseases such as diarrhea, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis, giardia, dysentery, and stunting. Water quality data from the Department of Water Resources (DoWR) database indicates that more than 60% of water sources are contaminated with E. coli (feces) at source or collection point.

Methods: To improve the quality of drinking water DoWR in collaboration with MoH, UNICEF, Hexagon Specialists and Engineers Without Borders have created a Water Quality Management training for Village Health Workers (VHW). The training covers sources of contamination, water quality monitoring and treatment, communication, and the creation of an action plan for the VHW to provide awareness to communities. The training has been piloted in Sanma province. The aim of this study was to review the training package before it is rolled out to other provinces. At the end of the training participants were asked to fill in a training evaluation form. The results from the survey are presented below.

Results: Most participants strongly agreed that they understood the importance of water quality, know what a Drinking Water Safety and Security Plan is, know ways to treat water and can make awareness on water quality to communities. Participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they understood water quality monitoring, testing and how to create an action plan. These very positive results indicate that the training was well received and of good quality.

Discussion: This training is key to assist health workers and communities to understand the importance of safe drinking water. The training package will be updated following the feedback from participants and after 6 months – 1 year a follow up workshop will be held to understand if the VHW action plans are being implemented in communities to improve health outcomes for all.