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Making Inclusion Meaningful - A new way to improve sanitation and hygiene for people with disabilities in Vanuatu

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Abstract

Background: In 2019 World Vision Vanuatu and key partners conducted a study of more than 56,000 individuals across Sanma and Torba provinces which found that 45% of all households surveyed reported using unhygienic sanitation facilities, with 32% of people with disabilities being unable to use the toilet without their bodies coming into direct contact with urine and faeces. Recognising that people with disabilities are not one homogenous group and toileting solutions cannot therefore be a “one size fits all” approach, an innovative Ventilation-Improved Pit (VIP) Latrine was designed and trialled with 103 people with disability across Sanma province. Additions of ultra-stable, locally built seat-risers, handrails, and ramps focus on improving accessibility, safety, dignity, and hygiene for people with disabilities.

Methods: Following the building of the new Inclusive VIP Latrines, a key-informant interview survey was carried out with a sample of 30% recipients to determine improvements in ease of accessibility, hygiene, safety, and independence for users and their families.

Results: The new innovative latrine design has significantly improved the lives of users with a 65% increase in ease of accessibility, 74% increase in independence and safety through use of seat risers and handrails, and 80% reduction in bodily contact with urine and faeces when using the toilet.

Discussion: A bespoke human-centred approach was utilised that focussed on meaningful dialogue with the person with disability to assess individual barriers to effectively tailor sanitation solutions to promote dignity, safety, and independence. Locally-led and locally-built solutions have resulted in sustainable, significant, positive, and meaningful impacts in the lives of people with disability in Vanuatu including improved well-being and a likely reduction in hygiene related diseases for the rising number of people living with disabilities in Vanuatu.