

PRESS RELEASE

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Water tanks bring new lease of life to Lau island village

Eleven 5,000-litre water tanks have been installed in Keteira village in Moala Island, Lau, providing the community with access to safe drinking water. The project, implemented by local NGO Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF) with support from Canada Fund, has enhanced the every day life of the village women and dramatically improved local education.

Keteira has a population of 110 and is situated on a hilly terrain on the leeward side of Moala Bay. Nine tanks were strategically placed within the village to ensure that each tank is accessible to up to three houses. An additional two tanks were installed at Keteira's Primary School, Uciwai.

The community has struggled to access clean and safe drinking water for a number of years. Recent prolonged dry seasons have made it especially difficult for families to cope.

The local primary school frequently sent many of their twenty-eight students home because they were unable to provide them with drinking water.

With the new water tanks, women can now access safe drinking water from right beside their homes and use the time saved to help their children with their homework.

Village headman Maika Bolatolu was grateful to the assistance provided to his village.

“Women and children were the most affected as they had to walk long distances to reach water sources. The district nurse regularly advised us to boil all drinking water, because the quality of the water before boiling was not very inviting.”

“The education of our children was also affected, as they were sent home when there was no water at the school. We thank PCDF and Canada Fund for making this project happen.”

The village water committee will oversee the maintenance and upkeep of the

tanks and water systems. The committee was established in 2007 and will work with the village on a monthly collection that will cater for the costs of purchasing repair parts for the guttering and tank system. Youth and men that were trained on water management during the installation of the tanks will work with the committee on a regular basis to monitor and maintain the rainwater catchment system.

53 year old villager Mrs. Sera Lakai says the new water tanks will help the community make good use of the rain water. “We didn’t have proper water storage containers and so we had to walk to the creeks or just drink tap water, because boiling water was using up too much of our firewood”

“During the long dry seasons, there is no water in the village taps, so we had to take our laundry, dirty dishes and water bottles to the creeks. This was very hard for us, especially for the older women and we felt the strain on our health.”

“Now we don’t have to worry about drinking water anymore. I can get water from the new tank that is connected to the neighbouring house, which makes everyday life a lot easier for me.”

The project was implemented under PCDF’s ‘Good Governance and Water in Rural Fiji’ initiative. The project provides a stepping stone to Keteira’s sustainable future and it is hoped to help many more communities with similar projects in the future.

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Notes to editors: For more information, interviews or images please call Annie Madden on: Tel.: 3300 392 or email: admin@pcdf.org.fj

Partners in Community Development Fiji
8 Denison Road, Suva, Phone: (679) 3300 392
Email: admin@pcdf.org.fj, Web: www.pcdf.org.fj