



# IWRM in Nauru : an achievement story

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## Raising awareness of water issues through childhood education



AboveL School children supporting IWRM through the WWD activities

Before the implementation of the IWRM project there was nothing about water at the community level and there was nothing about water in the education curriculum. School children never learned about water, its importance, the role of water in the environment or how humans can impact on its quality and quantity.

The project sought to change this because of the newness of the IWRM concept at a national level and at the community level. We thought we may not be able to change the mindset of older generations but we can teach these concepts at schools and allow children to see things differently and learn new information. Through education we hope to provide this information as a platform and let the children act as the carriers of new ideas, taking it to their families and communities.

In the beginning we engaged schools by utilising the international event of World Water Day (WWD) to get the information out and see how effective it would be at reaching the community. The knowledge of water and IWRM is being transferred at the local level using a creative method to deliver and understand this message.

The IWRM Team meets with the Education Department and teachers before each WWD where we direct them to web pages that have good resources for children, introduce them to concepts and provide assistance with understanding the role of water. Mrs Sibila Ika from the infant school said "It is important that our children understand the role of water in our lives and environment, through the WWD events and awareness raising that IWRM does, we can see that they are really starting to learn more about this."

We engaged the infant schools, prep to grade one, and wanted to see how they would interpret this new information and how effective it would be. Initially we gave out themes and had the children make up plays about this theme as part of a competition. In the first year we were surprised at the amount of information they

were able to interpret. As the project has evolved, the activities of WWD is left up to the schools discretion but some activities include song and short story writing, poster designs, plays and community walks. The students and teachers alike now look forward to WWD as a community event, as (student name?) said, "We really look forward to WWD and using the different themes to interpret the role of water".

**"...now that we have a composting toilet, we have learned how our waste can impact on the water."**

At the schools that have compost toilets we have undertaken a lot of awareness about the toilet itself and how to maintain but this is really a conduit to have the discussion about water conservation and how everyone's behaviour can affect the water systems in Nauru. Because the toilet at the infant school is well maintained the children are not fazed at all that it is a new system of sanitation, it has just become the toilet they use and they see no difference with the flushing toilet. "When the IWRM project came to school to talk about the compost toilets we were wondering what this toilet was and how it could be helping with the water in our community. But now that we have a toilet we are learning how our waste can impact on the water", said students from the infant school. To the kids there is no big deal about using and having a compost toilet, it is the same as any other toilet.

I realised that changing the mindset of older generations is difficult, but sharing new knowledge to the younger generation is a great way of building capacity in the community. I have learned that through well planned and ongoing engagement at the schools, we are able to raise the visibility of water issues amongst the whole community.



AboveL School children performing a play, presenting their interpretation of a water theme at the WWD celebrations, 2011