



IWRM in Samoa : an achievement story

By Mayor of Tuifiopa



Lending a helping hand and gaining community support for IWRM



The pond at Tuifiopa after being dammed from debris after Hurrigan Evans



Young community members involded in the clean up to restore fresh water to Tuifiopa families

The Samoa IWRM project has been heavily involved with communities in the Malololelei Catchment completing river clean ups and tree planting activities. I first heard about their work through these activities and our communities involvement in one of the river clean ups.

After hurricane Evans the water pond at Tuifiopa community became blocked up with debris and sediment and was acting as a dam causing flooding around the community. The swimming pond had become too dirty and turbid for people to use for washing or recreation.

We initially approached the hurricane relief organisation that told us that we would need a bulldozer to come in and clear the area and that it would be expensive and eventually seen to. We couldn't wait any longer and so decided to approach the IWRM Project. We had some reservations about approaching them as there is usually a lot of "red tape" involved when asking as a community for assistance from a government department.

The IWRM team also thought initially that it would require a bulldozer to clear however because of the cost and time involved they came and discussed options with the community and we decided on clearing it away by hand. Because of the experience the IWRM team has in engaging the community the process was smoother and we reached an agreement quite quickly. The IWRM Team engaged the whole community,

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from young teenagers to elderly; each was given \$20 a day to help. There was about a 300m long riverway that had created a dam from the debris and mud that had washed down after the hurricane. People were asked to clear 5m of mud each day, this took 4 days with about 20 people helping each day.

Imagine it, all those hands cleaned that area and I was thinking that only a machine could clean it up. I was pleasantly surprised that our community had the ability to move so much dirt and debris and the job was performed by our people and not machines, saving a lot of money in the process. The pond is now clear again and people can use the water for washing and swimming and the community is no longer flooded.

I was happy with the approach that IWRM took in helping us and was extremely impressed with the project's efficiency to initiate the work within a couple of weeks of our first talks. Otherwise we would have had to wait many months. Because of the approach that the IWRM Project takes when consulting and working with communities, I now have a greater confidence in government organisations that when we speak they will listen.

I am now very vocal about the work of the IWRM project and what they are trying to achieve in the area and will continue to work with them to promote IWRM and the importance of looking after our watershed.