

FIJI RAINWATER HARVESTING INITIATIVE

Prior to New Bayou | Community Project Leader |
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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Led 9-month water infrastructure project installing 12 rainwater harvesting systems across remote Fijian island villages, delivering 89,200 liters of potable water capacity to communities without reliable access to clean water. Managed cross-cultural team of 115 international volunteers, coordinated multinational supply chains, and facilitated community engagement to ensure culturally appropriate, sustainable implementation.

CHALLENGE

Remote island villages in Fiji's Yasawa chain lacked access to potable water—only nearby resorts had reliable water sources. Successful implementation required navigating complex cultural protocols, building trust with village leadership, managing volunteers from 15+ countries with no construction or cultural competency training, and coordinating multinational supply chains under challenging field conditions—limited electricity and communication infrastructure, remote island logistics requiring boat transport, import regulations across Australian suppliers and Fijian vendors, and budget management across multiple currencies.

APPROACH

Community-Centered Design & Cultural Navigation: Embedded with village communities to co-create solutions that honored both technical requirements and cultural protocols.

APPROACH (CONT.)

...Facilitated decision-making with village chiefs and leaders on site selection, balancing structural feasibility (roof integrity, catchment area) with cultural considerations (family status, community roles, traditional hierarchies). Negotiated project parameters with local and national Fijian officials while maintaining community ownership of key decisions.



Cross-Cultural Capacity Building: Trained 115 international volunteers with no construction or cultural competency on rainwater harvesting techniques, cultural protocols, emergency management, and adaptation to rural life without electricity or running water. Sustained team morale and operations (food procurement, supply management, base maintenance) under challenging field conditions.

Sustainable Knowledge Transfer: Ensured long-term project success by training community members on WASH protocols and system maintenance, creating local ownership and technical capacity for ongoing operations without external support. Documented outcomes for organizational learning and accountability.

WHAT THIS DEMONSTRATES

This project demonstrates New Bayou's approach to community engagement: building cross-cultural trust, honoring local context, and creating sustainable outcomes through capacity-building rather than dependency. The systems remain operational over a decade later because communities owned the process from day one. This approach to coordinating complex projects while maintaining community trust means solutions are more likely to be implemented and sustained, not abandoned.

OUTCOMES

- 89,200 liters of potable water capacity installed across 12 systems in 5 villages
- Systems remain operational over a decade later due to community ownership and locally-sustained maintenance
- 115 volunteers trained in construction techniques and cross-cultural engagement
- Sustainable infrastructure and community ownership established through culturally appropriate decision-making that honored social hierarchies, enabling long-term management without external support



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