



FoodWISE Asia Pacific Regional Meeting

17–19 September 2025
| Sydney, Australia



Executive summary

The FoodWISE Asia Pacific Workshop, co-hosted by Professors Jacqui Webster (University of Technology Sydney, Australia), Greg Leslie (University of New South Wales, Australia), and Sera Young (Northwestern University, United States of America), brought together a diverse group of leaders, researchers, and community advocates, from more than fifteen countries, to tackle the urgent and interconnected challenges of food and water security in the region. The event opened with a Welcome Reception, featuring remarks from Professor Kate McGrath, Deputy Vice Chancellor UTS and Professor Cheryl Jones, Dean of Medicine and Health, UNSW. A musical performance by guest speaker Ego Lemos from Timor-Leste, underscored the shared commitment to addressing climate change and health through collective action.

Day one began with a moving Welcome to Country by Michael West from the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council, followed by reflections from the hosts on the importance of integrated, community-led approaches. With half of the world's food-insecure population living in the Asia Pacific, participants explored the pressing need to address food and water insecurity in the context of the escalating climate and health crisis. Speakers emphasized the critical role of Indigenous knowledge, gender equity, and cross-sector collaboration in developing effective, sustainable solutions.

Presentations showcased the value of experiential measurement tools such as the Water Insecurity Experiences Scales (WISE), which capture lived realities and inform action in communities like Walgett (Australia), Timor-Leste, and the Philippines. These tools are being used to support gender-transformative approaches and generate policy-relevant data.

Discussions also highlighted opportunities for greater regional collaboration, laying the groundwork for the FoodWISE Asia Pacific Network. To catalyse further action, the hosts committed to funding four seed grant initiatives proposed during the workshop. These initiatives—spanning Southeast Asia, Australia, Timor-Leste, and the Pacific—aim to scale community-led solutions and strengthen regional coordination.

On the final day, participants co-developed a draft mission statement for the Network and contributed to a joint review paper on experiential measures of food and water insecurity. Key themes included the need to address food and water security in tandem, the power of lived experience data, and the centrality of Indigenous knowledge, community leadership, and multi-sectoral engagement. Next steps include finalising the mission statement, launching a website and newsletter, publishing the review paper, funding seed grants, and advocating for the integration of experiential tools and holistic approaches into national and regional frameworks.

The launch of the FoodWISE Asia Pacific Network is both timely and vital. As climate change intensifies threats to food and water systems, the region faces mounting challenges that demand co-ordinated, inclusive and evidence based responses. This network of researchers, practitioners and policy makers offers a powerful platform for collaboration, grounded in community leadership and informed by lived experience, to drive transformative, climate-resilient solutions that promote equity and sustainability across the region.



DAY 1: Welcome Reception

Wednesday, 17 September | 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM

Professor Jacqui Webster

(University of Technology Sydney, UTS) hosted the evening of introductions, which included a series of powerful opening addresses that set the tone for the main day event and writing workshop ahead.



Professor Kate McGrath

Deputy Vice Chancellor, UTS welcomed delegates to the meeting and expressed pride in hosting such a timely and important event and extended a heartfelt thanks to everyone

for coming.

She emphasised that food and water security are not just technical issues, but deeply social, cultural, and political, and highlighted UTS's commitment to climate resilience and community-led change including in responding to these issues. Kate highlighted that if we only focus on addressing crises, we just keep having more crises: "This is a very challenging topic, but a very important one. Without this work, in 20 years, all hell will have broken loose beyond anything we experienced during the pandemic."

She celebrated the diversity of attendees and the importance of long-term partnerships:

"Innovations in food and water security don't happen in isolation. They require years of collaboration. Communities bring deep insight and local knowledge; researchers bring technical expertise. The weaving together of these strengths creates real impact."

Kate urged participants to reflect on their partnerships: "Who are we working with, and who are we working for? Are we listening properly? Are we building relationships that will last beyond the life of a grant?" She concluded with commendation for the communities that are leading change, not just for the duration of the project but for the long haul.



Professor Kate McGrath provided the opening address welcoming delegates to the event



The inaugural foodWISE meeting was co-convened by Professor Greg Leslie (Director of UNSW Global Water Institute), Professor Jacqui Webster (WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development, UTS) and Professor Sera Young (Creator of the WISE scales Northwestern University)



DAY 1: Welcome Reception

Wednesday, 17 September | 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM



Professor Cheryl Jones
Dean of Medicine and Health, University of NSW (UNSW) – also reinforced the urgency of the workshop's focus: "Food and water are foundational to health and

well-being. But they are increasingly under threat from climate change, inequity, and growing system pressures."

She called for interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement: "To tackle some of the most complex problems we have, we need to bring together all disciplines, communities, and partners. We can't address these problems in silos." She noted that solutions must extend beyond hospitals and into communities, citing examples from Indigenous-led work in Australia and Timor-Leste: "When we learn, listen, and act in support of communities, we see real impact and change." She concluded: "This is the beginning of a shared journey to achieve food and water security solutions that are inclusive, just, and sustainable."

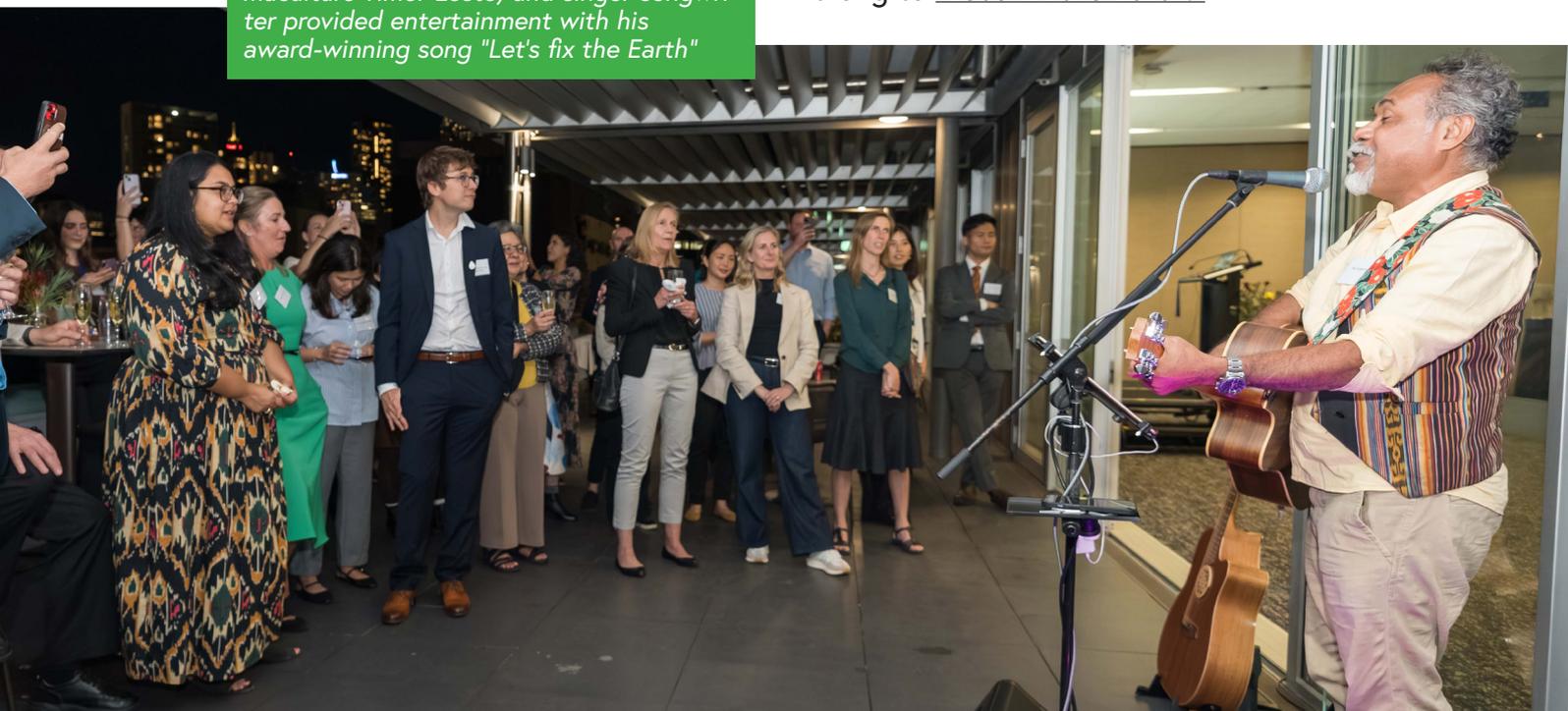


Professor Sera Young
Northwestern University, USA – shared a series of personal photos to illustrate how the idea for the workshop was conceived – over coffee and later wine – with

co-organiser Jacqui Webster, drawing from an analogous network she co-founded for Latin America and the Caribbean. She described networks as "life-giving," because: "We as humans are at our best when we can talk face-to-face about the things we care about." She outlined the workshop's objectives: To convene leaders across sectors; share experiences and best practices; develop actionable recommendations; establish the FoodWISE Asia Pacific Network; and support sustainable, community-led solutions.

Professor Jacqui Webster concluded that the top reason people gave for attending the meeting was networking and collaboration, encouraging everyone to make the most of their time to connect over food. A highlight of the evening was a performance by award-winning singer-songwriter and Permatil CEO Ego Lemmos, during which attendees sang along to "Let's fix the Earth!"

Eugenio (Ego) Lemos, CEO of Permatil (Permaculture Timor-Leste) and singer-songwriter provided entertainment with his award-winning song "Let's fix the Earth"





DAY 2: Main Workshop Sessions

Thursday, 18 September | 8:30 AM – 5:50 PM

The morning began with an informative and audience-engaging Welcome to Country by



Michael West
Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council, an Aboriginal man of the Gamilaroi Nation and member of the Stolen Generations, who was born, raised, and has lived his whole life in Sydney.



Professor Jacqui Webster opened with a reflection on her personal journey to food and water security. Jacqui shared how her work in salt reduction led her back to food and water security through an invitation from Walgett Aboriginal community organisations to address salty drinking water.

Jacqui noted:

"Half of the world's food-insecure population lives in the Asia Pacific region. This meeting is about urgency."

She highlighted the timeliness of the meeting, both globally in relation to UN conversations on non-communicable diseases, and in Australia, with the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data showing 13% of Australians are food insecure and one-quarter of low-income households, and with a national food strategy currently being developed.

She highlighted the need to consider food and water security in tandem, expressing a desire that everyone working on food leave the meeting thinking about water, and everyone working on water leave thinking about food.



Professor Greg Leslie (UNSW) reflected on his engineering background and how this led to past and ongoing water security endeavours in Timor-Leste, Australia (particularly Walgett and Bourke), and, more recently, Kiribati.

He described how productive these efforts were when working with a diverse network of people, noting:

"If you try to deal with problems in silos, you just create more problems."

Greg described the benefits of working with collaborators who were experts in food, permaculture, and Indigenous knowledge.



Director of the George Institute Guunu-maana ('Heal') program and proud Torres Strait Islander women, Ms Keziah Bennet-Brook, encouraged attendees to consider the needs of First Nations peoples when partnering with communities to develop solutions.



DAY 2 Session 1: Why Address Food and Water Security Now? 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM

Professor Greg Leslie (UNSW)

chaired Session 1, introducing speakers who discussed the urgency of addressing food and water insecurity through both scientific and community-led approaches — with a strong emphasis on Indigenous leadership, lived experience, and cross-sector collaboration.



Dr Ingrid Van Putten

Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) outlined the work of ACIAR since 1982 in tackling agricultural challenges through over 1,500

projects across 35 countries, mainly in Asia and Africa. She highlighted how ACIAR prioritises projects based on in-country needs and potential impact, with food and water security key priority areas. All new initiatives integrate gender equality, climate action, and community-led approaches.

Ingrid highlighted that

"technical data is important, but the human dimensions are equally important,"

emphasising the value of capturing lived experiences to understand community needs. She described key projects including salinity management in Pakistan, fish passages in the Mekong, and integrated water solutions in Timor-Leste. She described the projects as responsive to local priorities, co-designed with local researchers, multi-disciplinary, multi-level capacity building, building towards enduring community capacity, and based on rigorous science. Ingrid described how ACIAR also supports Indigenous collaborations, such as linking communities in Northern Australia, Fiji, and Timor-Leste to protect traditional foods, and with plans to expand this work.



Ms Keziah Bennett-Brook

The George Institute (TGI), Australia delivered a powerful presentation on Indigenous-led research. She introduced the George Institute's Guunu-maana

('Heal') model – grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, led by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to generate knowledge that privileges First peoples. She spoke about the importance of partnering with communities, building capacity among First Nations people, and carving a space within Western institutions for decolonised research. She described her team as working within an Indigenous research paradigm that centres holistic determinants of wellbeing – encompassing body, mind, family, Country, community, spirituality, and political and historical context. Kez challenged the audience to rethink conventional ideas, asking:

"What is research, who does it serve, and what actually constitutes robust evidence for First Nations people,"

asserting that people's stories and lived experiences should be equally valued forms of evidence.

Kez outlined her team's current work on the Resist NCD project in Fiji and PNG, which is addressing food and water insecurity and climate change impacts. Still in the early stages, Kez described a current focus on building trust, identifying interested communities, holding forums to determine priorities, and working from the bottom up to identify community priorities and address upstream determinants. She emphasised that for Indigenous communities, food and water are not just commodities – they are deeply tied to identity, spirituality, health, sovereignty, and land rights. Failure to recognise this can reinforce colonial legacies and undermine trust. Her message was clear: when Indigenous communities lead, outcomes are more meaningful, scalable, and culturally relevant. Kez encouraged non-Indigenous allies to push back on unrealistic timelines and highlighted the importance of trust-building and reciprocity.



DAY 2 Session 1: Why Address Food and Water Security Now? 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM



Dr Indira Bose
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), United Kingdom shared insights from her work with the World Food Programme, where her experience in Asia

revealed the importance of integrating water into efforts to achieve SDG2, Zero Hunger. She noted:

"I realised that you can't achieve zero hunger without addressing water – the interconnectedness is too deep."

She described the multiple pathways between food and water, with water being essential not only for food production but also for cooking, cleaning, and influencing food choices. Lack of access to water can reduce time for income generation or education, and force people to spend money treating or buying water, limiting resources to purchase food. Water also plays a role in reducing disease and malnutrition. "Yet, sectors still work in silos – agriculture focuses on productivity, water departments concentrate on infrastructural access and quality, and health sectors on access to services – leading to conflicting priorities and resource challenges," she said. She called for diverse sectors to work together to address the current polycrisis – of conflict, climate disasters, pandemics, and economic shocks – which together are amplifying food and water insecurity in the region.

Audience members further highlighted the need for coordination in food and water security solutions. **Dr Mou Sarker (Bangladesh)** described how 35 departments in Bangladesh work on water without any mechanism for collaboration, and others noted similar issues in nutrition. **Mr Eugenio Lemos (Timor-Leste)** shared experiences from Timor-Leste, where imported foods disrupted a previously secure, seasonal food system. Indira emphasised that food sovereignty

includes cultural and traditional food preferences, not just meeting dietary needs. **Dr Nicola Nelson (Australian Water Association)** raised concerns about using drinking water for agriculture, prompting discussion on "fit-for-purpose" water. Sera noted that measuring people's experiences helps capture whether water and food are not only safe but also acceptable to users. **Hon Dr Harsha de Silva (Sri Lanka)** raised concerns about rising kidney disease in rural parts of Sri Lanka potentially linked to groundwater, highlighting the need to coordinate drinking water experiences with health data. There was a shared feeling of urgency to prioritise these interconnected challenges for a liveable planet.



Dr Indira Bose called on diverse sectors to work together on food and water security



Honorable Dr Harsha de Silva, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Public Finance (CoPF) of Sri Lanka, raised concerns about water quality and disease rates.



DAY 2 Session 2: Measuring Food and Water Insecurity Experientially 11 AM – 12.30 PM

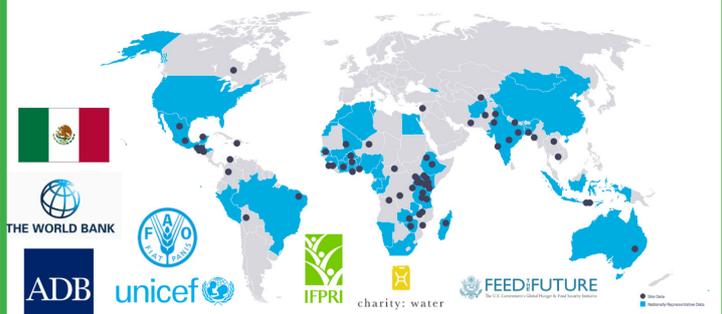
[Professor Jacqui Webster](#) chaired Session 2, with speakers showcasing how tools like the WISE scales are being used to capture lived experiences of food and water insecurity — enabling global comparisons, empowering Indigenous and community voices, and generating evidence that is both scientifically rigorous and locally relevant.

[Professor Sera Young](#) [Northwestern University, USA](#) introduced the [Water InSecurity Experiences \(WISE\) Scales](#), developed to measure water insecurity through lived experience. Her work began while studying food insecurity in Kenya, where she found that water access, even in cases where it appeared available, was a major barrier to infant feeding. She explained that water security spans multiple domains: availability, access, acceptability, use, and stability over time. While policymakers value ethnographic insights, they also need quantifiable data. Hence the creation of the WISE Scales: 12 validated questions that rapidly capturing universal water experiences, including psychological dimensions like anger, shame, and worry.

The Household Water InSecurity Experiences scales (HWISE scales - 2018) and Individual Water InSecurity Experiences scales (IWISE scales - 2021) have been used by over 110 organisations in 90 countries, with nationally representative data to be available for 82 countries by late 2025. These tools allow for global and community-level comparisons, are endorsed by WHO for gender-sensitive monitoring, and are now used in national health surveys and by development banks and NGOs to assess impact. Sera emphasised that water insecurity affects nearly every health outcome, from the more obvious diarrheal disease to less obvious NCDs and interpersonal violence. The scales bridge sectors—linking water to health, nutrition, gender, and climate—and fill a gap where food insecurity has long had more attention and data. She concluded by urging attendees to consider: "What can the WISE scales do for you?"



In 2024: WISE Scales had been used by 100+ organizations in more than 55 countries



DAY 2 Session 2: Measuring Food and Water Insecurity Experientially 11 AM – 12.30 PM



[Aunty Norma Kennedy](#) and [Wendy Spencer](#) **Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG), Australia** shared the powerful story of Walgett, a regional town in Australia facing long-standing challenges with food and water security. Aunty Norma, a proud Gamilaraay woman, described the transformation of her community's river: "The river flowed clean, beautiful water, we could swim in it, fish, catch freshwater yabbies. We could live off it." Her aunts and grandmothers taught her traditional methods of cooking fish using gum leaves and hot stones. She went on to say:



"The river today is disgusting, very disgusting, we can't drink the water, can't fish from it. We have to buy water, and that takes away from buying food".

"The river today is disgusting, very disgusting, we can't drink the water, can't fish from it. We have to buy water, and that takes away from buying food".

She also described the impacts of irrigation for cotton and pesticide runoff contributing to the river's degradation and the rise in cancer and chronic disease in her community, warning:

"Our mob is dying out. Fast."

With the support of Greg and Jacqui, the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Services (WAMS), and the [Yuwaya Ngarra-li partnership](#) – a collaboration between the Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG) and UNSW – the community secured an National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) grant and used the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) and WISE scales to measure food and water insecurity in the community. The [surveys revealed](#) that 46% of the community was food insecure, 44% water insecure, and 30% experienced both. Sodium levels in drinking water were found to be 15 times the recommended amount for people with

hypertension. Wendy said using the tools with the community enabled global comparisons that achieved media attention: "We couldn't be ignored after publishing evidence-based findings." A community-led response has included installing [drinking water kiosks](#), a gardener's network, a healthy supermarket initiative, a frozen meal program, and a meal of the month, as well as continued advocacy for improved infrastructure. Wendy concluded: "This community-led program provides evidence for what the government should be funding."



Walgett's Reverse-Osmosis System - inoperable because the brine waste is yet to be accommodated



Walgett's gardeners' network and drinking water kiosks are community-led initiatives improving food and water security locally.

When Walgett's river ran dry the town had to switch to bore water with high sodium levels





DAY 2 Session 2: Measuring Food and Water Insecurity Experientially 11 AM – 12.30 PM



Dr Judith Borja, University of San Carlos, Philippines shared preliminary findings from the ongoing Longitudinal Cohort Study on the Filipino Child (LCSFC). This tracks a nationally representative

cohort of Filipinos aged 10 in 2016 through age 24 in 2030 (covering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) implementation period). This study aims to put a human face to the SDGs by capturing various aspects in the lives of the Filipino youth. The LCSFC is a research collaboration involving the country's top demographic research institutions led by OPS, under the oversight of the Philippine Government and funded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Australian Government. Among the vulnerabilities examined in the study is adolescent water insecurity measured using the short-form HWISE scale and variables that define water service levels prescribed by the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP).

"The 2024 survey of 17–18-year-olds, found nearly all households had access to JMP-defined basic drinking water service levels (improved sources accessed within 30 minutes).

However, using the HWISE scale, 24% of households were water insecure — a stark contrast to only 2.4% when using JMP measures," said Judith.

Common water insecurity issues identified by the HWISE included worry about insufficient water and disrupted routines. Additionally, HWISE data showed that 12.8% of households were experiencing both water and food insecurity, while the JMP measure only classified 1.3% of the households as such, highlighting the value of experiential measures in understanding household vulnerability.

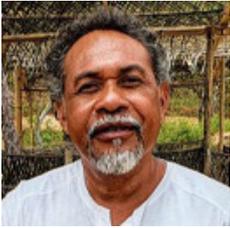


Dr Judith Borja presented findings from ongoing longitudinal research showing that rates of water insecurity in the Philippines are higher than those indicated by standard measurement metrics.



Dr Si Thu Win Tin, SPC, Fiji discussed the the need for improved health and resource infrastructure with over 90% of the Pacific population lacking basic drinking water and relying on imported food.

DAY 2 Session 2: Measuring Food and Water Insecurity Experientially 11 AM – 12.30 PM



Mr Eugenio Lemos (Permatil, Timor-Leste) described the Permatil initiative – focused on water restoration and catchment management using nature-based solutions across over 800 communities, with

over 700 water springs restored. The project works with local communities – with 40% participation by young females – to understand ecological dynamics and develop strategies to address rapid water runoff and soil erosion in mountainous regions. "During the rainy season, water rushes straight to the ocean and takes the topsoil with it," Ego Lemos said.

"We are planting water – restoring springs, slowing erosion, and regenerating soil. Restoring natural systems is key to growing food sustainably. We rely on nature, are part of nature."

By integrating traditional knowledge with scientific evidence – including satellite data from partnerships with UNSW and Timor-Leste's national university – the project aims to slow water flow and improve soil absorption. Reforestation with multifunctional tree species supports sustainable land management, enhances food and fuel sources, improves soil fertility, reduces carbon emissions, and creates wildlife habitats. A Permaculture Youth Club engages over 6,000 young people, vital in a country where 70% of the population is under 35. Preliminary findings from 14 restored sites and 13 control sites show significant improvements in water indicators such as rainfall, stream flow, groundwater levels, and salinity. The project also builds local capacity in hydrology and social science and recently trained 12 enumerators to administer a locally adapted WISE scale. The session concluded with a video showcasing the inspiring work of Permatil in Timor-Leste, demonstrating how communities are restoring ecosystems, building

networks, and empowering locals and youth to address food and water insecurity.

Audience members were deeply moved by the images, stories, and videos shared by the speakers, which showcased the power of community-led action. Audience members expressed shock at the level of food and water insecurity experienced in Walgett and the lack of policy action to address it. They commented on the effectiveness of the WISE tool in revealing the extent of water insecurity not captured by standard objective measures in the Philippines



Planting water in Atauro, Timor-Leste



Water retention ponds in Daré, Timor-Leste



Permaculture in schools program Timor-Leste



DAY 2 Session 3: Translating Measurement into Impact 1.30 PM – 2.30 PM

[Professor Sera Young](#) chaired Session 3, in which speakers highlighted how experiential tools are already being used across the Asia Pacific region to uncover hidden dimensions of food and water insecurity, enabling individual-level insights, informing gender-transformative approaches, and driving community-led solutions that resonate with policymakers and donors.



[Ms Megan Carroll](#) International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) shared how IWDA surveyed a nationally representative sample of adults using the 4-item WISE scale in Tonga and Solomon

Islands. In so doing they revealed household-level differences in water insecurity not captured by JMP indicators. The survey showed the co-occurrence of food insecurity, water insecurity, and mental health challenges, right around the time of the volcanic eruptions and tsunami in Tonga. IWDA works closely with national agencies to support context-specific data translation and reporting elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific. She noted:

"One-third of inequality exists within households. We need to measure at the individual level."



[Mr Tim Davis](#) WaterAid, Papua New Guinea discussed WaterAid's work in Papua New Guinea, where only 50% of the population has water access and collection burdens are high, especially

for women. Using HWISE-4, they found 22% of households had high water insecurity, despite JMP indicators suggesting otherwise. He is advocating for integrating WISE scales into national surveys. Tim emphasised the need for community-led approaches and experiential data to guide infrastructure investments.



[Professor Juliet Willetts](#) (UTS) spoke on gender-transformative approaches in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), noting how traditional roles in water collection could be leveraged to support

women to have a voice in community decision-making. She introduced the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Gender Equality Measure (WASH-GEM) framework, which considers resources, agency, well-being, and includes an extension to consider climate resilience and measure gender equality impacts. She explained:

"Water and sanitation can be an entry point for gender equality transformation."

When asked if there was a risk of creating new problems by promoting gender equality in these communities, Juliet responded that asking questions to prompt people to consider current gender roles and dynamics and letting communities determine the solutions is the most powerful way to positive transformation.



Mr Timoci (Jim) Naivalulevu, Project Manager for the WISH Pacific (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene & Infections of the Skin, Soil and Water) initiative in Fiji described plans to implement the WISE scales in their work.



DAY 2 Session 3: Translating Measurement into Impact 1.30 PM – 2.30 PM



Assistant Professor Josh Miller University of Buffalo, USA introduced the Institutional Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Experiences (INWISE) Scale Development Project, which assesses end-users'

experiences with WASH services in schools and healthcare facilities. The project is being implemented in 10 countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Preliminary findings show that even facilities meeting "basic" JMP criteria can present challenges that negatively affect users' well-being and ability to work or learn. In one school three-quarters of students reported being unable to concentrate in class due to thirst despite the presence of an improved water source. INWISE is expanding and seeking partners. The resulting data will support the design and evaluation of policies and programs to improve the equity and effectiveness of WASH services in schools and healthcare facilities.

The audience raised important questions on Indigenous data sovereignty, policy evaluation, and the intersection of water and food security. **Timoci (Jim) Naivalulevu (Fiji)** shared new plans to implement experiential water security measures across 29 communities in Fiji as a result of the FoodWISE meeting. **Dr Mou Sarker (Bangladesh)** highlighted the work that the International Water Management Institute and the International Rice Research Institute are doing to develop an Agricultural Water Insecurity Experience (AgWISE) Scale. AgWISE makes it possible to capture agricultural water insecurity through an intersectional lens. Sera confirmed the WISE tools have shown strong links between self-reported experiences and objective health outcomes in randomised controlled trials. Speakers agreed that holistic evaluation is essential, and that experiential tools can support both advocacy and program design, adding value to more traditional objective surveillance approaches. Josh highlighted how implementing the HWISE Scale alongside JMP service measures, following intensive, multi-level interventions in Kenya and Nepal, enabled NGOs to demonstrate human impacts in ways that resonate with donors. The session concluded with expressions of enthusiasm to introduce WISE measurements in additional settings.



Interviewed outdoors to help him feel comfortable, a student at a school in Nepal describes how WASH conditions shape his day-to-day experiences, including whether the sanitation facility behind him feels safe, private, and clean enough to use.



At a rural school in Uganda, students use a shared tap for both drinking and handwashing. Interviews revealed that many were unsure about its quality, with some choosing to go thirsty rather than drink from it.



DAY 2 Session 4: Aligning Agendas for Impact 1.30 PM – 2.30 PM

[Professor Jacqui Webster](#) facilitated a forward-looking session on building the FoodWISE Asia Pacific Network. She proposed a regional manifesto, website, newsletter, and annual meetings in different countries.

A recorded message from [Dr Gaitán Rossi Pablo](#) Iberoamericana University and co-founder of WISE-LAC shared lessons from Latin America, where friendship, institutional support, and political buy-in have sustained the network.

Inspired by this model, the workshop broke into four regional groups to brainstorm seed grant proposals that could catalyse action and collaboration:

- **The South-East Asia Team** proposed scoping a regional climate grant due in February. The focus would be on integrating agriculture, water, and experiential tools like WISE, with the goal of bringing contributing partners together to co-develop a proposal that reflects shared priorities across the region.
- **The Australia Team** pitched a short, high-impact advocacy video—a three-minute "call to action" drawing on the powerful insights from Walgett. The video would be used to engage local councils and policymakers, highlighting the lived realities of food and water insecurity in regional Australia.
- **The Timor-Leste Team** proposed building on an existing ACIAR-funded project in which UNSW is supporting Permatil to train enumerators to collect WISE data and share these findings with stakeholders, including the government, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- **The Pacific Team**, represented by delegates from Tonga and Fiji, emphasised the importance of working through existing regional platforms such as the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islander Research Platform, and the Pacific Network on Health and Climate Change. Their proposal focused on advocacy and alignment—

mapping existing networks, identifying shared priorities, and promoting the WISE scale through established mechanisms like the Fiji University Symposium, which recently convened 17 countries.

[Professor Greg Leslie](#) concluded the session by praising the diversity and innovation of the seed proposals — spanning community-led advocacy, regional coordination, and innovative data approaches. He highlighted the importance of data sovereignty, network mapping, and platform-building, noting: "These proposals aren't just necessary, they're fundable and practical." The organisers agreed that they would support funding for all four seed proposals, recognising their strategic value, regional relevance, and strong alignment with the workshop's goals.

The session closed with a renewed sense of energy and commitment, as participants looked ahead to the next phase of collaboration under the FoodWISE banner.

Upon leaving, guests were presented with a photo of the newly formed FoodWISE network in a photo frame, each individually and uniquely hand-painted by local Indigenous artist [Amanda Dass](#) ([Dulu Dreaming](#)).



DAY 3: Writing Workshop

Friday, 19 September | 8:30 AM – 3:00 PM

Participants collaborated on:

- Drafting a mission statement for the FoodWISE Asia Pacific Network.
- Contributing to a joint review paper on experiential measures of food and water insecurity in the region, with all attendees invited as co-authors.

Key Themes and Recommendations

- Food and water security are inseparable and must be addressed together.
- Experiential tools like WISE and FIES are vital for capturing lived realities.
- Community leadership and Indigenous knowledge must be central.
- Cross-sector collaboration is critical to address complex, intersecting challenges.
- Data disaggregation is vital to identify inequities and inform inclusive responses.
- Networks matter: trust, reciprocity, and shared purpose are key to long-term impact.

Next Steps

- Finalise and circulate the FoodWISE regional mission statement.
- Launch a network website and newsletter.
- Publish a collaborative review on experiential measures of food and water security in the region.
- Fund and undertake proposed seed grants.
- Promote the adoption of experiential tools in national and regional frameworks, research, and projects.
- Promote consideration of food and water security together.
- Amplify community voices and build enduring partnerships.

A group of regional attendees met to discuss next steps for the newly formed network, developing a mission statement and refining plans for a joint manuscript.





FoodWISE workshop attendee list

Ms Aliyah Palu,

Research Assistant and PhD Candidate,
Guunu-maana (Heal), The George Institute for Global
Health, Australia

Ms Andrea Timothy,

Senior Policy Advisor, National Aboriginal
Community Controlled Health Organisation
(NACCHO), Australia

Professor Cheryl Jones,

Dean of Medicine & Health, University of New South
Wales, Sydney, Australia

Dr Christopher Cvitanovic,

Senior Lecturer, School of Business, University of
New South Wales Canberra, Australia

Ms Clarissa Phillips,

Digital Delivery Technical Director Water ANZ,
Jacobs AWA NSW Branch Committee President,
Jacobs/ Australian Water Association, Australia

A/Professor Cindy Priadi,

Adjunct Fellow/Associate Professor, University of
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Ms Elizabeth Munn,

Director Population Health and Health Policy, NSW
Health, Australia

Ms Ella Bicego,

Project Assistant, WHO Collaborating Centre for
Nursing, Midwifery and Health Development,
University of Technology Sydney, Australia

Mr Eugenio (Ego) Lemos,

Goodwill Ambassador and Special Envoy of the
President for Culture, Environment and Water
Resources, Republic of Timor-Leste, Timor Leste

A/Professor Gade Waqa,

Head of C-POND, Fiji National University, Fiji

Dr Genevieve Poblete,

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Dr George Varughese,

Senior Strategic Advisor, Niti Foundation, Nepal

Professor Greg Leslie,

Director UNSW Global Water Institute, University of
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Hon Dr Harsha de Silva,

Member of Parliament for Colombo District,
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,
Chairman, Public Finance Committee, Parliament of
Sri Lanka, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,
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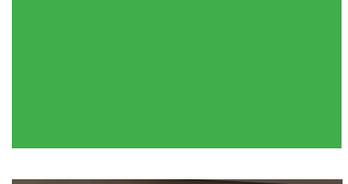
WASH Specialist UNICEF Regional, Bangkok City, Thailand

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