

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
Broad theme	Early childhood development
Research	Investigating childhood development issues and helping to deliver culturally relevant services and care; training doctors, researchers and students in diagnosis and treatment of childhood development challenges
Impact region	NSW, Fiji
Faculty	Medicine
School/Institute	Sydney Children's Community Health Centre
Academic	Dr Sue Woolfenden
Project partners	Australia/NSW: Sax Institute, Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, 4 x Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, Non government organisations, the George Institute, Cerebral Palsy Association
	Fiji: Fiji National University, Colonial War Memorial Hospital, Lautoka and Labasa Hospitals (Fiji), South West Sydney Local Health District, Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, South East Sydney Local Health District
Related SDGs	10: Reduced Inequalities
	4: Quality Education

Elevator pitch

Sue is investigating issues in the early development of Aboriginal childhood and is helping deliver clinical care to improve their chance to live a more equitable life. In Fiji, Sue is training doctors and researchers in the diagnosis and treatment of childhood development issues, improving care for kids and building local capacity.

The Challenges: Optimising early childhood development for Aboriginal and Fiji children

In Australia, urban Aboriginal children are more likely to experience inequities in their health and health care than their non Aboriginal peers. This means that they are at greater risk of poorer health, development and well being.

In Fiji, more than 1-2 children per day present to the doctors at its three main hospitals with development issues such as language delay, autism, and cerebral palsy. Dealing with infectious diseases and non communicable diseases, local doctors are overburdened with patients and short on time. They need support to diagnose and manage child developmental disability.

UNSW's solution: Address inequities in health and care for children with developmental disorders

Sue is involved in several projects around early childhood development among urban Aboriginal children in NSW. One is the [Aboriginal Resilience and Child Health \(SEARCH\) project](#), Australia's largest long term study of the health and wellbeing of urban Aboriginal Children. Sue has been involved in SEARCH since 2004 and is a key member of the research team that is examining factors that optimise developmental outcomes among 700 children. Sue and her team partner with Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and communities to develop models of care and to support children and their families.

At the La Perouse Community Health Centre, Sue and Karen Zwi (Conjoint Professor at UNSW) lead paediatric clinics that provide health services to a community of Aboriginal people. Sue and Karen provide advice and input around optimising health, wellbeing and developmental outcomes. They also help evaluate the success of services and the collection of data together with Aboriginal health workers and the Sydney Children Hospitals Network. There have been a number of successful projects that examine early detection of speech and developmental issues, chronic disease management, injury awareness and hospital avoidance.

In Fiji, Sue is helping to train local doctors and researchers in how to identify children with development issues, the kind of questions to ask, and where to refer patients. Since 2010, she has performed this role every six months. Her guidelines for Fiji doctors are being fed into the Fiji Disability Action Plan. She also is a co-investigator in research being undertaken in Fiji examining child development outcomes and she lectures students from Fiji National University on the subject. In other projects, Sue, Rohan Jayasuria and Patrick Rawstone recently received a Scientia PhD scholarship to address early childhood development in the Asia Pacific region.

The Impact: Enhance understanding of issues, improve services and development of kids

Sue's work with the Aboriginal community is helping the community, health providers and government to understand the key drivers of childhood development issues and the kind of services required. This information will enable targeted and more relevant services to be provided to children in need, helping them to achieve more equitable development. Her work with the La Perouse Community Health Centre is ensuring local Aboriginal children with development issues are being identified and treated earlier with more relevant services, optimising a child's development.

Sue's regular visits to Fiji are helping to build local physician capacity to identify kids with development issues and ensure the kids receive proper treatment. This enhances the child and family's chance of a higher quality of life. Sue is also helping to raise the standard of local research around childhood development, which will result in greater knowledge and services for children there in the future.

Researcher

Sue Woolfenden is a senior staff specialist in the Department of Community Child Health, the clinical lead in Integrated Care at Sydney Children's Hospital Network, and Associate Professor with UNSW's School of Women's and Children's Health. She is also co-chair of a Royal Australasian College of Physicians working group that has developed the first Child Health Equity Policy Statement in Australia. Sue is passionate about addressing the inverse care law that states those with the greatest need are least likely to be able to access help.

Ben Falkenmire 27.06.18