

# Improving WASH in Pacific Island schools by embracing local epistemologies

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**WASH  
FUTURES**

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Conference 2018

Collaboration for Universal WASH

#WASHFutures18



Photo source:  
ADRA Solomon Islands

“The world can only appear monochromatic to those who persist in interpreting what they experience through the lens of a single cultural paradigm, their own. For those with the eyes to see and the heart to feel, it remains a rich and complex topography of the spirit.”

Wade Davis

*The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World*



# WASH in Solomon Islands: A Story



Photo source: ADRA Solomon Islands

# Reviewing the literature

- Systematic scoping review requested by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
- Evaluated WASH systems literature relating to health and education of female school students, and students with a disability
- Conducted by researchers from CQUni/JCU, in partnership with WASH specialists from Solomon Islands, Australia and the United Kingdom.

**How can WASH be contextualised and operationalised in PICTs to promote the health and education of female students and students with a disability?**



Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools to promote girls' health and education in Pacific Island countries: A systematic scoping review.

A systematic scoping review conducted by Central Queensland University for Adventist Development and Relief Agency, July 2017.



# From findings to new questions...

- From initial identification of 471 records, 12 articles included; no intervention studies found
- Some descriptive research studies reported WASH interventions
- Growing number of studies with girls in schools about MHM (The Last Taboo)
- Grey literature included student-led WASH projects (LLEE), which should be able to integrate the needs of individual students
- These projects demonstrated the potential for **targeted and locally relevant responses** to the WASH needs of girls, and students with a disability

Photo source: Layton and Layton, 2010



Low-cost washing facility

# Ep... ep... epistemologies and pedagogies

- Lots of literature on WASH in schools internationally, but impact is mediated by context (Emory)
- Review encouraged us to reflect on our own experiences, which suggests programs looking to improve WASH in schools for girls and students with a disability should draw on global lessons, but focus on local epistemological and pedagogical contexts:
  - **Epistemology:** the branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. Epistemology studies the nature of knowledge, justification, and the rationality of belief. **i.e. ways of knowing**
  - **Pedagogy:** the method and practice of teaching, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept. **i.e. ways of learning**

# Partnership in PNG schools: A practitioner's story



Photo source: Jeanette Selep, World Vision PNG

# An informal settlement in Fiji: A researcher's story



Photo source: Dani Barrington, Uni of Leeds

# WASH in Solomon Islands: a useful metaphor



Photo source: Michelle Redman-MacLaren, JCU

# Recommendations for practitioners

- Need to iteratively adapt WASH to local context (including needs of individual students), using local pedagogies and epistemologies
- Be informed from other countries, but don't duplicate
- Genuine local partnerships ensure relevant, sustainable responses
- Manage donor relationships to the advantage of local people

**Without localised approaches to socially and culturally situated WASH needs, there is little chance of sustainability and ongoing benefit.**



Photo source: David MacLaren, JCU

Work detailed here is elaborated on in:

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