

# Leaving no-one behind: Menstrual health for people with intellectual disabilities

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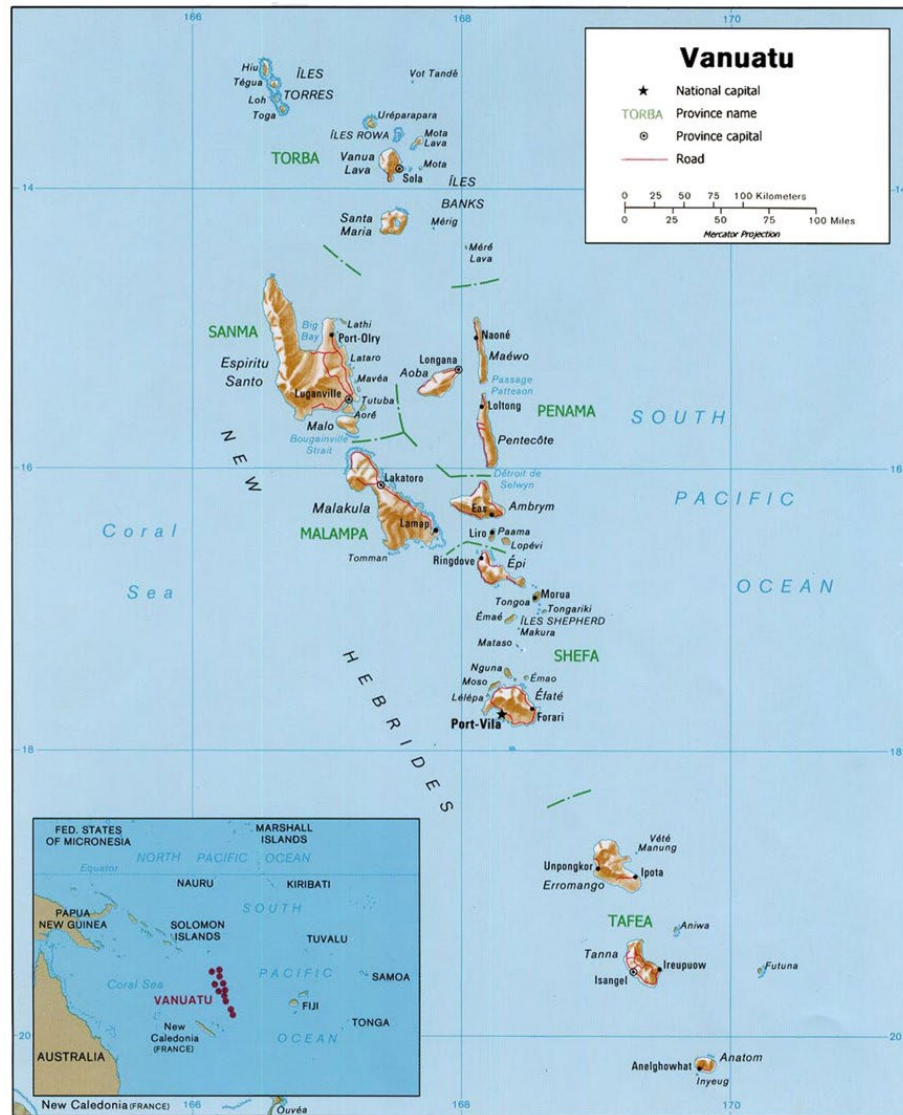
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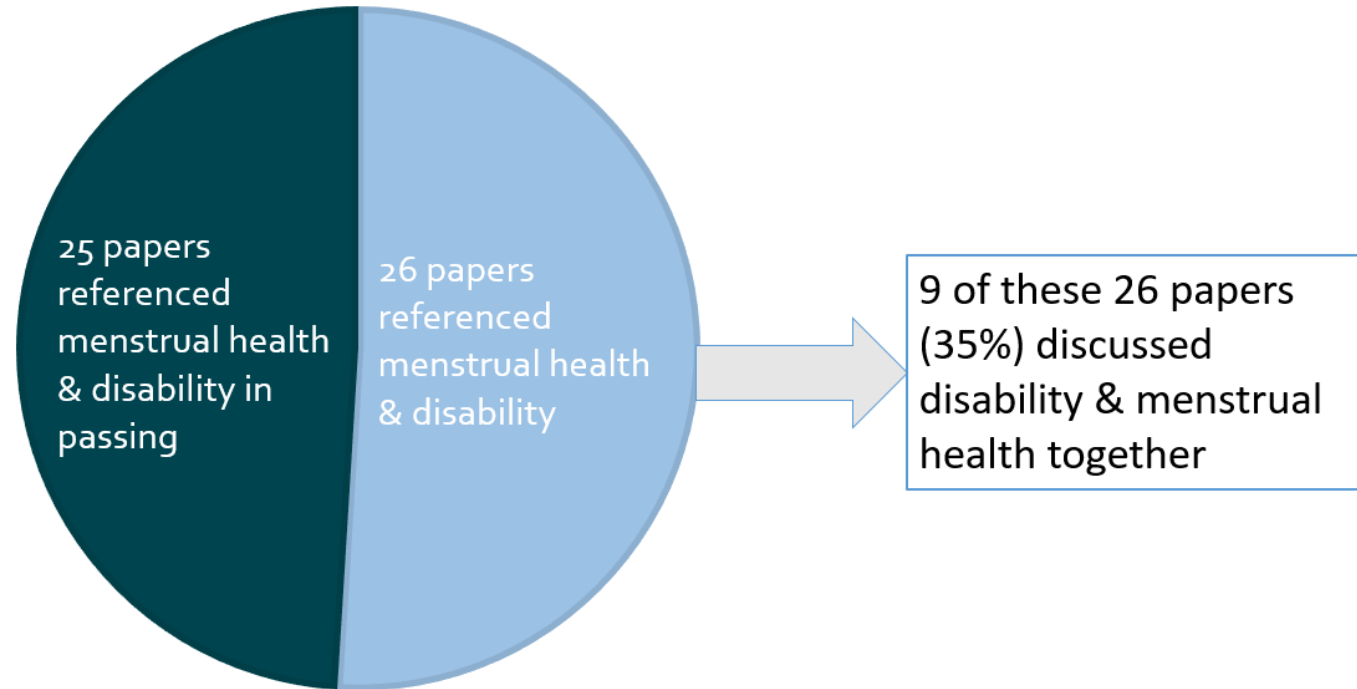
#WaWF23

# WASH and Menstrual Health in Vanuatu



- Frequently ranked the most vulnerable country globally to natural disasters.
- Combined coverage of basic water and sanitation is **lower in the Pacific** than any other region, and **lower in Vanuatu** than many of its Pacific neighbours.
- Menstrual health taboos and beliefs are widespread and disproportionately impact people with disabilities, especially in times of disaster

# The global situation – findings from a systematised review



- Women and girls with disabilities **rarely participated** in menstrual health efforts
- Hygiene kits provided **were not always appropriate for people with disabilities**, similarly cash transfers and hygiene kit distribution points were **often inaccessible** for people with disabilities
- Caregivers (all genders) need guidance about how to support an individual with disabilities manage menstruation.

# Formative research and findings

- 1) Caregivers reported **little support to manage** the young person's menstruation
- 2) Most **caregivers keep the young person at home when menstruating**
- 3) Young people's **support needs sometimes increased after emergencies**
- 4) **Poor access to water and sanitation** services impacted young people and their caregivers during emergencies



# PhotoVoice – Caregivers experience in TC Harold



*In [our uncle's] house, there is no privacy. Therefore when she menstruates, I had to take her out of that place, away from other people and come here where we feel that there is privacy. I would fetch a bucket of water and put it behind a tree, where no one could see her when she was having her shower.*

***Josephine, caregiver***

# Formative research Conclusions/Recommendations

- Gender, disability, and menstrual stigma and discrimination intersected to negatively impact young people's participation in daily life, seek safe shelter in an emergency
- The impacts are also felt by caregivers, who stay at home with the young people, thus reducing their potential to earn an income and ability to recover and prepare
- Menstrual health efforts must take into account the holistic needs of people with intellectual disabilities at all stages of an emergency response
- Hygiene kits were welcomed, however too often a “one size fits all approach” was taken, especially in relation to sanitary products.

# The Veivanua Campaign



Menstrual health behavior change package for people with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers in emergencies.

Adapted from the Bishesta campaign designed for a development setting in Nepal.

# What is the Veivanua campaign?



- Pilot with 38 young people and their caregivers in Sanma Province, Vanuatu
- 2 half day training sessions that support carers and young people to achieve 5 key target behaviours around effective menstrual health and ultimately to be able to **manage menstruation more independently and with dignity during** disasters.



# What does the Veivanua campaign involve?



Usum staefri o wan kaliko blo sikmun.

- Participatory approach designed to engage young people with intellectual disabilities
- Distributing and pre-positioning menstrual hygiene packs
- Young People: Reusable menstrual materials, menstrual storage bag, small menstrual bag, menstrual bin, small Veivanua doll, one visual story
- Caregivers: Menstrual calendar

# Preliminary Feasibility Study results

Initial results from the feasibility study are promising with caregivers reporting increased knowledge about managing menstrual health in emergencies and evidence of young people managing menstruation more independently.

During the feasibility study PhotoVoice was utilised with two young people with intellectual disabilities



PhotoVoice Participant Feylin:  
“(I like it) because it’s  
my photo”

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## Related publications:

Wilbur, J.; Poilapa, R.; Morrison, C. Menstrual Health Experiences of People with Intellectual Disabilities and Their Caregivers during Vanuatu's Humanitarian Responses: A Qualitative Study. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2022, *19*, 14540. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192114540>

Wilbur J, Clemens F, Sweet E, Banks LM and Morrison C (2022) The inclusion of disability within efforts to address menstrual health during humanitarian emergencies: A systematized review. *Front. Water* 4:983789. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/frwa.2022.983789>

Wilbur, J., Morrison, C., Iakavai, J., Shem, J., Poilapa, R., Bambery, L., ... Mactaggart, I. (2022). "The weather is not good": exploring the menstrual health experiences of menstruators with and without disabilities in Vanuatu. *The Lancet Regional Health - Western Pacific*, *18*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanwpc.2021.100325>

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