

# Menstrual health, stigma, and WASH facility access in Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea



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## SUMMARY

In 2022, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) undertook two surveys on menstrual health and hygiene in the Pacific region. The first survey was conducted in Goroka, in the highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG); the second was conducted in Funafuti, the capital of Tuvalu. The research aimed to better understand the reality of menstrual health and hygiene and its management in PNG and Tuvalu, including the impacts on individuals' participation in education, work, and community activities.

Both surveys found that the influence of culture, religion, and home life on menstruation is profound, with high levels of stigma and discrimination experienced by many people who menstruate. In addition, a key finding is that supporting infrastructure is limited in workplaces, education facilities, public spaces, and homes.

## GOROKA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

### Need for the work:

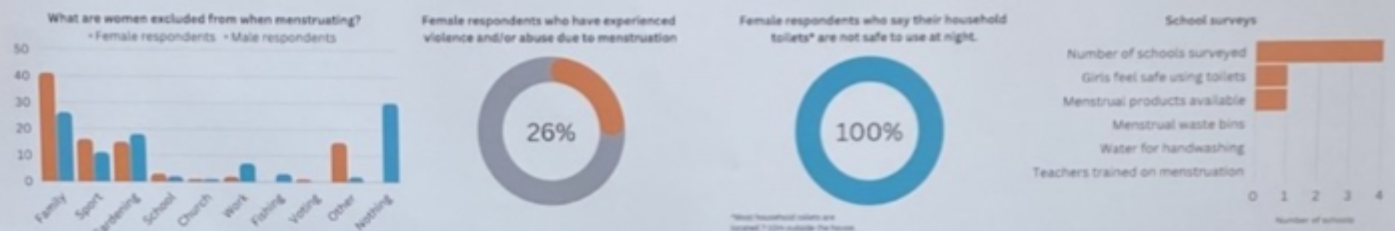
Limited in-depth research has been conducted on menstrual health in Papua New Guinea, and many gaps exist. Specifically regarding schools, the PNG National Policy Standards for WASH in Schools states that "all girls must have access to proper menstrual hygiene facilities", but the implementation of these standards was unclear.

### Process:

1. Menstrual health survey in 259 households (118 female respondents and 142 male respondents) (mWater platform)
2. Focus group discussions & school survey with 80 schoolgirls in grades 6-8 (20 girls at each of four schools) (paper surveys)
3. Key informant interviews with head teachers and senior staff at four schools
4. Community FGDs with women in three villages in Goroka.

*"School was fun until I had my first period. I didn't have open dialogue with my mother and I kept it secret for six months. Being too young and shy to ask, I tended to stain my skirt every time I had my period. I was bright in my class but always teased because of staining my skirt, so I gave up schooling."*  
- 34-year-old woman, Goroka

### Outcomes:



## TUVALU, FUNAFUTI

### Need for the work:

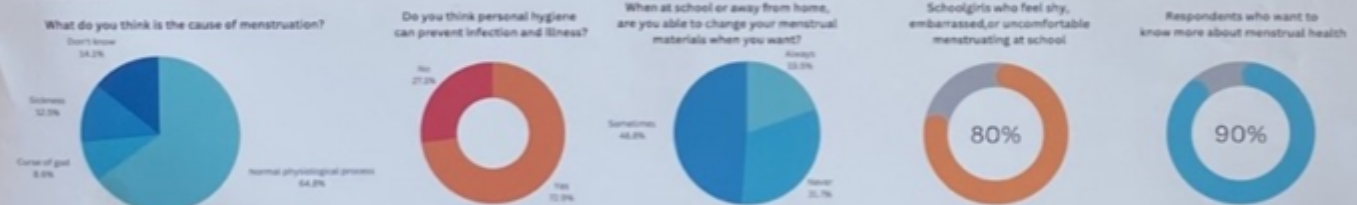
Prior to this survey, no large-scale research into menstrual health had been conducted in Tuvalu. There is also no official government data on menstrual health.

### Process:

1. Menstrual health and hygiene management survey with 328 women and girls as respondents
2. Hygiene behaviours and practices survey (run in tandem but not presented here).

Both surveys were implemented by the Tuvalu Family Health Association (TuFHA) using the mWater platform.

### Outcomes:



## LESSONS LEARNED (TUVALU & PNG)

**1. Lengthy surveys burden respondents.** The need for detail must be reconciled with the amount of time researchers are asking respondents to spend on the survey, and an adequate balance be found. For example, in Goroka, more male respondents took part in the household-level survey because there were significantly more questions for female respondents, meaning the survey was far quicker for men so more men agreed to participate than women upon being told the time required.

**2. Gender of enumerators is important.** While already apparent at the start of the survey, and the approach was designed for female enumerators only to interview female respondents, due to the survey being quicker for male respondents than female respondents, some male enumerators in PNG attempted to interview women about menstruation. The women became angry at the lack of cultural sensitivity and all but chased him off.

