

Understanding menstrual health through participatory approaches in Papua New Guinea

The 'Resilient WASH in the Islands Region of Papua New Guinea' project is enabling resilient, safe and inclusive WASH infrastructure and supports positive hygiene practices in communities, Schools and Health Care Facilities. A key focus of this project is changing the overall perception of menstrual health, especially amongst men and boys, in the two participating provinces.

Gender & social inclusion Baseline Key findings

- A majority of respondents believe that menstrual blood is bad or dirty, with only 20% of women and 31% of men disagreeing with that statement.
- 70.4% of female respondents said that they didn't have any questions or worries about menstruation. Both men and women agreed that women have a lot of useful knowledge and experience when it comes to managing menstruation.
- 58.5% of women learned about menstruation before their first period and were most commonly informed by their mother, teacher, aunts or friends. In contrast to this, men learned about periods from their wives or girlfriends as opposed to family members.
- Reusable products were more popular than disposable pads with 69.9% of women preferring this option over the former. These products can mostly be found in big towns, such as Kavieng. While they can be stocked in local village stores it is not as common to purchase these items there.



"Women are the direct beneficiaries of the training activities, while the introduction of new skills into rural communities will also benefit the broader community by improving access to hygiene materials produced and sold, improving the local economy"
- Live & Learn PNG project staff

Recommendations

- Build on the knowledge of reusable pads in training programs conducted with women's groups in sewing of reusable pads. There appears to be a good potential market for reusable pads.
- Leverage the confidence in menstrual health knowledge in the community. Recommend to work with partner organization experienced in conducting MHM awareness programs in communities and schools.
- Project staff (male and female) to also be confident in their knowledge about MHM and able to communicate accurate knowledge in an appropriate way with both males and females as needed during project activities.
- Schools to take on the sewing of reusable pads under the community life skills subject to increase capacity of girls in schools to learn the skills of pad making



- Live & Learn PNG has conducted pad and soap making workshops with participants from target communities in over 20 wards. Women who attended the training learned how to make reusable menstrual pads as well as soap and face masks.
- The project has also supported the creation of a menstrual health facilitation guide, for use by local facilitators in schools and communities.
- In addition, posters and stickers were designed to promote behavior change surrounding knowledge and attitudes towards menstrual health.

The 'Resilient WASH in the Islands Region of Papua New Guinea' project, under DFAT's Water for Women Fund, is implemented by Plan International, Live & Learn Environmental Education and Live & Learn PNG.