

Responding to Menstrual Hygiene Management Needs in Disaster Settings, in Vanuatu

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Background

Menstrual hygiene challenges

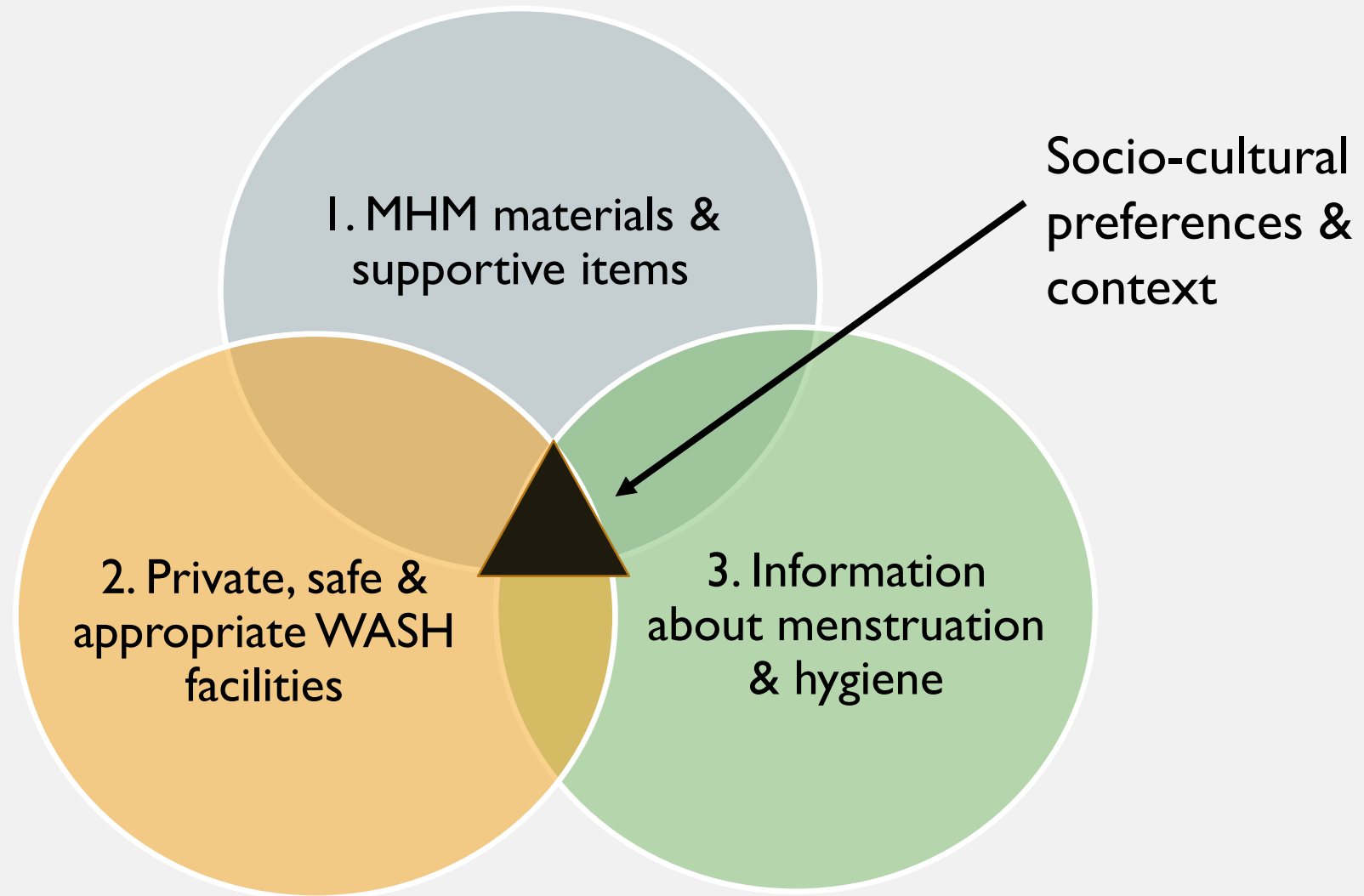
- Limited knowledge
- Inadequate sanitation facilities
- Lack of affordable, available sanitary products
- Limited waste management options
- Washing & drying of re-usable materials
- Societal taboos, secrecy & embarrassment

Vanuatu

- High disaster risk
- Responsive National Red Cross
- Integration of MHM



Menstrual Hygiene Management



Study Aims & Objectives

Aims

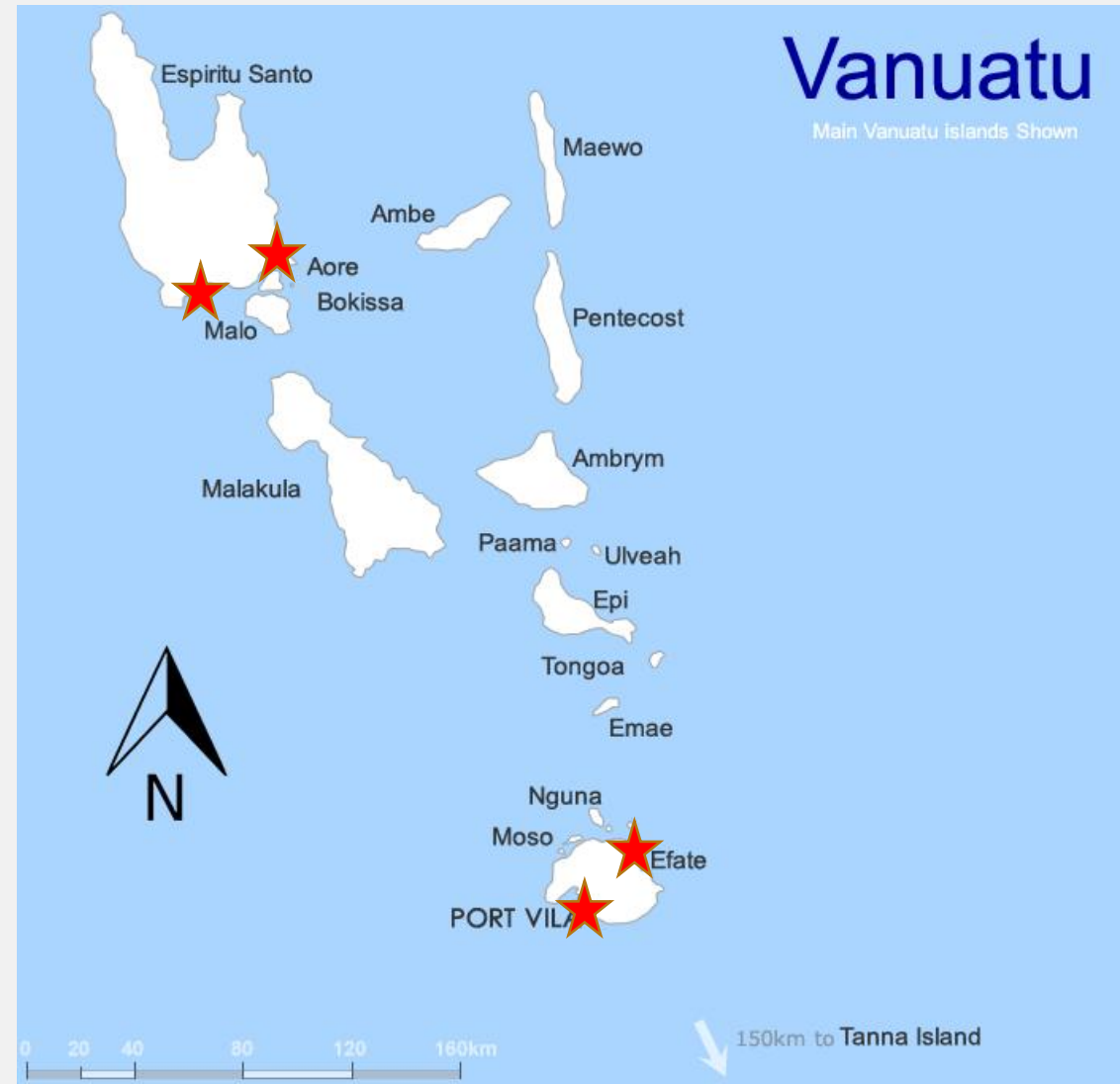
- i. Determine the sanitary protection needs & preferences of girls/women in Vanuatu
- ii. Explore the socio-cultural aspects of menstruation likely to impact MHM in disaster settings

Objectives

- i. Identify the preferred sanitary hygiene products & associated items for inclusion into MHM kits for pre-positioning & distribution in an acute disaster response
- ii. Identify opportunities to strengthen Vanuatu Red Cross programming and interventions to support women and girls in the safe and dignified management of menstruation in the context of a disaster

Methods & Setting

- Concurrent mixed methods study design
- 192 girls/women recruited across 4 sites
- Young single, younger married, older married
- Two disposable & two re-usable sanitary products



Methods and Setting



Results

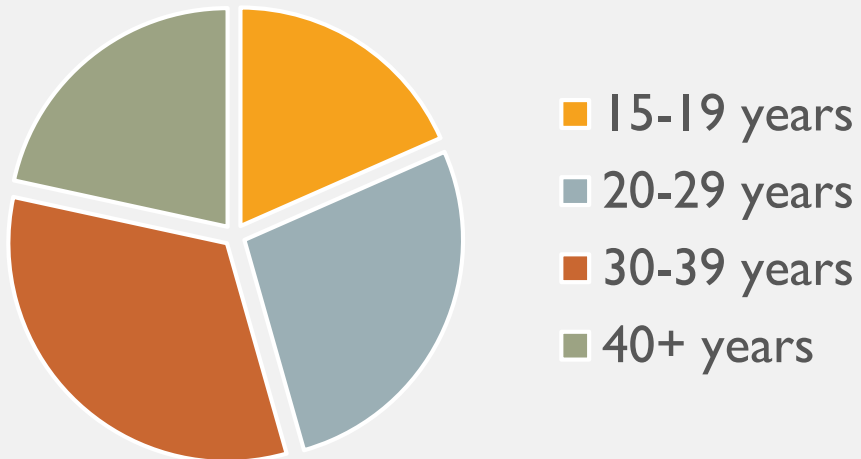
Qualitative data: focus group discussions

- 12 FGDs conducted, 125 women/girls
- Interviews x 2, women living with disability

Quantitative data: survey

- 136 surveys collected, 71% response rate
- 115 completed product satisfaction rating

Focus group participants by age group



Emojis for product satisfaction rating



Findings: socio-cultural context

➤ Shame

- ***“When I have my period, I am usually shy to walk around in the community and participate in community activities because of the fear of staining myself in public.” (Santo rural, older married)***

➤ Restrictive practices

- ***“When I get my period I do not cook, prepare food and wash the dishes. I will inform my husband and he will usually do the cooking for us.” (Santo rural, older married)***

➤ Gender roles

- ***“Normally in this village only men take part of disaster committee meeting but I think women should take part to share their concerns and needs.” (Efate rural, young married)***

Findings: current MHM practices

➤ Privacy

- ***“First I wash out the blood, then dry in the sun in a place where none of my brothers can see because of the respect we have for our brothers, then I burn it with rubbish. I usually hide the pads on the thatch roof where none of my brothers can see.” (Santo rural, older married)***

➤ Discretion

- ***“I usually wash late in the afternoon so I can hang it to dry overnight. Early in the morning I will remove it from the clothes line and hang it in a private space, usually in my room where no men will see except my husband.” (Santo urban, mixed group)***

➤ Respect

➤ Cleanliness

- ***“Yes, we share the same bathroom but I clean the bathroom well during my period so there’s no smell of blood or any mess.” (Efate urban, young single)***

Findings: disaster related MHM concerns

- Access
- Privacy
- Embarrassment



***“...access to sanitary pads will be our biggest concern”
(Efate rural, older married)***

“Privacy will be a great challenge. Loss of dignity if I stain my clothes. Other people will see me as a dirty person and say that I am not capable of looking after myself. It will be a shameful thing for me.” (Efate rural, young single)

“I will be embarrassed if MHM kit is distributed together with other NFIs because men and boys will be at the distribution point and they can make fun of us.” (Efate urban, mixed)

Findings: disaster related MHM concerns

- Water supply
- WASH facilities

- ***It will be challenging for me to dispose of my used pads. Firstly there will be lack of water to clean myself and wash my clothes and reusable pads. Secondly, there will be no private space for me to hang the pads to dry. Then, to burn the used pad I have to walk to the bush for burning.*** (Efate rural, young single)

- ***“...if a woman stains or drops some blood on the toilet seat and a male comes and use the toilet he will not want to touch or clean off the blood. He will be forced to go and use the bush/open defecate which is not a good hygienic practice. He can also tell other men and they will make fun of women.”*** (Efate urban, mixed)



Findings: needs & preferences

- Involve women in disaster planning activities
- Raise MHM awareness amongst men
- MHM kits distributed discretely by women
- Target young girls in distribution
- Provide MHM education at distribution



WASH facilities

- Separate to men
- Solid door with lock
- Good lighting
- Large enough to enable changing of pads
- Adequate water supply (inside)
- Handwashing station with soap
- Rubbish disposal (inside)
- Private area for laundry washing & drying

Findings: MHM kit preferences

Disposable pads

- Familiar
- More private, no need for washing/drying
- Better if water is scarce
- Issues with absorbency
- Environmental concerns with disposal
- Ongoing monthly cost

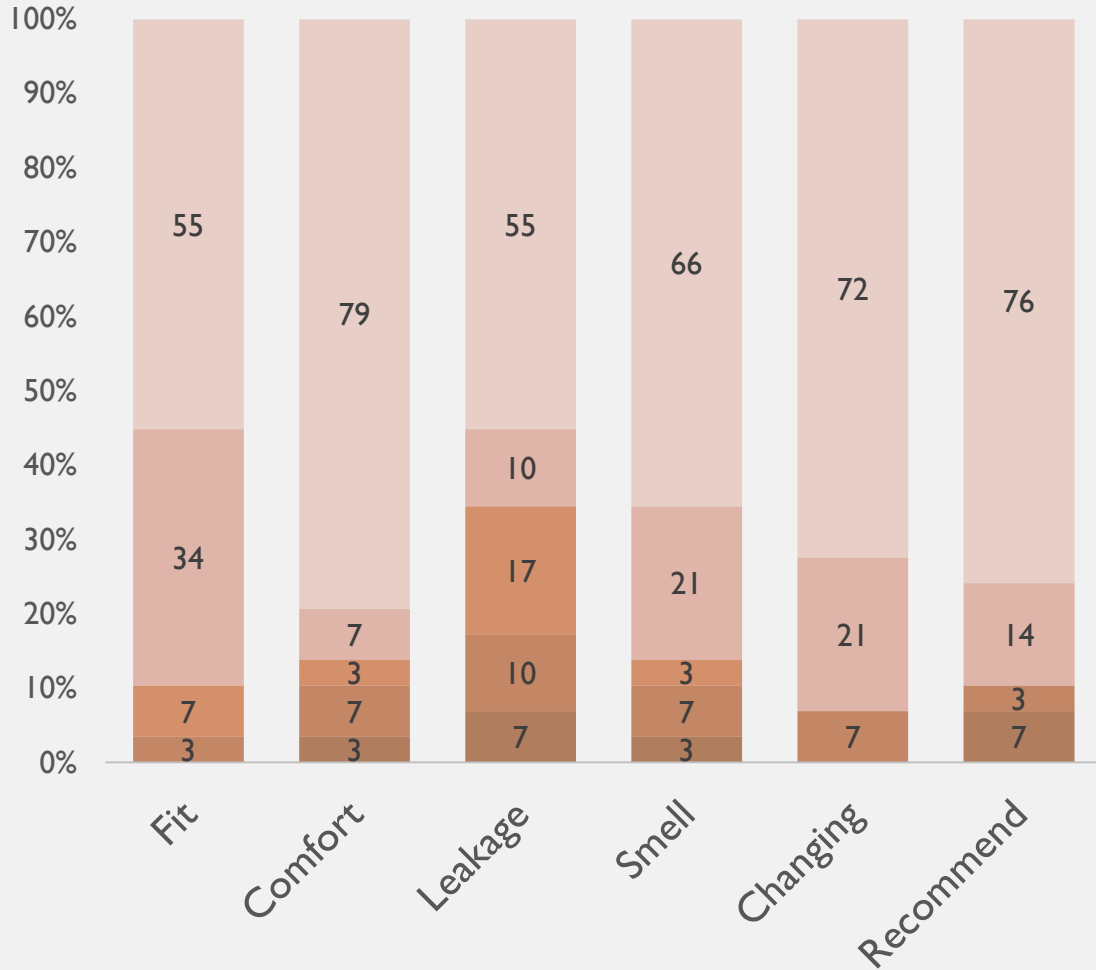


Re-usable pads

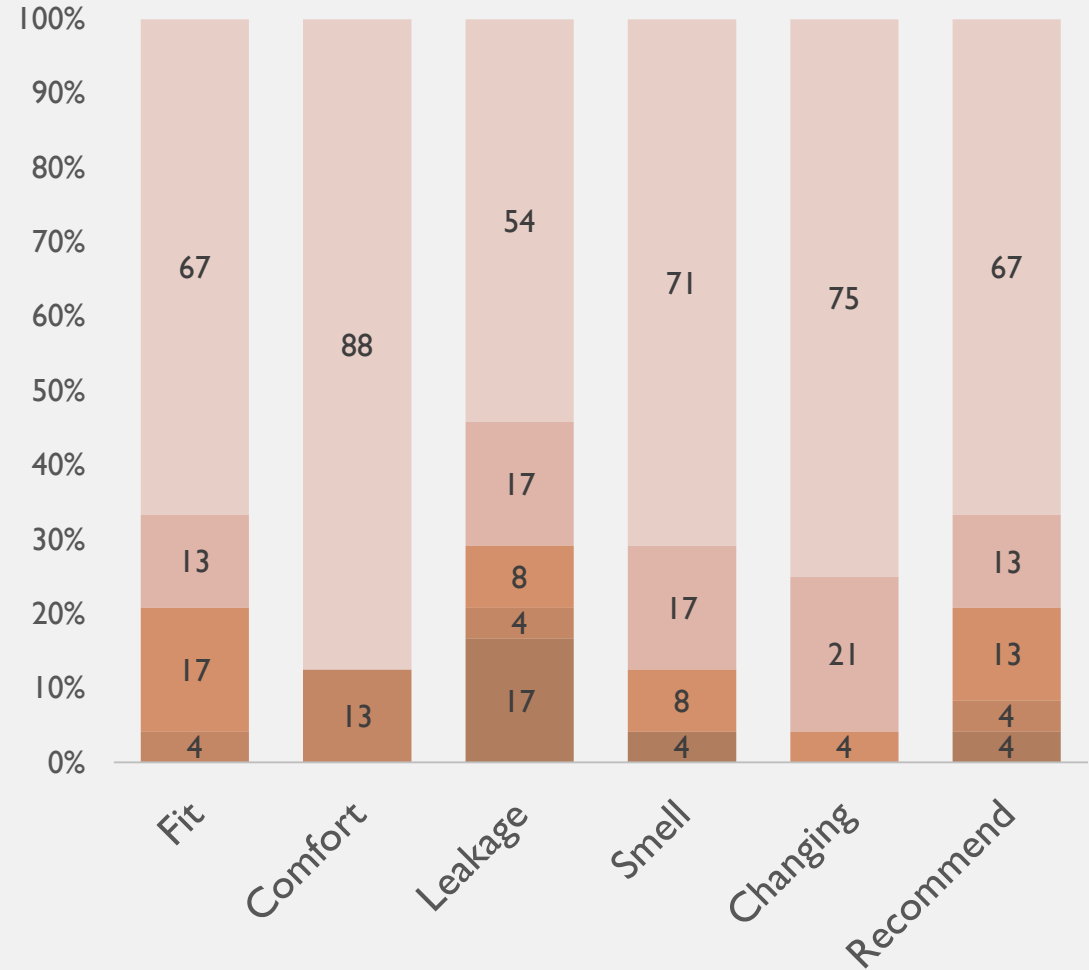
- Good absorbency
- Easy to wash & dry
- More cost effective
- Need a private space for drying
- May not dry well in Wet season
- Requires good water supply

Disposable Product Rating

MAXFREE (n=29)

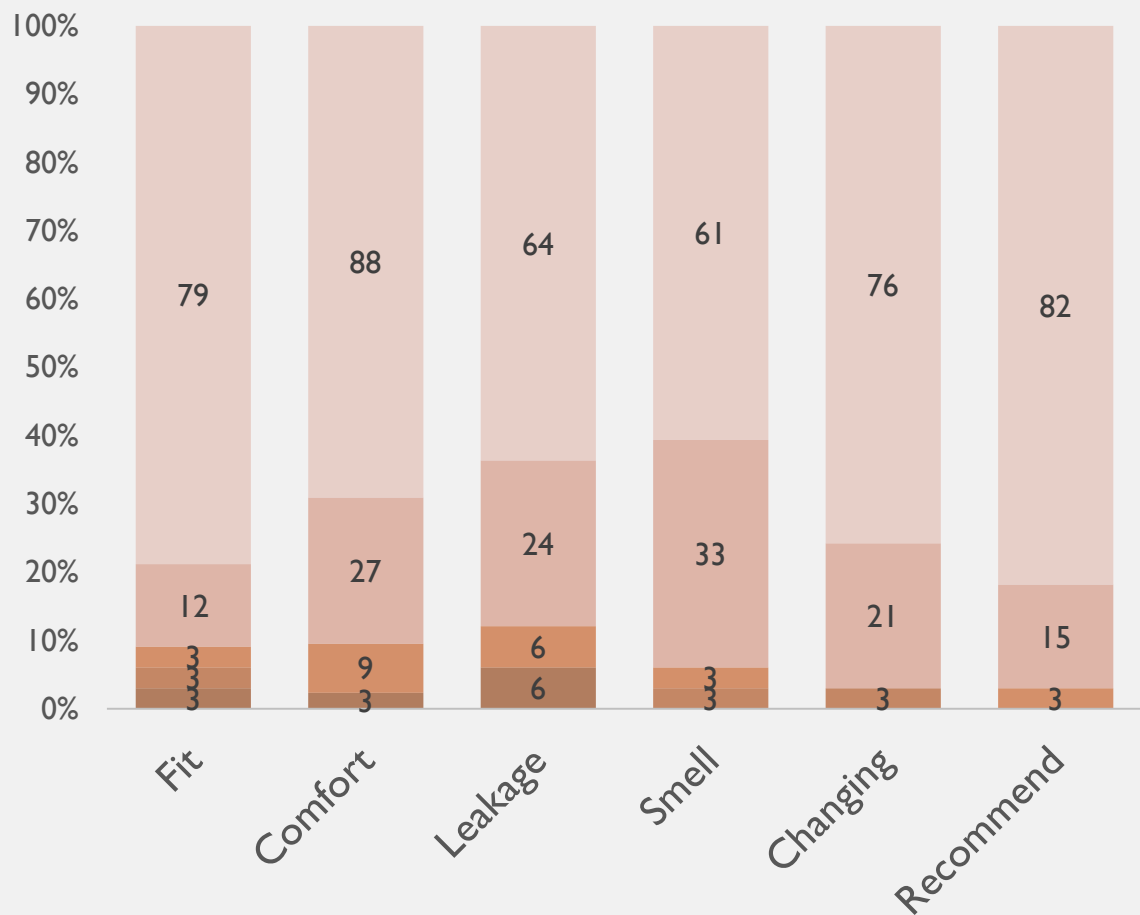


MODESS (n=24)

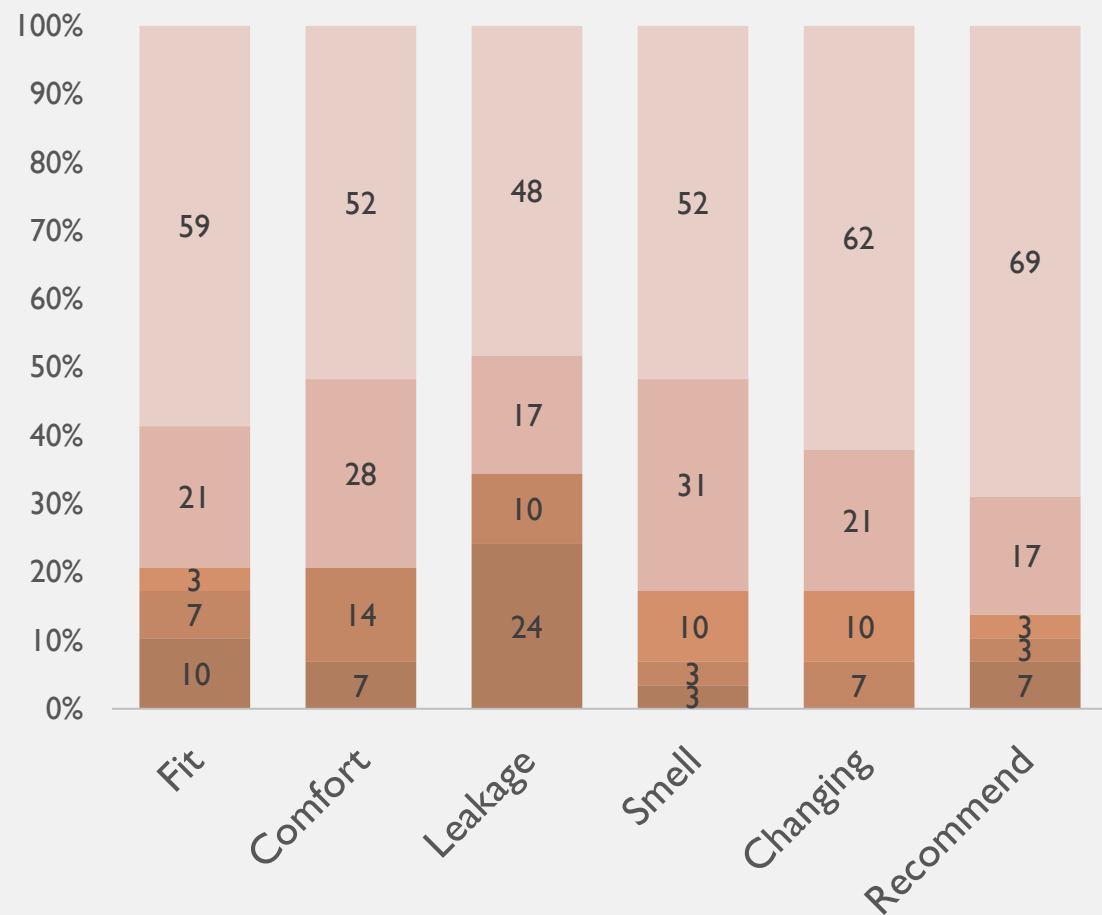


Re-usable Product Rating

AFRIPADS (n=33)



MAMA LAEF (n=29)



Women living with disability

KEY MESSAGES

- Home visits preferred for MHM education and kit distribution
- Consider individual needs/preferences
- Design WASH facilities for a variety of mobility needs



Discussing MHM needs, Port Vila

Strengthening Vanuatu Red Cross programming & interventions

MHM kits

- Locally acceptable
- Disposable & reusable products
- Procurement processes
- Pre-position
- Distribution practices

WASH facilities

- Collaboration
- Minimum standards
- Women's voices

Women/girls living with disabilities

- Inclusive, personalised approach

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