**Responding to menstrual hygiene management needs in disaster settings, in Vanuatu**

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Managing menstruation in a safe and dignified manner can be challenging for girls and women in resource poor settings. These challenges can be compounded by societal taboos, secrecy and embarrassment around menstruation. Displacement and living in emergency contexts can further increase the challenges experienced by girls and women due to a lack of access to sanitary materials, private/safe water and sanitation facilities, places to dry reusable sanitary materials or dispose of used pads and reduced privacy and dignity especially in overcrowded, temporary and transit settings. The increasing global focus on improving Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) interventions in emergency contexts is recognized in the recent (2018) revision of the Sphere Guidelines, which highlight the importance of understanding MHM related practices, social norms and myths to inform this aspect of the humanitarian response.

Increasingly, the Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) have been working to integrate MHM considerations in disaster preparedness and response programming. In 2019, James Cook University and Australian Red Cross partnered with VRCS in a study to explore the sanitary protection needs and preferences of girls/women in Vanuatu and the socio-cultural aspects of menstruation likely to impact MHM in disaster settings. Four communities, one rural and one urban on both Efate and Espiritu Santo islands, that had previously experienced disasters were selected for the study. Participating women and girls each received a MHM kit which included one of four sanitary products, two disposable and two reusable. Qualitative data was collected through eleven focus group discussions involving 125 participants and two interviews of women with disabilities. Quantitative data focusing on sanitary product acceptability was obtained via a simple paper-based survey which was completed by 136 participants. This paper will present the key findings and discuss the implications in disaster preparedness and response for the VRCS.