



WATER, WOMEN AND DISABILITY STUDY

SURVIVING VERSES THRIVING

SUMMARY

The Water, Women and Disability study* carried out in Vanuatu's SANMA and TORBA Provinces highlights the isolation and stigma experienced by several interrelated vulnerable groups: women who menstruate, women and men with disabilities, and women and men who experience incontinence. Whilst the study focused on vulnerabilities of these groups in relation to WASH, the results also exposed the negative implications of exclusion on wellbeing and satisfaction with life overall. Furthermore, the study also identified examples of self-limitation, meaning that some participants felt they were not able to participate in life as much as they wanted to, often as a result of feeling like they were a burden on their families.

KEY FINDINGS

The study found that based on self-reported satisfaction with life:

People with disabilities were more likely to be struggling and less likely to be thriving than people without disabilities.

Amongst people with disabilities:

People with mobility limitations, memory and self care limitations reported lowest current satisfaction with life.

Amongst people with disabilities women, people in the lowest 50% of socio-economic status and people with self-care limitations were the **least likely to be thriving.**

Ageing, disability and incontinence discrimination inhibits a person's ability to thrive. A supportive family is crucial for dignity, but the study found this was mainly afforded to younger men who became disabled after getting married.

The Gallup World Poll Cantril Scale was used to assess overall wellbeing, based on reported satisfaction with life as a whole currently, and expected satisfaction with life as a whole in five years' time. According to the scale the study found that:

WOMEN AND MEN WITH DISABILITIES WERE THREE TIMES LESS LIKELY TO BE THRIVING THAN WOMEN AND MEN WITHOUT DISABILITIES.

The study found that people with disabilities reported lower participation than their peers across a range of activities which included being:

8 TIMES more likely **not to be able to visit other people in the community**

AND

9 TIMES more likely **not to be able to participate in religious or community affairs as much as they'd like to.**

THERE WERE MANY ACCOUNTS ACROSS ALL PARTICIPANTS WHO EXPERIENCE INCONTINENCE LIMITING THEIR OWN PARTICIPATION, WITH A LACK OF PUBLIC TOILETS AND FEAR OF SOILING ONESELF BEING CITED AS A MAJOR CONCERN. PEOPLE WITHOUT A DISABILITY AND WITH MORE FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE ABLE TO HAVE A GREATER DEGREE OF FREEDOM, AS THEY CAN DRIVE HOME OR GET TO A PUBLIC TOILET IN URBAN AREAS, BUT THIS IS STRESSFUL AND REQUIRES FORWARD PLANNING.



People **without** a disability who experience incontinence generally do not require support and are able to manage with difficulty, but independently.

People with disabilities are more likely to require support and this differs depending on the functional difficulty experienced. People who experience functional limitations across a number of domains often require total and constant care, which restricts their ability to participate fully in life.

The study found that people **without** a disability living in rural areas may self-limit participation if they have a heavy menstrual flow because they are concerned about leakage.

Carers of young women who have difficulties remembering, concentrating, understanding or communicating, reported keeping them at home during menstruation because they would not wear a menstrual product and carers feared they would have blood stained clothes.

* The Water, Women and Disability study findings on disability prevalence are based on data collected from 56,402 individuals across SANMA and TORBA provinces in Vanuatu, from 11,446 households. In addition, a case-control study of 1516 participants was also carried out. This means a sub-sample of survey participants identified as having a disability age 5+ and an equal number of people without disabilities were examined more closely to assess differences in WASH access and experiences about a range of topics such as education, menstrual hygiene and incontinence explored by the study.

