



Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a major health issue affecting women and girls of reproductive age worldwide. Fifty-two per cent of the female population is of reproductive age at any given time¹. The transition into reproductive age for some girls is often met with fear and anxiety due to a lack of knowledge about menstruation and a lack of resources about the changes that are occurring in their bodies. School-aged girls in marginalised communities face the largest barriers to MHM, as many schools do not have







the necessary facilities, supplies, knowledge, and understanding to appropriately support girls during menstruation. This negatively impacts their education and ability to stay in school. Furthermore, schools often have inadequate water and sanitation available, making menstrual hygiene almost impossible to maintain, causing stress and embarrassment for female students. Also, communities often hold local cultural beliefs or taboos related to menstruation that can threaten a girl's physical and/or emotional well-being.

Barriers to MHM in Schools

Many barriers exist that prevent MHM in schools and hinder girls' access to equitable education, undermine their well-being, and prevent dignity and empowerment. These barriers include lack of access to sanitation products and facilities, lack of social support, schools' lack of access to consistent supplies of water, restrooms that are not MHM friendly, gender-based violence, and the stigmatization of menstruation.

Menstruation Matters²

World Vision is working to respond to MHM-related barriers that adolescent girls face. World Vision acknowledges that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlighted below are all essential in supporting safe and dignifying MHM. These six goals work alongside each other to support the empowerment and education of women and girls through promoting healthy MHM. Healthy MHM requires access to education, sanitation (toilets, water, and soap), menstrual products, and a means of disposal. Furthermore, there are additional systemic factors that impact the quality of MHM, such as informed professionals, positive social norms, policies, and health services.

	MHM is a critical component of reproductive health and an important entry point for adolescent sexual and reproductive health programming.
	Factual information on MHM and puberty is part of the school curriculum and the capacities of teachers are built to teach about these issues with comfort.
	Women and girls can manage their menstruation with normalcy and dignity. Taboos about menstruation are broken down and positive social norms around menstruation are built.
	Women and girls need water and sanitation facilities that are safe, socially and culturally acceptable, and where they can safely dispose of menstrual products in order to manage menstruation in privacy and dignity.
	Menstruation should not limit women's ability to work. Employers should provide adequate sanitation facilities at workplace, including water, soap for washing and disposal.
	Policies and quality standards promote safe and affordable options and dynamic markets for menstrual products. Sustainable, environmentally-friendly menstrual products and their disposal are promoted.

Source: WASH United²

World Vision's Response

World Vision facilitates construction of toilets separate for boys and girls and is working to provide MHM awareness and guidance to all school children. Toilets are to be kept hygienic, clean, and usable with at least one toilet for women and girls to manage menstruation. These facilities should have means for disposing of menstrual waste safely, water for washing, and offer privacy and security for women and girls.



Beyond schools

Current research and practice around MHM is highly concentrated in the school environment and is often addressed within individual sectors, rather than in an integrated way -- including in World Vision's work. World Vision intends to build on learnings from existing MHM research and programming to develop a more multi-sectoral approach to MHM – aligning the sectors of education, livelihoods, health, WASH, and gender to advocate and intervene for healthy MHM for women and girls beyond the school environment and in all settings where women and girls live, work, learn, play, and seek services.

Spotlight: DREAMS Project

In Uganda, one of the critical factors that undermines menstrual hygiene management is the limited knowledge and support from men and boys, which appear to be informed by stigma, lack of knowledge, and social norms embedded in gender relations. This contributes to poor school performance and attendance. Efforts have been made globally to close the gender gap in education by paying attention to the specific needs of pre- and post-pubescent girls.

World Vision and the Center for Transformative Parenting and Research are working together to empower adolescent girls and boys with skills in making their own reusable sanitary pads as a way of improving attendance and retention of girls in school. The goal is to positively influence existing attitudes and beliefs that can contribute to gender-based violence by promoting views on menstruation as a positive and healthy part of adolescent growth and development.

Each training session targets 35 girls and 15 boys in every school. The trainings aim to equip girls and boys with skills to make reusable pads, and empower school-children with knowledge on menstrual hygiene and with resources about the changes that occur in their bodies during maturation.





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Sources

¹World Vision International (2016). Menstrual Hygiene Management. Available online: <https://www.wvcentral.org/community/wash/Pages/Menstrual-Hygiene-Management.aspx>

²WASH United (2017). Infographic MHM and SDGs. Available online: http://menstrualhygieneday.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MHD_infographic_MHM-SDGs.pdf

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