



Fact Sheet



Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) to school girls

Menstruation is neither a disease nor a disability. It is a natural process. WaterAid 2013 described, "on any given day, more than 800 million women between the ages of 15 and 49 are menstruating" (Water Aid 2013:17). MHM therefore, "focuses on practical strategies for coping with monthly periods.... ways [which] women keep clean and healthy during menstruation and how they acquire, use and dispose of blood-absorbing materials" (Water Engineering and Development Centre 2012:1). In some areas in Tanzania, menstruating girls are not allowed to touch water sources, cook, wash dishes, touch plants or pass through planted fields. The cultural barriers around menstruation are associated with traditional taboos, such as ideas relating to impurity, witchcraft and local superstitions, which lead to negative attitudes and practices.

Insufficient infrastructure at schools

Results from schools in 16 districts revealed (National Institute for Medical Research, 2016):

Latrines:

- 11% meets minimum standard
- 26% of schools have > 100 pupils/ latrine or no latrines at all
- 9% of school latrines are clean
- 1% of schools have soap available

Water facilities

- **not** available in 38% of the schools
- **non-functional** in 46% of the cases

On top of this, menstruating girls have to cope with:

- 52% of the girl latrines do **not** have doors
- 63% of the school latrines have no place to dispose sanitary pads

Studies (2015): SNV in Sengerema, Mufindi and Chato districts and TAWASANET in Temeke and Kilombero:

- 98% of the schools have insufficient WASH facilities for girls in terms of water, privacy and adequate waste disposal (SNV).
- There is a lack of access to pain relief (analgesic) drugs (TAWASANET).
- The expenses for commercial sanitary pads are high (TAWASANET).

Poor knowledge transfer

Results from schools in 16 districts revealed (National Institute for Medical Research, 2016):

Inappropriate hygiene practices:

- Unclean sanitary pad materials
- Changing pads infrequently
- Insertion of unclean material into vagina
- Unsafe disposal of used sanitary materials or blood
- Lack of hand-washing after changing a sanitary towel

Health risks:

- Poor protection and inadequate washing facilities may increase susceptibility to infection
- In case of female genital cutting: blockage and build-up of blood clots is created behind the infibulated area: pain, additional infection risk

Studies (2015): SNV in Sengerema, Mufindi and Chato districts and TAWASANET in Temeke and Kilombero:

- In addition to pain, it is difficult to concentrate in classes due to a lack of confidence caused by poor sanitary wear and fear of staining their uniforms (SNV).
- 48% missing class due to menstruation, with 36% staying home during days of heavy flow and 12% not attending school at all during menstruation (SNV).
- 78% responded that menstrual affect academic performance (TAWASANET).



In Tanzania the 1992 Education Policy does not refer to WASH or menstrual hygiene management in schools, although the 2010 School WASH Guideline and the 2012–2017 National School WASH Strategy have included menstrual hygiene management. The Guideline refers to rest rooms for girls and also suggests the use of nurses' rooms for this purpose. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) has set a minimum standard of one toilet per 20 girls and one toilet per 25 boys.

Why menstruation matters?

- Menstruation matters to education: When schools have the right facilities and education materials – they can help girls manage their menstruation with pride and dignity, and contribute to better education, gender equality and health outcomes.
- Menstruation matters to boys and men too: Taboos are created by the whole of society – in order to break the silence around menstrual hygiene, we need boys and men to also start speaking about periods.
- Menstruation matters to health: many girls and women can't afford sanitary napkins or cloths and often rely on unsafe materials, like old clothes and mattress sponge, that can cause infection.
- Menstruation matters for progress: improving menstrual hygiene can have a profound effect on girls and women, as it can help unlock progress related to health, education and gender equality.
- YOU matter to menstruation: yes –you can play an important role in breaking the silence around menstruation.



Recommendation to improve MHM to school girls

- Considering menstruation issues in school curricula
- Ensuring safe and clean toilets at school
- Ensuring privacy to change their menstrual protection material as often as necessary
- Providing clean water and soaps to wash as required
- Providing proper waste disposal facilities
- Ensuring availability of quality sanitary protection materials
- Providing psycho-social support for menstruating girls
- Providing affordable sanitary pads and other requirements such as medicine and mattresses
- Addressing the culture of 'silence'