



Issue 223 | May 25, 2016 | Focus on Menstrual Hygiene

In celebration of Menstrual Hygiene Day, May 28, and its theme: Menstruation Matters to Everyone, Everywhere, this issue of the weekly focuses on menstrual hygiene and includes articles on men's roles in supporting menstrual hygiene management, inclusiveness in general, and the need for policy work.

More than 100 past issues of the Weekly are [archived](#) on the WASHplus website.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Putting the Men into Menstruation: The Role of Men and Boys in Community Menstrual Hygiene Management. *Waterlines*, 2015. T Mahon. [Link](#).

This article examines how men and boys have an essential role in effective menstrual hygiene programs and describes an initiative to engage men and boys in Uttar Pradesh, India. While significant progress has been made in developing comprehensive approaches to menstrual hygiene management (MHM), the role of men and boys in supporting menstrual hygiene has been lacking. In India, WaterAid and Vatsalya have targeted men and boys to address this gap in a program that started in December 2011. As a result of the initiative, men and boys began to talk about menstruation more freely and were better able to support the MHM needs of women and girls within the household, community, and school.

Mainstreaming MHM in Schools through the Play-Based Approach: Lessons Learned from Ghana. *Waterlines*, 2015. G Dorgbetor. [Link](#).

The study objective was to identify and document the effectiveness of the play-based approach in promoting MHM in schools and share lessons learned. The author carried out an exploratory evaluation on the promotion of MHM activities as part of WASH in Schools programs in 120 public schools in Ghana. Comparison was drawn between 60 schools currently using the play-based approach, and 60 schools that were not. The study showed the potential in play-based approaches, which could accelerate and sustain the implementation of MHM in schools. More teachers and school children participated and demonstrated considerable knowledge and confidence discussing MHM. The play-based activities also served as a point of attraction for the primary school children. The study indicated positive attitudes in boys towards menstruating girls and improved personal hygiene among adolescent girls.

Unpacking the Policy Landscape for Menstrual Hygiene Management: Implications for School WASH Programmes in India. *Waterlines*, 2015. M Arundati. [Link](#).

This article discusses a scoping exercise that examines how select policy initiatives implemented by the Government of India address MHM, especially in the context of schools. This document review found that most policy initiatives addressing MHM are geared toward adolescent girls, with a focus primarily on the hardware (i.e., infrastructure, sanitary napkins)

or software (i.e., health education) components. Most programs are implemented at the school level, though guidelines for implementation are not always explicit.

Towards a Sustainable Solution for School Menstrual Hygiene Management: Cases of Ethiopia, Uganda, South-Sudan, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. *Waterlines*, 2015. T Selamawit. [Link](#).

This article highlights baseline survey findings of the current MHM practices in designated areas of Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. The authors argue for a comprehensive approach that can improve: knowledge, attitudes, and practices of girls, parents, and the community; sanitary materials supply; the policy environment; and the physical infrastructure. They conclude that the issue of MHM is gaining recognition as part of the development agenda for improving girls' school participation.

Do Menstrual Hygiene Management Interventions Improve Education and Psychosocial Outcomes for Women and Girls in Low and Middle Income Countries? A Systematic Review. *PLoS One*, 2016. J Hennegan. [Link](#).

This article summarizes and appraises evidence of the effectiveness of menstruation management interventions in improving women and girls' education, work, and psychosocial well-being in low- and middle-income countries. The authors conclude that further research is needed to establish the role of MHM in education performance, employment, and other psychosocial outcomes.

A Time for Global Action: Addressing Girls' Menstrual Hygiene Management Needs in Schools. *PLoS Med*, 2016. M Sommer. [Link](#).

The authors reflect on priorities needed to guide global, national, and local action to address girls' MHM needs in schools.

"Bitten By Shyness": Menstrual Hygiene Management, Sanitation, and the Quest for Privacy in South Africa. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 2016. F Scorgie. [Link](#).

Using the Photovoice method with 21 women in participatory workshops and in-depth interviews, researchers collected data on MHM in three sites in Durban, South Africa. All women reported using disposable sanitary pads. Although they were aware that disposable pads were non-biodegradable, incompatible with waterborne flush systems, and fill up pit latrines, they had little experience with reusable products. Considerable energy was devoted to concealing and containing menstrual waste, and women expressed concern about inadequate privacy during menstruation. All sites lacked discreet disposal options and reliable water access, while outdoor sanitation facilities were considered unsafe. The authors concluded that the findings highlighted the need for advocacy to improve safety and privacy of facilities for women in this setting.

Menstrual Hygiene Management: Education and Empowerment for Girls? *Waterlines*, 2015. J Deepa. [Link](#).

This paper discusses the recent WASH sector attention to resolving the menstrual hygiene crisis for young girls in developing countries. MHM interventions, including the use of sanitary pads, education and awareness, and where possible, separate, sanitary toilets, are identified as having far-reaching impacts on the education and empowerment of girls. Field research conducted in Ghana's Northern Region indicates a pronounced socialized, sexualized understanding and experience of menstruation among young girls and their families, school teachers, and local NGOs. The authors note that WASH initiatives only allow interventions to manage menstrual hygiene, leaving the young girls and others in their social settings to deal with the larger subset of sexuality issues. They argue that opening the dominant discourse of a medicalized concept of menstruation to other meanings and experiences will have significant implications for the education and empowerment of young adolescent girls.

Menstrual Hygiene Among Adolescent Girls. *Indian Journal of Community Health*, 2015. R Sharma. [Link](#).

The article discusses how menstruation and menstrual practices are still clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions resulting in adolescent girls remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygienic health practices, which sometimes result in adverse health outcomes. To assess knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene before and after a teaching program among adolescent girls, an experimental study was conducted among 50 adolescent girls of a secondary school situated in Uttarakhand. The authors concluded that educational television programs, trained school nurses/health personnel, motivated school teachers, and knowledgeable parents can play a very important role in transmitting the vital message of correct menstrual hygiene to adolescent girls.

BLOG POSTS AND NEWS

How Sukhibhava is Helping Women in Urban Slums Move Beyond Sand, Ash, and Leaves to Improve Menstrual Hygiene. *Your Story*. March 2016. S Singha. [Link](#).

The organization Sukhibhava works with women in the urban slums of Bengaluru, educating them about menstrual hygiene and providing them affordable menstrual hygiene products like sanitary pads through locally trained female micro-entrepreneurs. Awareness sessions are carried out through a 25-minute interactive video, and then the organization's team identifies women living within these communities to become its micro-entrepreneurs. These women are trained to conduct awareness sessions and distribute the sanitary pads that are purchased for lower than the retail price. Sukhibhava supports these micro-entrepreneurs for three months helping them build their networks and ensures they set up sustainable micro-businesses. A micro-entrepreneur make a small profit on every pack sold.

The Movement for Affordable and Accessible Sanitary Napkins in South Asia. *Boom*, March 2016. [Link](#).

This article looks at menstrual health as being more than a women's issue, and one that requires action by policy makers. It also discusses efforts in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal that are helping to make good-quality sanitary napkins affordable and available to the countries' women. In Bangladesh, an organization that shelters girls also helps them make their own pads. In India and Nepal, several menstrual pad projects train local women to sew menstrual pad kits.

PRESENTATIONS AND EVENTS

Menstrual Hygiene Day. [Link](#).

This annual event will be held on May 28, 2016. The website features fact sheets and other resources to promote menstrual hygiene worldwide.

Menstrual Hygiene Day serves as a neutral platform to bring together individuals, organizations, social businesses, and the media to create a united and strong voice for women and girls around the world, helping to break the silence around MHM.

DC Coalition for Menstrual Hygiene Day. [Link](#).

WASHplus is a member of this coalition of organizations based in Washington, DC, that have joined forces to advocate for the important link between access to MHM, WASH, education, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, women's and girl's empowerment, and the realization of fundamental human rights. This link contains a press release on MH Day themes for 2016 and a social media planner.

WEBINARS AND VIDEOS

India's Menstruation Man. *Al Jazeera*, 2016. D Gilson. [Link](#).

This video recounts the story of Arunachalam Muruganatham, who began a quest to develop an affordable sanitary napkin that could be produced inexpensively and be used by more women in India. His machines can be purchased for far less than other machines and can be used by schools or women's groups to produce their own sanitary pads and sell the surplus; the machine has created jobs for women in rural India. To date, he has sold 1,300 machines to 27 states and has recently begun exporting them to developing countries.

Banished: Why Menstruation Can Mean Exile. *Al Jazeera*, 2016. D Gilson. [Link](#).

This web documentary explains the stigma associated with menstruation in villages in Nepal, including the use of menstrual huts and being banished from the household for the duration of the menstrual period. The dangers of the menstrual hut are highlighted, including women dying of suffocation or hypothermia. The documentary tells the story of a young woman who goes through her menstrual cycle and has to live in a menstrual hut for five days until her cycle ends and she can be purified and rejoin the household.

WASHplus Weeklies highlight topics such as Urban WASH, Household Air Pollution, Innovation, Household Water Treatment and Storage, Handwashing, Integration, and more.



About WASHplus - WASHplus, a multi-year project funded through USAID's Bureau for Global Health, supports healthy households and communities by creating and delivering interventions that lead to improvements in access, practice and health outcomes related to water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and household air pollution (HAP). WASHplus uses at-scale, targeted as well as integrated approaches to reduce diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections, the two top killers of children under five years of age globally. For information, visit www.washplus.org or email: contact@washplus.org.