



Supportive Environments for Healthy Communities

Issue 30 October 28, 2011 | Focus on Menstrual Hygiene Management

This issue of the *WASHplus Weekly* focuses on menstrual hygiene management (MHM). MHM is a neglected topic that has far-reaching implications for health, education, and gender. A WaterAid publication states, "MHM is fundamental to the dignity of women and girls and an integral part of basic sanitation and hygiene services for which every woman and girl has a right."

WASHplus is working closely with other stakeholders like WaterAid and UNICEF to develop concrete programming, guidance, and tools to address this vital issue. An informal community of practice is forming and interested parties are encouraged to join in.

The resources below include case studies from Bangladesh, India, Kenya, and other countries and links to websites, videos, and online forums on MHM. Please contact WASHplus if you have additional resources to add to this topic or if you have suggestions for future issues of the *Weekly*.

FEATURED PUBLICATION

- **Menstrual Hygiene Management Briefing Note, 2011. WaterAid. ([Full-text](#))**
This briefing note summarizes the discussions from a recent workshop organized by SHARE and WaterAid to explore MHM. The note includes recommendations for collaboration, details the design of a new research program, and provides a list of key MHM research priorities.

REPORTS/ARTICLES

- **A Community Based Study on Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescent Girls, *Indian Journal of Maternal and Child Health, July-September 2011*. K Jogdand, Katuri Medical College. ([Full-text](#))**
Only 36 percent of adolescent girls surveyed for this study were informed about menstruation prior to menarche. Among the study's recommendations: All mothers irrespective of their educational status should be taught to break their inhibitions about discussing menstruation with their daughters before the age of menarche;

education regarding reproductive health and hygiene should be included as a part of the school curriculum; and hygienic practices can be improved if sanitary pads are made available at affordable prices.

- **Cultural Aspects of Menstruation and Menstrual Hygiene in Adolescents**, *Expert Review of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, March 2011. M Farage. ([Full-text](#))
Menstruation brings with it a significant hygiene challenge, but in many cultures it is also an important social milestone, surrounded by many cultural practices that profoundly alter a girl's life. The ability to practically manage menstruation may also impact a girl's life, depending on the availability of appropriate absorbent products and access to private sanitation facilities.
- **'The Girl with Her Period is the One to Hang Her Head' Reflections on Menstrual Management among Schoolgirls in Rural Kenya**, *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 11(7) 2011. S McMahon, Emory University Center for Global Safe Water. ([Full-text](#))
Further research on menstrual management options that are practical, sustainable, and culturally acceptable must be conducted to inform future programs and policies that aim to empower young girls as they transition into womanhood. Stakeholders working within this and similar contexts must consider systematic mechanisms to explain to young girls what menstruation is and how to manage it.
- **Growing Up at School—A Guide to Menstrual Management for School Girls**, 2011. A Kanyemba, Water Information Network South Africa. ([Full-text](#))
This book on menstrual management was created for Zimbabwean schoolgirls and describes the problems girls face when they are menstruating and how to deal with them in a practical way. Several of the girls' own stories are told and the book is also available in Shona and Ndebele.
- **How to Integrate Water, Sanitation and Hygiene into HIV Programmes**, 2010. USAID, WHO. ([Full-text](#))
This document is the first comprehensive guide to integrate WASH practices into HIV care. It contains guidance on implementing priority WASH practices, including WASH in global and national HIV/AIDS policy and guidance, and integrating WASH-HIV programs. A section of the report covers menstruation management for HIV/AIDS patients and their caregivers. *Note: This publication was prepared with support from the USAID Hygiene Improvement Project—the predecessor project of WASHplus.*
- **Menstrual Hygiene: Breaking the Silence in Programmes of WaterAid Bangladesh**, 2011. K Yesmin, WaterAid. ([Full-text](#))
Despite major developments in the hygiene and sanitation sector in recent years, the menstrual requirements of women and adolescent girls have been ignored. An awareness-building program from WaterAid Bangladesh (WAB) helped put the issue on the development agenda. Menstrual awareness and management is now incorporated into all WAB and partner sanitation and hygiene programs. This brief reports on

achievements made in a very short time to overcome the wall of silence that surrounds the issue of menstrual hygiene.

- **Menstrual Hygiene: Knowledge and Practice among Adolescent School Girls of Saoner, Nagpur District**, *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, October 2011. B Subhash. ([Full-text](#))

The purpose of this study was to assess the knowledge and the practices of menstrual hygiene among rural and urban school-going adolescent girls. Mothers served as the major source of information about menstruation for these girls, yet more than three-fourths of those surveyed were not aware of the cause and the source of the bleeding. A majority of them had knowledge about the use of sanitary pads.

- **Menstrual Hygiene Matters: Guidelines for Practitioners**, 2011. WaterAid. ([Link to presentation](#)) (Registration required to download presentation on Slideshare)
This presentation is a synthesis of best practices in menstrual hygiene management and was presented at the UNC Water and Health Conference, October 2011.

- **Putting Menstrual Hygiene Management on to the School Water and Sanitation Agenda**, *Waterlines*, 29(4) 2010. M Sommer, Columbia University. ([Abstract](#))

The water and sanitation community, in partnership with the education sector, is long overdue in taking ownership of the menstrual hygiene management agenda for schools in low-income settings. While the global community writ large is implementing numerous interventions aimed at closing the gender gap in education, limited attention is being paid to ensure schools are non-discriminating structural environments where both girls and boys can succeed academically.

- **What Impact Does the Provision of Separate Toilets for Girls at Schools Have on their Primary and Secondary School Enrolment, Attendance and Completion? A Systematic Review of the Evidence**, 2011. I Birdthistle. London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. ([Full-text](#))

To help verify whether WASH conditions contribute to girls' educational outcomes, a systematic literature review was conducted to determine what impact the provision of separate toilets for girls has on their primary and secondary school enrollment, attendance, and completion.

- **WASH and Women: A Situation Analysis of Living and Working Conditions in the Tea Gardens of Dibrugarh District, Assam**, 2011. R Amiya, UNICEF. ([Full-text](#))

This report discusses four critical facets of WASH status. Noting the significant role women play in ensuring the well-being of children, families, and communities, the study places a special emphasis on the female perspective. Specifically, the report covers the following four research themes under WASH: household consumption behavior; sanitation and hygiene at home and in the hospital; menstrual hygiene management; and community participation.

- **Where the Education System and Women's Bodies Collide: The Social and**

Health Impact of Girls' Experiences of Menstruation and Schooling in

Tanzania, *J Adolesc*, August, 2010. M Sommer, Columbia University. ([Abstract](#))

This study explored the social context of girls' experiences of menses and schooling in northern Tanzania, with data collection focused on capturing girls' voiced concerns and recommendations. Results indicated that pubescent girls are confronted with numerous challenges managing menses within the school environment. Many are transitioning through puberty without adequate guidance on puberty and menses management, and pursuing education in environments that lack adequate facilities, supplies, and gender sensitivity.

WEBSITES/FORUMS

- **Menstruation, Hygiene, and Public Health: Surveying Women's Knowledge and Habits in Dharwad.** ([Link to website](#))

This website contains data and information about the habits and opinions of women in relation to menstruation in three locations of Dharwad district, India. The survey asked questions on different aspects of women's lives such as their hygiene habits, knowledge of menstruation, and knowledge and opinion of sanitary napkins or other means of managing their menstrual flow, such as cotton cloth.

- **SHARE-funded Research: Synthesizing Existing Knowledge on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM).** ([Link to research project information](#))

This research aims to highlight successful approaches to MHM in developing countries (particularly in Africa and Asia), as well as to understand the impact of general menstrual hygiene practices on health and education.

- **Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) Forum on Menstrual Hygiene Management.** ([Link to online forum](#))

This online forum features posts and resources from Kenya, Zimbabwe, and other countries on a range of MHM topics.

VIDEOS

- **Eco Femme: A Women's Empowerment Project in Rural India**, 2011. ([Link to video](#))

Auroville Village Action Group, located in Tamil Nadu, India, presents its innovative project addressing women's empowerment, personal hygiene, and health.

- **WaterAid—Freedom of Mobility: Experiences from Villages in the States of Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, India**, 2010. ([Link to video](#))

This is the first of three presentations made by Mariya Fernandes of WaterAid in a workshop for hygiene practitioners in Bangladesh. The cultural practices of two villages related to menstruation are discussed in the context of hygiene challenges, including a lack of access to sanitary pads.

- **WaterAid—Freedom of Mobility: Menstrual Hygiene Assistance for Women in Chhattisgarh (Part 2)**, 2010. ([Link to video](#))

A continuation of the Freedom of Mobility workshop, this video covers the community of Mahalaxmi where women who were suffering ill effects from poor menstrual hygiene can now purchase sanitary napkins through a WaterAid project. In addition to obvious health improvements, this access has proved to be empowering for the women of the community.

- **WaterAid—Freedom of Mobility: Menstrual Hygiene Assistance for Women in Chhattisgarh (Part 3)**, 2010. ([Link to video](#)) In the Q&A follow-up of the Freedom of Mobility series sanitation implications of the provision of pads are discussed along with the mechanics of pad production and dissemination.

Each *WASHplus Weekly* highlights topics such as Urban WASH, Indoor Air Pollution, Innovation, Household Water Treatment and Storage, Hand Washing, Integration, and more. If you would like to feature your organization's materials in upcoming issues, please send them to Dan Campbell, WASHplus knowledge resources specialist, at dacampbell@fhi360.org.



About WASHplus - WASHplus, a five-year project funded through USAID's Bureau for Global Health, creates supportive environments for healthy households and communities by delivering high-impact interventions in water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and indoor air pollution (IAP). WASHplus uses proven, at-scale interventions 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.

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