



Module five

Working with schools on menstrual hygiene

*Part of Menstrual hygiene matters;
A resource for improving menstrual
hygiene around the world, written by*

*Sarah House, Thérèse Mahon
and Sue Cavill (2012).*

The full version can be downloaded
from www.wateraid.org/mhm.

This module will cover...

- 5.1 Getting started
- 5.2 Practical menstrual hygiene interventions in schools

Schoolgirls in Ghana learn from other girls' experiences of menstruation shared in the book *Growth and changes* developed by Marni Sommer and Nana Ackatia-Armah with input from the Ministry of Education (Photo: Nana Ackatia-Armah)



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5.1 Getting started

For an introduction into working with schools on menstrual hygiene, this module should be read alongside other modules and toolkits in this resource. Table 5.1 highlights the relevant sections.

Table 5.1 Key introductory information to be read in association with Module 5

| Introductory information | Refer to: |
|--|--|
| Basics of menstruation, and menstruation-related challenges women and girls face in their daily lives | Module 1 |
| Institutional responsibilities for menstrual hygiene | Module 2.1 Module 2.2 |
| Building staff competence and confidence to talk about menstrual hygiene | Module 2.3 |
| The role of boys and men in menstrual hygiene | Module 2.4 |
| Developing school leadership, counsellors’ and teachers’ confidence and capacity to talk about menstrual hygiene | Toolkit 4.3.1 Toolkit 5.3.1 Toolkit 7.3.1 |
| Obtaining feedback on menstrual hygiene interventions, and assessment and monitoring | Module 9.1 |

Menstrual hygiene challenges faced by schoolgirls and female teachers

- **Lack of sanitary protection materials** – leading to embarrassment and stress due to leakage, smell and teasing.
- **Less concentration and participation, including not standing up to answer questions** – due to embarrassment, stress, concern over leakage or smell and discomfort.
- **Lack of private facilities and water supply** – for washing and drying soiled clothing, cloths or hands.
- **Absence** – due to a lack of facilities and services at school to manage menstruation.
- **Fear of using the latrine** – in case others discover menstrual blood.
- **Inability to keep clean** – in some cultures girls and women are not allowed to bathe or wash themselves during menstruation.
- **Bodily smell or the smell of used sanitary materials that have to be taken home for disposal** – causing discomfort or stress.
- **Lack of knowledge** – girls approaching menstruation are especially lacking in information about the process, leaving them scared and embarrassed.
- **Exclusion from sports** – due to discomfort, concern over leakage or because of cultural restrictions.

The following example highlights the expressed wishes of Afghan schoolgirls in relation to menstruation. These wishes are likely to be common across other countries.

Afghan schoolgirls' expressed wishes in relation to menstruation¹

- We want to be aware about menstruation and the physiological changes.
- We don't want to keep away from society due to unawareness of menstruation.
- We want to have knowledgeable parents, especially our mothers to be aware of menstrual health and hygiene to help us prior to the start of the period.
- We are eager to build up our education and have good reputation in the society, so we don't like to be absent from school each month because of unavailability of the school facility.
- We want to have a special subject about menstruation health and hygiene at school even before starting our period.
- Teachers are our second parents. We expect them to teach us in this regard.
- We need the facilities to safely dispose and manage the napkin at school.
- [We want] access to proper hand-washing facilities and soap at schools.
- We wish to have access to shops with low price, good quality pads with female seller at school.
- We want to have a health centre at school (a room for rehabilitation) to help us sometimes for pain of menstruation.

From Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNICEF (2010)

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Benefits of good menstrual hygiene in school for girls and female staff

The benefits of good menstrual hygiene in school (available sanitary protection materials; clean and safe toilets, bathing or changing facilities with locks on the inside of doors; discrete disposal facilities; understanding and supportive staff; information on menstrual hygiene) are considered to include, although not yet well documented:

- More time spent in school (female teachers and schoolgirls).
- Increased concentration.
- Higher self-confidence.
- Increased comfort, good hygiene, less irritation from sanitary materials and less risk of related infections.
- Greater participation.
- More confidence to stand up to answer questions and ask to leave the classroom to use the latrine.

Step-by-step approach to supporting menstrual hygiene in schools

The following example highlights the steps that the State Government of Tamil Nadu, India, and UNICEF went through to integrate menstrual hygiene into programmes in Tamil Nadu (particularly school water, sanitation and hygiene programmes). Steps included training engineers, building the capacity of teachers and exchanging learning, all of which has increased the knowledge and confidence of staff.

Example 5.1 Step-by-step for menstrual hygiene – Government of India and UNICEF, Tamil Nadu³

| Year | Activity |
|--------|---|
| 2004 | Women's self-help groups trained in sanitary napkin production. |
| 2004 | Incinerators for safe disposal of napkins installed in schools and sanitary complexes. |
| 2006 | Capacity building of teachers and trainers in menstrual hygiene. |
| 2006-8 | Three international learning exchange visits on menstrual hygiene. |
| 2007 | Booklet for girls in Tamil, Telugu and English and curriculum package produced. |
| 2007 | Sanitary napkin vending machine installed in 128 schools and hostels. |
| 2007-8 | Education civil engineers trained on girl-friendly toilet designs. |
| 2007-8 | Education and rural development departments include sessions on menstrual hygiene, under Life Skills Education ⁴ . |
| 2007-8 | Student assemblies established to look after use and maintenance [of facilities]. |
| 2007-8 | NGO network on menstrual hygiene established across the state. |
| 2008 | Compact electrical incinerators for disposal of sanitary pads developed. |

Institutional responsibilities for working with schools on menstrual hygiene

While one ministry (usually the Ministry of Education) will generally lead on working with schools, for the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene and for menstrual hygiene more specifically, several sectors will be involved with different responsibilities. It is important to be clear on the responsibilities to be able to collaborate across sectors when developing materials, guidelines, standards or interventions. The following case study from Tanzania provides one example of how collaboration can be achieved.

Obtaining feedback and monitoring menstrual hygiene in schools

It is very important to involve girls in the development of menstrual hygiene interventions in schools, and in any project to support improved access to sanitary materials. Menstrual hygiene should be integrated into school monitoring systems through:

- In-school monitoring of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities (which can be undertaken by schoolchildren or teachers).
- External education inspectors' checklists.

On the following pages are two examples of monitoring checklists for schools.

Collaboration between the ministries responsible for education, health, water and local government to develop school water, sanitation and hygiene guidelines for Tanzania, incorporating menstrual hygiene

In 2009-10 the four ministries responsible for education, health, water and local government, with the support of Netherlands Development Agency, SNV, WaterAid and UNICEF as well as a range of other NGOs, developed a set of school water, sanitation and hygiene guidelines for Tanzania through a participatory process. Efforts were made to integrate issues relating to both accessibility and menstrual hygiene throughout, including into school management, infrastructure, the curriculum and monitoring routines.

A separate activity was also undertaken by a national NGO – the Tanzania Water and Sanitation Agency (TWESA), Dr Marni Sommer of Columbia University, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, and UNICEF. This was to develop teacher training guidance notes to assist them in supporting girls with their menstrual hygiene learning using a Tanzanian girls' menstrual hygiene booklet². Trials were also undertaken to distribute the girls' menstrual hygiene book at scale, to every girl in the last three years of primary school across four districts of Tanzania. This was a learning process for a possible national scale-up to all districts and to investigate the options for menstrual protection disposal methods, including incineration. The findings from this research will be incorporated into the final version of the national school water, sanitation and hygiene guidelines.



(Picture: Government of the United Republic of Tanzania/ Rashid Mbago, reproduced directly from the Tanzania girls' menstrual hygiene booklet by M Sommer)

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Example 5.2 UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) water, sanitation and hygiene in schools monitoring package: The survey module⁵

SS3. In general, how clean are the toilet facilities?* (Visit as many of each type of toilet as possible, and then for each type of toilet **check the appropriate box** with your general impression. Where a particular type of toilet doesn't exist, leave the box blank).

(use the key below)

| | Clean | Somewhat Clean | Not Clean |
|---|-------|----------------|-----------|
| Students' toilets | | | |
| Teachers' toilets (if any) | | | |
| Toilets that are for the use of anyone in the school (students or teachers, male or female) | | | |

Key for Above Table

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Clean | The toilet facilities are not smelly, there is no visible faeces in or around the facility, there are no flies and there is no litter. |
| Somewhat Clean | There is some smell and/or some sign of fecal matter and/or some flies and/or some litter. |
| Not Clean | There is a strong smell and/or presence fecal matter and/or a significant fly problem and/or a large amount of litter. |

SS4. Are girls' toilet facilities separate from boys' toilet facilities? (check one; separate means that the girls' and boys' toilets are in different blocks or designated areas separated from each other by distance and/or some physical barrier like a wall)

Yes ☐ No ☐ Partially ☐

SS5. Are girls' individual toilet compartments lockable from the inside (check one; lockable means with a hasp, bolt or similar arrangement)

Yes ☐ No ☐ Some ☐

SS6. What facilities and programmes are there in the school for promoting safe and private menstrual hygiene for older girls? (check all that apply)

| | |
|---|--|
| Menstrual hygiene education sessions for girls | |
| Private washing facilities for cloth napkins (such as a tap and basin inside a lockable toilet stall) | |
| Private disposal/incineration facilities for disposable napkins | |
| Any kind of napkin distribution programme | |
| Other (specify) | |
| None | |
| Don't know | |

SS7. Are toilets accessible to children with disabilities? (check one)

Yes ☐ No ☐ Some ☐

Example 5.3 Checklist for girls' school menstrual health and hygiene monitoring, Afghanistan⁶

This is a tool useful for collection of data of each school by survey and establishes a baseline of all schools in Afghanistan.

| Menstruation Health and Hygiene (MHH) programme- Schools Monitoring Checklist | | | |
|---|---|--------|------|
| Province: | | | |
| District: | | | |
| Village: | | | |
| School name: | | | |
| Reporting period: | | | |
| School infrastructure: 1. Formal building | | | |
| Number of students registered in the school? | | Female | Male |
| Number of teachers in the school. | | Female | Male |
| MHH- Facilities | | | |
| Water Supply | | | |
| 1 | Type of water point: a. Piped water, b. Drilled well, c. Protected dug well with hand-pump, d. Protected spring, e. Unprotected well, f. Unprotected spring/pond, g. River/canal/stream, h. Other (specify) | | |
| 2 | Is the water point working well/ functional? | Yes | No |
| 3 | Is there water available all the time at the designed latrine? | Yes | No |
| 4 | Is the sink water point working properly? | Yes | No |
| 5 | Is the sink drainage operating well? | Yes | No |
| 6 | Are the designed latrines clean and used by the girls? | Yes | No |
| 7 | Are the vent pipes in place? | Yes | No |
| 8 | Is there any operation and maintenance mechanism for the designed latrine? | Yes | No |
| Sanitation | | | |
| 1 | Type of latrine: a. Flush to sewerage, b. Flush to septic tank, c. Improved pit/vault latrine, d. Eco sanitation latrine, e. Traditional pit/vault latrine, f. Open defecation. | | |
| 2 | Is there any operation and maintenance mechanism for the designed latrines? | Yes | No |
| 3 | Are the latrines clean and used by the students? | Yes | No |
| 4 | Is there smell inside the latrine? | Yes | No |

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| | | | |
|---------------------|---|-----|----|
| 5 | Are all the doors in place? | Yes | No |
| 6 | Are the vault cover slabs in place? | Yes | No |
| 7 | Are the surroundings of the latrine clean? | Yes | No |
| 8 | Do girls oriented about the usage of designed latrine? | Yes | No |
| Soap | | | |
| 1 | Is there soap available all the time? | Yes | No |
| 2 | Is pot with its cover available for putting soap? | Yes | No |
| 3 | Are the students using soap for hand washing properly? | Yes | No |
| 4 | Who provides the soap? | | |
| 5 | Do girls aware of washing hand with soap before and after changing napkins? | Yes | No |
| Hygiene (menstrual) | | | |
| 1 | Have any staff members been trained on menstrual health and hygiene education/promotion? | Yes | No |
| 2 | How many times a week teachers conduct menstrual health and hygiene sessions? | | |
| 3 | Are menstrual health and hygiene education materials available in the school? (for girls schools) | Yes | No |
| 4 | Are MHH education materials available in the latrines of school? (if girls and boys at the same school the posters should be inside of designed latrine that it is for girls) | Yes | No |
| 5 | Are the material posted in visible area? | Yes | No |
| 6 | Are all the teachers oriented on MHH education by fellow teachers who got trained? | Yes | No |
| 7 | Is there any MHH material available in school? | Yes | No |
| 8 | Is the sink available inside the toilet? | Yes | No |
| Napkin | | | |
| 1 | Are napkins available in the school office for emergency need of the girls? | Yes | No |
| 2 | Do the girls aware of presence of napkins in school office for their emergency need? | Yes | No |
| 3 | Do the girls oriented about the usage of napkins? | Yes | No |
| 4 | Do the girls aware about proper disposal of napkins? | Yes | No |
| | | | |

| Dustbin | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----|----|
| 1 | Is there dustbin available for disposal of napkins in the toilet? | Yes | No |
| 2 | Do the girls aware of method of disposal of napkins in the dustbin of designed latrine? | Yes | No |
| 3 | Does the dustbin empty regularly in the incinerator for burning? | Yes | No |
| 4 | Is there any trained care taker for cleaning or emptying of dustbin to the incinerator? | Yes | No |
| Operation and Maintenance | | | |
| 1 | Is there any care taker for MHH facilities? | Yes | No |
| 2 | Who is responsible for cleaning and maintaining MHH facilities? | | |
| 3 | Does community pay for the maintenance of MHH facilities? | Yes | No |
| 4 | Does community pay for the minor repair of MHH facilities? | Yes | No |
| | | | |
| School Committee | | | |
| 1 | Are there students' club in school? If yes, What are the main activities in the club engaged? | Yes | No |
| 2 | Does the school have a functional PTA and school shore? If yes, Please find out how many times the members met and note the activities supported by PTA and school shore? | | |
| 3 | Is there school management committee (SMC) in place? If yes, what are the main activities the SMC is engaged? | | |
| 4 | Is MHH promoted properly in girls schools? | Yes | No |
| 5 | Is napkin and solid waste disposal system in place and functioning? | Yes | No |
| | | | |
| Incinerator | | | |
| 1 | Is there any incinerator in school? | Yes | No |
| 2 | Is incinerator located in suitable area? | Yes | No |
| 3 | Does incinerator operate properly? | Yes | No |
| 4 | Does incinerator check by care taker? | Yes | No |
| 5 | Is care taker trained for operation of incinerator? | Yes | No |

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5.2 Practical menstrual hygiene interventions in schools

Possible menstrual hygiene interventions in schools are included in Table 5.2. Note that menstrual hygiene interventions are needed in both primary and secondary schools, because girls can start their period at primary school age.

Table 5.2 Menstrual hygiene interventions in schools

| Intervention | Description | Refer to: |
|--|--|--|
| Engaging girls and boys in menstrual hygiene: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menstrual hygiene education sessions • Formation of girls clubs | Sharing information on menstrual hygiene through dialogue with a female teacher or trusted female adult. Forming girls clubs where menstrual hygiene can be discussed. Teaching boys about menstrual hygiene through adolescence lessons for boys and girls. | Keeping healthy during menstruation – Module 1.7 Correcting menstrual myths – Toolkit 1.3.2 Girls' menstruation booklets – Toolkit 1.2.1 Communication framework – Toolkit 9.1.3 Developing information briefs – Toolkit 9.1.4 |
| Ensuring availability of affordable sanitary protection materials | Providing sanitary protection materials or training on how to make your own. | Sanitary protection materials and disposal – Module 3 Toolkit 3 |
| Improving or constructing girl-friendly latrines and changing facilities | Ensuring that latrine cubicles are in a safe location, clean, covered by a screen, and have water supply, soap and a covered disposal bin for used sanitary products. | Latrine, bathing and changing unit designs – Toolkit 5.2 |
| Sanitary protection materials management | Establishing a safe collection and disposal management system for sanitary protection materials. | Waste collection containers and incinerators – Toolkit 3.2.5 Toolkit 3.2.6 |

5.2.1 Engaging school pupils in menstrual hygiene

Engaging girls in menstrual hygiene

Schools provide a useful opportunity to reach a large number of girls with information on menstrual hygiene. Female teachers or other trusted female adults can play an important role in ensuring girls have the information they need on adolescence and how to look after themselves during menstruation. An increasing number of booklets for girls on menstrual hygiene are being developed (see [Toolkit 1.2.1](#)).

Girls can be engaged in menstrual hygiene:

- Through the curriculum.
- Through additional sessions for girls outside the school curriculum.
- Through health and hygiene clubs and other groups.

Engaging boys in adolescence education

Less work has been done in this area, but the benefits of educating boys about adolescence for both themselves and female students are increasingly being recognised. Schools also provide the opportunity of reaching large numbers of boys with information on adolescence (see [Module 1.7.2](#)).

Involving parents in menstrual hygiene

Schools also offer opportunities to engage parents in menstrual hygiene, which can improve support for girls at home, including those who don't attend school. Parent and Teacher Associations can be involved in monitoring how menstrual hygiene-friendly the school environment is, and making improvements and providing additional resources where governments are unable or unwilling to do so.

5.2.2 Integrating menstrual hygiene into the curriculum

Menstrual hygiene is sometimes included in the school curriculum under the subjects of science, home economics or life skills. However, the subject is not always taught appropriately or fully. For example, girls may be taught the biology of the process without learning how they will feel or how they should look after themselves. Male teachers can feel uncomfortable teaching the subject and therefore may skip over the subject quickly. Where harmful cultural myths exist (eg girls and women not being allowed to bathe during their period) the teacher may also not have the correct information to counteract such beliefs.



Self-help groups and girls in residential girls' schools in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were trained in producing sanitary pads (Photo: UNICEF)

In some contexts, education about menstrual hygiene may be taught without reference to the biology, where strict religious or traditional beliefs restrict the teachings due to concerns about teaching girls about sexual relations.

Materials are increasingly being developed to help girls learn about menstrual hygiene, and these can be used, along with additional guidance, by teachers as learning resources (refer to [Toolkit 5.3.2](#) for examples from Afghanistan and Tanzania). More work is needed to incorporate these resources into the curriculum and teacher training, and have them approved by the relevant ministry of education. This will require engaging curriculum development institutes in the issue of menstrual hygiene.

5.2.3 Availability of sanitary materials in schools

Making affordable sanitary materials and products available to schoolgirls around the world remains a significant challenge. A number of programmes are being undertaken in Africa and Asia to supply commercially produced disposable or re-usable pads to girls in school (see examples in [Module 3.2.3](#) and [Toolkit 3.3.2](#)). While this will certainly have a positive impact on girls' education and wellbeing, further attention is needed on the mechanisms for providing longer-term access to pads, whether disposable or re-usable (which will also need replacing after they are worn out from repeated washing).

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One example of an organisation considering the longer-term sustainability of supply is UNICEF's work with the Governments of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in India. Together they have been supporting women's self-help groups and girls in residential schools to make their own re-usable sanitary pads, as well as establishing a supply chain for wider distribution.

Refer to [Module 3](#) and [Toolkit 3](#) for details on all aspects of sanitary product selection, production and the supply chain.

5.2.4 Menstrual hygiene-friendly water and sanitation facilities in schools

The condition of the water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools is frequently recognised as a major challenge for schoolgirls and staff in managing their menstrual hygiene. The two case studies opposite highlight some of the issues that can arise.

Features of menstrual hygiene-friendly schools

Menstrual hygiene-friendly infrastructure:

- Separate latrines are available for boys and girls, and male and female teachers.
- Latrines have doors with locks, and are secure and private with a privacy wall.
- Latrine, water supply and hand-washing facilities are in a safe location.
- Hand-washing facilities are inside the latrine unit, with soap and water available at all times.
- Water is available (from a tap or bucket) inside latrines, bathing units and changing rooms.
- Latrines are easily cleanable and there is an efficient mechanism for sustaining cleanliness and maintenance.
- The facilities are accessible for all girls, boys and staff, including those with mobility limitations.
- Each unit has a washable container with lid for collecting sanitary protection materials, and wrapping materials.
- A small mirror (even a broken piece of mirror) is present in the latrine to help girls check for spotting or leaking and ensure everything is in order before leaving.
- A mechanism is established for the collection and disposal of sanitary protection materials, such as in a pit or incinerator.
- In boarding schools, private bathing facilities are

available and there is somewhere to wash and dry sanitary cloths. Shelves or hooks are provided for hanging cloths and placing pads while changing.

- Changing facilities are provided in a larger latrine cubicle that can be used by all girls, so that sanitary protection materials can be changed discretely.
- In boarding schools, latrines and bathing units have lights and are near the dormitories.
- A financing mechanism is established to sustain the operation and maintenance of the water supply, latrine and hand-washing facilities.

Menstrual hygiene-friendly teaching and school environment:

- Teachers are knowledgeable about menstrual hygiene in school and the needs of girls and female staff.
- Menstrual hygiene is included in the curriculum.
- Appropriate sanitary materials are available for girls who need them.
- Where possible, girls can purchase appropriate, low-cost sanitary products through the school.
- The school governing bodies are aware of the menstrual hygiene needs of girls and staff, and work to ensure the school is menstrual hygiene-friendly.
- Menstrual hygiene is incorporated into the school's standard monitoring systems.

The state of the toilets, South Africa⁷

The toilets at the three schools were in different conditions of hygiene and their state was one of the main issues discussed by all girls. At one school, girls were proud of their toilet and had a supervisor responsible for their maintenance. These toilets were clean, with brightly coloured walls, creating a comfortable non-threatening ambiance. This same level of sanitation was not evident at the other two schools. Learners described them as 'filthy', 'dark', 'smelly' and 'blocked' as well as broken so that they had to 'stand in awkward positions'. Photos of these toilets were taken and one showed the ground littered with excrement, soiled sanitary pads and used toilet paper. At neither of the problematic schools was toilet paper available at time of the study. Instead, many girls described using all kinds of other types of paper including text books and school magazines. A few girls brought their toilet paper from home while others tried not to use the school toilet at all.

At one school, only one toilet was considered acceptable for use, mainly because it could flush, it had a door and the only sanitary towel bin in the school.

This toilet was in demand during break periods. In this secondary school, at least half of the students would be menstruating girls. Assuming that most girls menstruate for five days of the month, we calculated that at least 80-100 girls would be menstruating on any school day. This would have placed an intolerable demand on this toilet at break times. In the focus group discussions, some girls said that they knew girls who stayed at home during their first two days of menstruation because of access and hygiene. Learners also spoke of bloodstained cloths that could be found on the floor – these were used by girls who were not able to afford sanitary towels. None of the three schools had soap available for hand-washing in the toilets. At the school with the toilet supervisor, soap was only available on special occasions when the school had visitors. She apologised to the researcher for not having soap and said, "I did not know you were coming, nobody told me. I always make sure that the soap is out when visitors come to the school." She further explained she would remove the soap immediately after the visit.

From Abrahams N et al (2006)

Importance of appropriate latrines, bathing units and locations for washing and drying sanitary protection in boarding schools, Malawi⁸

An interviewee from the Water and Sanitation Network (WES) said girls were told to wash three times a day, and when they could not meet this standard they felt dirty. In the boarding schools the showers were open-plan and girls rose at 4am to shower and wash menstrual cloths before anybody could see. They observed that the showers 'ran with blood' as girls had no other option for washing either themselves or cloths. Cloths were rarely washed correctly due to lack of water and soap. "Soap grows wings," said the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

All girls hated the possibility of anybody seeing their menstrual blood in the toilet. 5% of girls used the bush

even when menstruating, with 25% admitting to using outside at other times, rather than unsuitable or dirty school toilets.

The majority changed their pads or cloths three to four times a day. Insufficient time at break or no washing facilities were major concerns voiced... Bins for used pads were lacking even in the boarding schools, where girls kept blood-soaked pads under their beds all night and disposed of them next morning. Alternatively, they put them down flush toilets which often blocked, or down pit latrines.

From Piper Pillitteri S (2011)

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Water supply

Water supply is essential for a school to be menstrual hygiene-friendly. Schoolgirls and staff need water to wash themselves, their hands, their cloths and their clothing, and also to clean blood off latrine slabs. Ideally, there should be a water supply inside latrine units, whether from a tap or a bucket that is routinely filled.

The results of a brainstorming exercise on menstrual hygiene priorities with schoolgirls in Malawi⁹ indicated that girls' first preference is for sanitary pads, second a water supply, third an incinerator, and fourth soap. It is worth noting that these preferences may vary in different schools and locations.

Latrines and hand-washing facilities

The girls in Malawi reported changing their sanitary protection materials one to four times a day, highlighting the importance of a safe and hygienic place to change materials in school. School latrines need to be in a safe location (chosen in collaboration with female students), private, and have water, soap and materials to wrap used sanitary protection materials available, ideally in each unit. A small mirror is beneficial to help girls check for spotting or leaking.

Toolkit 5.2.2 provides a number of examples of good designs for accessible and menstrual hygiene-friendly toilet blocks for girls.

Bathing or changing units

Private bathing or changing units are important, particularly in boarding schools. Facilities for girls to wash and dry sanitary cloths or re-usable pads, privately and hygienically, are also needed, so they don't have to dry their cloths or re-usable pads in front of others or worry about them going missing.

Management and disposal of sanitary materials

Schools should provide a discrete method of collecting and disposing of sanitary materials. Washable containers with a close-fitting lid should be located inside the latrines.

A trial of constructing incinerators in schools in Tanzania¹⁰ identified two requests from girls:

- To have separate disposal locations for girls and teachers.
- To not have to walk by the boys' facilities to reach the disposal point.

Toolkit 3.2.5 and **Toolkit 3.2.6** provide a range of designs for washable collection containers and incinerators, and **Toolkit 5.2.2** provides examples of inclusive, girl-friendly latrine blocks, some with integral incinerator units. This design feature meets the Tanzanian girls' concerns, as sanitary materials can be inserted directly into the incinerator from the latrine cubicle.

Whichever method or design is adopted, a management system needs to be established to sustain operation and maintenance over the longer-term.

Further research and information is still required on:

- Options for making appropriate and affordable sanitary protection available to girls in the longer-term, both in and out of school.

School latrines in Tanzania¹¹

A study by SNV, WaterAid and UNICEF in Tanzania, in 2009, mapped the water and sanitation facilities in 2,697 schools across 16 districts. The findings included:

- Over 50% of girls' latrines had no doors.
- Only 1% had soap, 8% had an adequate water supply, and 14% had a hand-washing facility.
- 4% of schools had latrines suitable for people with

disabilities.

- Some schools had as many as 400-600 pupils per drop-hole.

This situation potentially has serious implications for schoolgirls and female teachers in managing their menstruation.



Poor quality latrine with rusty corrugated sheet walling, posing a health and safety hazard



Example of a well-designed latrine with privacy wall



Over 50% of girls' latrines had no doors
(Photos: Geodata, Tanzania)



Poor maintenance and cleanliness can lead to girls not using latrines

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Endnotes

¹ Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and UNICEF (2010) *Assessment of knowledge, attitude and practice of menstrual health and hygiene in girls' schools in Afghanistan*.

² Sommer M (2011) *Improving the support to girls in primary schools with their menstrual hygiene management*.

³ Burgers L and Spruijt H (2009) *Menstrual hygiene: Manage it well!*. UNICEF webinar.

⁴ Government of Tamil Nadu (2007-8) *Education department policy note*.

⁵ UNICEF EAPRO (2010) *WASH in schools monitoring package: The survey module*.

⁶ Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and UNICEF (2011, draft) *Guideline for the promotion of menstrual health and hygiene for trainers and supervisors*.

⁷ Abrahams N, Mathews S and Ramela P (2006) Intersections of sanitation, sexual coercion and girls' safety in schools, *Tropical medicine and international health*, vol 11, no 5, pp 751-756.

⁸ Piper Pillitteri S (2011) *Toilets are not enough: Addressing menstrual hygiene management in secondary schools in Malawi*. MSc thesis, academic year: 2010-2011, Cranfield University.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Sommer M (2011) *Improving the support to girls in primary schools with their menstrual hygiene management*.

¹¹ SNV, WaterAid and UNICEF (2011) *School water, sanitation and hygiene mapping in Tanzania; Consolidated national report*.