

What is MHM in schools?

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is:

- Proper girl-friendly facilities: separate toilets for boys and girls
- Washrooms for girls with water and soap available
- Access to sanitary pads or towels, or other products for discretely absorbing the menstrual flow
- Means for disposal of used menstrual absorption products
- Training in MHM for teachers, especially coordinators and guidance staff from the Ministry of Education and its health division
- Education about menstruation for girls and boys, PTAs, and other parent/community structures
- Booklets and other support materials for pupils and teachers
- School WASH clubs and MHM activities



Why is MHM important?

- MHM is a main strategy for keeping girls in schools and increasing the number of educated girls and women
- Lack of MHM is a big reason why girls stay home from school. They can lose up to 5 days of school per month, then lose track of school work, and eventually drop out
- Having access to MHM increases a girl's confidence, sense of value, and self worth
- An educated woman contributes significantly to her family's health and to the development of her country



What are the challenges for girls in MHM in School?

Menstruating girls frequently experience:

- Fear of standing up to answer questions in case they have a stain on their skirt
- Bullying and teasing from boys
- Shame and fear of people finding out that they are "on their menses"
- Lack of accurate information and fear about what is happening to them
- Health problems related to inability to change their pads regularly
- Taboos about what they can and cannot do, and where they can and cannot be during their menses
- Lack of support and understanding from the adults in their lives: parents, other family members, and teachers



What are some small doable actions for MHM?

While waiting for permanent structures or program elements to support MHM, a school can:

- Engage local stakeholders (local councilors, traditional leaders, civic leaders) in a discussion forum on MHM issues
- Create girl-friendly "corners" or special spaces with MHM information and supplies or organize special clubs
- Make sanitary pads out of locally available materials
- Come up with appropriate and sustainable ways to support MHM in schools
- Carry out awareness education with parents and the community at large
- Create linkages with service providers for support (health practitioners, local business leaders)
- Engage local radio stations to broadcast appealing MHM messages
- What else? If you have ideas or suggestions you would like to contribute to the growing conversation about MHM, please share them with WASHplus at sfry@fhi360.org



Zambian schoolgirls show the hygiene supplies in the MHM packages at their school

MHM Checklist for Schools

MHM Program Element	✓ Yes	✓ No	Notes/Plan and Date to Turn No to Yes!
Informational program for school, PTA, and community			
MHM themed community events (theater, radio)			
Washrooms for girls			
Water and soap in girls' washroom			
Disposal place for used pads			
Emergency pads at place where girls know to find them			
Comfort kits (bag with pads, panties, soap, booklet on puberty)			
A local pad production program			
Guidance teacher or counselor designated for MHM			
SHN Coordinator trained in MHM			
MHM training for all teachers			
WASH Club with MHM activities			
Talks on MHM from local nurses or EHTs			
Pill supply for menstrual pain with guidance or SHN teacher			
Mentoring by older girls for younger girls			
Booklets on puberty for boys and girls			
Guidance materials for teachers			
Visual aids on menstruation and puberty			
Inclusion of menstruation and puberty in classroom subject teaching			
School funds raised and set aside for MHM support (for example, pad purchase)			
Income generating activities related to MHM (local pad production)			
Add your own ideas!			