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## Ministry of Education, Science and Vocational Training and Early Education

## Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools

## Training Session

## for school officials and teachers

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# **MHM in Schools: Training for School Officials and Teachers**

## **Purpose of the Session:**

To understand the importance of good MHM in school, and develop and commit to plans to implement school MHM programs

## **Session Objectives**

By the end of this session, the participants will be able to:

1. Describe the physiology of puberty and menstruation
2. List the elements of good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in school
3. Discuss the consequences of poor or inadequate MHM
4. Outline the main barriers/challenges to MHM in schools, and corresponding actions to mitigate these challenges:
5. Practice making sanitary pads/towels using locally available materials
6. Incorporate MHM into WASH Friendly School planning and/or develop plans to train other teachers using the MHM mini-toolbox

**Materials**

* Flipchart paper
* Markers and tape
* MHM mini-toolbox for each participant: MHM folder containing
  + *List contents*
* Storyline handout for each participants (if district of zonal level training)
* Model of sanitary pads/towels using local materials

## **Introduction**

**Say**

Menstrual hygiene management or MHM is being talked about a lot these days, and we know it is a critical activity in schools, especially within the SHN program. It still makes some people uncomfortable to talk about MHM, but as teachers, we are on the front lines for helping and guiding girls when they need help in managing their menses in school. In this session we are going to review what exactly menstruation and MHM are, why this is so important, what MHM actions we can take in school and how to train others. By the end of this session you will all be comfortable talking about MHM!

**Present the session objectives written on flipchart**

**Hand out**

MHM Mini-Toolbox folder to each participant and explain that every teacher should have these tools to help support them in carrying out good MHM in school. Say that during the training we will look at the different tools one by one, no need to do so right now.

**Say** Let’s start at the beginning with the basics.

## **What is Menstruation?**

**Ask** “what is menstruation”?

**Write up** or just accept answers from the group

**Ask participants**

To pull out the sheet in their toolbox with the picture on it called   
“Menstruation: The FemaleReproductive System”

**Ask for volunteers**

1. To read the text out loud.
2. Then someone can come to the front and explain the menstrual cycle using the graphic of the female reproductive system. If errors are made now or earlier during the first question, ask the group what is correct information.

**Emphasize**

that this is a natural, normal process for every female on the planet, 50% of the world’s population. Menstruation is not shameful, an illness or a reason for excluding girls and women from being active and participating in normal everyday life.

## **What is good MHM in school?**

**Say** Obviously, menstruation has to be managed for females to function normally during this period. In school, this can pose challenges. What would be required in a school setting for good MHM to happen?

**Collect** ideas from group, on cards to stick up on the wall, or write them up on flipchart. Make sure the ideas cover hardware/facilities/materials, education/guidance/peer support and good school policies. You can make 3 categories on the wall and group different ideas in the categories. That way you can see if one has been forgotten (probably the “enabling environment” category for good policies etc)

## **Consequences of bad or no MHM in school**

**Ask** the group to think about incidents at their school or during their own school time when there was inadequate MHM. What happened?

**Note** Girls stay home, don’t like to participate in class, drop out, feel ashamed, don’t get an

education, etc.

**Emphasize**

An uneducated girl grows into an uneducated woman. Her children are more likely to be malnourished and poor than a woman who has finished primary school *[find citation].*

An educated woman contributes to a country’s wealth (GDP). Keeping girls in school is a priority for the Ministry of Education and the country

## **Barriers/Challenges and Possible Actions**

**Group work**

Divide group into small groups of 5 -7. Give them the task of listing all the barrier/challenges they can think especially from their own experience, to good MHM in school. Next to each challenge or barrier write a feasible action, specify that the action should be doable by the school using local resources, not big expensive actions (although certain facility construction needs could be noted).

You can prepare flipcharts like this for each group, or show them one and they can replicate:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Challenge/barrier** | **Action possible** | **Local resources** |
| 1  2  3  4  5  6  7 |  |  |

Groups present their work to the others when done.

Remark on the creativity and good ideas that people have about what can be done locally without waiting for projects and extra funding. These are called Small Doable Actions and they are very empowering.

After the session, collate the group work into one table and distribute copies of this master table to all the participants.

## **Review of MHM so far using Mini-Toolbox**

Ask participants to open their MHM tool box folder and find:

* 2 pager “Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)”

Ask participants to take turns reading the sections, asking questions or comparing to their own work as they read.

Ask the participants to find in their toolbox:

* MESVTEE - Approved design for washrooms for girls + list of materials required + cost estimate

If a SPLASH or MESVTEE engineer is present, he can explain that this is the design they can take to their schools and use to construct girls toilets with washrooms attached, if they don’t have any yet. They can also use the design to help them add washrooms to girls’ latrines if they don’t have them yet.

## **Practice sewing pads from local materials**

**Trainer Note:**

You will need choose a pattern from the Mini Toolbox and collect the following materials for each group of 2-3 members (list can change depending on your chosen pattern):

* Old but clean chitenge pieces
* Sewing needles and thread
* Old towels
* Good scissors
* Some pins
* Buttons, snaps, and/or “velcro”

**Group practice**

Ask the participants to find the reusable menstrual pad patterns in their toolkit. Each toolkit has 3 patterns. The groups should try different pad models.

Divide them into small groups of 2-3, mixing men and women so men try too!

When they are done, each group describes their work and whether it was easy or hard, what they might do differently, whether girls could sew these themselves, is there a business opportunity, etc.

## **Getting ready to train others**

**Trainer’s Note:**

It is likely that the trainees in your training will train others to learn about MHM in school and how to start MHM activities, using some or all of the sessions in this guide. The new trainees might be Head Teachers, SHN Coordinators, Guidance Teachers, mixed PTA groups (parents and teachers) or WASH Clubs (peer educators). This guide contains several sessions to choose from that can be tried out, depending on who the participants will be training. Here are the sessions you can choose from:

* How to Counsel Girls for MHM (for any teacher, but especially for Guidance and SHN Coordinators)
* MHM for mixed groups in a WASH Friendly Schools (SLTS) training
* MHM for peer educators

**Starting off a MHM training**

Ask “what is a good way to start any training session, especially on a difficult topic?”

* Stories
* Role plays

Say that we are going to create some stories to have a collection to take with us.

## **Creating MHM Stories**

***Trainer Note: Before starting, please see the Story Outline sheet at the end of this session.***

**Ask the group** What makes a good story for setting a scene? Try to get:

* Has beginning, middle and end
* Is short
* Has a setting that the audience can recognize
* Has real characters that the audience can identify with (culturally appropriate)
* Centers around a highlighted problem that will allow trainees to analyze the problem and think of solutions
* Has a dramatic event of some kind
* Evokes emotions (such as sympathy, empathy, shock, indignation, sadness etc.)

Hand out the Story Outline sheet at the end of this guide, one for each participant.

Ask for a volunteer to read it. Ask for another volunteer to explain what they are going to do, after reading the Story Outline.

Divide the participants into groups of 3 or 4. Ask each group to develop a short story of a MHM situation (challenge) in school using the Story Outline as a guide. The stories can be written up after the session and the collection distributed to everyone to have for future trainings.

After about 20 minutes, gather everyone. Each group tell its stories to the others. Others provide feedback and groups make changes they agree with.

Ask the participants to explain how a story would be used to kick off a training.

Possible ideas:

* Facilitator reads the story, asks questions based on it:
  + What did you hear? What happened? What problems did X or Y encounter? What should X or Y do now? Could/dos this happen at our school? What could we do? How would we do that? Who would do that?
* Facilitator reads the story, small groups debate and answer questions given to them (same ones as above)
* Small groups get a different story each, they read and answer the questions.

Ask groups from different schools to decide how they will use stories in their training.

## **Counseling Girls (and boys and parents) for MHM**

[**Trainer’s Note:** Prepare a participant to play a girl in trouble who seeks help from a teacher. Show the list of problems below to the volunteer to choose a few for the role play.]

**Ask the group** What experiences have you had in counseling girls for MHM?

From the experiences, make a list of the most common MHM crises or situations encountered in schools.

**Conduct a 5 minute role play** with someone playing a pre-assigned role of a girl in trouble with MHM. Ask for a volunteer to play the counselor.

Here is a list of possible problems that the girl brings to the “counselor” in the role play (choose 1 then another):

1. Girl has bled through her skirt and does not have a chitenge or any pads
2. Girl has her first menses and does not know what has happened to her and is afraid
3. Girl is being bullied by boys because they know she is on her menses
4. Girl has pain in her “belly” from her menses
5. Girl is experiencing smells and discomfort from a homemade pad that has been on too long
6. Girl is afraid of telling her parents about problems with MHM in school
7. Girl stuffs rags in panties and prays for no leakage; waits all day in school without changing pad

A volunteer participant counsels her while the group watches.

At the end of the 5 minute “counselling session” ask the group what they observed.

* What seemed to be effective counseling techniques?
* What techniques could be improved?

Repeat with another scenario and look for improvements. Make a list of effective and less effective counseling behaviors.

If you want, you can also carry out mock counseling sessions with parents. Here are some possible scenarios you can prepare with volunteers beforehand:

1. Parents have been keeping girl away from school due to MHM
2. Parents are angry with school for lack of MHM
3. Parents send girl to school without any materials for MHM
4. Parents don’t know how to support girl who had her first menses at school and was scared

Or with “boys”. Here are some possible scenarios:

1. Boys have been bullying and teasing girls about their menses
2. Boys have been hanging around the girls toilets and washrooms
3. …….

**Sum up** the mock counseling session by asking for **tips for teachers on good counseling**. This can include:

* Show empathy
* Listen well
* Be reassuring
* Practice confidentiality
* Help solve problems
* Build confidence
* Follow up with the girl

## **Training Peer Educators or WASH Clubs**

**Ask** How many participants work with WASH or Girls’ Clubs? If some do, ask whether they do any activities related to MHM?

**Ask** everyone to think of good ideas of MHM activities that Peer Educators or WASH Clubs could do and make a list.

**Some possible activities:**

* Put on plays, musical performances or poetry on MHM themes
* Develop a mentor program: big girls with younger girls. Girls can decide what to do with each other.
* Make a pad production unit - teach sewing and marketing skills while doing it
* Organize the supplies for the washrooms
* If no washrooms, get help from community to build them
* Create a local booklet for girls with stories from real girls

**Ask** What do the young people need to know in order to be able to think of and carry out Club-based ` MHM activities?

The answer is that they probably need to know menstruation and puberty facts.

**Small groups**

Develop a simple training session for a Club group, then share your ideas.

**Collect the best ideas** and develop a training guide for the participants.

**Role Play**

If time permits, have the group do a 10-15 minute role play training session, with 5 or so members playing girls or mixed girls and boys, and two others playing trainers/teachers. Have them conduct a mock training and teaching session with the group of “boys and girls” that leads to them deciding on what activities they want to do as part of their club.

Discuss the role play after it is done, to get feedback from everyone on what seemed to work well and what was difficult and might need to be improved.

# **Story Outline Sheet**

This Sheet can help you to develop stories around common problems and challenges for a training session. Fill in the blanks/jot down notes and ideas:

## **Central problem or Challenge**

Example: Girls being bullied and teased by boys about their periods

## **The setting: where is this story taking place?**

## **The people: who is the story about?**

What are some details about these people: names, ages, personalities, physical appearance?

## **The scenes: what happens to the people in the story?**

Scene 1 Setting the stage - where are we? Who is there doing what?

Scene 2 The problem develops and is described. What emotions are present in the different people?

Scene 3 The climax

Issues come to a dramatic peak, often with a moral or other decision; or some kind of choice. There is a suspended moment where the audience is ‘wondering’ which direction the main character will turn.

Scene 4 The wrap-up: either the problem is resolved, or the story ends without a real ending to allow the readers to supply an appropriate ending or decide what the right action should be.