DRAFT GUIDELINE ON TEACHERS’ TRAINING ON MHM

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

ASMARA AUGUST 2017
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1. Introduction

The Ministry of Education recognizes education of girls and other disadvantaged groups as one of its educational priorities. Thus, in collaboration with its development partners, it has been planning and implementing numerous strategies to enhance the enrolment and participation of girls in education. The implementation of adult literacy and elementary complementary education programs, opening more schools in the remote and disadvantaged areas, development of gender sensitive curriculum, community sensitization activities and development of communication materials are among the major strategies. The Ministry has been also working on the provision of material and financial incentives to girls, construction of school WASH facilities, introduction of School Based Health Services and the use of affirmative action for the admission of girls to higher institutions.

As a result there is a significant progress and achievements in the enrolment and participation of girls in education. However research based evidences show that school girls are still facing other challenges that affect their enrolment and educational participation. These challenges are related to menstrual hygiene management practices.

A qualitative research was conducted by the Ministry of Education to assess and understand the challenges related to menstrual hygiene management practices that school girls face. In this research, the existing situations, challenges, impacts and determinants of the current menstrual hygiene management practices are identified and recommendations that could help to mitigate the challenges suggested.

The Ministry of Education has planned different activities to implement these recommendations. Educating and providing supports to the school girls through their teachers is among the various planned intervention activities to be implemented. However, the research findings revealed that school teachers are not supporting school girls in
managing their menstruation due to the lack of sufficient awareness and skills. Thus, the Ministry developed a training manual of MHM to train the teachers. The development of the manual considers the findings of the underlined MHM research findings and recommendations.

The main objective of the training is to sensitize the teachers to the various issues associated with menstrual hygiene practices and management. Thus, it is believed that the training manual provides important information and equips them with the necessary skills and tools to help the teachers understand menstruation and good MHM practices well so that they will educate and support the students in the school.

The training manual has seven parts. They include breaking the silence, the biology of Menstruation, the key findings of the MHM research, menstrual Hygiene Management, Menstrual Hygiene management by disable people, environmentally friendly disposal options, teacher’s support and guidance to school girls.

Each topic has expected learning outcomes, steps of presentation and messages to be presented by the facilitators. The facilitator can present them flexibly by relating them to the specific cultural practices.

Training menstrual hygiene management like any other forms of trainings involves communicating plenty of hard facts that the facilitators of the training have to remember and make the use of essential soft skills. Some of the essential skills that you need to consider as guidelines during the training include the followings:

a. **Make sufficient preparations to master and articulate the material**
   
   • Always invest time in preparing yourself before conducting the training. As a trainer you should be well-versed with the tools and exercises used.
   • Take the time to study and understand issues around menstrual hygiene and health, and sexual health.
   • Ensure that there are enough sets of visual materials available for the training and that all participants get to use them.
• If you do not have an answer to a question or are unsure how to respond, thank the participant for their question and take the time to come back with the right information.

• Be ready with all the materials needed for sharing and distribution during the training.

b. Act as facilitator rather than as a trainer
• Encourage learning through sharing and effective engagement from the participants.

• Identify the participants’ different qualities and personalities, e.g. passive, active, aggressive or arrogant.

• Learn how to deal with each personality trait, making the passive more interactive and the aggressive more tempered.

• Always maintain eye contact with participants.

c. Use proper seating arrangement of participants
• Ensure that the trainer and participants sit at the same level (to avoid the trainer ‘talking down’ to the audience). If the participants are sitting on the floor, so should the trainer.

• Participants should sit in a circle or a semi-circle as opposed to a classroom style arrangement. This seating style will make the interaction less formal and encourage participants to contribute to discussions.

d. Use of simple and friendly language
• Use soft language in the training. If any participant begins to argue, do not react but explain yourself clearly with supporting examples and case studies.

• Do not use heavy jargon. As much as possible use local language and local examples to aid better understanding.

• Follow the schedules and times allocated for each module. However, if participants appear to be low in energy, use energizer games and exercises to make sure they are alert and engaged.

e. Demonstrate empathy
• Do not be discriminatory about gender, abilities, economic, or social status.

• Do not laugh at queries or answers.

• Avoid making personal comments
2. **Breaking the Silence**

**Expected outcome:** After this presentation participants will be able to:

- recognize the need for talking about MHM practices openly with the students in the school/class
- explain the meaning of menstruation

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Material Required:**
- Flip chart or white board
- Copies of case studies in local language
- Marker pen

**Ice Breaker**

Initiate a discussion on menstruation using a set of leading questions. While seemingly unrelated to the topic, the questions are aimed at engaging the audience in conversation about menstruation.

**Step 1:** Participants express their experiences and knowledge about menstruation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divide participants into gender specific groups and write down all relevant responses on the flip chart or white board for use in further discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask participants some example of leading questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questions to be asked**

**Directed to both groups**

- What is the basic difference between male and female bodies?
- What changes occur in boys and girls as they grow?

**Directed male participants**

- Have you seen the girl or woman in your house secluded from the rest of the house or refrained from usual activities on any particular day(s)?

**Directed to the female participants**

- Are you subject to seclusion from the rest of the house or refrained from your usual activities on any particular day(s)?
- What do you think are the reasons for these seclusions, restrictions and customs?
Step 2: **Explanation of the key messages to the participants**

- Once the participants are warmed-up and comfortable, be ready with case studies to sensitize them.
- Use Hsian’s story (Anex-1) at this stage as a case study. Finally, ask participants to share their stories, in brief

**Step 3 Discuss the key messages with the participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Messages:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Menstruation is part of growing up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An indication that a girl is approaching maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The shedding of tissue and blood from the lining of the womb through a females’ vagina.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The blood and tissue that comes from the uterus when fertilization does not occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Also called ‘menses’, ‘menstrual period’, ‘monthly bleeding’ and ‘period’,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is a normal and natural part of biological maturity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The monthly self-cleaning action of a healthy uterus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is normal for every woman, including the different “disabled” people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is not a women’s issue but a universal issue – men need to know about it too!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An important developmental milestone for girls, the same way wet dreams are for boys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are many myths and misconceptions around menstruation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The Biology of Menstruation

**Expected learning outcome:** After this session participants will be able to:

- Explain why women and girls menstruate
- List and describe important facts about menstruation
- List and explain the symptoms of menstruation
- Describe the four stages of menstrual cycle

**Duration:** 1:40 hour

**Materials required:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• flipbook</th>
<th>• Paper chits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Menstruation wheel</td>
<td>• Marker pens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apron</td>
<td>• Chart paper and drop box</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 1 Participants answer key questions about the biology of menstruation**

**Instructions**

Arranged a drop box for their responses, divide the participants into four groups, give each participant a paper chit and pen, and pose one of the following four sets of questions to each of group

**Questions**

1. Why do women menstruate?
2. What do women use to manage menstruation; what different kinds of materials have you seen used for managing menstruation?
3. At what age does a girl begin menstruation; how many times do woman menstruate in a month; how many times will she menstruate in the whole year; and how many times will she menstruate in her lifetime?
4. What is the relationship between menstruation and motherhood?

**Step 2: Compilation and displaying the responses of the four groups**

- Once you've collected the responses from the drop box, sort them into their respective groups and display them on four separate charts to share knowledge.

**Step 3: Sharing the facts and symptoms of menstruation with the participants**

- Share the facts about menstruation and clarify any conflicting answers or ideas that may have been generated by the participants.
Next, use the flipbook to explain the difference in biological and physical changes that occur in the male and female body. The Flipbook will help to shift the discussion from external to internal changes in males and females.

Finally, use the illustrated menstruation wheel to support learning around the menstrual and reproductive process.

The point of putting questions to the participants is to ascertain their level of awareness – so make sure that they write down their individual responses with NO influence from others in the group! When demonstrating the menstruation wheel and flipbook - make use of available reference material to these visuals.

**2.2 Menstruation is not:** Sickness, illness, disease, infection, harmful, dirty, shameful, unclean or otherwise ‘negative’

**2.3 Menstrual cycle and key facts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menstrual Cycle</th>
<th>Key facts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Menstrual Cycle Diagram](image.png) | • The first menstrual cycle is called ‘menarche’.
• Periods in the first few years of menstruation are not very regular.
• Some girls have their first period as early as nine years of age.
• Some women menstruate every 28 days, while others have longer cycles (36 days) or shorter cycles (21 days).
• Periods usually last from 3-7 days, with 5 days being the average length of menstrual flow. |

**2.4 Common symptoms that occur before or at the onset of menstruation:**

• General weakness of the body; body feels heavy.
• Dizziness, nausea, cramps/lower abdominal pain.
• Headache, enlarged and painful breasts, fever.
2.5 Puberty

• *It is a biological process* where boys’ and girls’ experience rapid growth and their bodies begin to develop and look more like adults.

• It is an important dimension of puberty is that young adolescents be able to integrate bodily changes into their self-identity, and to incorporate others’ responses to these changes into that self-identity.

• It occurs at different times, related to sex, nutrition, environment, etc.
  o Girls: 10-11
  o Boys: 11-12

• Experienced differently by girls and boys
  o **Girls**: breasts appear, hips get wider, pubic and underarm hair, first menstruation (menarche)

2.6 Physical growth of girls and boys at puberty
4. Current MHM practices in schools

Expected learning outcome: At the end of the presentation Participants will be able to:

- List the common challenges of school girls in managing their menstrual hygiene
- Distinguish the challenges, determinants and impacts of the current MHM practices in their places
- Analyse the determinants and impacts of the current MHM practices in relation to their specific places

Duration: 1:30 hours

Materials required

- Flip chart and marker

Step 1: Group discussions by participants on the current MHM practices

Instructions:

- Divide participants into big groups and explain the questions
- Make sure that each group has answer both questions and present their findings to the whole participants

Questions for the discussions

1. What could be the factors that affect MHM practices of school girls?
2. What are the factors in your school that currently affect school girls in managing their menstruation
3. What do you suggest for hygienic, comfortable and safe MHM practices for the girls in the school

Step 2: Explain the key findings of the MHM research indicated below to the participants.

Current MHM practices in the Eritrean middle schools

The main challenges of school girls in managing their menses are related to societal, environmental, interpersonal, personal and biological factors.

a. Societal factors: Policy, tradition, cultural beliefs

- Biology of menstruation is included in the curriculum and taught in schools but does not have sufficient focus on management.
- The lessons are insufficient and students generally don’t retain the information.
- Classes being taught in co-educational environments may not be sufficiently comfortable to allow students to engage in the material.
b. Environmental factors: WASH facilities and resource availability

- School WASH is generally insufficient for girls to confidently manage their menstrual materials while at school.
- Latrines are often not sex-separated in practice, lacked privacy, are dirty, and lack essential supplies such as water, soap, and waste receptacles. Emergency MHM supplies are not available in school.
- Commercial pads are available in markets but are often financially inaccessible

c. Interpersonal factors: Relationships with family, teachers, peers

- Mothers often express limited comfort in talking about the topic with their daughters, and also have limited knowledge that is generally based only on their own experience.
- Girls often rely on information coming from their peers that is likely to be inaccurate or incomplete.
- Generally neither girls nor mothers are comfortable talking to their fathers/husbands about girls’ menstrual needs, limiting men’s capacity to provide informed financial support.
- Parents rarely provide information to their sons, and boys who are uninformed were more likely to engage in teasing, which was a factor in girls’ social isolation and desire to stay home from school on days when they are afraid of leaks.

d. Personal factors: Knowledge, skills, beliefs

- Most girls have limited knowledge of the biology of menstruation and how to track their cycles, and few had developed good practices for preparing for the start of their period and managing pain and heavy menstrual flow while in school.
- This is particularly challenging in the period after menarche, since girls have to learn by experience.
- Girls often lack skills in managing pain, which is a key factor in missed class time.
- Some girls voiced negatives attitudes about menstruation and menstruating women that likely come from cultural beliefs, and the attitudes likely contribute to girls’ desire for social isolation during their periods that contribute to stress and missed class.

e. Biological factors: Age, the physical experience of the menstrual cycle

- Girls started experiencing menarche in grade 6, before the initiation of formal education on menstruation.
- They experience challenges in managing heavy flow, in being able to track their cycles and predict when their next period would arrive, and managing pain.
5. Menstrual Hygiene Management

**Expected learning outcome:** After this session the participants will be able to:

- List and describe different menstrual hygiene management materials
- Compare the advantages and disadvantages of using the different kinds of sanitary materials
- Differentiate the good MHM practices at different contexts (work place, School and home)
- Demonstrate good MHM practices

**Duration:** 2 hour 30 minutes

**Materials required:**

- Range of sanitary napkins available from the local market, including cotton, wooden pulp, gel and polymer / petroleum-based products
- Cloth pads including cotton, terry cotton, synthetics, thick cotton, woolen fabric and old rags
- Cloth pad with ash filling, sand and dried leaves
- A repeatedly used / stained cloth

**Step 1: Group discussion about the menstruation management materials**

**Instruction**

- Following on from what was learnt in the previous session, introduce the materials used for MHM and ask the participants about their opinions on these materials.
- Focus on what they believe is the most appropriate material to use.
- Make sure you have display a range of menstruation materials, as these are useful for facilitating a discussion around preferred menstrual management methods. The display also gives participants the opportunity to talk about their own (product) preferences.
5.1 Examples of menstrual management materials

**Stitched pads:** Made of cloth that is washable they can be either new or from old clothes, blankets, towels, etc.

![Stitched Pads Image]

**3.2 Disposable pads**

![Disposable Pads Image]

**3.3 Insertable materials**

**Tampons** - Absorb menstrual blood
- Inserted into vagina and absorb menstrual blood
- Disposable after single use
- Not commonly used in many countries so not always available

**Cups** - Collect menstrual blood
- Inserted into vagina and collects menstrual blood
- Reusable; requires water and soap to wash between changes
- Studies in Kenya and Nepal with different results
- Not commonly used in many countries so not always available

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**Step 2: Explanation on the advantages and disadvantages of the materials using the display**
Instructions
- Explain the advantages and disadvantages of each material on display and highlight the safety and hygiene aspect of each one.
- Use the chart below to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of different materials

5.2 Advantages and disadvantages of the different type of sanitary materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Cotton Cloth pad</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily available</td>
<td>Gets soaked fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low / no cost</td>
<td>Difficulty in changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washable / Reusable</td>
<td>Repeatedly use causes abrasions in the thigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearable without underpants</td>
<td>Improper washing, drying and storage causes infections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More soaking capacity</td>
<td>Chances of the pad falling under weight or its snapping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b. Cloth pad filled with ash / sand / dried leaves</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily available</td>
<td>Increased risk of infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low / No cost</td>
<td>Chances of the pad falling under weight or its snapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washable / reusable</td>
<td>Heavy and inconvenient when used with sand filling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More soaking capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c. Sanitary napkin: Polymer, Wood pulp, Cotton and Gel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe and hygienic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Soaking capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenient to carry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily available (except in some remote rural areas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light weight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 3: How to use and maintain sanitary materials

Instruction
- Organize the participants in small groups to discuss the following questions
- Allow some of the groups to report the results of their discussions to the whole group
- Give short explanation using the key note below.

Questions
1. What are the main issues that women and girls to consider in managing their menses?
2. How do they use the ranges of sanitary materials indicated above?
3. What do they do in managing their menses? Explain why they should do them?

The two essential issues in using the sanitary materials are safety and hygiene.

a. Cloth pad:
   - A set of cloth is advised to be used for just 2-3 months of menstruation cycle or until the cloth starts to become hard to wash.
   - Before changing and after changing, wash your hands with soap.
   - Do not hesitate to carry menstrual waste for safe disposal (by wrapping in newspaper).
   - Female family members or friends should not interchange their menstrual cloth.

b. Sanitary napkins:
   - Do not throw sanitary napkins in toilets.
   - Do not use one napkin for more than 6 hours.

The main hygienic practices

a. Handling menstrual blood:
   - Wash hands with water and soap after contact with menstrual blood.
   - Clean up spills with phenyl.
   - Set aside soiled clothing and bed sheets from other clothes before washing and drying separately.

b. Cleaning blood stained rags, clothes, bed sheets and cloth for reuse:
   - Soak the soiled material in soapy water for 20 minutes. To ensure there is enough soap in the water, make sure there are plenty of bubbles when you shake the water with your hand.
   - Wash the soiled material as you would normally with soap and water.
   - Allow the cleaned materials to air dry in the sun. Discard the dirty soaking water in the toilet.
   - Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

c. Washing and cleaning the body:
   - During menstruation wash the body including the genital area daily with warm, clean water and mild soap.
   - Always pat the area dry after cleaning it.
Step 4: Identifying the problems of women and girls in managing their menstruation.

With the aid of targeted group discussions point out the MHM problems women and adolescent girls face in the workplace, school and home using a combination of bullet points on the flipchart / whiteboard, visual aids and Q&A with participants.

Given the number of points to get through it’s worth keeping group discussions to a minimum.

After the groups discussed and present their response to the whole class, explain the challenges women and girls face in different places.

Challenges women and girls face in managing their menstruation

a. At the Workplace:
   • Inadequate toilet facilities.
   • Lack of facilities for washing and drying menstrual cloth.
   • Lack of disposal for sanitary pads or menstrual cloths.
   • Difficulty discussing menstrual issues with male managers. Managers often do not understand the need for women and girls to be able to take additional time in the toilet or the washroom to manage menstruation.
   • Difficulty with concentrating on work due to menstrual cramps.
   • Lack of sanitary materials or medicines.
   • Lack of opportunities or facilities to change, wash or clean sanitary clothes while travelling for work.

a. At the school:
   • Lack of sanitary menstrual materials.
   • Less concentration and participation, including not being able to standup to answer questions.
   • Lack of private facilities and water supply for washing and drying of soiled clothing, cloths and hands.
   • Absenteeism from school during menstruation because of lack of facilities.
   • Fear of using the latrine in case others discover menstrual blood.
   • Lack of information about the menstrual process, leaving them scared and embarrassed.
- Exclusion from sports.

**b. At home:**
- In some cultures girls and women are not allowed to bathe or wash themselves during menstruation. This causes discomfort and stress.
- Many women and girls have to manage their menstruation in the open air due to non-availability of toilets and running water.
- They can suffer from stress and anxiety due to the shame associated with menstruation.
- Moreover, they are unable to discuss these matters with family members due to taboos.

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**Step 5: Discussing about good ways of hygiene practice**

Divide participants into three groups. Lead them to discuss and suggest good practices of MHM by women and girls at work place, school and home.

After their discussions and presentations of their response, explain the good practices using the chart below as a guide.

**Good practices of menstrual hygiene by women and girls**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the work place</th>
<th>In the school</th>
<th>In the household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Provide separate water and sanitation facilities for women and men.</td>
<td>• Availability of sanitary protection material.</td>
<td>• Availability of toilet with running water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide facilities for disposal.</td>
<td>• Clean and separate toilets for girls and boys.</td>
<td>• Clean washing and drying spaces for cloth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have discrete supply of sanitary pads and clean cloths available in an emergency for women or girls at work</td>
<td>• Space for washing and drying.</td>
<td>• Safe and clean bathing space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Disposal facilities and supportive teachers / staff.</td>
<td>• Facilities for disposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Open environment to discuss issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Key messages to deliver:**
1. Cotton cloth pads should be washed with soap or detergent after every use and dried in direct sunlight.

2. Cotton pads should be stored in a clean, dry environment protected from insects and rodents.

3. The use of other materials such as ash and sand increases risk of infection and can be seriously harmful.

4. Sanitary napkins should be changed at least 3-4 times in a day irrespective of the volume of blood flow because:
   - Bacteria grow faster in excreted blood, resulting in bad odor and infection.
   - Prolonged pad use and exposure to dried blood leads to rashes.

**Menstrual hygiene is important because it:**
- Prevents infection.
- Prevents body odour.
- Enables women to remain healthy.
- Enables women and girls to feel comfortable, confident and stay fresh all day.

**Ways of minimising poor menstrual hygiene:**
- Hygiene education and promotion for women/girls.
- Education of young girls (primary and post-primary).
- Proper washing of vulva and hands with soap and water.
4. Menstrual Hygiene Management for the Disabled

**Expected outcomes:** After completing this session participants will be able to:

- Recognize the specific MHM needs of the school girls who have disability
- List and explain the specific supports and advices necessary for each type of disability
- Demonstrate skills of providing supports and advices to girls who have different type of disability

**Duration:** 1 hour

Regardless of their abilities, disabled people experience the same biological and physical changes as anyone else, so their menstrual management needs are identical. However, understanding differences in physical and mental abilities is essential when it comes to providing effective support to disabled people. For instance, a woman or adolescent girl who is differently abled is subject to social, physical, cultural and economic barriers that stop her from getting information on health care, education, vocational training and employment. As a result, she is excluded from vital support activities, making her situation worse.

**Step 1: Group Discussion**

To help tackle the problem of exclusion and lack of equity for disabled people, introduce the following examples as discussion points:

a. **For blind or visually impaired girls:**

It may be difficult for a blind adolescent girl to identify her period initially as she will be unable to see the menstrual blood. However, over the course of few months, she will understand her menstrual cycle, how it feels and sense its timing. Useful advice would therefore be:

- Emphasize the hormone-triggered emotional changes that occur during the menstrual cycle, to create awareness on menstruation.
- Motivate them to take support from family members or someone she trusts to check if there is any blood on her clothing.
b. For girls who are deaf or has difficulty in hearing:
   • Use visual aids to explain menstruation and hygiene management practices to those who are hearing impaired.

c. For Girls who have a physical disability
   • Talk to the girls to understand and assess the kind of facilities they require for managing menstruation.
   • Guide them on how they can work with their family and support group to make provisions for these facilities, which include:
     • A toilet and bathing space equipped with railings.
     • Doors that open outward rather than inward.
     • Water taps that are within their reach.
     • Storage of cloth and sanitary napkins in a place within their reach.

d. For girls who are mentally challenged;
   • Ask participants if they have family, friends or neighbors that are mentally challenged.
   • Discuss how and what kind of support is needed to help them with menstrual hygiene management.

Step 2: Instruction
Training facilitators should share key points to caregivers of mentally challenged women and adolescent girls so that they can help them manage their menstruation independently. Key points include:
   • Identify the kind of cloth or pads she has access to and use the same for demonstration.
   • Show her where the supply of cloth or pad is kept.
   • Show her where the pads or cloth are thrown out or how they are washed if they are to be reused.
   • Put a pad or cloth inside her underwear so she can practice, and get used to wearing it.
   • Explain that she may want to wear dark clothing during her period, so there will be less chance of any blood stains showing.
Tips:

a. **A woman who is blind or has difficulty in seeing:**
   - Unless it is an emergency, do not touch the woman before telling her who you are.
   - Do not assume that she cannot see you at all.
   - Speak in your normal voice.
   - If she has a stick, do not take it away from her at any time.
   - Say 'goodbye' before walking away or leaving.

b. **A woman whose hearing is impaired:**
   - Make sure you have her attention before speaking to her. If she is not facing you, touch her gently on the shoulder.
   - Do not shout or exaggerate your speech.
   - Look directly at her and do not cover your mouth with anything.
   - Ask her about her preferred way of communicating.

c. **A woman with a physical disability:**
   - Do not assume she is mentally slow.
   - If possible, sit so that you are at eye level with her.
   - Do not move crutches, sticks, walkers or wheelchairs without her permission, or without arranging their return.
   - If she is a wheelchair user, do not lean on or touch her wheelchair without her permission.

d. **A woman who does not speak clearly:**
   - Even though her speech may be slow or difficult to understand this does not mean she has any difficulties in learning and understanding.
   - Ask her to repeat anything you do not understand.
   - Ask questions she can answer by yes / no.
   - Let her take as much time as she needs to explain her problem.
   - Be patient.

e. **A woman who has a learning disability or difficulty understanding you:**
   - Use simple words and short sentences.
   - Be polite and patient, and do not treat her like
5. Environmentally friendly disposal options

Expected learning outcome: At the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Identify the main method of managing sanitary materials of MHM
- List and describe the different methods and options of disposing the used MHM materials
- Demonstrate the different environment friendly methods of disposal options materials

Duration: 1:30 hours

Step 1: Methods for Reuse and Disposal of Used Cloths or Sanitary Napkins

Ask the participants to list and discuss the methods they know girls use to manage their menses

Explain and discuss the main methods mentioned below with the participants.

5.1 Reuse

To clean blood-stained rags, clothes, bed sheets and cloth used as sanitary napkin, do the following:

- Soak the soiled material in soapy water for 20 minutes. To ensure there is enough soap in the water, make sure there are a lot of bubbles when you stir and shake the water with your hand.
- Wash the soiled material as you would normally with soap and water.
- Allow the cleaned materials to air dry in the sun. Throw the soaking water in the toilet.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with water and soap

5.2 Disposal

Blood stained materials can contaminate the environment and spread diseases if not properly disposed of, so it is critical to emphasize the need for proper disposal of menstrual waste. Reiterate that women and girls should not throw soiled cloths or napkins in latrines or toilets, open drains, water bodies (streams, rivers, ponds, and wells) and so on.

It is not possible to accurately estimate the volumes of menstrual waste in schools due to several factors, including:

- Varying numbers of students.
• Absenteeism among girls who are menstruating.
• Very few students change their napkins during school hours due to the absence of proper facilities for changing and washing.

Privacy is a key factor in determining the location of menstrual waste disposal and collection facilities on school premises. Therefore, the location of these facilities should be decided after input from female students and teachers. The following methods are suggested for the collection and disposal of used cloth and napkins in schools:

a. Collection of Used Cloths and Sanitary Napkins

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><img src="image" alt="Collection Bins" /></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Schools need a separate private collection and disposal system for used menstrual cloth and sanitary napkins, in addition to conventional systems for solid waste disposal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• This collection system should ideally be administered by a group of girls or a staff appointed by the school.
• Collection bins should be placed in locations identified by girls and female teachers.
• Collection bins should have lids on top to keep the waste protected from flies and animals. (See collection bins on the left) Once collected, menstrual waste can be buried, composted or incinerated depending on available resources in school.

Step 2: Discussions on different disposal options

Instruction
• Arrange participants in small groups and tell them to answer the questions below
• Let some of the groups report their response to the whole group for discussion
• Then discuss the different options indicated below

Questions
1. How could MHM materials be disposed in the school?
2. List some options and describe each of them
3. Give the advantages and disadvantages of each option
b. Disposal options of used sanitary materials

The following are some of the best available methods of safe waste disposal

**Deep Burial**

- Used cloth and/or sanitary napkins could be buried in a simple pit.
- Dig a pit 0.5m wide x 0.5m in breadth x 1m deep.
- A pit this size can last for two years. Once filled, another pit can be dug and used.
- Such pits should be dug a minimum of seven meters from water sources, including hand pumps, tube wells, open wells, ponds, reservoirs and rivers.

**Composting:** This is an improvement over the deep burial method

- The additional material needs to be added every time cloths or napkins are disposed.
- Cover the material with a layer of soil.
- The pit should be located in an open space in the school premises in a location selected by the girls. Once it is filled, another pit can be dug and used.
- A teacher or member of staff from the school should help with adding these materials and preparing the compost.
- Compost can be used by the community or for a kitchen garden around the school.

**C. Incineration**

Burning of used cloth and napkins is not recommended as the process emits toxic compounds, so it should only be practiced when there are no other feasible options. Depending on available resources there are two options for burning waste, as shown in the illustrations from left:
Burning the waste in a customized drum waste in a pit

180 liter drum

Lid removed and placed in this position

Perforated fire-bed

Cutaways provide air inlets and Fire-bed support

Burning / incineration

Used cloths / napkins could be burnt in an open pit similar to a deep burial pit. However, burning is not recommended and should be used only when there are no other viable options. An example of an incinerator installed in a school is shown below.

Electric incinerator

These can be adapted for girls’ hostels, training centers and women’s associations based on the number of women and girls residing or working in the location.
Bio-sanitizers

The Bio-sanitizer is a new and innovative method of composting, which uses to dispose of sanitary napkins.

The development process of Bio-sanitizers involves two bins of 1m wide x 0.6m wide x 1m deep filled with a bed of coconut fiber, vegetable peels and a catalyst powder which hastens the decomposition process. The sanitary napkins and cloths used are added to the Bio-sanitizers along with placentae and converted into rich manure. The Bio-sanitizer is odour free and does not attract flies.

Disposal Chute and Composting Pit for School Toilets

This design uses a steep 60° chute made from a six inch PVC pipe, which leads from a hole in the cubicle wall to a simple unlined pit in the ground outside, separated from the septic tank and covered with a stone slab. Used menstrual cloths are dropped down the chute; adding a mug of cow dung slurry water once a week aids decomposition of all the organic waste and controls smell.
6. Teachers’ supports to school girls

**Expected learning outcomes:** After completing this session participants will be able to;

- Explain their roles while supporting school girls to manage their menses hygienically and with dignity
- Identify and discuss MHM related activities that could help them to support school girls

Knowledge and Skills, WASH facilities, and Materials are necessary but not independently sufficient for addressing and ameliorating girls’ menstruation-related challenges at school.

**Duration** 1:30 hours

**Materials**

- Markers
- Flip chart

**Step 1: Brainstorming the role of the teachers in empowering school girls to manage their menses effectively**

**Instruction**

- Ask the participants to answer the question and write down their responses without making any judgments
- Lead the participants to discuss and decide the most relevant responses

**Questions**

1. How can teachers empower school girls
2. Which one is more effective? Why?
The teacher is among the main determinants for the holistic development in the school. Teachers are responsible not only to teach the subject matter such as the biology of menstruation through formal lessons but, also to create a conducive learning environment and empower the students that entail the provision of continues supports. The provision of information about school WASH facilities, guidance and implementation MHM related co-curricular activities are among the various supports that should be provided to the students by teachers.

Thus, they have to give sufficient orientations about the existing school WASH facilities and their proper utilizations, provide guidance about the management of menstrual hygiene and organize different activities that could promote knowledge skills and attitudes of the school girls so that they manage their menses with confidence and pride.

### 8.1 Sufficient orientations to the school girls about School WASH facilities

School girls need to get sufficient information about the available school WASH facilities and their proper utilizations: The WASH facilities include toilets and water, MHM materials as well as the waste disposal options. The teacher should also ensure that the facilities are safe secure and accessible to the girls. Information about the roles of the students in keeping the facilities clean while they use them is essential.

### 8.2 Providing Continuous guidance to the school girls

While supporting the girls, the teachers need to be well aware and have good understanding about the frequently asked questions about menstruation, proper MHM practices. Doing this helps them to guide the girls effectively.

The frequent questions that could be raised by school girls could be many and different. But it is advisable for the teachers to think well and prepare themselves about the questions. The questions could be related to their biological knowledge of menstruation, cultural beliefs and practices and menstrual sanitary materials and appropriate management of menstrual hygiene.
Step 2: Anticipating and understanding menstruation related questions that could be asked frequently by school girls

**Instruction**
1. Organize participants in pairs and let label themselves as A and B
2. Let A ask questions and B give answers to the questions raised by A
3. Let them repeat this activity by changing their roles
4. Pairs discuss on all their questions and select only one question with its answer
5. Arrange four big groups and instruct the groups to discuss the selected questions and form five big groups

**Questions**
1. List questions that could be frequently asked by girls and then give correct answers to each question
2. Firm groups and discuss on the response given to select which you think are the most important
3. Report the selected questions of your group to the whole class

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**Step 3: Discussions on the example questions and answers below**

**a. Questions about Biology of Menstruation:**

The frequent questions that could be raise under the category biology of menstruation are related mainly to the menarche age, amount of blood flow, duration of the flow, behaviors of girls during menstruation and absence of menstruation. Some example questions and their corresponding answers are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Menarche Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q: At what age does a girl start menstruating?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: Some girls begin to menstruate as early as age nine or 10 and some may not get their first period until a few years later.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of Blood Flow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q: How much flow is there normally?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: Menstrual flow can vary from person to person. Usually, an entire period consists of a few to several spoonfuls of blood.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q: How long should a girl’s period last?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A: The duration of a menstrual period can vary from girl to girl but is typically 3-7 days long. One girl might have three-day periods while another might have six-day periods. In some cases, the length of the period can vary from month to month. For example, in the first month, a girl’s period might last four days, and then the next month it could be six days.

Girls’ behavior
Q: How does the body feel during menstruation?
A: Sometimes a girl may experience physical or emotional changes around the time of her period, while others may not feel any change in moods or body. Physical changes include: cramps, pain, bloating, weight gain, food cravings, painful breasts, headache, dizziness or irritability. Emotional changes include: short temper, aggression, anger, anxiety or panic, confusion, lack of concentration, nervousness, tension, fatigue or depression.

Absence of menstruation
Q: What if a girl’s period stops but she is sure she is not pregnant?
A: The absence of menstruation is called amenorrhea. This is not usually a concern unless it occurs for several months, in which case they should consult a medical professional.

b. Cultural beliefs and practices of MHM

Q: Are girls unclean and impure during periods?
A: There is no impurity in the blood associated with menstruation. Cleanliness and hygiene are important to the menstrual flow, to keep away any odor or infection.

c. Menstrual sanitary materials

Q: Should girls use only sanitary napkins?
A: No. Clean and dry cotton cloth can be made into a pad for absorbing menstrual blood.

d. Proper management practices of menstrual hygiene

Q: What kinds of foods should be avoided during periods?
A: Eat regular foods such as vegetables, roti, rice and pulses, lots of fiber, and drink plenty of water to avoid constipation, as it can lead to an increase in pain from menstrual cramps. Cutting down on salty foods will prevent the water retention in the body.

Q: What can be done to relieve menstrual cramps?
A: Place a hot water bottle on the abdomen or on the back, depending on the cramps’ location. Take a warm bath. Drink a hot beverage, such as tea. Take a walk. Rub or massage the abdomen. Get on your elbows and knees so that the uterus is hanging down, which helps it to relax. Lie on your back with knees up and move them in small circles.

Q: Is it risky and dangerous to engage in sports and games during menstruation?
A: No, but if you feel tired or weak and feel the need to rest then rest is advised.

Are there other critical questions which are similar to the above questions? Discuss them.

**Step 4: Organizing and Implementing Co-curricular Activities for School Girls**

**Instruction**
- Arrange the participants in pairs to discuss and answer the question
- Allow some pairs to report their discussions to the whole class
- Use the information below and discuss with the participants

**Questions**
1. List some co-curricular activities that could enhance effective MHM
2. How can the teachers organize these co-curricular activities for school girls
3. What could be the roles of the teacher in the implementation of these co-curricular activities?

**8.3 Implementation of MHM related Co-curricular Activities**

The provision of formal lessons, orientation about WASH facilities and guidance alone are not enough to promote proper MHM practices by school girls. The teachers should also organize co-curricular activities that help the girls to develop certain social and practical skills about MHM practices.

One way to support girls by the teachers in the school is to make them engaged in MHM related co-curricular activities. Engagement on MHM related co-curricular activities gives them good opportunities to discuss openly and critically about the different beliefs and restrictions of the community about MHM practices with their peers that enhances their knowledge and understanding.

MHM related co-curricular activities can be implemented forming girls club on volunteer base. The club can be part of the school health club or independent which can be named by the girls themselves.
The Role of the teacher is to form and lead the club. After forming the club, the teacher has also to make sure that an action plan is prepared by the girls themselves.

The plan can include activities such discussion time with peers, older girls, experience sharing with younger girls, making of local MHM sanitary materials, provision of emergency services of sanitary materials in the school, assessment on current MHM practices in the community etc. The teacher should continuously monitor the implementation of the action plan of the club. Through monitoring, the teacher should provide the club members timely and constructive feedbacks that help them to make improvement.

Annex

Hsian’s Story

Hsian is 14 and comes from a village. Her mother died when she was just five-years-old, which left her father to raise Hsian and her three siblings single-handedly. She has two elder sisters – who used to do all the cooking when she was growing up – and a brother. Her elder sisters used to do all the cooking and cleaning for the entire household when she was growing up. “I had no idea about menstruation till I actually had my period!” Hsian says, explaining there was no one at home to look after her or give her personal care and information, not just on menstruation, but on anything else like safety, how to deal with friends, school and so on. “My sisters were kids themselves so that explains my situation. One night she woke up with abdominal pain, and feared it was a bowel problem. But then she saw blood on her panties. “I was devastated. I thought I had some big ailment and would now die!”

Hsian suffers from cramps, and her menstruation lasts eight days. She uses cotton cloth for absorption of menstrual fluid, but her family often faces a shortage of material. When she finishes with a cloth she disposes of it by throwing it out in an open field. She never washes or reuses the same cloth twice. Occasionally, Hsian has boils and rashes in her private parts and discomfort from the wetness of the cloth she wears. But she had no idea these problems related to menstruation or bad hygiene. A sense of shame means she has never discussed these issues – even with her sisters – and has never considered buying sanitary pads from the market. “I feel too shy to ask for it,” she says. Family elders have barred Hsian from talking to boys in her village; and she is also barred from most physical contact during her periods.
Hsian is a strong and articulate girl who shared all of this personal information after a brief conversation about menstrual hygiene management.