

# Action Guide **4** For Teachers

*Keep girls in schools! Support them to manage their menstruation hygienically and overcome shame, silence and lack of knowledge around periods.*

## WHAT SHOULD BE ACHIEVED

### **Provide support**

- To become empathetic to girl's challenges and needs
- To help girls overcome stigma and shame associated with menstruation

### **Education**

- MHM related trainings with school girls (and boys maybe too)

### **School WASH facilities and safe disposal**

- Assure clean WASH facilities, operation and maintenance
- Sustain supply of water and soap
- Safe disposal of uses menstrual absorbent
- Provision of emergency sanitary napkins

## How You Can Do It !

### **Part 1: Provide Support**

1. Assign focal or contact teacher for girls special needs at your school.
2. Identify peer students or peer councils, such as girls' hygiene clubs, student cabinet and/or specific MHM councillors for girls are encouraged to strengthen peer support.
3. Also talk to the parents on the importance of MHM for their daughters.
4. Ensure that the MHM councils meet at regular intervals.
5. Be there for the girls!

### **Part 2: Education**

- > Check guideline chapter 3 on training session with girls and boys
- > Check guideline appendix for examples on IEC materials

1. Set up smaller groups, one-on-one interaction with girls to talk about menstruation on a regular basis.
2. Identify the key messages based on their local needs and challenges.
3. Consider also providing education to boys, as it helps break the silence around girls' needs and also creates a supportive environment.
4. Reach out to ASHA worker or local doctors to support you in this endeavour.
5. Reach out to district or NGOs if they have MHM IEC materials available or can provide you with further trainings.

- Understand that a couple of sessions will not break the secrecy and dispel myths related to menstruation, it requires continued efforts and interaction with the girls.

### Part 3: WASH Facilities and disposal

-> Check guideline Chapter 5 and 6

- Make sure the toilets are not locked during break times
- A bucket (simple container) in each toilet is a simple and effective way to collect and avoid disposal of used absorbent into the open or the latrine.
- Establish a cleaning service for keeping toilets clean and to have water and soap for washing.
- Stock up emergency sanitary pads.
- If your school has challenges to provide for separate toilets, water, soap and safe disposal facilities: reach out to the BEO/DEO and particularly the district engineer. Assess the school girls specific needs together with the engineer and school students. Under the SBM there are funds available for construction of separate WASH facilities and incinerators.

#### Example of training sessions with girls at the school level

##### The purpose of these sessions is that the girls:

- Receive accurate knowledge on MMH and feel supported in school
- Are able to hygienically manage their menstruation without fear of shame and embarrassment
- Are able to speak freely about it to their peers and teachers

##### The components of the session can focus on:

- Understanding changes during puberty
- Knowing menstruation
- Dealing with relating to menstruation
- Maintaining Hygiene Practices
- Handling absorbents including disposal
- Normalizing menstruation and conquering myth and misconceptions
- Breaking the silence regarding menstruation

##### The various methods used during these sessions could be:

Individual exercise, group work, quiz, role plays with discussion, case studies, games, drawings, skits, poem writing, etc.; class interaction about best WASH improvements that can be made within the school.

The more fun, the more positive girls attitudes will be to menstruation.

### What girls need to know - Some basics

Questions	Good practice guidance
<b>How do you manage your first period (menarche)?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk to other girls and woman such as your mother, sister, aunt grandmother, female friend or an older woman in your community</li> <li>Don't be afraid. It can be scary to see blood for the first time in your underwear, but it is normal and natural</li> <li>If you are at school, tell a female teacher or a fellow female student, and ask for consultation</li> <li>Feel proud! Your body is developing into that of a young woman.</li> </ul>
<b>How can I keep track of my menstrual cycle?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A normal period cycle is 28-33 days, but in your first few years, it is normal for the menstrual cycle to be more unpredictable.</li> <li>A normal menstruation lasts 3-6 days</li> <li>Keep a calendar and mark the first day of your period.</li> </ul>

Questions	Good practice guidance
<b>What are the different materials I can use?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hygienic and effective menstrual absorbents include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locally made reusable napkin</li> <li>Commercial reusable napkin</li> <li>Commercial disposable napkin</li> </ul> </li> <li>Semi-hygienic and less effective are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton wool</li> <li>Toilet paper or tissues</li> <li>Clean and dry strips of clean sari or other cloth</li> </ul> </li> <li>Unhygienic absorbent include: leaves, old cloth, dirty cloth, soil, ash, mud... these will cause infections and other health problems!</li> <li>Only use dry absorbent. If wet and moist you risk infection (more details in Chapter 4)</li> </ul>
<b>How do you capture or absorb the blood?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place a clean cloth, sanitary napkin, cotton on your underwear</li> <li>Don't insert any material– as you risk infection and it might get stuck</li> <li>Change the material every 2-6 hours or more frequently if you think the blood is getting heavy. Longer times also risk infections</li> </ul>
<b>How to wash and clean cloth and reusable napkins</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a little plain water to first rinse blood from the used cloth. Then use clean water and a little soap to wash it. Warm water can makes it easier to clean. When finished rinse with clean water until no more soap is on the cloth</li> <li>Dry the cloth in the sunshine to make it the cleanest and driest possible.</li> <li>Drying cloth inside a house takes a long time, and sometimes may not dry properly. If you are worried it will be seen and make you feel bad, talk with female adults in your family and find a place together.</li> </ul>
<b>How do you dispose of the used absorbent?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you are reusing a cloth, put it into a plastic bag until you can wash it with hot water and soap and then dry it in the sunshine or iron it.</li> <li>If you are using a disposable pad, tissue or cotton, wrap it in paper to make a clean package and put it in the bin or take home.</li> <li>If there is no other option, drop it straight in the latrine but not if it is a toilet, as this could easily become clogged.</li> </ul>
<b>How do you keep yourself clean during your period?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyday (morning and evening if possible), wash your genitals with soap and clean water. Only use the soap on the outside of the area, not inside. If there is no soap available, use clean water. But try and get soap for the next washing.</li> <li>Pat the area dry with a clean towel or cloth and put a fresh cloth, napkin or tissue in your underwear.</li> <li>Always wash your hands with soap and clean water after changing material and handling used absorbent</li> </ul>
<b>What changes might I expect to feel in terms of emotions?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is normal to feel sad, upset or over sensitive in the days leading up to or first few day of the period.</li> <li>Understand that this is temporary. If possible, rest more and be aware that these feelings are absolutely normal.</li> </ul>
<b>How do you manage the belly pain before or during menstruation?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can put a bottle with hot water on your belly area</li> <li>If it feels good, exercise can help soothe the pain. Yoga and stretching is also recommended, but no upside-down postures.</li> <li>You can take painkiller medicines on the most painful days.</li> </ul>

## What boys need to know?

Questions	Good practice guidance
<b>What is menstruation?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Menstruation happens every month for 3-5 days for every adolescent girl and women</li> <li>• It starts during puberty (around 11-14) . It stops during pregnancy, and finishes a women become older (over 40)</li> </ul>
<b>Why do girls get menstruation?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is part of puberty in growing up. Puberty happens to both girls and boys because of change in hormones. Some changes are similar, some are different, such as you develop a beard</li> <li>• Menstruation is a sign of maturing, i.e. a girl/ women is able to bear a child. Boys/men do not have a menstrual cycle, because they do not give birth.</li> <li>• So actually it is fantastic- without menstruation of your mother you wouldn't be there =)</li> </ul>
<b>Is menstruation dangerous or filthy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Menstruation is perfectly normal! As said: it is actually a sign that a women and girls is able to bear a child</li> <li>• There is nothing dirty – the blood is not impure, so is not the girl.</li> <li>• Girls use different materials to collect and absorb blood (such as sanitary napkins) and they usually dispose this out of your sight</li> </ul>
<b>How can you support girls and even your mother and female relatives?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't laugh at them or tease them</li> <li>• Show that you don't feel embarrassed</li> <li>• Talk to other girls and woman such as your mother, sister, aunt grandmother, female friend or an older woman in your community you trust, to get to know more</li> </ul>
<b>What about the myths and taboos?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many myths and taboos stems from old stories and beliefs that women and girls are dirty when they menstruate – but this is not true and many myths despise scientific facts</li> <li>• Do not encourage societal taboos and myths, because these are not based on any facts! Instead help to overcome</li> </ul>