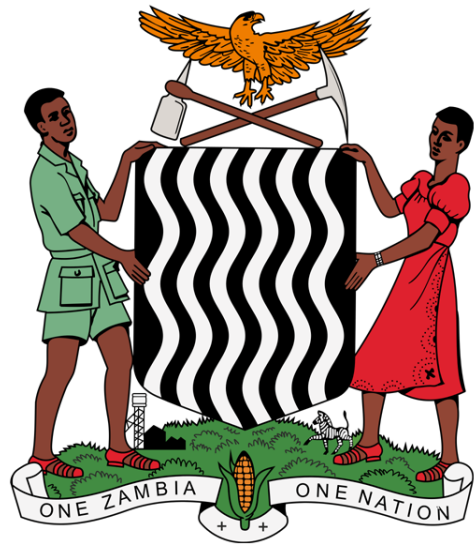




**Menstrual
Hygiene
Matters**



**Menstrual
Hygiene
Management**

**NATIONAL
GUIDELINES**

Ministry of Education 2016



FOREWORD

The Ministry of General Education conducts a dropout analysis every year in order to identify and address factors that lead to school dropout. A trend that has continued over time shows that due to early marriages more female learners drop out in comparison to their male counterpart. For example in 2014, a total of 5,046 female dropped out compared to 975 male (EMIS, 2014). In 2013, a Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) pilot study was conducted by the Ministry of General Education with support from UNICEF, SNV, WaterAid and other members of the MHM Thematic Working Group to look at management of menstrual hygiene among girls in primary schools and its effects on attendance of lessons in Zambia. This was carried out in five districts of Eastern, Central, Northern and Luapula Provinces. Despite menstruation being a natural biological process which occurs in females who have become adults, the study showed that most girls do not know how to handle menstruation and sometimes even drop out of school.

In 2014, the Ministry of General Education, engaged in the ‘WASH in Schools for Girls: Advocacy and Capacity Building for MHM through WASH in Schools Programme’ (WinS4Girls) with support of UNICEF and funded by the Government of Canada. A research study was conducted to understand factors affecting MHM practices among pupils in schools, leading into the development of National MHM Guidelines and toolkit. The investigative process was carried out by Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ), an organisation with vast experience in conducting research in health. Formative qualitative research was conducted in six schools of Mumbwa and Rufunsa Districts with technical support from Emory University, USA and the University of Zambia’s Department of Gender Studies. The study also reviewed previous work or studies in MHM and other developed MHM materials such as the MHM Toolkit developed by the USAID funded Schools Promoting Learning Achievements through Sanitation and Hygiene (SPLASH) programme in the Eastern Province. Periodic consultative meetings were also held with the Ministry of General Education’s Menstrual Hygiene Management Thematic Working Group (MoGE MHM TWG) which comprises different line Ministries, Cooperating Partners, Non-governmental and Community Based Organisations. MHM is a challenge globally and in 2014, the United Nations designated 28th May as Menstrual Hygiene Day. Every year themes for this day have raised a call to action on menstruation.

The purpose of these guidelines is to make an evidence-based MHM resource available that gives guidance on MHM programming to stakeholders involved in providing an enabling school environment through improvements in WASH infrastructure and associated services. The National Guidelines define the commonly used terms in MHM. They outline the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders at the various implementing levels namely National, Provincial, District, School and Community levels. Furthermore, the guidelines define key elements of an effective MHM system with information and knowledge on MHM, appropriate WASH facilities including disposal options, access to menstrual management materials, management of menstrual pain and discomfort, guidance/counselling and includes a checklist for evaluating implementation of MHM at schools.

Research has shown that women and girls face a number of challenges in managing their menstruation hygienically, both at home and in school. These challenges range from continued lack of knowledge, myths and beliefs about menstruation to lack of adequate WASH facilities and lack of access to affordable and hygienic sanitary materials including disposal options leaving women and girls to manage their menses in unhygienic and ineffective ways. In schools, this challenge is worsened especially by inadequate safe and private toilets as well as lack of clean water and soap for personal hygiene. It has also been established by studies conducted in Zambia that girls miss at least 36 days of classes per year; with 81% of girls interviewed indicating that they missed classes for the entire period of menstruation.¹ The guidelines therefore, aim to reduce absenteeism and drop out among adolescent female learners resulting in improved learning outcomes. The use of these guidelines are complemented with the MHM Toolkit.



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August 2016

¹ Zambia Ministry of Education Menstrual Hygiene Management Pilot study, 2013

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The Government of Canada for funding the research study and subsequent development of the toolkit and guidelines. The funding was administered through UNICEF Water Sanitation and Hygiene Section who offered support and direction for the research and the toolkit and guidelines development. UKaid and the Government of the Netherlands contributed through their support to the Ministry of General Education in strengthening Water Sanitation and Hygiene / MHM in schools at National and decentralised levels. The piloting of the toolkit and the scaling up of the basic MHM package has been supported through the UKaid funded Sanitation and Hygiene Programme.

The Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ) in collaboration with the University of Zambia - Department of Gender Studies - for conducting the formative research study which generated the evidence for the development of the toolkit and guidelines. Emory University for their technical support to the formative research and the training provided to the Ministry and the research team.

Members of the MHM Thematic Working Group who participated in the consultative meetings for their constructive contributions and technical expertise in the WASH in Schools and MHM programming.

We also thank the USAID and the programme for Schools Promoting Learning Achievement through Sanitation and Hygiene (SPLASH) for allowing us to take into consideration the MHM toolkit developed under SPLASH, based on experiences in Zambia's Eastern Province, consolidating the current research study.

Special thanks are extended to the six schools in Mumbwa and Rufunsa Districts including their surrounding communities for participating in the formative research. In particular, we thank the Head Teachers, Teachers, Village Headmen, the Pupils and Parents for providing insight into existing menstrual hygiene practices, without which it would not have been possible to develop a meaningful approach to addressing the MHM challenges faced by the girls at Schools.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BO	Building Officer
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CIDRZ	Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
DESO	District Education Standards Officer
DGIS	Directorate of Development Cooperation - Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
EHT	Environmental Health Technician/Technologist
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FAWEZA	Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
GIZ	German Society for International Development
MGCD	Ministry of Gender and Child Development
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MLGH	Ministry of Local Government and Housing
MOCTA	Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MoGE	Ministry of General Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
PEO	Provincial Education Office
PO	Planning Officer
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RHS	Reproductive Health Services
SBO	Senior Building Officer
SIU	School Infrastructure Unit
SHN	School Health and Nutrition
SLTS	School Led Total Sanitation
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SPLASH	Schools Promoting Learning Achievements through Sanitation and Hygiene
TWG	Thematic Working Group
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAREN	Vision Africa Regional Network
VIP	Ventilated Improved Pit latrine
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WinS	Water Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools
ZIC	Zone In-service Coordinator

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT TERMS

There are several terms associated with menstruation and its management: **Table 1** presents some of the commonly used terms with their related definitions:

Table 1: Definition of MHM Terms

Term	Definition
Adolescent	A young person in the process of developing into an adult.
Dysmenorrhea	Pain, backaches, abdominal pain or cramps during menstruation.
Menarche	The first time a girl has her menstruation or menses. This occurs during the adolescent stage usually between the ages of 10-15 years, although this can vary.
Menstruation	A natural part of the reproductive process that occurs to prepare a woman's body for pregnancy. If a woman does not become pregnant, the uterus sheds its lining. This shedding is called menstruation and is evidenced by the flow of blood through the uterine canal.
Menstrual Hygiene Management	The mechanism through which women and adolescent girls use clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood. This material should be changed in privacy, as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period. Soap and water should be available for washing the body as required, and facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials must be accessible ² .
Menstrual materials	Any material that girls and women use to absorb or soak up menstrual blood during menstruation. These can include disposable pads, tampons, cotton wool, menstrual cups, leaves, husks, sacks, etc.
Puberty	Puberty is the natural physiological process that boys and girls undergo to become sexually mature. In essence, this is the period from childhood to adulthood. Puberty involves a series of physical changes in both boys and girls that lead to the development of secondary sexual characteristics, including full development of the male or female reproductive organs.
Re-usable pads	These are cloth pads made from absorbent fabrics that are worn by females during menstruation. These types of pads are washable, so they can be used repeatedly.

²WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme. *Meeting Report of the JMP Post-2015 Global Monitoring Working Group on Hygiene*. Washington, DC; 2012.

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The following Government Ministries and organisations participated in the development of the MHM national guidelines: Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) Zambia, Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ), Columbia University, Emory University, FAWEZA, Government of the Netherlands, Media agencies, Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs (MoCTA), Ministry of Community Development Mother and Child Health (MCDMCH), Ministry of General Education (MoGE), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Local Government and Housing (MLGH), National Water and Sanitation Company (NWASCO), PLAN, Save the Children Zambia, SNV, Schools, Teachers and Community Members of Rufunsa and Mumbwa Districts, Toilet Yanga, UNGEI, UNICEF, USAID, University of Zambia - Department of Gender Studies, Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN), WaterAid, Water Empowerment, World Vision Zambia.

INTRODUCTION

Evidence has shown that the provision of adequate Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities and services in schools has a bearing on health and educational outcomes, especially for girls. According to an analysis conducted by UNICEF using Education Management Information System (EMIS) data covering all 9,000 schools in Zambia, there is a high correlation between the provision of adequate WASH facilities and improvements in indicators for the education of girls. Overall, it was observed that schools with improved WASH facilities had higher enrolment ratios, lower grade repetition rates and reduced school dropout rates³.

These MHM guidelines have been developed under the leadership of the Zambian Ministry of General Education (MoGE), from data collected and analysed across six schools of Mumbwa and Rufunsa districts. The guidelines have also taken into consideration findings of a MHM pilot study conducted in 2013⁴ by the Ministry of Education with support from UNICEF, the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), WaterAid and other members of the MHM Thematic Working Group led by MoGE.

The MHM guidelines are intended to aid provision of a supportive school environment that will provide comfort whilst at school during menstruation, improve school performance, and reduce dropout rates attributable to menstruation.

PURPOSE OF THE MHM GUIDELINES

In a school setup, an MHM enabling environment includes having toilets or latrines with designs that meet the needs of girl. This includes privacy, soap and water availability, access to sanitary materials and disposal facilities, and provision of the right information to assist teachers, boys, girls and the community to understand MHM issues.

The purpose of these guidelines is to make an evidence-based MHM resource available that gives guidance on MHM programming to stakeholders involved in providing a safe and appropriate school environment through improvements in WASH infrastructure and services. They have been developed specifically to guide the stakeholders at National, Provincial, District, School and Community levels,

³Lack of Sanitation and its Impacts on the Girls' Education Performance in Zambia, UNICEF 2014

⁴Zambia Ministry of Education Menstrual Hygiene Management Pilot study, 2013

and also take into consideration the contribution of non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Formative research was conducted in six schools of Mumbwa and Rufunsa Districts with the technical support of Emory University and the Department of Gender and Development studies at the University of Zambia. They have also referenced the MHM pilot study that was conducted in 2013 under the leadership of the MoGE in five districts of Eastern, Central, Northern and Luapula Provinces, and draws from findings of the work done in Eastern province by SPLASH, funded by USAID.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Ministry of Education was supported by UNICEF with funding from the Canadian Government - Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) to implement a MHM Advocacy and Capacity Building Project for school girls. The objective of the project was to carry out qualitative research in order to understand MHM practices and barriers that girls face in hygienically managing menstruation, specifically in relation to WASH facilities provided at schools. Findings from the qualitative research form the basis for the development of these guidelines, containing roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders. The Ministry of Education commissioned the research, and with the support of UNICEF, engaged the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ) to carry out the research in Mumbwa and Rufunsa Districts, covering six schools.

Although menstruation is a natural biological process and a key sign of reproductive health in girls and women,⁵ little attention has been given to the provision of appropriate and adequate hygiene facilities and services for its management. Menstruation is characterised by the shedding of blood from the uterus on a monthly basis, usually starting between 10-15 years. This can vary widely, from as early as 9 to as old as 19 in some individuals. Menstruation in many cultures is treated as something negative, shameful or dirty. It can be associated with many taboos and cultural restrictions, largely due to limited knowledge and access to information both at home and in schools. As a result, girls often do not know what to do when they begin menstruating.

Research has shown that the ability for women and girls to manage their periods is affected by a number of factors, such as:

- **Knowledge and beliefs on menstruation**
- **Access to affordable and hygienic sanitary materials**
- **Disposal options.**

Poorly addressing these factors results in many women and girls managing their menstruation in ineffective and unhygienic ways. The problems are exacerbated by **insufficient access to safe and private toilets** and a **lack of clean water and soap for personal hygiene, specifically at schools**. These challenges, coupled with barriers such as fear of being recognised as menstruating at school, teasing by boys, and fear of staining clothing (in a case of leakage of menstrual blood), can discourage girls from attending classes during menses. With this background, MHM programmes are being developed, aiming at keeping girls in school and improving performance and learning outcomes.

⁵Emory University MHM course presentations, 2015

At the time of preparing these guidelines, the MoGE had not yet developed a full MHM package of interventions for managing menstrual hygiene at schools; very little was being done to address the barriers and challenges in Zambia.

WASH IN SCHOOLS SITUATION IN ZAMBIA

Water and sanitation facilities in rural primary and basic schools are generally poor in Zambia. In 2013, the MoGE estimated the proportion of schools with permanent toilets to be 58.5%, whilst 89.8% had sufficient water coverage. However, according to a sustainability study undertaken by UNICEF in 2012, 35% of WASH facilities in schools were not functional. The MoGE has recommended the double-vault Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrine as the standard latrine for rural schools. However, the design lacks washrooms and water supply that provide an enabling environment for the effective management of menstrual hygiene. The high pupil to toilet ratios observed in most schools are also a deterrent in the proper maintenance of the facilities, which can prevent use.

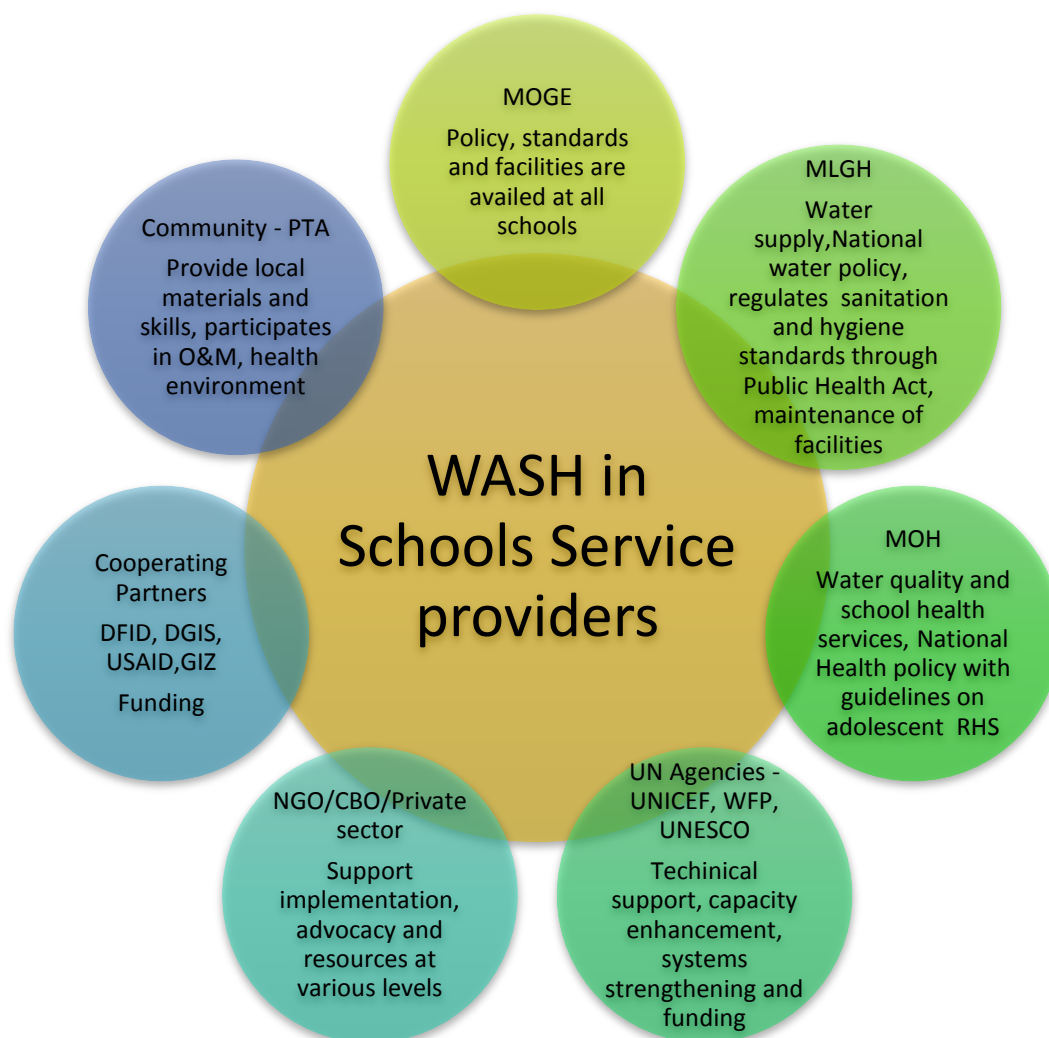
The impact of inadequate water supply and poor sanitation on adolescent girls is significant. Although this situation is more pronounced in rural areas, the issue is insufficiently addressed nationally at all levels of planning, decision-making and implementation of WASH interventions in schools.

STAKEHOLDERS

The Ministry of Education has put in place the School Infrastructure Unit (SIU) within the Department of Planning and Information which is responsible for infrastructural development, including sanitation and hygiene facilities.

The School Health and Nutrition (SHN) unit is responsible for the “software programme”, which includes hygiene education and improvements to WASH behaviour. The MoGE works with other line ministries such as the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Local Government and Housing (MLGH) who are responsible for specific components of WASH. Other stakeholders include the UN Agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations and cooperating partners who are responsible for programme funding as well as the communities through the involvement of the Parent Teacher Associations (PTA):

Diagram 1: Roles of Stakeholders



The Government of Canada, through the Department of Foreign Affairs funded the MHM research and the development of the guidelines.

BARRIERS TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

Girls miss classes for a number of reasons during menstruation:

- Limited knowledge of MHM
- Menstruation can be viewed as taboo, resulting in myths and misconceptions from the community
- A lack of access to suitable facilities and adequate materials (private toilets, water, soap and disposal facilities) at school

In the 2013 MHM pilot study⁶, it was estimated that girls missed school for up to 36 days per year. The majority (81%) of girls who were interviewed missed school for the entire period of menstruation.

Findings from the qualitative research on this subject exposed the challenges in hygienically managing menstruation and are presented in the table below.

⁶Zambia Ministry of Education Menstrual Hygiene Management Pilot study, 2013

Table 1: Barriers to Menstrual Hygiene Management

<i>Sanitation facilities including disposal options for used menstrual management materials</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is insufficient access to safe and private toilets. Toilets may be dirty and smelly, and lack water and soap for personal hygiene⁷ • Some schools do not have separate toilets for girls and boys, and most do not have changing or washing rooms. • Girls do not have appropriate facilities for disposing of used menstrual management materials. 77% of girls used pit latrines in schools in rural areas as a means of disposal⁸.
<i>Inadequate knowledge and information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of understanding among girls of the biological process of menstruation⁹. • There is no formal teaching on menstruation prior to menarche. • 50.7 %¹⁰ of girls included in the baseline survey in Muchinga and Central provinces reported lack of knowledge on menstruation at menarche. • Male teachers are hindered by cultural barriers to adequately address MHM within the school curriculum, especially in rural areas.
<i>Limited access to menstrual management materials</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is limited access to affordable hygienic menstrual management materials. • Most girls from low-income households are not able to buy disposable sanitary pads and instead use pieces of old cloth or “chitenge” material. • 58.2% prefer to re-use old pieces of cloth because of their availability and affordability¹¹.
<i>Missing school</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47% ¹²of girls in rural areas do not go to school when they are menstruating due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discomfort as a result of fear of soiling their uniform - Poor sanitation at school - Lack of sanitary materials - Menstrual pain • Girls miss up to 36 days each per year due to menstruation¹³
<i>Cultural restrictions, taboos, myths & misconceptions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 70.1%¹⁴ of girls had restrictions placed on them during their menstrual period. Such as from playing with males, not being able to cook, and restriction on movement, including going to school in some instances¹⁵. • Myths and misconceptions exist about MHM that can affect girls’ behaviour after menarche and during menstruation.
<i>Stigmatisation by boys</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys often tease girls when they are menstruating, especially when the girls stain their clothes¹⁶.

⁷Findings from the Formative Research Conducted in Mumbwa and Rufunsa, 2015

⁸Vision Africa Regional Network and District Education Boards, 2016, MHM Baseline Survey in Muchinga and Central Province, Zambia.

⁹Findings from the Formative Research Conducted in Mumbwa and Rufunsa, 2015

¹⁰Vision Africa Regional Network and District Education Boards, 2016, MHM Baseline Survey in Muchinga and Central Province, Zambia.

¹¹Ibid

¹²Ministry of Education, 2013, Management of Menstrual Hygiene among Girls in Primary Schools and its Effects on Attendance of Lessons in Zambia- A Pilot Study.

¹³Ibid

¹⁴Vision Africa Regional Network and District Education Boards, 2016, MHM Baseline Survey in Muchinga and Central Province, Zambia.

¹⁵Findings from the Formative Research Conducted in Mumbwa and Rufunsa, 2015

¹⁶Ibid

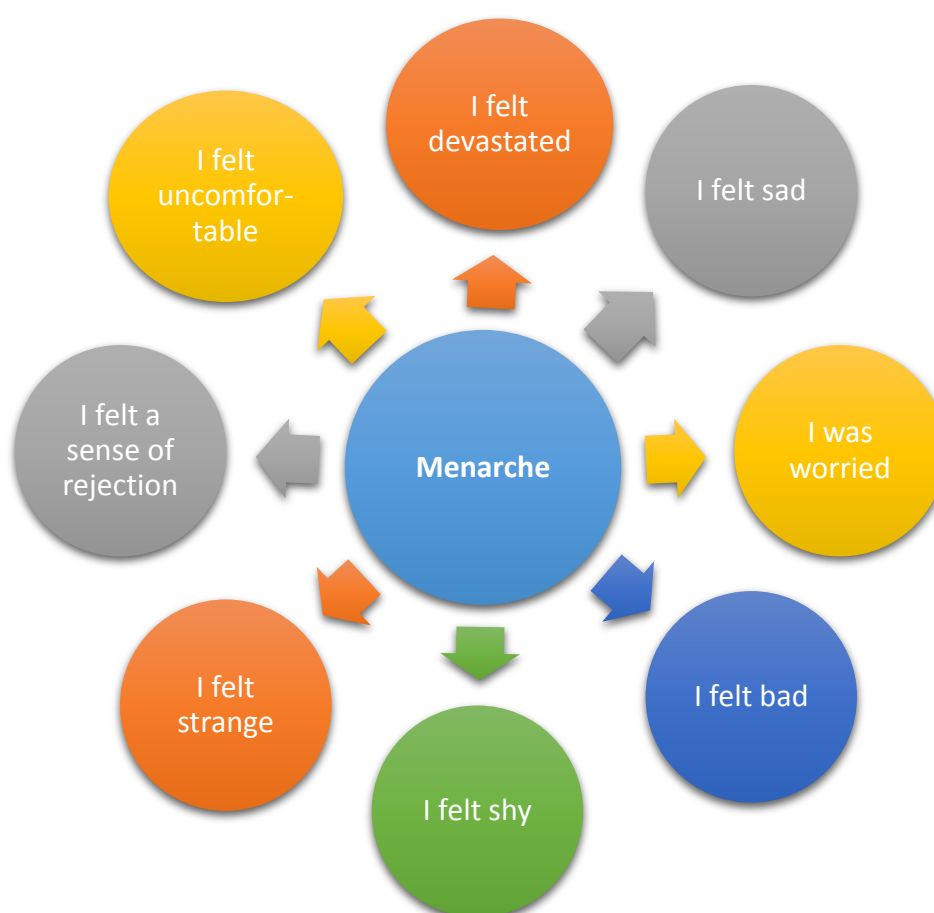
What about support at schools from teachers?

Not just in education but in understanding. Girls must be allowed to use the bathroom when they wish. There should be school clubs that mentor young girls. Opportunities must exist to engage parents.

Evidence from the formative research showed that experiences at menarche were different for each individual, eliciting different reactions.

Diagram 2 comprises some common reactions from girls at menarche. The reactions indicate a lack of knowledge, and that many are unaware that menstruation is a natural occurrence in their biological development. There is a huge need to support girls and provide adequate information.

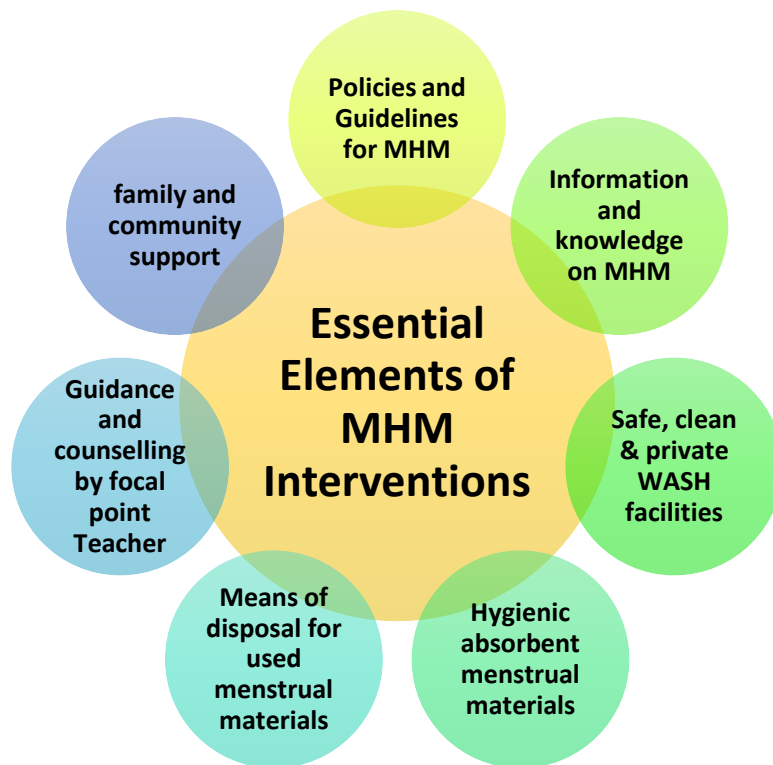
Diagram 2: Girls First Experience of Menstruation



SUMMARY OF MHM ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Diagram 3 shows the key elements that must be considered in an effective MHM programme. The guidelines have been developed based on this framework, in addition to the findings and recommendations from the formative research conducted with the support of Emory University and other local studies.

Diagram 3: Summary of key components of the MHM Framework



Source: adapted from MHM Matters: a Resource for Improving MHM¹⁷

¹⁷House S, Mahon T, and Cavill S, (2012), Menstrual Hygiene Matters; A Resource for Improving Menstrual Hygiene Management Around the World.

THE GUIDELINES

To tackle MHM systematically through the education system in Zambia, there are many interlinked and multi-sectoral processes that must occur. These are unlikely to be achieved by the government alone in the current context, and require many partners and stakeholders, including communities and households. Below are the guidelines for tackling MHM at schools based on the key essential elements:

Guideline 1: WASH facilities and disposal options

WASH Facilities

1. The design and features of toilets for girls at schools should be able to cater for their menstruation needs. The following features must be included:
 - a. **Water for MHM within the facility.** In situations where there is no running water, the 20 litre Kalingalinga bucket, or an alternative PVC container should be used.
 - b. **Soap** for hand washing, to maintain personal hygiene.
 - c. **Screen wall** and lockable door for privacy, ensuring there is enough light inside for visibility.
 - d. **Integrated toilets**, combining toilet facilities with wash rooms to facilitate MHM.
2. Maintain a reasonable distance between boys and girls toilets. Where space is not an issue, gender-segregated toilets should be placed at opposite sides of the school.
3. Allocation of toilets or latrines to be done according to grades (e.g. grades 1-4, grade 5-7 and grades 8-9) so that older girls in upper grades, including those in lower grades who might have started menstruating, have their own privacy.
4. WASH facilities should be well maintained and kept clean at all times. Schools should develop a cleaning rota for sanitation facilities. This can be done through the WASH clubs with the support of the Focal Point Teacher. Pupils should also be sensitized on toilet use, and those in upper grades should be involved in cleaning activities. Schools working with the PTA can also come up with initiatives to promote cleanliness.

Below are some images of facilities obtaining at some of the schools that meet the recommended “minimum” standards for WASH in Schools (**figure 1**). These are relatively inexpensive facilities that address fundamental barriers to MHM.

Figure 1: Images of WASH Facilities for MHM in Schools



Disposal options

It must be emphasized to all stakeholders that the practice of disposing of menstrual pads in pit latrines is an environmental hazard. Burning is the best way of disposing used menstrual materials, ideally with an incinerator close to the latrine.

Non-biodegradable materials like plastics are not environmentally friendly.

1. Development of infrastructure for the disposal of menstrual materials

School management must provide appropriate infrastructure for the disposal of menstrual materials. Incinerators are highly recommended for this. These facilities must be user friendly, non-hazardous and located in areas that ensure privacy. The community must be engaged through campaigns to address the cultural sensitivities linked to the disposal of menstrual materials, in order to ensure the successful roll out and adoption of improved disposal systems.

2. Provision of disposal accessories in schools

School management must provide disposal bins within the toilet compartments. School cleaning staff must be employed to manage safe disposal of menstrual hygiene materials.

To cater for more personal disposal options, school management should provide special or improvised carrier bags for girls to store menstrual materials that are soiled whilst at school. This will give them the option to decide when, where and how they will dispose of the used menstrual material.

Guideline 2: Information and knowledge on MHM

Information and knowledge on menstruation and MHM helps to prepare the girls for menarche and the subsequent management of their menses. The right information helps to dispels myths and misconceptions around MHM. The following are the guidelines on improving knowledge and information sharing at the schools:

1. All adolescent girls and boys, in addition to male and female teachers must be given appropriate information and understand the facts about menstruation required for effective management of menstrual hygiene.
2. The Ministry of Education should include MHM as a key component of the SHN implementation framework, and provide adequate fund allocation for the implementation of the prioritised strategies.
3. The Ministry of Education should support publications of books on puberty and menstruation to aid the learning process for both boys and girls, and ensure MHM is incorporated in the school curriculum, including primary school curriculum.
4. Ensure development of MHM messages as part of the WASH in Schools Hygiene Education, and integration into personal hygiene messages.
5. Posters, pamphlets, flyers and other IEC materials must be produced and printed. These should be translated into local Zambian languages to target a wider audience.
6. Extra-curricular activities (drama clubs, debates, songs, quizzes and games) should be used to inform, create awareness and sensitise stakeholders on MHM.
7. The Government must continue to recognise and support the Menstrual Hygiene Commemoration Day on the 28th May to raise public awareness and sharing of the right information on MHM in schools.
8. Peer to peer interactions at schools must be encouraged, and female teachers should hold informal 'let's talk about it' sessions with girls. This will encourage girls to open up and share experiences. Female teachers should be very approachable in order to facilitate this. Older girls should be trained to mentor young girls, if willing.

Guideline 3: Access to menstrual management materials

Hygienic absorbent menstrual materials should be available and accessible for pupils and teachers. Adequate supply chain for disposable and washable menstrual materials should be in place providing affordable materials throughout the country, including in remote areas. The supply of menstrual material by school administrations and the users themselves should be addressed as follows:

1. *School Administration procurement of disposable pads and other hygienic absorbent menstrual materials for emergency cases.*

School management should put in place resource mobilization processes to procure menstrual pads. School management must establish policies that support such procurement by allocating a percentage of school grants, PTA funds or other community financial contributions. These materials must include tissue, soap, disposable menstrual pads and washable pads as a package, forming a hygiene kit.

2. *Access to alternative menstrual materials*

Schools must implement capacity building programs for girls and women to learn how to make re-usable and washable pads, as a low cost alternative for menstrual hygiene

management. Some of these washable pads can be stocked in schools for emergency cases, or sold to the wider community as an income generation activity. The training for the sewing of washable pads can be done through the home economics and needle work curriculum, and school WASH clubs. The type of material used to make the washable pad should cater for skin sensitivity among different users, availability of local appropriate materials and affordability. *Procedures for making re-usable or washable pads can be found in the accompanying MHM toolkit.*

3. Safe storage of menstrual materials

School management must ensure that the hygiene absorbent menstrual materials are stored safely and hygienically in a designated area in the school such as an office with shelves, lockable trunk or cabinet with an assigned custodian. Below are selected images of available modern disposable and hand re-usable or washable menstrual pads (**figure 2**):

Figure 2: Examples of Some menstrual management materials¹⁸

Images of commercial disposable and washable Examples of self-sewn chitenge washable pads



Where disposable sanitary pads may be too expensive or unavailable, girls can be taught how to make their own re-usable cloth pads, and learn methods of caring for them to ensure they are safe and hygienic to use.

Cloth and cotton wool are unhygienic, not sufficiently absorbent materials and do not provide adequate protection from leakages. In addition, as with all menstrual washable materials, cloth is a high maintenance option, since it requires adequate water for washing with soap, drying in the sun and ironing for re-use.

Access and availability of menstrual materials are an important factor in addressing the barriers and challenges posed by MHM. The choice of the type of menstrual materials is largely dependent on the social-cultural acceptability, personal preferences, cost and the distance of the school from the local town where most business are situated.

¹⁸More images, information on use and care of menstrual management materials are provided in the MHM toolkit

Guideline 4: Management of pain and discomfort due to menstruation

Menstrual pain causes feelings of discomfort, and can result in girls missing class. The baseline survey in Muchinga and Central provinces showed that 61.5% felt uncomfortable at school when on their menses, and among the 34.3% who indicated recently missing classes, their reason were largely due to menstrual pain¹⁹. The following guides are therefore set for management of pain and discomforts at school;

1. Create a space within the school (sick bay) for temporal relief of menstrual pain (improvise accordingly).
2. Collaborate with local health facilities for care, support and access to basic medications. Where such arrangement exists, stock basic pain relief medication within schools.
3. Designate a teacher, or Focal Point Person whom the girls can easily approach to assist with pain management.
4. In the absence of female teachers, trained role-model older girls from the upper grades can be selected and tasked with mentoring younger girls.

Content of Guidance and Counseling Sessions

- Address knowledge gaps on MHM – including myths/misconceptions BOTH with girls and boys
- Hygienic management of menstruation
- Access to menstrual materials
- Provision of appropriate WASH amenities with privacy
- Minimising menstrual discomfort and pain

Guideline 5: Guidance/counselling by Focal Point Teacher

In the absence of female Focal Point teacher, a male teacher can help provide guidance. Alternatively, a trained older, approachable female pupil should be trained and given the roles and responsibilities of a Focal Point person.

What is the Role of the Focal Point Person?

1. Ensure essential elements for MHM at school level are in place e.g. sanitary pads, sewing programmes for washable pads, cleaning materials, IEC materials etc.
2. Direct counselling and guidance through:
 - (i) General information sessions
 - (ii) One-to-one sessions for both boys and girls
3. Provide guidance to PTA and the community through general information sessions, and events such as the MHM commemoration day.
4. Counseling of parents (on specific occasions such as open days, MHM Day among others) as a means of support to parents and the community.
5. Integrate MHM into existing WASH clubs, and encourage MHM advocacy directed by these groups.

Tools for Guidance and Counselling

- MHM Toolkit
- School checklist

¹⁹Vision Africa Regional Network and District Education Boards, 2016, MHM Baseline Survey in Muchinga and Central Province, Zambia.

- Leaflets, pamphlets and brochures
- Different tools for general information sessions and individual one-on-one counselling

These must be in the relevant local languages (Bemba, Nyanga, Tonga, Lozi, Kaonde, Luvala, Lunda).

Guideline 6: Community and family support

1. Designate one executive member of the PTA for MHM (PCSC – Parents Community School Committee for community schools). This focal point (FP) will coordinate MHM, linking a school FP with community support groups.
2. Members of the PTA committee can work with schools to sensitize other parents and guardians (both males and females) on proper MHM practices to dispel taboos associated with menstruation and support girls at home.
3. All traditional, community and opinion leaders must be equipped with the right information on MHM to help dispel myths and misconceptions.
4. An MHM training manual must be developed by the Ministry of Education working with key stakeholders, and used by community based organisations to train community support groups such as members of the PTA, Neighbourhood Health Committees and other groups associated with initiation ceremonies for girls.
5. Each school and community leadership should promote the formation of community support groups to be involved with the services below:

Services of the MHM Community Support Group

- Work with the school to create awareness about MHM (especially during Menstrual Hygiene Commemoration Day on the 28th May).
- Act as an information resource to women and other community members who are involved in girls' initiation ceremonies.
- Support resource mobilisation for provision of MHM materials at schools.
- Encourage adolescent girls to attend school and complete their education.

MHM TRAINING

In most cultures, menstruation is hardly discussed in public. As a result, myths and misconceptions arise because of a lack of factual information²⁰. For this reason, it is important that orientation and training is given to all stakeholders, and especially for community groups who are responsible for initiation ceremonies. The main aim of the training and orientation is to provide the right information that will help to dispel the myths and misconceptions, and equip stakeholders – pupils, teachers, community groups including leaders, government and non-governmental organisations with basic skills in menstrual hygiene management.

²⁰House S, Mahon T, and Cavill S, (2012), Menstrual Hygiene Matters; A Resource for Improving Menstrual Hygiene Management Around the World.

MHM training should include the following, note that this list is not exhaustive:

- Facts on adolescence, puberty and menstruation
- Personal hygiene during menstruation
- MHM interventions at school and in the community including making washable pads
- Management of menstrual pain
- Support for adolescent girls

MHM ACTION PLAN

Responsibilities and actions must be highlighted to ensure effective resource allocation. In addition, monitoring and evaluation processes must be in place for review of the performance of national MHM programmes.

Table 2: Actions for Effective MHM at Different Levels

Level of Action	Actions Required	Who should be Involved?
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop guidelines for the implementation and management of MHM in schools • Incorporate MHM guidelines in the SHN implementation framework and school curriculum • Allocate adequate funding for WASH facilities and MHM in national budgets • Put in place an MHM M&E plan to ensure resources are reaching intended beneficiaries • Develop and validate WASH designs that have MHM compliant features, and include indicators in the EMIS for monitoring • Create and advocate for national policies that support easy access to affordable and safe menstrual hygiene management products for girls • Collaborate with different ministries, CSOs and private partners to improve MHM in schools 	MoE – SHN & infrastructure units and the Standards & Curriculum development, MOF – Directorate of planning, MLGH, MOH, UN Agencies –UNICEF & UNESCO, NGO, Cooperating Partners, Private sector.
Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Planning Officers must support implementation and monitoring of national guidelines on MHM and dissemination to the district structures • Resident engineers must work with district officers to support infrastructural development, and construction of menstrual hygiene-compliant designs, monitoring progress along the way • Conduct awareness and dissemination meetings with all stakeholders for ensuring a holistic approach to MHM, and mobilise resources for implementation 	MOGE - PEO's office, NGOs, private sector, MLGH

Level of Action	Actions Required	Who should be Involved?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct monitoring and evaluation of school MHM programmes 	
District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate guidelines to schools, monitor and supervise the schools to effectively implement MHM activities • Ensure all MHM activities are adequately budgeted for and included in district plans • Conduct MHM orientation workshops and capacity building for teachers, parents and traditional leaders • Provide MHM resources: IEC materials, books, funds for emergency sanitary pads etc. to schools • Recruit building officers to support schools in constructing MHM compliant WASH facilities, including provision of safe water sources • Form district level MHM working groups to deliberate issues pertaining to MHM, find workable solutions, mobilise resources and share knowledge and information 	MOGE-DEBS Officers (PO,BO, DESO, ZIC), RWSS, MOH-EHTs, NGOs, FBO, Private Sector, DRCC, GCC

Level of Action	Actions Required	Who should be Involved?
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the guidelines • Designate guidance and counselling teachers at each school to support the girls and provide them with appropriate information • Train teachers to conduct MHM awareness sessions for both boys and girls at least once every month • Build lockable toilets, disposal facilities and shower rooms with water for girls and female teachers • Develop a well-defined school based child protection policy to ensure that both boys and girls respect each other's rights • Stock emergency menstrual hygiene materials, such as disposable pads, cotton wool, accessible to all girls who start menstruation at school. Where possible, schools should be encouraged to make re-usable pads through the home economics classes or school clubs • Drama, theatre and debate groups should work to create awareness, advocate and demystify MHM through plays, poetry and open discussions • School groups should also be encouraged to write facts about MHM through social media, in areas where people regularly use the likes of Facebook and Twitter • Involve health workers to assist girls on the management of menstrual pain and hold talks with the girls on proper personal hygiene during menses • Support communities through PTA committees and traditional leaders to understand facts of MHM, so that they can provide support to girls at home: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PTA must teach more parents and guardians about proper MHM practices to dispel taboos associated with menstruation • Train peer educators in MHM to overcome stigma associated with menstruation 	Head teachers, SHN Coordinators, local masons and contractors, pupils; both boys and girls, health workers, PTA members, Tradition leadership, NGOs, FBOs
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form community support groups for advancement of girls' education • Fathers and female family members should receive correct information from schools on MHM, and support the girls to maintain proper MHM at home and at school • Support school MHM programmes and activities, including production of re-usable pads and mobilising resources for provision of appropriate WASH facilities 	CBO, FBO Churches, PTA members, EHTs, Community Health Workers, Traditional leaders.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VARIOUS MINISTRIES IN MHM

In addition to the MoGE, other ministries like MLGH, MOH are involved in the provision of WASH facilities and services at schools. Below is the diagrammatic presentation of the type of services that must be implemented by the other ministries to effectively manage menstrual hygiene:

Diagram 6: Roles of Line Ministries:

MLGH	MOH	MGCD	MOCTA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Water supply •Provision of services for water supply and sanitation •Technical backstop for O&M through local authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support training of schools and PTA members on MHM •WASH monitoring through EHTs •Hygiene Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Promote development of gender sensitive policies and strategies that promote equity and inclusiveness at schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Support sensitisation and awareness creation in communities •Support community groups to dispel myths and misconceptions and encourage girls to complete their education.

Table 3: Checklist for MHM guidelines

National/Provincial Level			
Questions	Yes/No	Status	Comments
Is a WASH policy in place?			
Is MHM part of the WASH policy?			
What components of MHM are addressed in the WASH policy?			
What monitoring mechanisms have been put in place in the policy?			
Is MHM education included in the school curriculum?			
Is the WASH/MHM budget for schools in place and sufficient?			

District Level			
Questions	Yes/No	Status	Comments
WASH Facilities			
Does the district support WASH infrastructural development and maintenance in schools?			
Does the district carry out health inspections of WASH facilities in schools?			
If yes, how often?			
Curriculum			
Is MHM part of the school curriculum?			
Is MHM being taught in schools?			
In what subjects?			
Sanitary materials and disposal			
Does the district support MHM budgets for sanitary materials for emergencies in schools?			
What initiatives are being supported to sustain provision of sanitary materials in schools?			
What disposal options are available in schools			
Social and psychological support			

District Level				
Questions	Yes/No	Status	Comments	
Do schools have guidance and counselling/SHN teachers?				
School Level				
Questions	Yes/No/ number	Total	Status	Comments
WASH Facilities				
Total school population Total # of girls				
Is school absenteeism for girls being tracked with numbers and reasons?				
Total # of latrines in each school For girls and boys (segregated)				
What is the toilet ratio for girls ?				
# of washrooms/ change rooms for girls				
Is there water available? How is the hygiene component addressed?				
Curriculum				
In what grade is MHM taught?				
What subjects include an MHM component?				
Sanitary materials & disposal				
Availability of sanitary pads for emergencies in school				
What school-community initiatives are in place to improve availability of menstrual materials in schools?				
Social and psychological support				
Does the school have a Guidance and counselling/SHN department				

District Level			
Questions	Yes/No	Status	Comments
Is there a sick bay and pain relief Medication?			
Linkages with nearby health centres			

This document has been developed with contribution of:

Canada

