

TEACHING WASH IN SCHOOLS

Menstrual Hygiene Management Guide



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Important reminders to teachers

This Menstruation Hygiene Management (MHM) guide is prepared to support teachers deliver WASH related contents reflected in the Community and Culture Syllabus.

WASH is an acronym that stands for Water Sanitation and Hygiene – WASH. These notes focus on MHM in Schools and it is worth keeping in mind that much of what you do in the class will find its way home with students. WASH in Schools safeguards the health of children, supports and promotes the provision of safe drinking water and improves sanitation and hygiene facilities and practice. Students are encouraged to be agents of change and promote positive hygiene practices in the community.

Why teach WASH in Kiribati classrooms?

Globally every year there are 2 million diarrheal deaths related to unsafe water, sanitation, and poor hygiene. Most of these deaths occur among children under 5 years of age (WHO, 2012). Diarrhoea diseases kill more children than AIDS, malaria, and measles combined. This makes diarrheal disease the second leading cause of death among children under five (CDC, 2012). Kiribati has the second highest number of diarrheal deaths under 5 years of age in the Pacific region.

Education will help our communities make the lifestyle changes required for a better tomorrow. Teachers are the key enablers of children and can support them as agents of personal behaviour change and community behaviour change and attitude.

The whole of school approach through classroom and club activities will improve good hygiene practices in schools and therefore will reduce sickness, improve your teaching outcomes, the standard of education in your school and improve your school's ranking. Improved education levels benefit the whole community and builds Kiribati's future.

How do children learn WASH concepts effectively?

Fun and Practical Activities

Year 5 and 6 children learn water, sanitation and hygiene concepts through practical and participatory activities in the classroom and on the field: they are child-centred and fun activities including:

- Songs, poems and rhymes
- Role Play
- Games
- Dances
- Stories
- Practical demonstrations and hands-on activities on the field.

Language of Instruction

A teacher has to deliver MHM in Kiribati for first days of instruction and use materials prepared in Te Kiribati. On other days students and teachers need to reinforce learning of MHM through using English according to the language in education policy. The notes are in English and there is a resource material written in English.

How to use this guide

Note that this document is to be used when teaching the WASH topics under the health component of Year 5-6 Healthy Living curriculum.

Kiribati WASH in School (KWinS)

WASH is an abbreviation that stands for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

WASH in Schools safeguards the health of children, supports the provision of safe drinking water, improves sanitation and hygiene facilities, enables children to be messengers of change and promotes lifelong health for children and their families.

WASH in school enables all children in Kiribati classrooms to learn the right to:

1. Safe and affordable drinking water
2. Basic sanitation facilities/services
3. Improved hygiene practices
4. Survive, develop and grow.

Please refer to the 3 STAR Approach poster for checking on the benchmarks achieved so far.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students

An efficiently and effectively implemented WASH in Schools programs will lead to students who:

- Are healthier
- Perform better in school
- Positively influence hygiene practices in their homes, among family members and in the wider community
- Learn to observe, communicate, cooperate, listen and carry out decisions about hygienic conditions and practices for themselves, their friends, and younger siblings whose hygiene they may care for
- Change their current hygiene behaviour and continue better hygiene practices in the future.

Parents and Guardians

Parents/guardians are expected to take an active interest in their child's education and support the WASH in School programs.

Community

The community is expected to:

- Respect, protect and promote the rights and cultures of children
- Support and celebrate WASH.

Schools

Schools through the school leaders are responsible for:

- Empowering children with knowledge, skills and values on WASH concepts.

Teachers

Teachers are expected to understand the implication of the WASH policy and concepts in order to deliver WASH related pragmatic lessons to exert effective learning, teaching and assessment that impacts on learner change behaviour.

The Ministry of Education supported by other relevant sectors, NGOs and UNICEF shall:

- develop, disseminate and train teachers on WASH- IEC materials
- assess, monitor and evaluate the rollout of WASH programs in all Kiribati schools



What is puberty?

Puberty is the period during which growing boys and girls undergo the process of physical changes in their body. Puberty includes a series of physical changes that lead to the achievement of fertility and the development of the physical features associated with adults such as the growth of pubic hair. While puberty involves a series of biological or physical changes, the process will also have an effect on the social and emotional development of an individual.

The physical growth experienced during puberty is accompanied by new and complex emotions including sexual desire and gender identity.

When does puberty occur?

Puberty begins when extra amounts of chemicals called “hormones” are produced. Hormones lead to physical, emotional, and cognitive changes in the body. The onset of puberty varies among individuals. Puberty usually occurs in girls between the ages of 8 and 16, while in boys it generally occurs later, between the ages of 12 and 16. Most girls and boys begin to notice changes in their bodies between the ages of 10 and 14.

Puberty and hygiene

When puberty hits, the glands become more active. Glands are organs placed throughout the body that make substances needed by the body to grow.

The glands release these chemicals through the skin or directly into the bloodstream. This means as we go through puberty our bodies produce more natural oils and the chemical composition of sweat changes; these changes can cause pimples and sweat can smell stronger. Some students will sweat more and so this can make stronger body odour, other will produce more natural oils so they may have more pimples.

As they go through puberty all students need to bathe and change clothes more often. It is recommended that all students use a personal soap and that they remember to wash the face, hands, feet, underarms, groin and bottom with soap. Washing under the fingernails is important for hygiene too. If students' body and breath smell ok, if their clothes are clean, and if they are on top of basic personal hygiene, it will help them fit in with other people and make puberty easier to cope with.

A year six teacher will see the changes of puberty in students. Use your observations to assess how well your students are understanding this content and repeat the information when you think students have not understood as well. Students of this age are very sensitive about puberty – the changes in their body and the way they think – so talk gently and be encouraging.

Emphasise to them that this is a normal human rite of passage.

What is menstruation?

Menstruation or a period is the regular discharge of blood from the uterus through the vagina from puberty to menopause (when menstruation stops in older women).

Menstruation marks the physical transition from being a young girl to being young woman. Girls begin to menstruate anywhere between the ages of nine and 14. An average menstruation period lasts between 3 to 5 days, but anywhere from 2 to 7 days is considered normal.

The full menstrual cycle takes about 28 days from the first day of one period to the first day of the next; however everyone is different and the number of days can be longer or shorter.

For the first few years after the first menstruation, periods may not occur every month and this is normal. Menstruation is different for every woman, but all girls will experience menstruation and so they need to learn to live with it and what they can do to make it easier to cope with.

Facts about Menstruation:

- Menstruation is a significant rite of passage for young girls.
- Menstruation marks the physical transition from being a young girl to being a young woman.
- Girls begin to menstruate anywhere between the ages of 10 and 14.
- An average menstruation period lasts between 3 to 5 days, but anywhere from 2 to 7 days is considered normal.
- Most menstrual cycles (the time between the first day of one period and the first day of the next) are between 28 and 30 days long.
- During her lifetime, a woman will manage menstruation of an average of 3,000 days total.
- During a girl's basic schooling period, from grades 4-10, she will manage menstruation of an average of 450 days total.

Menstruation is:

- A natural biological function for all females
- A natural process where the female body sheds the lining of the uterus every month if a fertilised egg has not planted itself there and grown into a baby
- When the lining of the uterus, rich in blood and other matter ready to nourish a baby, flows out through the vagina every 28 days if conception has not occurred.
- Sometimes painful because the uterus cramps up to shed the lining of a girl's or woman's uterus through the vagina along with blood. The bleeding usually lasts between two to seven days each month, with some lighter flow and some heavier flow days. The menstrual cycle for girls during their first year or two is irregular.

Menstruation is NOT:

- An illness or a curse
- Shameful
- A reason to keep girls and women from school, household activities, or work.

Menstruation and culture

Kiribati has a unique culture to celebrate girls' first menstruation. It is called a *Katekateka*. This is where the girl spends the first days of menstruation with one female elder who teaches the young girl menstrual hygiene practices and the values that girls are expected to perform and maintain in their next periods.

Some girls hide their first menstruation from their family. This is against our culture. All girls must not miss this important ritual of *Te Katekateka* as a means to maintain our important culture in the face of modernisation and cultural alienation.

Our unique culture of *Te Katekateka* will be strengthened and all girls will go through the teaching and application of hygiene practices that are culturally significant during menstruation. These include:

- How a girl looks after herself during menstruation.
- Having a bath with warm water to relieve stomach pain
- Making a sanitary pad from white soft cloth
- Washing clothes with soap and putting them in the sun so they dry and smell nice
- Keeping clean white cloth for the next periods
- Drinking herbs or *Taberani kai* during menstruation to relieve stomach pain
- Boundaries between girls and boys.

At the end of the three days for *Te Katekateka*, there's a big celebration. Family members and friends gather together to eat delicious food to mark the new stage of womanhood.



Menstrual Hygiene Management

Why menstrual hygiene matters

To manage menstruation hygienically with dignity, it is essential that women and girls have access to water and sanitation. They need somewhere private to change sanitary cloths or pads; clean water and soap for washing their hands, bodies and reusable cloths; and facilities for safely disposing of used materials or a clean place to dry them if reusable. There is also a need for both men and women to have a greater awareness of good menstrual hygiene practices.

Lack of information and awareness

Young girls often grow up with limited knowledge of menstruation because their mothers and other women shy away from discussing the issues with them prior to a *Katekateka*. Men and boys typically know even less, but it is important for them to understand menstrual hygiene so they can support their wives, daughters, mothers, students, employees and peers.

Impact on social exclusion

Taboos surrounding menstruation exclude women and girls from many aspects of social and cultural life as well as menstrual hygiene services. Such taboos include not touching water points, or food that others will eat and drink, and exclusion from religious rituals, the family home and sanitation facilities. As a result, women and girls are often denied access to water and sanitation when they need it most.

Well designed and appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities that address menstrual hygiene can make a significant difference to the schooling experience of girls.

Impact on education

Menstruation has critical implications for girl's educational outcomes. Many schools do not support adolescent girls or female teachers in managing menstrual hygiene with dignity. Inadequate water and sanitation facilities, make managing menstruation very difficult, and poor sanitary protection materials can result in blood-stained clothes, causing stress and embarrassment. Menstrual hygiene materials must be made available; safe latrines with water and soap, adequate sanitation and disposal mechanisms must be provided. These will benefit female teachers and menstrual girls in school.

Teachers (and male members of staff in particular) can be unaware of girls' needs, in some cases refusing to let them visit the latrine. As a result, girls have been reported to miss school during their menstrual periods or even drop out completely.

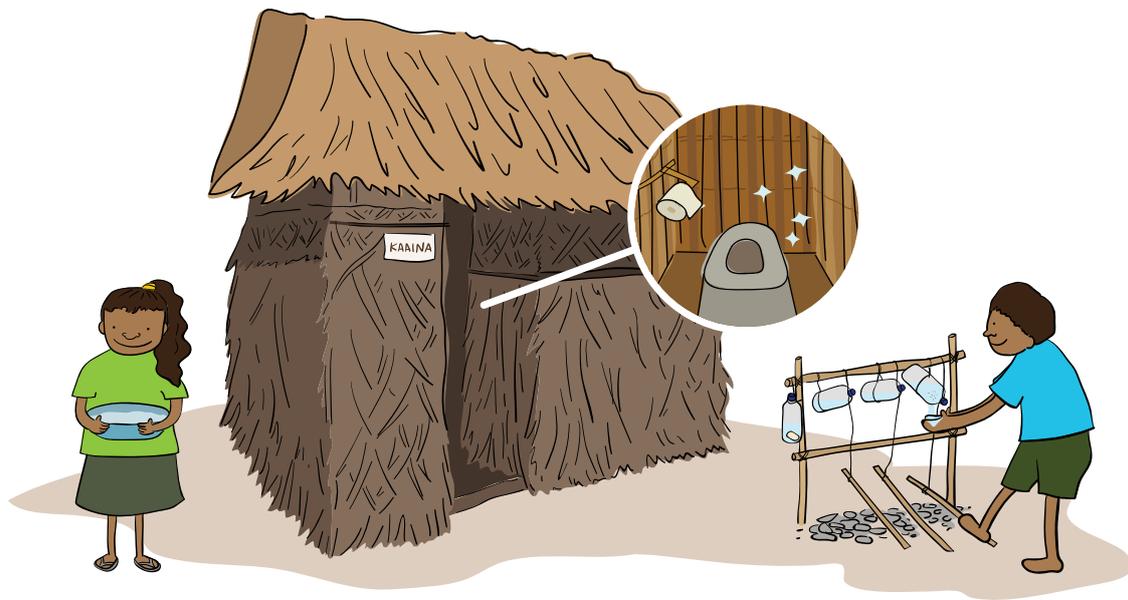
Impact on health

Menstruation is a natural process; however, if not properly managed it can result in health problems. The impact of poor menstrual hygiene on the wellbeing of women and girls (e.g. stress levels, fear and embarrassment, and social exclusion during menstruation) should also be considered.

Impact on sustainability of water and sanitation services and behaviour change

Neglecting menstrual hygiene in water, sanitation and hygiene programs could also have a negative effect on their sustainability. Failing to provide disposal facilities for used sanitary pads or cloths can result in a significant solid waste issue, with latrines becoming blocked and pits filling quickly.

Failure to provide appropriate menstrual hygiene facilities at home or school could also prevent WASH services being used by the intended users all of the time.



Menstrual Hygiene Management in schools

MHM in school includes the facilities, products, education, training, and support necessary for how menstruation is viewed and experienced. Now that a movement is growing to bring the topic into the open and address menstruation as a normal part of being female and to manage their menstrual periods away from home. MHM is gaining recognition globally as a critical human rights and development problem.

- MHM in school is a program that provides:
- Proper girl-friendly facilities, for example separate toilets for boys and girls
- Toilets for girls with water and soap readily available
- Access to sanitary pads or towels, or other products for discretely absorbing the menstrual flow
- Means for disposal of used menstrual absorption products
- Education about menstruation for girls and boys, parents, and other parent/community structures
- Booklets and other support materials for students and teachers
- A similar teaching delivered at cultural *Katekateka*
- WASH Clubs with MHM activities

Why is MHM in school important?

- Lack of MHM in school is a significant reason why girls stay home from school. They can lose up to five days per month because of menstruation. This can result in losing track of school work. Some students eventually drop out.
- Schools are ready to provide programs and facilities to alleviate the high rate of absenteeism of girls.
- Having access to MHM increases a girl's confidence, sense of value, and self-worth.
- MHM is a main strategy for keeping girls in school and increasing the numbers of educated girls and women in our country.
- An educated woman contributes significantly to her family's health and to the development of her country.

What are the challenges that girls face managing menstruation at school?

Menstruating girls frequently experience:

- Fear of standing up to answer questions in the classroom in case they have stained their skirt
- Bullying and teasing from boys
- Shame and fear of people finding out that they are "on their menses"
- Lack of accurate information and fear about what is happening to them
- Health problems related to inability to change their pads regularly e.g. urinary tract infection, vaginal candida, etc.
- Taboos on what they can and cannot do and where they can and cannot be during their menses

There are four key areas to menstrual hygiene in a school: education, appropriate facilities, waste management and culture.

Education

The Ministry of Education requires that schools provide information in the classroom about personal and menstrual hygiene guided by the syllabus and as part of the ongoing school hygiene program. The menstrual hygiene program must reflect the teachings delivered during *Te Katekateka* to raise awareness of both girls and boys. Menstruation education must be taught to both boys and girls, and it must be taught by both male and female teachers. Menstrual hygiene should be taught in a supportive and sensitive manner.

Young girls must have a female senior teacher they can speak to regarding any issues they face.

Provide appropriate sanitation facilities

Schools must provide a clean, separate, safe and private girl's sanitation facility with water and a waste management plan. This plan should be explained to the young girls and supervised by female teachers. Girls need to change their sanitation protection up to four times a day. A small walled cubicle with a roof could be built in the school grounds using local materials. The school must provide a water supply, a tap or a large water container with a lid, for this room and the girls must ensure the container is kept full of clean water. The school should provide a pit latrine in this area as a pit latrine is the only safe way to dispose of commercial sanitary pads.

Girls should never flush sanitary pads in the toilet.

Waste management

Sanitary pads purchased from a shop need to be disposed of in a hygienic and environmentally friendly way. They can only be disposed of in a pit latrine or they can be put in a closed waste bin or container with a lid inside the girls' sanitation facility, and then burned at the end of each day. Most girls in Kiribati use cloth pads. Cloth pads are hygienic and align to the 3Rs. When a girl needs to change cloth pads at school she should securely wrap her pad in a plastic bag and put it in her school bag so she can wash it when she gets home. Cloth pads need to be washed with soap, and bleach if bleach is available, and then dried directly in the sun as the sun helps kill germs. Cloth pads can be used for as long as they continue to be effective.

Culture

The cultural practice and celebration of *Te Katekateka* should be part of the school curriculum to raise awareness of menstruation in Kiribati's culture. This will make girls well prepared, and boys a sense of responsibility to look after their sisters who have undergone the menstruation rite of passage. This will contribute to cultural maintenance of our unique and very important culture.



Activities for girls:

Making Sanitary pads (*pasador*)

Explain to girls how to:

- prepare 10 *pasadors* or more and store them in a bag
- use the *pasador* by putting it in your pants and when to change
- wash the *pasador* with soap and put it in the sun
- store washed *pasador* for use during the girls' next period.



Refer to MHM Factsheet for instructions and care of *pasadors*.

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