Menstrual Hygiene Management among Girls in School: Getting to a Model of an Enabling School Environment

Exploring the MHM Barriers faced by Girls: Bolivia

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Objectives

I. Provide background regarding the Bolivian context of Wash in Schools (WinS)

II. Present preliminary findings from data collection on MHM within rural areas of Cochabamba, Bolivia.
I. WinS in Bolivia

- In 2009, 2,101,313 children enrolled in schools
- 41.3% of children attend rural schools
- 72.4% of Bolivian schools are in rural areas
- 22.5% of rural schools have no access to water

Source: SIE 2009, n=16,531 registered schools
Sanitation facilities data

**Figure 4 – Average number of WASH facilities per school in rural and urban areas.**

Source: SIE 2007, n=16,501 registered schools
Methods: Selection and Recruitment

- 11 Schools in two rural municipalities within Cochabamba
- Purposeful selection: Not nationally representative

Location:
- Tacopaya
- Independencia

Age:
- ~14 - 18

Type of school:
- ‘Nucleos’ – groups of schools with secondary-level education
- ‘Internados’ – boarding schools

Language:
- Indigenous Quechua-speaking communities
MHM Barriers faced by Girls: Bolivia
Landscape

- Tacopaya
- Independencia
Methods: Gaining Rapport with ‘Señoritas’

- Main obstacle for data collection: very shy girls
- Alteration of the FGD guide into a board game:
  - Questions were re-worded to sound more ‘game-like’
  - The participant rolls the dice and questions are read by the facilitators, with probes remaining on each card.
  - Questions promote discussion among participants and involves interactive activities: drawing, list-making, and hypothetical scenarios.
Bathrooms

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Preliminary Findings: Myths affecting behavior

- Myths may influence hygiene practices
- Fear of touching cold water
- Washing with tepid chamomile water
- Wash pads after use
- Can’t burn pads
- ‘Dirty blood’ or too much blood

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Preliminary Findings: Managing Menstruation

- Pads vs. ‘Trapos’: Stigma??
  - Toilet paper or nothing...
- Wear underpants
- Track their period using the moon
- Go home to change
- Last to leave the classroom
- Avoid participation in gym
- Wears ‘pollera’ over pants
Preliminary Findings: Emotions and Support

- **Feelings regarding menstruation**
  - Fear, panic, embarrassment, worry, sadness
  - Respect

- **Support**
  - You can’t even tell your best friend because when the friendship ends she could tell other people.
  - More trust in female cousins and friends than parents.
  - Can approach mothers but not fathers.
  - Parents are often migrant workers—far from home.
  - Girls don’t want boys to know or else they will make fun, saying “Get away from me, you smell bad.”
Preliminary Findings: What do teachers say?

**How Menstruation is taught**
- What they know and personal experiences
- Within natural sciences
- “Transversales” or “We bring up the theme when necessary”
- One-on-one communication

**What teachers want**
- To provide more info: It is normal!
- Training: seminars and workshops for them
- Visual materials: DVDs, pictures
- Support from parents

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Moving Forward

Data collection
- KII’s with Health professionals and midwives
- FGDs with mothers and boys

Preliminary Analysis
- Challenges
- Impacts
- Recommendations

Validation of recommendations
- Señoritas
- Teachers
- MOE
- UNICEF

Incorporate recommendations
- National standards for Bolivian schools: a UNICEF—Bolivia MOE WASH infrastructure project
Thank you!

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