

Menstrual Hygiene & Human Rights: A bloody road to a more equal world



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Placing menstrual hygiene in a human rights framework

- What are a State's human rights obligations?
- How far do they extend?
- How do they relate to something as private as menstruation?
- What do they mean in concrete terms?
- How to overcome challenges in making MH rights-based?

How does menstrual hygiene fit with human rights?



People = “rights-holders”



State = “duty bearer”



Refrain from behaviour that violates human rights (respect)



Improve (realise/fulfil) enjoyment of human rights



Ensure human rights are upheld in private sphere (protect)



How do we know what a State's obligations are?



Which human rights are implicated by menstrual hygiene?

Human Rights Impacted

- ✘ Human dignity
- ✘ Education
- ✘ Health
- ✘ Work
- ✘ Gender equality
- ✘ Healthy environment

Enabling Human Rights

- ✔ Water
- ✔ Sanitation
- ✔ Health
- ✔ Education
- ✔ Gender Equality

State's human rights obligations (con't)

HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES

Equality

Non-Discrimination

Transparency

Access to

information

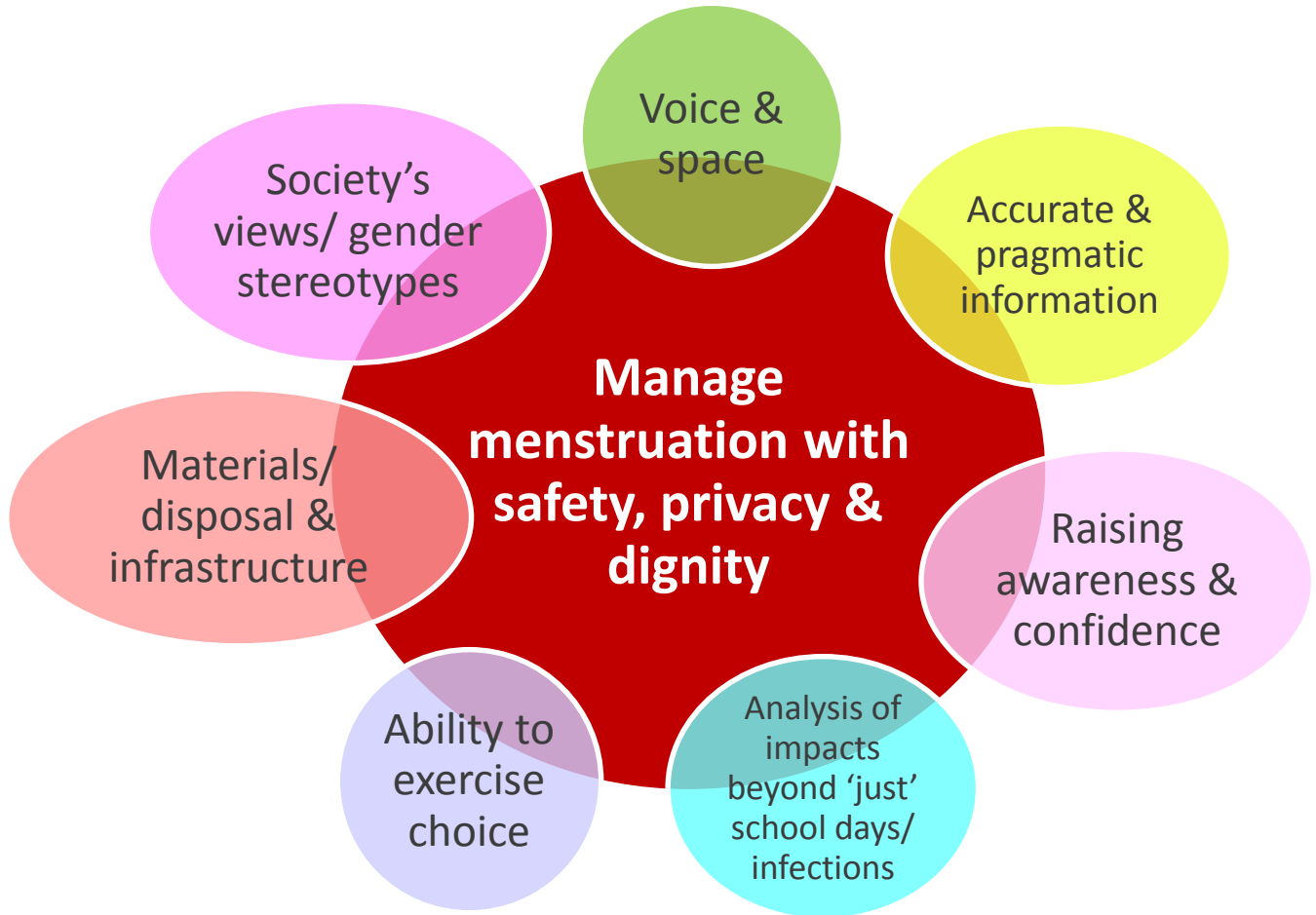
Participation

Accountability

Mandates inclusion
of women & girls'
needs, including for
menstrual hygiene

Ability of women & girls to practice good MH cuts to the heart of dignity & *gender equality*

Human rights understanding of menstrual hygiene



Schools, human rights & MHM

Right to education

Education for all

Adequate institutions, incl.
e.g. WASH

Access to health related
education (puberty, sexual &
reproductive health, norms,
stigmas, taboos)

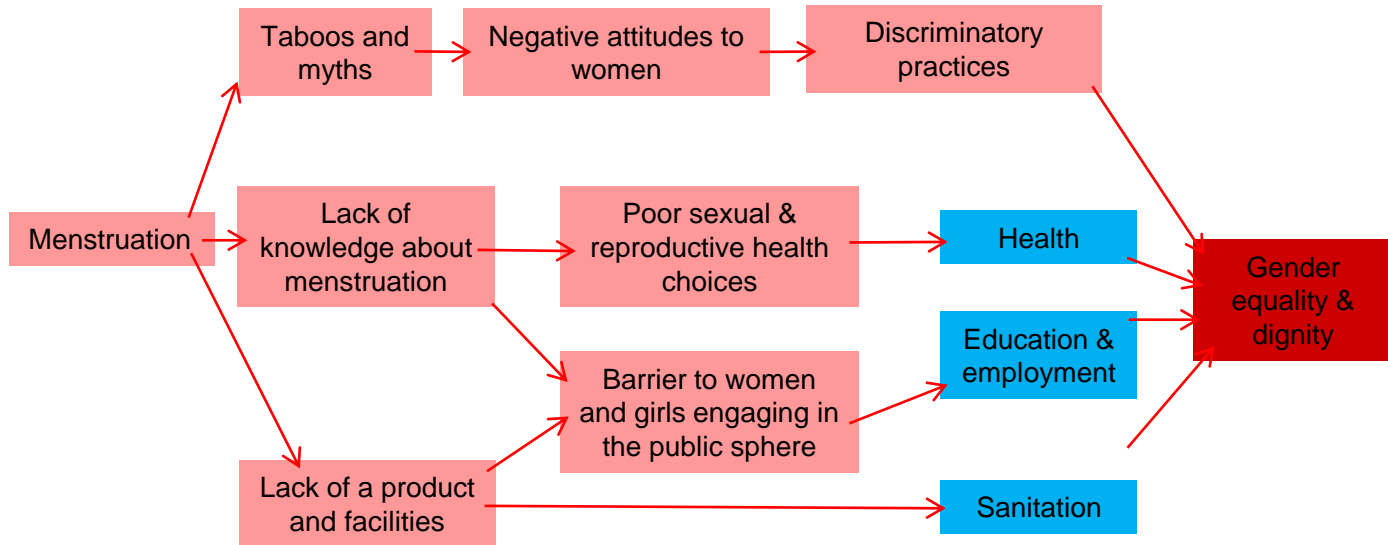
Impacts of inadequate MHM

Evidence base: Link between
MHM & girls' educational
attainment

- “Secondary” impacts, e.g.:
- Gender equality & women's ability to achieve their full potential
 - Preventable maternal death
 - Unmet contraceptive needs

Schools are an excellent entry point for discussing menstrual hygiene & human rights

How does approaching MHM from a human rights perspective impact programming?



Courtesy of Irise

HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH TASK:

- 1) Does the State focus on realization of rights?
- 2) Help monitor impact & outcomes of MHM programming on girls' human rights?

- Infrastructure
- Curriculum
- Retention & school achievement
- School completion & employment
- Choices about reproductive health
- Attitudes, self-esteem, empowerment

Quantitative Methods



Qualitative Methods

Advocacy benefits of a human rights framework

International level

- Civil society can engage UN mechanisms
- Common frame of reference for monitoring
- Generates donor support
- Matches indicators w/ gender equality & other impacts

National level

- Framework to change law, policies, practice
- Enables civil society monitoring
- Access to judicial or other remedy

Local level



Conclusion: Collaboration across sectors needed for a rights-based approach

- Approaching MH as a human rights concern that impacts health & education, but also dignity & gender equality, could bridge sectors, communities of practice/research.
- Integrating a human rights perspective influences (& broadens) the evidence base & influences programming and implementation.

References:

- Inga Winkler & Virginia Roaf, *Bringing the Dirty Bloody Linen Out of the Closet – Menstrual Hygiene as a Priority for Achieving Gender Equality*,
<http://tinyurl.com/pkm7aba>
- MH Day Human Rights Fact Sheet:
<http://menstrualhygieneday.org/human-rights/>
- IRISE research:
<http://www.irise.org.uk/downloads.html>
- Human Rights Watch, *Menstrual Hygiene Day Links Periods and Human Rights*,
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/05/28/menstrual-hygiene-day-links-periods-and-human-rights>

We hope this will start a conversation across sectors. Keep the flow going...

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Thank you...

