Menstrual Hygiene Management in Malawian Schools

Presented by
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Presentation outline

1. Key components of the programme
2. Background – the local context
3. Current interventions
4. Lessons learnt
5. Future plans
Approaches to addressing MHM for girls
Key Components of the programme

• Capacity building in menstrual hygiene management
• Provision of separate latrines for boys and girls
• Provision of sanitary kits for girls
Background – the local context

- Ministry of Education WASH study done in 2008 shows that only 23% of primary schools have sanitation of ‘acceptable quality and quantity’, with 81% lacking hand-washing facilities. This study covered 5379 schools out of 5460 schools (98.5%)

- In 2008, Malawi primary schools, had a total of 15,473 improved latrines in use for female pupils. With a primary school enrolment of 1,773,369 girls, this represents a ratio of 1 improved latrine for every 115 girls.

- There are various cultural beliefs surrounding menstruation. Ignorance about menstrual issues is prevalent not only amongst schoolgirls but also in communities.
• Parents do not talk to their children about menstruation – Menstruation is seen as ‘strictly secret’,

• Often it is the Aunts who provide advice on how to make the local sanitary pad (from old clothes), to stop playing with non-menstruating friends and not talk/chat with boys.

• In some ethnic groups, arrangements are even made for sexual initiation by a man called a ‘fisi’

Source: MoEST, Malawi School WASH, 2008: A Status Report on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Primary Schools
UNICEF supported toilets

UNICEF supported urinals
Current interventions

• **MHM Education** – usually girls do not get appropriate education on MHM. Mother groups have been established in schools to among other things provide MHM education to girls. These have been provided with a manual with a wide range of topics concerning girls education including MHM.

• **Providing appropriate sanitary facilities** – in most schools, toilets are dilapidated and offer no privacy. UNICEF supports construction of separate sanitary facilities for boys and girls which also have doors for privacy.

• **Provision of sanitary pads** – in 2 districts Chikwawa and Mangochi, UNICEF is piloting provision of pads to adolescent girls. In addition, Mother groups have been trained to make local sanitary towels for girls.
Lessons learnt

• Appropriate knowledge on MHM is crucial so that girls have appropriate knowledge. This reduces the negative cultural and traditional beliefs on menstruation

• Training communities on local sanitary towel making is a good investment as most rural communities cannot afford to purchase sanitary pads.

• Provision of separate latrines for girls and boys which also offer privacy is another good investment as it reduces absenteeism among adolescent girls
A homemade, washable, cotton sanitary pad, which is made at school and doubles as underwear
Future plans for UNICEF Malawi

• Construct urinals with privacy walls and as part of standard school toilet block, include one toilet which is bigger than the rest, to cater for a bucket of water and hand washing stand.

• Provide a sanitary kit (containing pads, underwear and soap) for adolescent girls in districts where UNICEF will focus its interventions in the next 4 years.

• Build capacities of mother groups in local sanitary towels/ pads production. These will be reusable as they use local cloth which can be washed.

• Reproduce the Menstrual Hygiene Booklet for distribution to adolescent girls in schools.
Other partners working on MHM interventions

- **Save the Children Malawi** – providing sanitary facilities
- **Development Aid from People to people** – toilet construction
- **Water Aid Malawi** – sanitary facilities provision
- **Campaign for Female Education** – providing bursaries and sanitary pads
- **Forum for Women Educationalists in Malawi (FAWEMA)** – providing bursaries and pads
- **COOPI** – Toilet construction
- **DFID** – supporting school construction which includes sanitary facilities
For more information, please contact

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