

Virtual Conference on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)
Co-Hosted by Columbia University and UNICEF
September 27, 2012

The Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University and UNICEF organized the **first-ever virtual conference on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) on 27th of September, 2012**. The one-day event showcased the research and programming approaches currently being implemented in fourteen UNICEF country offices¹ around the world. During the 13 hour WebEx, the UNICEF teams described the Menstrual Hygiene Management efforts underway in their respective contexts. The conference was divided into four sessions, with the first exploring the Menstrual Hygiene Management barriers faced by girls, the second introducing current approaches to addressing MHM for girls through WASH in Schools programming, the third focusing on MHM in humanitarian emergencies and the fourth discussing efforts at scaling-up MHM programs. Over 300 people participated in the conference online and an additional 30 experts attended in person. The online and in-person attendees represented UNICEF and NGO partners (working in the WASH, Education, Health, Gender and Youth sectors), academia (Columbia University and Emory University) as well as social entrepreneurs, government and donor agencies from around the world.

The combined efforts and union of research and practice were highlighted throughout the virtual conference, and provided important insights for countries aiming to scale-up Menstrual Hygiene Management related activities. These efforts work simultaneously with improvements to WASH facilities in school settings which enable comfortable and successful Menstrual Hygiene Management for girls and female teachers. The conference also catalyzed a discussion about the global and national priorities for MHM-related interventions in schools; the most effective and efficient MHM approaches; and the best methods for monitoring their implementation, use and outcomes. Future research needed to understand the specific Menstrual Hygiene Management related requirements of girls going to school in different social, cultural, and economic contexts was also examined.

The conference provided a significant opportunity to share experiences and enable joint discussion on the way forward. The virtual platform also reduced the logistical costs associated with such a large meeting. A summary document capturing the key conclusions of the discussion, and the range of Menstrual Hygiene Management related activities being conducted around the world, will be compiled for a UNICEF publication in November 2012. The documents will be shared with country offices, WASH in Schools network, and experts in the global MHM community.

The excitement and energy generated by the conference will hopefully encourage more countries to initiate activities to address the important issue of Menstrual Hygiene Management in WASH in Schools programming.



¹ Afghanistan, Bolivia, Copenhagen, India, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, UNICEF HQ,