Solomon Islands

Incorporating MHM into national WASH in schools

policies and guidelines
Introduction to Pacific Island Countries

Not all sunshine and palm trees....

- Highly hazard prone region
- Fragile island environments
- Extreme transport and comms constraints and costs
- Limited human and financial resources

You can find out more about WASH in the Pacific in *A Snapshot of Water and Sanitation in the Pacific* (2014 Update)
WASH and WinS in the Pacific

As a region, slowest progress in the world since 1990 and will miss MDG targets for drinking water and sanitation:

- Water coverage (56%) is lower than all other regions in the world

SIEMIS data in 2015 show:

- 23% of schools have improved sanitation facilities
- 22% of schools have no toilets

Insufficient data in other countries: Cook Islands, FSM, Nauru, Tokelau, Tonga
Solomon Islands Context

- Small dispersed population over around 330 of 990 islands
- 80% rural population but urbanization challenges in Honiara
- LDC status, HDI ranking of 157/185
- Will not achieve MDG water and sanitation targets

Solomon Islands WASH & Education Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>264,455</td>
<td>251,415</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Census 2009)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to improved drinking water</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access to improved sanitation</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open defecation</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>66.4%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Net primary enrolment ratio</th>
<th>82%</th>
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<tr>
<th>Estimated no. of schools (ECE, primary, secondary)</th>
<th>1,261</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>School access to water supply</th>
<th>32%</th>
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<tr>
<th>Average toilet-to-student ratio</th>
<th>1:65</th>
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(JMP 2014)
Development of national “technical requirements for WinS” initiated in 2013 ...but no evidence on MHM to inform these technical requirements and accompanying guidelines.

MHMS, MEHRD, and UNICEF conducted a study in Honiara and Guadalcanal Province to make recommendations for MHM facilities in schools.
Honiara and Guadalcanal Case Study

- **4 schools** visited in August 2014 with primary, secondary, and boarding students
- **14 surveyors** from MEHRD, MHMS, and NGO
- Average age of interviewed girls: **17 yrs**
- Average age of girls in focus groups: **14.7 yrs**
- Surveyors trained in ethics and survey methods and consent / asset received from parents and girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of Activities</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Depth Interviews</td>
<td>In-school girls</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
<td>In-school girls</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings
Impacts of poor MHM in Schools on girls

- Missing class or days of school
- Embarrassment, anger, fright, shame
- Distraction during class
- Punishment for visiting the bathroom
- Disrupted socialization
- Skipped sports

“The first time I had my period is when I was in Form 1. I was 13 years old. I did not know what was happening. One of my friends had seen a stain on my skirt after class. I did not have a pad so my friend gave me one and taught me how to use it and take care of myself. We kept it a secret. During holidays, I went home and I told my mom and she taught me to keep myself clean at all times during menstruation.”

Source: In-depth interview with girl at a boarding school, age 18
Challenges girls face during menstruation

- Lack of hygiene (water, soap, toilet paper) and absorbent materials at school
- Fear of leakage and staining school uniform
- Inability to manage menstruation discreetly and hygienically at school
- Physical symptoms associated with menstruation

Photos © UNICEF/Pacific/2013/Yamakoshi
Determinants of menstruation-related challenges

The most significant determinants identified by girls and their teachers were:

- Social factors preventing discussion of menstruation
- Poor quality of school WASH facilities
- Inaccurate or lack of information about menstruation
- Variable support from school managers and teachers

Photos © UNICEF/Pacific/2014/Yamakoshi
Determinants

- **Attitudes and beliefs**
  - Taboo to discuss, sometimes even in class
  - Variable support from school managers and teachers

- **Inaccurate information about menstruation**
  - Teachers lack knowledge and confidence to teach
  - Not always discussed at home with family

- **Poor quality of school WASH facilities**
  - None or not functioning
  - Not maintained
  - Don’t meet girls’ needs

Challenges

- Lack of hygiene (water, soap, toilet paper) and absorbent materials at school
- Fear of leakage and staining school uniform
- Inability to manage menstruation discreetly and hygienically at school
- Physical symptoms associated with menstruation

Impacts

- **Educational impacts**
  - Absenteeism
  - Distraction during class
  - Reduced participation
  - Punishment for visiting the bathroom

- **Social impacts**
  - Skipped sports
  - Disrupted socialization

- **Embarassment, shame, fright, anger**

**Potential health risks**
(not discussed during the study)
Recommendation 1: Facilities

Improve school policies, facilities, and resources available for girls to manage menstruation at schools.

- Schools allocate resources to maintain WASH facilities and prioritize them for upgrading.
- A female teacher supports girls.
- School canteens sell single disposable pads and are staffed by women or girls.
- Schools provide basic hygiene materials.
- Waste managed hygienically and discreetly.
Recommendation 2: Information

Give girls knowledge and skills to maintain their menstrual hygiene safely and effectively at school.

- Teachers are knowledgeable and confident to teach on reproductive and sexual health.
- Girls are educated on menstruation and personal hygiene prior to menarche, in grades 4 and 5.
- Girls learn how to use absorbent materials and operate WASH facilities.
- Girls have access to resources for self-learning.
- Parents learn and support their daughters.
Improve national policies and monitoring of MHM in Schools.

• Standard designs for WASH in schools facilities are girl-friendly.
• MEHRD monitors compliance with *Technical Requirements for WASH in schools*.
• Government, NGOs, and donors ensure that new schools meet standards.
Impacts of the study

MHM incorporated into the national minimum standards for WinS (draft)

MHM indicators proposed in changes to the annual school survey, reflected in SIEMIS

Separate guidance note with practical steps that schools can take to improve MHM in schools, used by Save the Children in schools in Malaita Province
Plans for scale up

Regional: example for other Pacific Island Countries

National: additional information needed on other parts of the country, then focus on reflecting in national plans and ongoing projects
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School girls in the Solomon Islands in 2014