Supporting Tanzanian School Girls with their Menstrual Hygiene Management

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Thematic session II: Approaches to addressing MHM for girls
Outline of the presentation

1. WASH in Schools context in Tanzania
2. MHM as part of improving WASH in Schools
3. Use of Growth & Changes booklet
4. Sensitization materials and lesson plans
5. MHM in the School WASH Guidelines
6. Experience with incinerators
7. Conclusions & Way Forward
School WASH Context in Tanzania

Mapping of all schools in 16 districts revealed:

- Latrine numbers:
  - 11% meets minimum standard
  - 26% of schools have > 100 pupils/latrine or no latrines at all
- 9% of school latrines are clean
- 1% of schools have soap available
- Water facilities
  - not available in 38% of the schools
  - non-functional in 46% of the cases

On top of this, menstruating girls have to cope with:

- 52% of the girl latrines do not have doors
- 63% of the school latrines have no place to dispose sanitary pads
Improving MHM as part of improving WASH in Schools

- UNICEF put WinS amongst its priorities of its WASH programme
- Both MHM and access for disabled “mainstreamed”
- Developing National SWASH guidelines and toolkits
  (partnership MoEVT/ SNV/ UNICEF & others)
- Piloting of the guidelines → feedback from the field
- Getting Growth & Changes booklet to girls
  (partnership Dr. M. Sommer/ TWESA/ UNICEF)
  - Widely distributed
  - Tested its use and effectiveness
  - Teacher sensitization materials developed
Growth & Changes

• Booklet about puberty including how to manage menstruation

• Distributed to 55,000 girls of standards 5 to 7 of primary school in 4 districts

• Teachers were provided with draft “sensitisation materials” incl lesson plans

• Girls’ KAP about puberty issues tested before and after reading the book

• Teachers/ girls feedback on materials/ book collected
Positive feedback on Growth and Changes

Girls

• Liked it **a lot** stating things like
  - “each girl should have it”
  - “boys also need something like this”
  - stressed that nobody tells them about it
• Learned a lot
  - post-tests of about a 1,000 girls showed significant improvement compared to pre-test
• Feedback revealed a lot of fear amongst girls around the onset of menstruation

Demand for the booklet

• Many requests from NGOs for copies
• Reprint done by FHI, USAid funded
Sensitization materials and lesson plans

Comprises of:
- Introduction of the Growth and Changes book
- Recommended teaching methodology
- Two alternative lesson plans
- Section of Frequently Asked Questions

Teachers feedback very positive
- No suggestions for improvements
- Teachers found it useful to guide them through the lesson
- Highlighted unanimously that the girls enjoyed the lessons

Challenges highlighted by some teachers
- Limitations of what can be put in practice in absence of WASH facilities and pads
- Extra hours/efforts teachers need to put in this
MHM in the School WASH Guidelines

• among the rationale why improving SWASH is important
• one of the themes for hygiene education
• advocates for additional attention to this subject outside regular curriculum and outside the normal class setting
• highlights the need to also sensitize boys on the issue
• facilities for successful management that are promoted include:
  - emphasis on privacy of the latrines: lockable and girls and boys toilets separated
  - alternatives for disposal options and/or washing spaces
• mainstreamed again in all 5 Toolkits

Truly made part and parcel of the package – but ..... .... translating theory into practice .......
Experience with incinerators

- Lots of shyness about using them; even about sharing one incinerator by students and teachers
- Some technical improvements can be made (e.g. attaching incinerator to toilet) but at the same time addressing social taboos
- Limited understanding on the use of the incinerator
- Limited use of incinerators
  - strong need to better understand local MHM practices and better briefings on the incinerators purpose
  - filling and clogging of toilets related to this?
- Combination of incineration of general garbage and sanitary pads (?)

Lesson learned: focus should be on finding local solutions for appropriate MHM without a pre-determined technical solution in mind – girls & female teachers to be consulted!
Conclusions & Way Forward

- MHM remains a sensitive topic in which we make small steps forward
- Due to its sensitivity hard to get proper feedback
- MHM needs “hardware”, but changing attitudes most important hurdle
- Mainstreaming MHM in School WASH projects/programmes requires safeguards to ensure it gets sufficient attention
- UNICEF will expand distribution of the Growth and Changes booklet to all girls (standards 5-7) in its 7 focus districts
- UNICEF will continue to advocate for country wide distribution
- G&C booklets will also be distributed through Tuseme (“Speak out!”) Clubs that promote life skills among school girls
- Use of incinerators and changing rooms will be assessed to guide future hardware interventions
- Networking & sharing of information with likeminded organisations in Tanzania (e.g. CARE planning to make low-cost pads)
Thank you for listening!
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Illustration from the Tanzania School WASH Guideline:
*Girls hygiene unit with water and disposal bin*