



Menstrual Hygiene Week 2021

We need to step up
action and investment
in menstrual health and
hygiene now!

Join us on **21, 24 and 27 May 2021**
for a series of engaging webinars
and discussions on the future of
menstrual hygiene in the **East Asia
and Pacific Region**



Reaching everyone: Who is being left behind?







21 May 2021

1-2:15 PM Bangkok | 8-9:15 AM Geneva | 4-5:15 PM Canberra

WaterAid Australia and UNICEF East Asia & Pacific Regional Office

Welcome!

As people are joining this webinar, please get started with the items below:

-  Set **your name** in Zoom, so people can identify you.
-  Please **mute** your microphone.
-  Please **turn off your video** if you are not a speaker.
-  Please use the **Q&A function** to interact with presenters.
-  **Having technical issues?** Please ask for TechSupport in the chat.
-  This meeting is being **recorded**.

Agenda

- Introductory remarks
- Menstrual health and hygiene in East Asia and the Pacific: Looking back and looking ahead (Chelsea Huggett, WaterAid & Brooke Yamakoshi, UNICEF)
- Who is being left behind and why? Learning from the challenges of menstruators across the region (Chloe Morrison on behalf of World Vision Vanuatu; Sandrine Benjimen UNICEF Vanuatu; Chelsea on behalf of country teams)
- How can we reach everyone? Panel discussion on good practices (Chloe, Sandrine, Chelsea, and Lieve Sabbe UNICEF moderated by Brooke)
- Closing (Rosie Wheen, Chief Executive, WaterAid Australia)

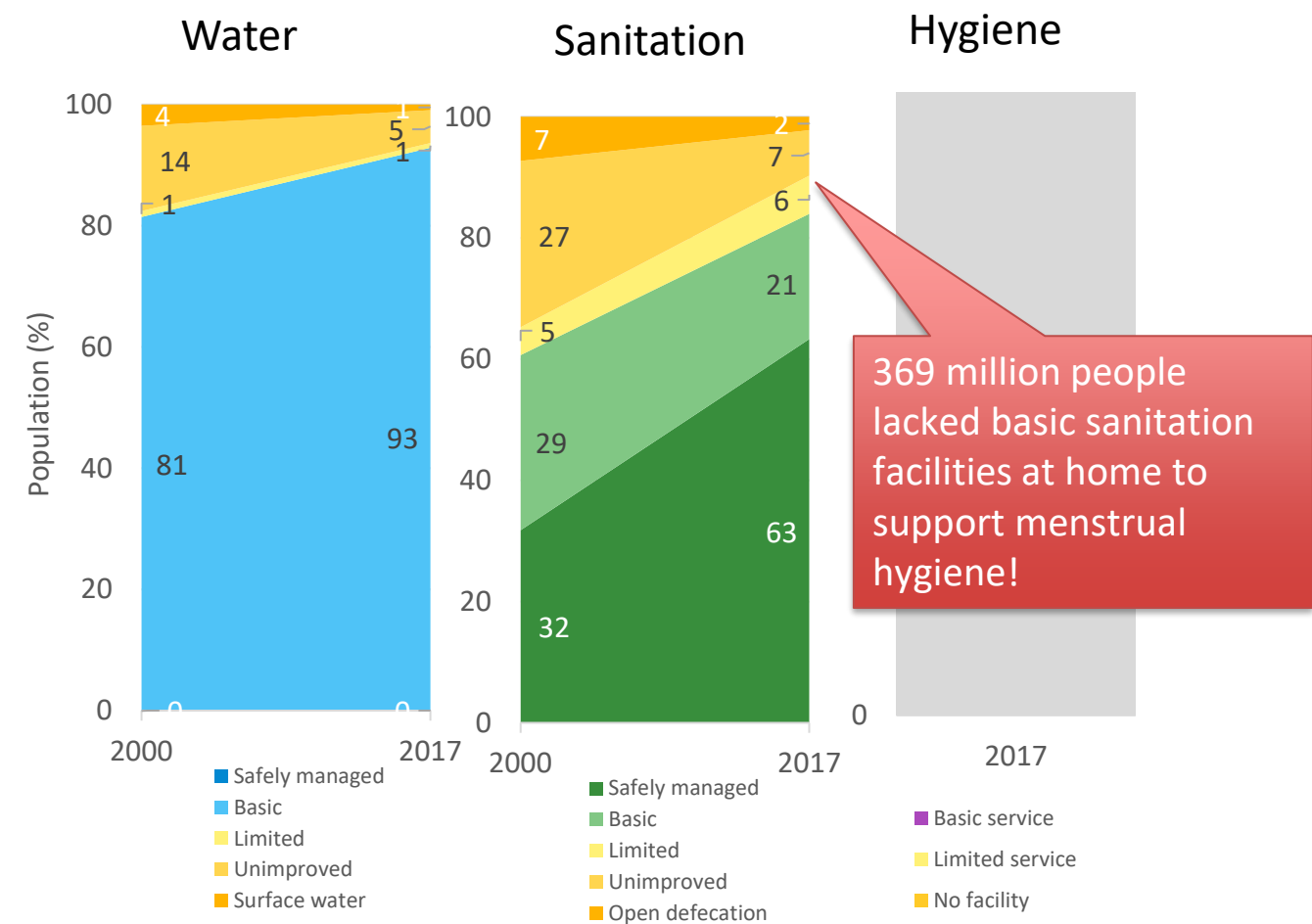
Opening remarks

Gerard Cheong
Assistant Director, Water Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



Menstrual health and hygiene in East Asia and the Pacific

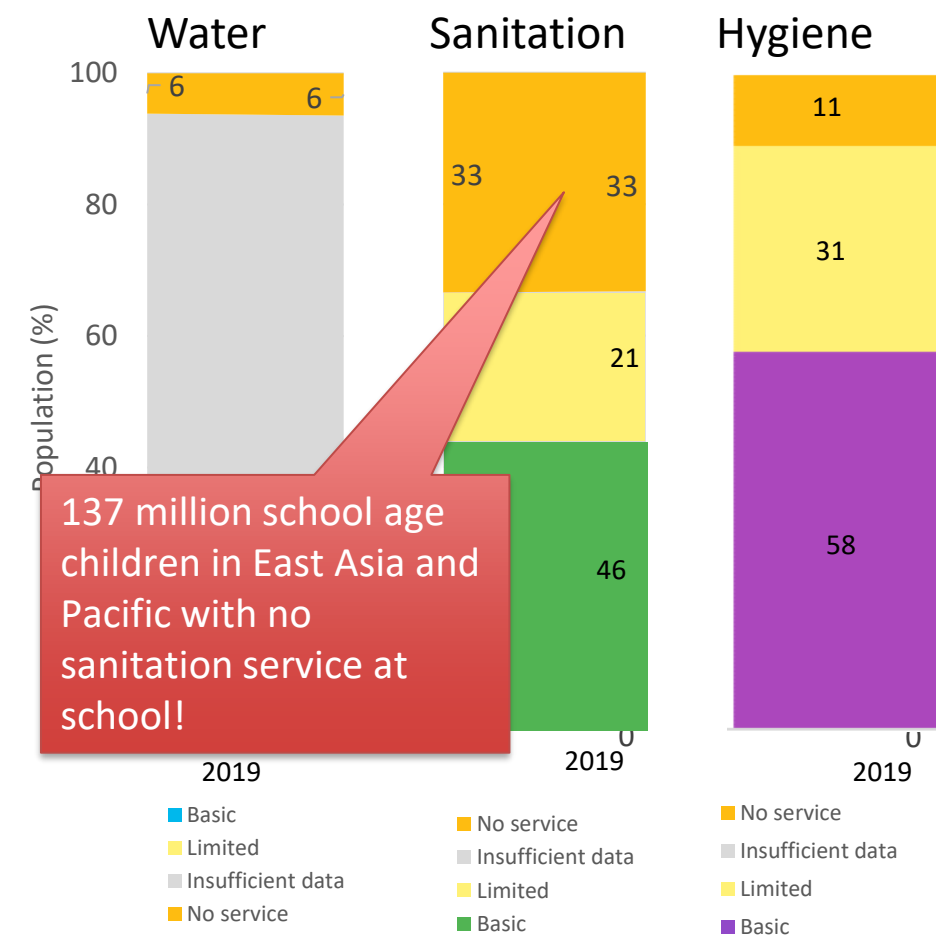
WASH in Households in EAP Region



Regional service ladders (%), 2000-2017

Source: WHO/UNICEF JMP (2019)

WASH in Schools in EAP Region



Regional WASH in schools ladders (%), 2015-2019

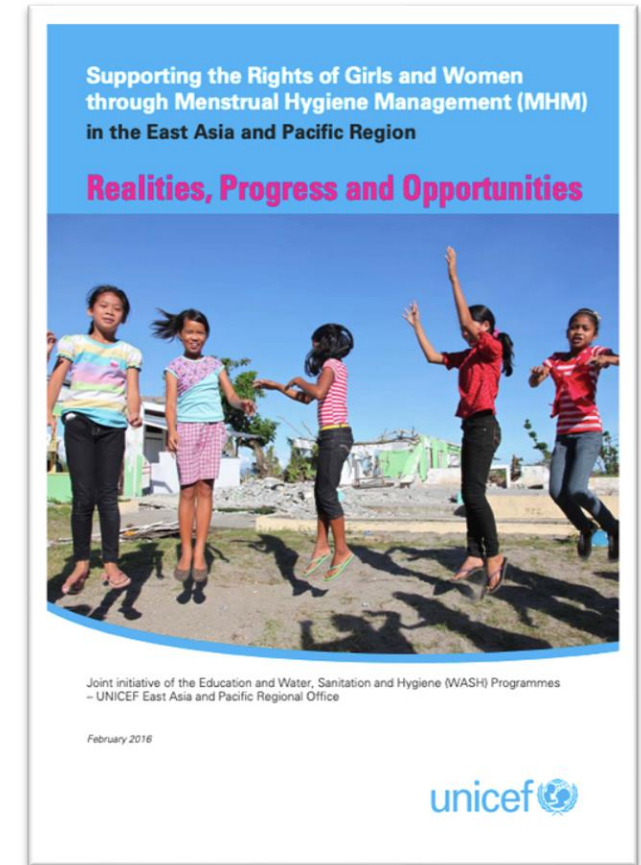
Source: WHO/UNICEF JMP (2020)

MHM realities: Misconceptions; limited WinS access; limited availability pads and inadequate MHM teaching

- Range of misconceptions exist, leading to poor hygiene practices/school absence
- Limited access to appropriate WASH facilities and poor O&M
- Access to appropriate sanitary protection materials varied across the region
- MHM inadequately incorporated into school curriculum and teachers low confidence

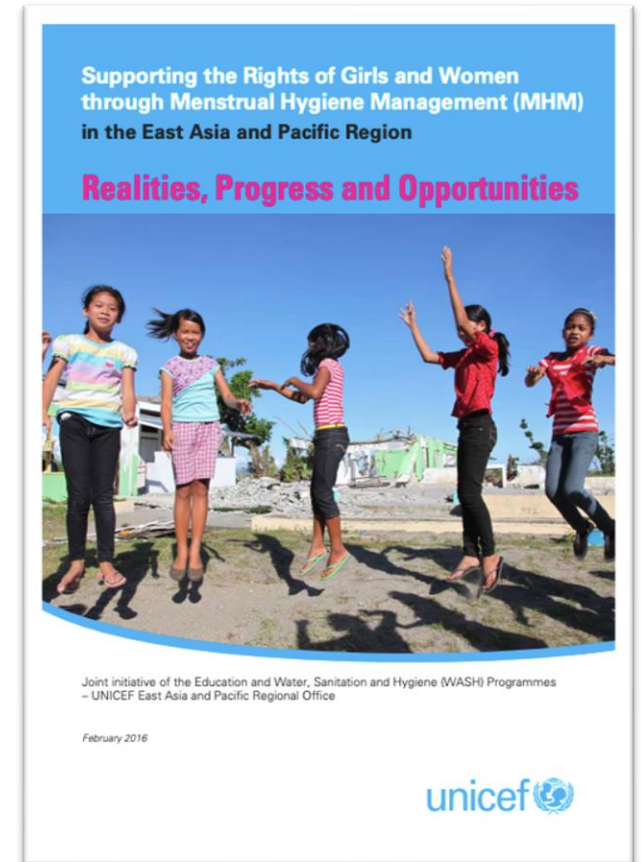
MHM action: Increasing momentum, support and actions

- Increasing momentum for learning about MHM and a number of studies undertaken
- Increasing action by government and practitioners to pilot practical responses – although still at small or pilot scale
- Two major donors – DFAT, Australian Government; GAC, Canadian Government; UNICEF; CSOs with own or other donor funding; UNFPA–funding research, piloting
- MHM champions – across organisations and countries; interest to learn from others



Recommendations

- **Regional Guidance:** Strengthening curriculum, research and advocacy
- **National Level Actions:** Strengthening policies, guidelines, curriculum and teacher training
- **Improve Research, M&E and Advocacy:** MHM indicators, baseline surveys; standard monitoring EMIS ; formative research
- **Improve access to supplies and facilities:** MHM-friendly WASH in schools
- Women and girl-led solutions, including those from minority or marginalised groups



5 years of increasing action

National Efforts

2014
Solomon Islands WASH in Schools research and standards

2017
PNG WASH in Schools Guidelines

2017 **Vanuatu Sanitation & Hygiene Policy**: calls for formative research on MHM

2020
PNG CSE Curriculum

2020 MH Day: Fiji Government statement:
"I call on individuals (particularly men and boys), heads of households and communities this year to change the dynamics around the taboo culture regarding menstrual hygiene. It is the most natural thing that happens to a girl's body and must be a priority in whatever sector of our nation that women and girls engage themselves in."

Regional Efforts

2016-17
Last Taboo Research: Fiji, Solomon Islands and PNG (DFAT)

2017
UNICEF EAP Regional Progress, Realities Report

2018 **Menstrual Health Ecosystem Opportunities** scoping/ workshop (DFAT, Criterion)

2018
Water for Women Fund established: MHH initiatives in WASH programs

2019
Pacific Trade Finance Vehicle established

2019
UNICEF Guidance on menstrual health and hygiene

2020
Pacific Menstrual Health Network established



Progress: Social Support

Myths and taboos still prevail in some areas, leading to...

- Poor hygiene practices
- Restrictions on food
- Restricted movement or participation in society

Highlights since 2016:

- More research to understand taboos, myths and misconceptions as a basis to address them
- More attention to norms shift in programmes
- Greater advocacy through national campaigns, ambassadors and MH Day Celebrations



"I can see big changes in the children, the way they think, the way they tend to respect each other. When a girl is having a period, it is normal. Unlike my previous experience of teaching, respect has come." (PNG)



Progress: Knowledge and Skills

Some topics relevant to MHM are included in the curriculum

Missing practical guidance on menstrual hygiene and emotional related subjects such as self-esteem and issues around teasing

Subjects may be optional

Teachers may be embarrassed to teach MHM due to its link to sexual reproduction or concerned about parents opinions



Since 2016 : Greater attention and progress to appropriate information for girls, boys, parents and teachers (e.g., Timor Leste, PNG, Indonesia, Mongolia and others)

Spotlight on PNG: Developing a Comprehensive Sexuality Education resources for Teachers

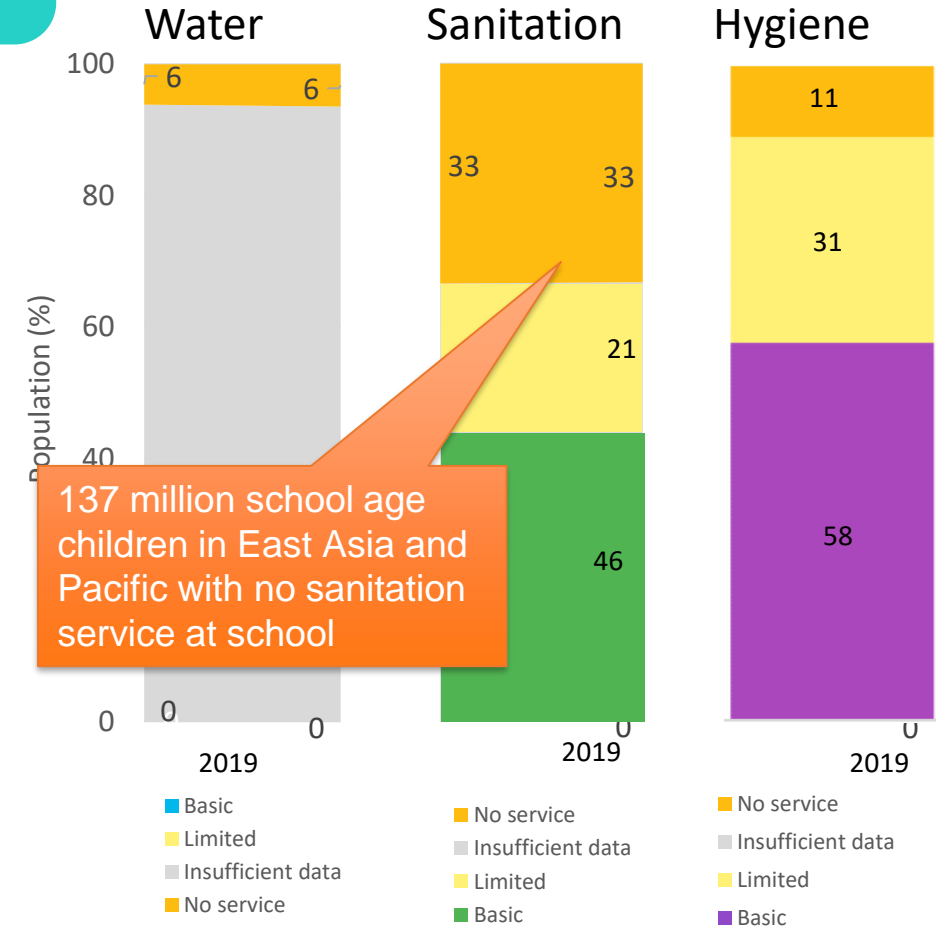
- Government collaboration takes time, but is integral to success
- Teachers require training on materials and continuous support
- The curriculum itself must follow best practice guidelines regarding inclusive language and age-appropriateness



Progress: Facilities and services

- All services (water, sanitation and hygiene) needed for menstrual health
- Services needed everywhere – at home, at school, at work, and in public places
- School toilets as a proxy but not sufficient... and in many cases not used because not working, not clean, not safe, not convenient or other reasons
- Since 2016, no trends available and remaining data gaps (though WASH indicators increasingly in EMIS, not always including MH specifically)

WASH in Schools in EAP Region





Progress: Appropriate & affordable menstrual materials

No regional data available, however...

Growing attention to

- Consulting with girls and women about their preferences
- Assessing the market for menstrual hygiene materials
- Supporting SMEs to develop or scale their approach

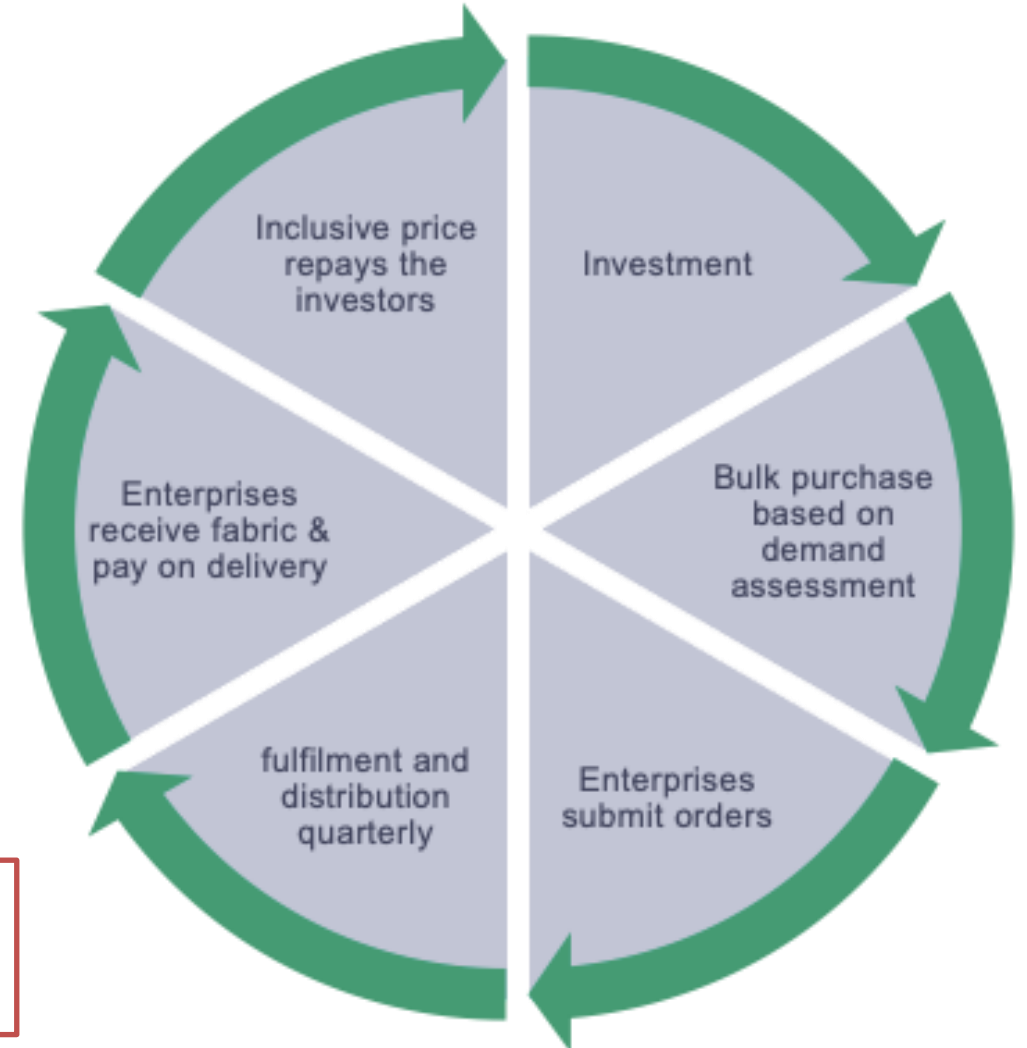


Wiles/Marie Stopes Timor-Leste



Pacific Trade Finance Vehicle for Menstrual Health

- In 2019 Red Hat Impact and Lotus Impact collaborated with Pacific based enterprises and small businesses to design a trade finance vehicle
- Late 2020: fast-track a “first run” of the vehicle: using investment commitment of US\$50,000
- Enterprises throughout the pacific are now making reusable pads using supplies at reduced costs



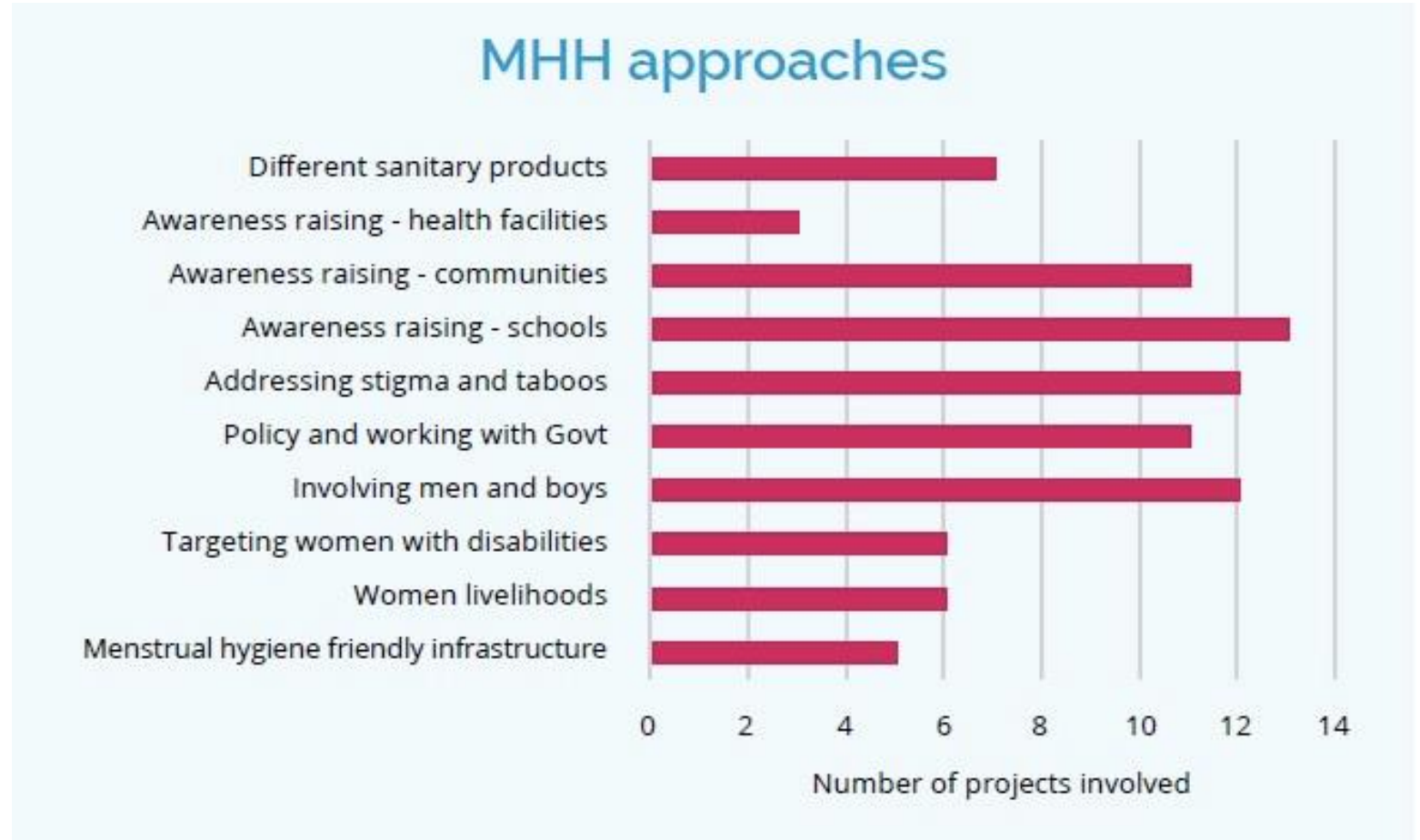
*Join next week's
webinars to learn more!*

WASH: Leading regional MHH progress

Water for Women Fund:

Led a review of 14 WASH projects (2020) across the region. Findings highlighted the role of WASH in MHH:

- MHH role in inclusive WASH
- Consulting with marginalised groups such as women with disabilities
- Engage with rights holders organisations locally in solutions



Enabling environment: galvanising regional action

Co-ordination and information sharing on MHM is increasing, particularly in the Pacific subregion and at national level

Example: Pacific Menstrual Health Network

Cross-sectoral communication / collaboration

Despite promising examples, cross sectoral action is still limited (WASH, education, adolescence, sexual and reproductive health,, school health and nutrition (SHN), gender and emergency sectors)

Example: Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea: Keeping Girls in school project (2017 - 2021), WaterAid, Marie Stopes International Australia (DFAT funded)

Continuing momentum on acknowledgement of the importance of MHM in **national policies, strategies or guidelines** and some **monitoring systems**



#mhd2020 #pacificperiods



Who is being left behind?

> Sex Reprod Health Matters. 2021 Dec;29(1):1911618. doi: 10.1080/26410397.2021.1911618.

Menstrual health: a definition for policy, practice, and research

Julie Hennegan ¹, Inga T Winkler ², Chris Bobel ³, Danielle Keiser ⁴,
Gerda Larsson ⁶, Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli ⁷, Marina Plesons ⁸,



“Referring to “women, girls, and all other people who experience a menstrual cycle” **draws attention to the fact that people experience menstruation differently, shaped by their lived experiences, needs and circumstances.** Disability, age, gender identity, place of residence, homelessness, housing instability, conditions of detention, migration, disaster, insecurity and displacement, religion, ethnicity, caste, culture and many other factors influence menstrual experiences and must be considered to adequately meet menstrual health needs”

Learning from the challenges of menstruators across the region



Menstrual health and hygiene for people with disabilities in Vanuatu

**The impact of cultural taboos and poor access to water and
sanitation**

Cultural Taboos

“When a woman menstruates, she mustn’t live with her husband because she is sick. She can cause the husband to be sick with asthma, or they might have a pot belly or even get sick with intestinal gas. We women are different to men. This [menstruation] is a disease itself.

That’s why I had to come and sleep here by myself.”

(Woman, 38 years, disability – seeing, urban)

Widespread cultural taboos about menstruation in Vanuatu

Findings from the **Water, Women and Disability Study (2020)**

Harmful menstrual beliefs and taboos are prevalent in Vanuatu, as in many other countries

The most widespread beliefs across all participants in the qualitative study, are that:

- menstruating women and girls will kill crops if they touch them,
 - must not work in the gardens,
 - cook food, and
 - lift heavy objects (or else the menstrual blood will flow more heavily).
-
- Many believed that they must:
 - Collect their own water for bathing and washing their reusable
 - Menstrual product
 - Wash their own menstrual product
 - Use separate latrines and bathing shelters

The impacts of these menstrual beliefs more negatively affect women and girls with a disability who require support to collect water, bathe, and do the laundry, and for people who have difficulties accessing the latrine or bathing shelter.

Impact of cultural taboos on people with disabilities.



©Liti Akimere
Caption: The water source is far. I want water closer to me so I can get it easily.



©Liti Akimere
Caption: I would like a better bathroom where I can sit properly.



©Liti Akimere
Caption: Washing for myself is hard

Supporting people with disabilities is not one size fits all approach

“When I was just lying in bed, I really hated getting my period.

And the first time I got my period while in this bad condition, it was so difficult, because when I have my period I don’t like to wear panties, because I’ll make a mess – who will take them off me? Who will pull them off me? And then who will put them back on me? [.....]

(Woman, 42 years, disability – walking and self-care, incontinence)

People with disabilities who are unable to manage their menstruation independently may require the following support from carers:

- Reminding to how to use and change a menstrual product and bathe (remembering and concentrating functional limitations)
- Changing the menstrual product (self-care)
- Collecting water (seeing, walking)
- Cooking, washing dishes (seeing, walking)

How can we improve menstrual health for people with disabilities

- It's not a one size fits all approach. Support needs to be tailored depending on impairment type and also context such as urban or rural
- When addressing cultural taboos and beliefs engage men and boys
- Consider the menstrual health and hygiene needs of people with disabilities in humanitarian response, including tailored to different impairment types
- Consider ways to support carers: so they can better support people with disabilities when menstruating
- Increase access to accessible latrines, water points, and bathing shelters

To find out more:

Water, women, and disability study:

<https://www.wvi.org/vanuatu/our-work/inclusive-water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

Research paper - *Water, women and disability: Using mixed-methods to support inclusive WASH programme design in Vanuatu* (Lancet Journal Western Pacific)

<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2666-6065%2821%2900018-3>

The Water, Women, and Disability was funded by the Australian Government's Water for Women fund and donations from the Australian public to World Vision Australia.

MH barriers for transgender men

- Marginalized and face exclusion, stigma, and violence that prevents them from accessing services
- May lack legal recognition of their identity
- Discrimination and lack of recognition makes limited data and information particularly for transgender men and boys
- Potentially 0.3 to 1.2% of population

WASH barriers:

- Harassment, exclusion or abuse at public toilets
- Do not have infrastructure and services for MH
- May not have access to MH information

Timor-Leste: WASH consultations with trans-men activists (2019) –

- Menstruation was a difficult topic to discuss, and described as a very uncomfortable experience.
- Wearing sanitary pads was difficult, as products are not designed to fit inside men's underwear.
- Trans-men found it important to dispose of used sanitary pads in total privacy and would carry them home.
- WASH-led menstrual health and hygiene efforts in Timor-Leste, most of which are school-based, may not be reaching people who are sexual and gender minorities, as they may have left school early.

WaterAid (2019 How water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) actors can safely reach and include sexual and gender minorities: Supporting diversity in sustainable WASH in Timor-Leste (Unpublished)

Supporting transgender menstruators

- Understand the terminology preferred by transgender people in the specific context.
- Include organisations comprised of and serving transgender menstruators in relevant coordination forums and as partners in programme design and delivery.
- SAFELY consult with transgender people when possible, to develop safe and desirable options
- Avoid further stigmatisation or exposure to vulnerability through the provision of services. Use safety audits to facilitate participatory assessments and design, where possible.
- Where possible, work with education and health service providers to ensure they are adequately trained and sensitised.



Dili's first pride march, 2017 Photo: The Asia Foundation



Sandrine, UNICEF WASH Officer, leads a focus group discussion in Melsisi, Pentecost, discussing water safety, sanitation and hygiene challenges, with women in cyclone affected communities.

How can we reach everyone?

Sharing good practices



Chloe Morrison
World Vision



Sandrine Benjimen
UNICEF Vanuatu



Chelsea Huggett
WaterAid Australia

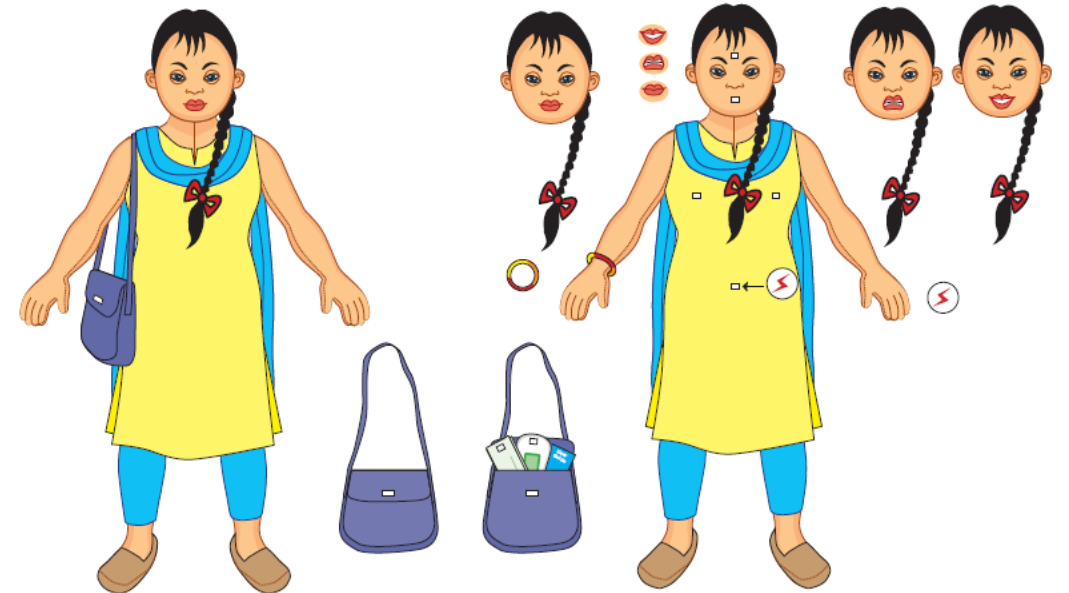


Lieve Sabbe
UNICEF EAPRO

Disabling Menstrual Barriers Research Project Kavre district, Nepal

“We don’t know anything else. I don’t go anywhere. I hear that people come to our village to teach about those things, but I haven’t been taught about the menstruation management”

- Carer of a person with an intellectual impairment.



Summary points

- Collect data disaggregated by gender, age, disability and other factors relevant to deprivations in your context
- Partner with rights groups representing marginalized people, such as LGBT organizations or organizations for persons with disabilities
- Ensure safe participation in development of programmes and resources by outreach and ensuring accessible venues and formats
- Build capacity of professionals to communicate with children with disabilities and other groups with special considerations

Closing



Rosie Wheen
Chief Executive
WaterAid Australia

Join us for the next webinars!



Monday 24 May

**Building
knowledge and
skills during the
pandemic and a
post-COVID world**

1-2:15 PM Bangkok
8-9:15 AM Geneva
4-5:15 PM Brisbane

REGISTER HERE

Thursday 27 May

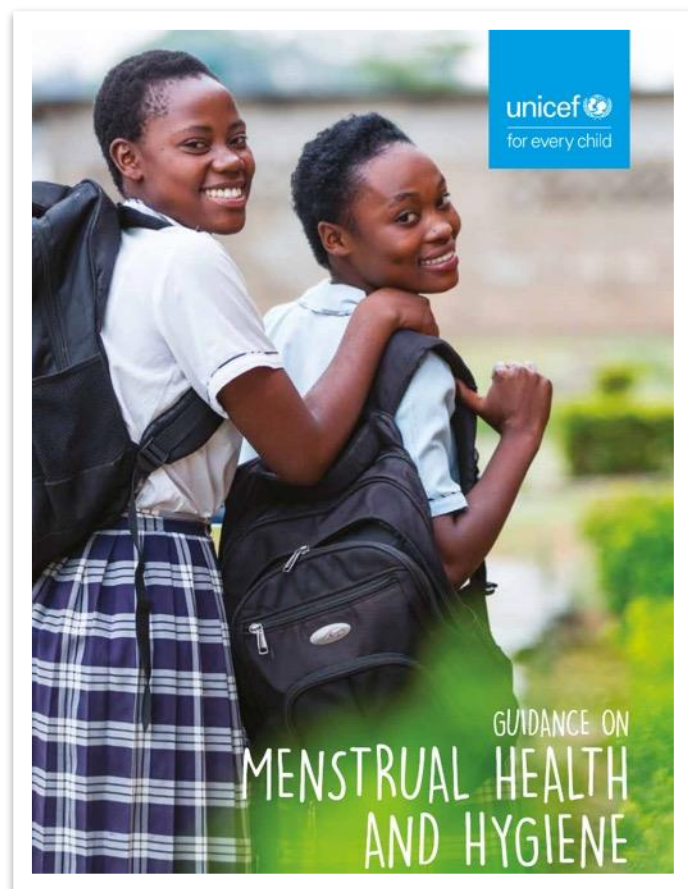
**Stepping up action
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and hygiene**

1-2:30 PM Bangkok
8-9:30 AM Geneva
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FURTHER RESOURCES



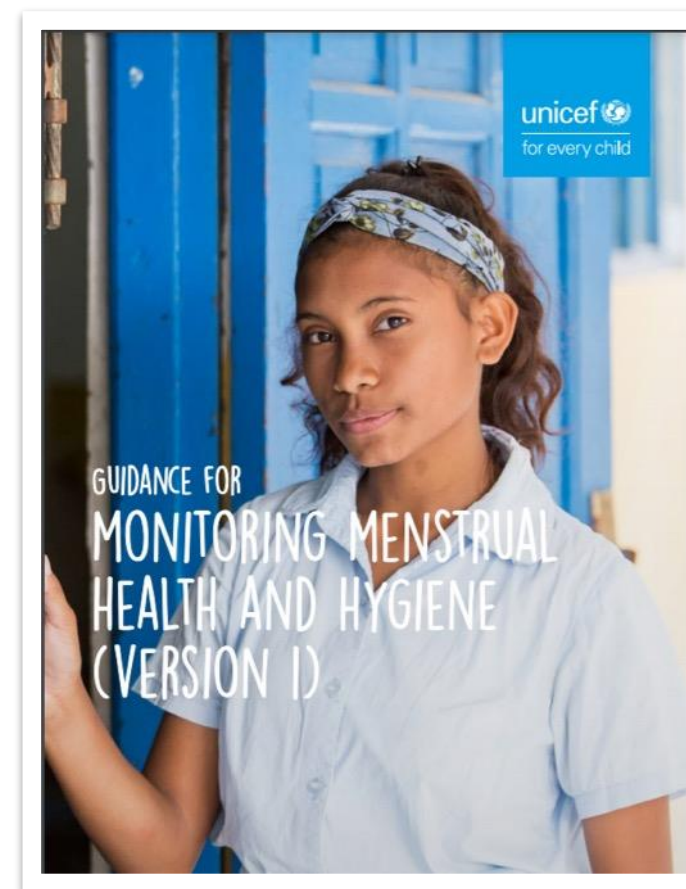
Guidance on menstrual health and hygiene

<https://www.unicef.org/documents/guidance-menstrual-health-and-hygiene>



Guide to menstrual hygiene materials

<https://www.unicef.org/documents/guide-menstrual-hygiene-materials>



MHH monitoring guide (v1)

<https://www.unicef.org/documents/guidance-monitoring-menstrual-health-and-hygiene>

Title, author and link	Relevance
<p>Supporting the Rights of Girls and Women through Menstrual Hygiene Management in the East Asia and Pacific Region: Realities, Progress and Opportunities</p> <p>UNICEF (2016)</p>	<p>A comprehensive overview and analysis of the experiences of girls and women, to establish the current status of MHM programming and action across the East Asia and the Pacific region. The review not only focuses on the school context linked to WASH in Schools programming, but also explores MHM in relation to out-of-school youth, as well as MHM at community level, in humanitarian contexts and in the workplace.</p> <p>The findings are presented in two documents:</p> <p>(1) A regional synthesis report titled “Realities, Progress and Opportunities”</p> <p>(2) An implementation guidance note with selected good practices titled “Regional Good Practice Guidance Note”</p>
<p>Menstrual Hygiene Matters: A resource for improving menstrual hygiene around the world</p> <p>SHARE & WaterAid (2012)</p> <p>Module & Toolkit 1 Menstrual hygiene – the basics</p>	<p>This resource brings together knowledge and practice on MH programming from around the world to encourage the development of comprehensive and context-specific approaches to menstrual hygiene.</p> <p>Module 2 provides information on institutional and sector responsibilities, amongst other practical information.</p>
<p>WinS4Girls distance learning course book and materials</p> <p>Emory University, UNGEI and UNICEF (2015)</p>	<p>The WinS4Girls e-course was developed and delivered as part of the 14-country UNICEF project funded by the Government of Canada. The WinS4Girls e-course was designed by the Center for Global Safe WASH at Emory University, UNGEI and UNICEF to help strengthen the capacity of WASH practitioners and policymakers to carry out rigorous research that investigates local MHM practices and challenges. It includes step-by-step modules for planning formative research into MHM.</p>
<p>Tools for Assessing Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools</p> <p>UNICEF and Emory University (2013)</p>	<p>In 2012, UNICEF and the Center for Global Safe Water at Emory University initiated a programme to support collaborative research focused on MHM in Bolivia, the Philippines, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. The assessment results are now published as a series of reports. All of the tools presented here are meant to be used and adapted for assessments around the world.</p>
<p>UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis</p> <p>UNICEF (2015)</p> <p>E-learning course available on Agora</p> <p>Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC)</p>	<p>In order to ensure the protection of, and respect for, human and child rights within all research, evaluation and data collection processes undertaken or commissioned by UNICEF, this guidance illustrates procedures designed to achieve the following objectives: to establish minimum and binding standards for ethical research, evaluation and data collection and analysis processes in UNICEF globally; and to ensure effective processes and accountability for ethical oversight of these processes.</p>

Author, title and link	Relevance
Disability Orientation UNICEF	A web-based training for staff which is open to UNICEF and external partners. It is a multi-media, 40-minute video that includes interesting and thought-provoking statements, resources and good practices from UNICEF and partners from across the globe. It strengthens an understanding of, and capacity to support, programming for children and women with disabilities. Available in English, Spanish, French with accessibility features.
Inclusive Communication Module UNICEF	Based on the Disability Orientation training, and open to UNICEF and external partners. The Inclusive Communication Module is dynamic and engaging. The content is divided into three chapters of 15-20 minutes each, and contains examples from over 30 country offices. Upon completion of the module, it is expected that participants will be able to: use appropriate terminology when communicating about children with disabilities; confidently interact with persons with disabilities; and develop materials and organise meetings that are inclusive of and accessible to people with disabilities. Available in English with accessibility features.
WASH in Schools for Girls Compendium UNICEF (2018)	This online resource includes examples of interventions, including teaching and learning materials, from 14 countries included in the WASH in Schools for Girls project, funded by the Government of Canada and implemented in partnership between UNICEF, governments and civil society around the world.
Virtual Conference on MHM in Schools Columbia University and UNICEF	The Virtual Conference for MHM in Schools is an annual event, first held in 2012, that brings together over 1,000 practitioners and researchers from around the world to review the latest research and programme examples on MHM in schools. Proceedings of the conference are available online.
International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach (revised edition) UNESCO (2018)	The International technical guidance on sexuality education was developed to assist education, health and other relevant authorities in the development and implementation of school-based and out-of-school comprehensive sexuality education programmes and materials.