



Menstrual Hygiene in Schools in South Asia:

2018-2020 update

Key Observations

- There is greater awareness of MH and its impact on adolescent girls, as well as the role played by education officials, health officers, teachers, and students.
- Various best practices at the provincial level have been scaled up to the national level. Learnings from MH in schools are being applied to households and public places such as offices, bus stands, marketplaces, and religious temples under the World Bank-funded Water Supply and Sanitation Improvement Project (WaSSIP) implemented by the National Water Supply and Drainage Board.
- There is ongoing advocacy seeking to use monitoring indicators across all schools as a means of measuring progress.



WASH in Schools (WinS) overview:

<https://washdata.org/monitoring/schools/dashboard>

Drinking Water Availability

80% of schools have a limited water supply

20% of schools have no water supply

Sanitation

100% of primary and secondary schools have basic sanitation

Hygiene

Data unavailable

Key Issues

- The National Guidelines for school WASH include MH units for schools. The Government, World Bank, and private sector has been mobilised to build these units in schools.
- The National Accreditation System for School Health Evaluation refers to adequate sanitary facilities to dispose of menstrual waste.



MH Overview

Policies Standards Guidelines Legal frameworks	<p>The revised National Sanitation Policy (2017) is being operationalised and includes a component on MH.</p>
	<p>The Ministry of Education (MoE) has maintained its commitment to MH in the education sector under the School Health Promotion Framework.</p>
Education materials Curriculum materials Teacher training materials Additional resources	<p>Under the School Health Programme it is compulsory to teach Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and life skills to Grades 7 to 9.</p>
	<p>Efforts continue to build the knowledge, skills, and practices of Provincial Departments of Education (including primary teachers), Medical Officers of Health, frontline healthcare workers, as well as local civil society organisations.</p>
	<p>Creative education materials have been developed including a Snakes and Ladders game for adolescents, 'creating space for dialogue on menstruation' documentation, and a puppet show to dispel myths. Facebook and other social media platforms are used to create awareness. For example, the 'Red Moon Period' campaign was launched on MH Day.</p> <p>The MoE and Health Promotion Bureau have launched a self-learning book to educate students on SRH, including MH, targeting Grade 7 students in the country.</p>
Is MH in Education Information System (MEMIS)	<p>MH is not included in the EMIS.</p>
	<p>UNICEF supported the design and integration of ten MH-specific indicators into the school monitoring system of 42 pilot schools at the provincial level.</p>
	<p>The MoE has piloted the monitoring of key WASH indicators related to behaviour, quality, and functionality with a view to upgrading the Annual School Census.</p>
Current evidence – key findings	<p>A UNICEF study on menstrual rituals and their impact on health, hygiene, educational attainment, economic opportunity, and the bodily autonomy of Tamil women informed national-level advocacy on the need for MH. It also provided evidence to support the development of behaviour-change communication materials on MH practices.</p>
	<p>A study for Plan International Sri Lanka (2018) evaluated MH disposal options in Sinhala and Tamil schools in Monaragala District. The study found that schools' staff lacked an understanding of how to operate and maintain the system. Both sets of schools faced budget constraints, meaning that soap and cleaning products were not continuously available.</p>
	<p>One study in Beruwala (Agampodi, et al., 2018) showed that even getting girls to talk about menstruation with public-health midwives grassroots-level, health-care workers in Sri Lanka) was difficult because most believed that it was something dirty.</p>
Coordination platforms/ mechanisms at national/ sub-national levels	<p>There is no official coordination platform.</p>
MH in schools practice ▶ Materials ▶ Disposal	<p>There are few waste-collection mechanisms in institutions. Options for schools include incinerators and waste separation.</p>
	<p>The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council has supported women to make low-cost, organic, sanitary towels. One brand is Sinidu ('soft'); a packet of ten pads costs 80 LKR (US \$0.5).</p>
	<p>Local clothing industries have also introduced reusable sanitary napkins to the local market; costs range from US \$4 to US \$5.</p>

Equity and inclusion

Sri Lanka faces frequent flooding, both seasonal monsoon and sporadic, heavy storms. Four different disaster-related messages and campaign materials were developed to mark the 2020 Global Menstrual Hygiene Day.

MH Journey in Sri Lanka

Year	Key steps – Sri Lanka WinS MH
2018	The 2017 revised National Sanitation Policy (which includes MH) was approved.
	The MoE initiated school criteria and a monitoring system for MH.
	The levy on imported sanitary pads was reduced from 100% to 63% (Daniel, 2019).
2019	An overall Value Added Tax (VAT) reduction in December 2019 brought the total taxes for sanitary products down to 52 per cent. The SACOSAN Regional Sanitation Centre helped raise the profile of MH through engagement with public health and water-service providers.
	A Rapid Action Learning (RAL) Workshop on Sustainable Sanitation Progress with Leaving No One Behind was organised by the Regional Centre for Sanitation, Ministry of Water Supply, Government of Sri Lanka in partnership with the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and Sanitation Learning Hub (IDS, University of Sussex).
2020	The MoE included MH in the school curriculum.
	The Ministry of Water Supply finalised and field tested MH materials.
	The National Water Supply and Drainage Board has implemented pilot projects on increasing 'safe women-friendly sanitation space' in public places. This included attention to facilities providing for the disposal of sanitary napkins.
	The National Water Supply and Drainage Board introduced new designs for the disposal of sanitary napkins at schools.
	The MoE and Ministry of Health have produced self-learning materials on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health including MH as a component.



What's coming up? Opportunities for MH in WinS

- The development of innovative designs by the National Water Supply and Drainage Board and development partners for safe disposal of sanitary napkins at schools premises.
- Promotion of MHM facilities in female toilets, resting areas of public places (such as public bus stations or railway stations).
- Options for translating the MH materials into braille and local languages are being considered.
- Government is discussing the possibility of providing free sanitary napkins to 800,000 girls in Grade 6 to Advanced Level, by the end of 2021.

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