MENSTRUAL HYGIENE WEBINAR 3 SYNOPSIS

Date: June 14th Thursday at 7:00 AM PDT
Topic: Creating access to menstrual products

Guest speakers: Thematic presenter- Nancy Muller (PATH)
Topical presenter- Wonder Mafuta (World Vision Somalia)
Topical presenter- Charu Agarwal (Dharma Life)

Webinar host: WASH United and World Vision
Organised by: WASH United, Simavi, World Vision, GIZ, an activity of the MH Alliance
Link to the recording: https://vimeo.com/275146525

Thematic Presenter- Nancy Muller (PATH)

- Background on Menstrual Products
  - Are a basic human right, and are important regarding health, education, employment, and gender equity
  - Absorb blood and prevent leaks, thereby supporting girls/women to live in dignity and confidence
  - Include disposable sanitary pads/tampons, reusable cloth/period panties, and menstrual cups
  - Influenced by cultural beliefs, and preference influence the type of menstrual products girls/women use
  - Disposable sanitary pads are commonly preferred by girls/women
  - Reusable cloth/period panties, and menstrual cups are used less often by women and girls due to lack of awareness, distribution channels, standards, cultural beliefs, misinformation, and cost.

- Research on Menstrual Products
  - Rigorous research on menstrual products and access is limited and of uneven quality
  - Increased incidence of reproductive tract infection (RTI) from improvised cloth use
  - Higher perceived reliability of reusable sanitary pads to improvised cloth
  - In one study, bacterial vaginosis less prevalent among menstrual cup users than among users of disposable pads
  - Increased self-efficacy and reduced stigma among users of period panties
  - Increased level of education is associated with use of commercial products
  - Safe hygiene facilities reduce risk of bacterial vaginosis
  - No evidence on the association of cervical cancer with poor menstrual hygiene

- Menstrual Product access
  - Access to improved menstrual products is limited in many settings
  - Countries including India, Kenya, Zambia, and South Africa are subsidizing products to help keep girls in school. However, this support faces challenges which include:
    - Single product focus
    - Limited monitoring and evaluation of the programme
    - No performance or quality standards of products for comparison
    - Luxury taxes and lack of systems and policies for products’ disposal
  - Various models exist to increase access to menstrual products for high, middle and low income populations -- for example: Shops, social enterprise sales models, and subsidies, respectively

- Key Takeaways
Menstrual products are part of the solution and not the solution

All types of menstrual products are needed

There is no one right product

Keep women and girls in the centre of product design

Product choice is important

There is need of research, evidence, quality of products and setting up supportive systems.

Consideration for menstrual products choice include performance, acceptability, context of use, and supply

Topical presenter - Wonder Mafuta (World Vision Somalia)

- **Be Girl Pilot**
  - A partnership between WV Somalia and Be Girl
  - Conducted in the northern part of Somalia to examine how access to high-quality durable menstrual products improve girls’ quality of life
  - Xi-month pilot process evaluation on school girls
  - Intervention included the provision of two Be Girl period panties per girl delivered in an MHM workshop

- **Lessons Learnt**
  - Menstruating girls are resilient despite country’s fragility
  - More school attendance but access does not necessarily influence school performance
  - Holistic approach (i.e. other influences of absenteeism in menstruators) should be considered when deciding what menstrual products to provide to menstruators
  - Access to menstrual products can positively change attitudes and influence perceptions of menstruation

Topical presenter - Charu Agarwal (Dharma Life)

- **Making Periods Normal Programme**
  - A collaborative initiative based in Bihar aimed at promoting healthy hygiene practices among adolescent girls and women in the community through innovative behaviour change tools
  - Promote adoption of sanitary pads and improve access to pads in the community.
  - Key aspects of the programme include awareness, accessibility, use, and affordability
  - Mobilise women as change agents and sensitise men and boys about menstruation

- **Lessons Learned**
  - The successes of the programme include
    - Unique distribution channel of menstrual products
    - Generates income for women entrepreneurs
    - Access to products i.e. sanitary pads helps to improve quality of menstrual health
  - The challenge of the programme includes:
    - Weather conditions such as serious rainy periods may disrupt distribution channels.

Key question addressed in the webinar

- **Dharma Life**
  - What process did you go through to choose the sanitary napkin provider for the project?
    - Ans: Quality control criteria, nature of production and supply chain, and price point.
- Why are you not offering more than one product?
  - Ans: It is the feasible solution for social impact

- **WV Somalia**
  - How have you involved community groups in access to products?
    - Ans: Imams, teachers, and expectant mothers in the community and the Ministry of Health are involved
  - How do you address pain management for menstrual hygiene?
    - Ans: Health team provide drugs such as paracetamol for pain, which are provided with distributed MHM products

- **PATH**
  - What are your thoughts on providing of pain medication or seeking local remedies for menstrual pain management?
    - Ans: Information about how to access pain management product and manage the pain is important, provision of paracetamols is a reasonable approach, and linking to health services is helpful to women and girls
  - What are the economic importance of MHM?
    - Ans: There is a market for MHM products
  - If those local solutions (e.g. banana leaves) work fine, what is meant by "their quality needs to be improved"?
    - Ans: There are issues around quality control for disposable products. There is need for more evidence and data.