POLICY LANDSCAPE FOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE & HEALTH

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GLOBAL LEVEL
BODIES AND POLICIES

- SDG
- UN Human Rights Council
- Commission Status of Women
Sustainable Development Goals

- MHM is not directly included, but can serve as a proxy for meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- More specifically within target and indicator SDG 4:a and target 6.2
- Monitoring via the Joint Monitoring Programme by UNICEF/WHO
- MHM is advanced indicator -> meaning voluntarily on national level

**INDICATOR 4.a.1:** Proportion of schools with access to: (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)

**TARGET 6.2:** By 2030, achieve access adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

**ADVANCED SERVICE:** (to be defined at national level)
Additional criteria may include hygiene education, group handwashing, menstrual hygiene materials, and accessibility to all users.
UN Human Rights Council

- The first time menstrual hygiene management was explicitly included in resolution A/HRC/RES/27/7 in 2014.

- Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/ RES/ 39/8, which was adopted by a broad majority on 21 September 2018, now includes significant new language on MHM.

- Paragraph 7 (e) calls upon states to “address the widespread stigma and shame surrounding menstruation and menstrual hygiene by ensuring access to factual information thereon, addressing the negative social norms around the issue and ensuring universal access to hygienic products and gender-sensitive facilities, including disposal options for menstrual products.”

Operative paragraph, with a comprehensive definition!

MHM is not a human right, but the lack thereof it has impacts on the enjoyment of human rights, and many good Human rights support MHM
Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

- CSW 2019 conclusions /E/CN.6/2019/L.3019:

The Commission urged governments at all levels and as appropriate with the relevant entities of the UN system and international and regional organizations in collaboration with civil society, (…) 

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water as well as access to safe and affordable drinking water and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all women and girls, as well as for menstrual hygiene management, including for hygiene facilities and services, in homes, schools, temporary shelters for refugees, migrants or people affected by natural disasters, humanitarian emergencies and armed conflicts and post-conflict situations and all other public and private spaces; (…)
These agreement can be powerful to hold your countries accountable.

SDG: Advocacy is needed to include MHM as advanced monitoring indicator (into EMIS, etc;...
NATIONAL LEVEL POLICIES

- Stand-alone
- Integrated into sector policies
- Tax reduction / removal
- Free / subsidies product distribution
- Product standards
- Menstrual leave
Dedicated National MHM Policies / Guidelines

Ethiopia, 2016
POLICY
Ministry of Health

Zambia, 2016
NATIONAL GUIDELINES
Ministry of Education

India, 2015
NATIONAL GUIDELINE
Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation

South Africa, 2017
POLICY FRAMEWORK
Department of women

Nepal (Dignified menstrual policy)
Kenya
long time in the making, and stuck to get final approval.
MHM integrated into Schools / WASH /Education/ Gender Policies, Strategies or Guidelines

**Schools**
- **Cameroon, 2016**
  - CLTS - STRATEGY
  - Ministry of Energy and Water and the Ministry of Public Health

**WASH**
- **Uganda, 2013**
  - STRATEGY FOR GIRLS EDUCATION
  - Ministry of Education & Sports

**Education**
- **Ethiopia, 2016**
  - SCHOOL WASH
  - GUIDELINE
- **Cameroon, 2016**
  - STRATEGY for the Promotion of Drinking Water Supplies, Hygiene and Sanitation in schools
  - Ministry of Basic Education

**Children/ Humanitarian**
- **Niger, 2018**
  - GUIDE PROTECTION
  - Ministère de la promotion de la femme et de la protection d’enfants
Issues:

- Responsibilities: Government on different level (Decentralization)
- Funding for implementation
- Distribution, capacity and alignment of key stakeholders
- Monitoring & accountability
- Convergence: roles of different ministries
- Stakeholder involvement and contributions in the development and implementation
Is there a window of opportunity?

Are there already champions in the government/parliamentarians?

Stand-alone or integrated, or both?

A policy or guideline or strategy?

Clarity on roles, leadership and accountability?

Capacity building and social norms

Monitoring indicators (EMIS, WASH, MICS, ...)

**National stand-alone:**
+ Visibility
+ MHM across life cycle and sectors
+- Many actors
  - Often lacks mainstreaming and can be “shelved” and only used by actors already aware

**Integrated**
+ Anchored within one ministry
  - Might get lost in multiple other issues
  - MHM is mentioned as important aspect, but there are often no concrete recommendations on how to implement
  - Less comprehensive MHM

**UGANDA 2014**
a parliamentary resolution was passed that directed the MoESTS to place increased focus on MHM in schools,

**Action**
Advocate for MHM policies and/or mainstream
National Policies

Product Taxation / VAT free or reduced

Who?

- National Treasury / Finance Ministry
- Parliament
- Driven by civil society (petitions) and media, stakeholder groups, parliamentarian champions
National Policies

Product Taxation / VAT free or reduced

**Case A: Tackling injustice** by ensuring menstrual products are not taxed luxury VAT, but a normal/ reduced rate in comparison to other items of basic necessity.

Ireland, 1972  
Spain, 2018  
Australia, 2018

**Case B: Price reduction / increase affordability** through ZERO or reduced VAT.

Kenya, 2004  
Tanzania, 2018  
Lesotho, 2018/9  
South Africa, 2019  
Zimbabwe, 2019 custom duty for 12 months

**Issues: not an end in itself**

- Positive echo in media and society
- Taxes on raw materials; favours import over local manufacturers
- Distribution chain (Tanzania) -> price caps / fixed prices
- Currency inflation (Zimbabwe)
- Will it help the hard-core poor?

Almost no studies found! Please let us know!
Free Product Distribution for Schools (Prisons....)

- **India**
  - 2011
  - Menstrual Hygiene Scheme

- **Kenya**
  - 2016/2017
  - National free pad program

- **Scotland & UK**
  - 2018, 2019
  - Sanitary Dignity Programme

- **New York City**
  - Subsidised supplies for menstrual hygiene in the city’s homeless shelters and jails

- **South Africa**
  - 2016/2017
  - Sanitary Dignity Programme

- **India**
  - 2018
  - Subsidised pads for women below poverty line

**Issues:**
- School girls or all women?
- Costs, sustainability and scale
- Coverage, procurement & distribution
- Choice and quality
- Education and awareness to change social norms
- Disposal

Lack of (externally available) impact evaluations, but some evidence (India)
Be realistic, start small and adjust your policy

What is your ultimate goal?

Funding and sustainability?

What are your local product markets?
National Policies

Product Standards

- Uganda, 2017
  1st standard for reusable sanitary pads
- Zimbabwe, 2019
- CUPS
  USA: medical device
  Australia: therapeutic device
  Europe: hygiene product

Issues:
- Standard do to consider new products
- Enforcement

Action

Issue policies and standards that promote safe AND affordable menstrual products AND innovation and local markets.

WHO?
- Government ministries / departments incl. consumer safety
- Regulatory authority/ standards body
- Manufacturers
- Researchers and experts (Textile engineers, chemical engineers, microbiologists, environmentalists etc.)
Menstrual Leave Policy

Who?
- Corporates (internal policies)
- Trade unions ....
- Ministries of gender, labour,
- Activists

Issues
- Menstrual leave is controversial
  - it is seen by some as a criticism of women's work efficiency or as sexism.
  + similar like maternity leave and view it as a promoter of gender equality.
- Companies ignore policies
- Women not wanting to expose, fear to lose job (Japan)
- Menstruation taboo

Action
Menstruation-friendly workplace
Schools: yes, and also beyond
Out of school girls, work place, institutions, as well across the life cycle!

Equality = leave no one behind
Poor and vulnerable, people with disabilities, all menstruators reached equally well

Seek for Champions
and use Ministers, county first ladies (Kenya), Parliamentarians (Uganda, Tanzania)

Evidence and data is power
Build the policy on evidence, use data for evaluation and improvements
#ItsTimeForAction
Together we can empower all women and girls to realize their full potential.