



Menstrual Hygiene in Schools in South Asia:

2018-2020 update

Key Observations

- Various projects and campaigns (e.g. Project #Cupvert) have been launched to reduce the impact of single-use pads on the environment and to break the taboos around reproductive and menstrual health.
- Access to menstrual supplies and reusable products has been promoted including by removing a tax on menstrual products as well as by promoting menstrual cups.

Key Issues

- The Government is accelerating the supply of WASH services to all islands.
- The supply of hygiene products (such as soap and toilet paper) is more variable. For instance, girls bring some supplies from home to help them maintain MH.



WASH in Schools (WinS) overview:

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



Drinking Water Availability

100% of schools have basic drinking water supply.



Sanitation

99% of schools have basic sanitation facilities.



Hygiene

100% of schools have facilities for handwashing.



MH Overview

Policies Standards Guidelines Legal frameworks	<p>WinS is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (MoE) and was developed by the MoE in 2019.</p>
	<p>The 2019 Education Sector Plan (ESP) includes providing schools with access to: adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; basic drinking water; single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions).</p>
	<p>In August 2020, an amendment to the Employment Act was proposed to introduce one day of paid menstrual leave per month for women in the Maldives' workforce.</p>
Education materials Curriculum materials Teacher training materials Additional resources	<p>Grades 6 to 8 learn about purity-related restrictions for the management of menstruation in Islamic Studies. Grades 6 and 7 also learn about puberty in General Science. IEC materials on puberty have been developed and disseminated as part of Life Skills interventions. However, there remains limited access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information and services. Young people tend to use the internet for information.</p>
	<p>Efforts are being made to ensure that teachers are well-trained and supported on MH, particularly in remote islands.</p>
	<p>UNFPA Maldives, the Society for Health Education (SHE), and other partners have piloted Safe Space Sessions on MH for girls and parents from different Atolls (e.g. Laamu and Gaafu Dhaalu). Sessions cover human anatomy as well as MH. These sessions can be face-to-face or virtual. The Maldives Girl Guides Association has also been involved in raising awareness among students and parents.</p>
	<p>The Maldives has high mobile phone and internet coverage across the country so awareness materials can be shared through various social media channels, particularly Facebook. UNFPA, in collaboration with SHE, launched the mobile app Siththaa (Now I know!) that increases awareness on MH and SRH and also has a chat feature for questions.</p>
Is MH in Maldives Education Information System (MEMIS)	<p>A WinS module was included in the MEMIS and schools are currently entering the data into this module to generate reports in 2020.</p>
	<p>WinS monitoring information is also reported in the MaldivInfo platform, although MH is not monitored.</p>
Coordination platforms/mechanisms at national/sub-national levels	<p>While there is no formal coordination mechanism, under the Cupvert project UNFPA played a convening role in bringing together environmental activists, reproductive health educators, and the tourism sector to take action on MH.</p>
MH in schools practice ▶ Materials ▶ Disposal	<p>Schools have generally made arrangements so that girls can access pads in schools in emergencies. Most schools have a Health Room with a supply of pads and pain killers. Girls also tend to bring toilet tissue from home in order to wipe themselves after washing.</p>
	<p>A range of actors (UNFPA, Six Senses, and Zero Waste Maldives) are providing information on different sanitary products during Safe Space sessions for girls.</p>
	<p>Girls' toilets generally have bins with lids for disposal of menstrual waste. However, the Maldives has a growing challenge in managing its solid waste. This is worse in small islands due to the size of the island communities (e.g. insufficient infrastructure, waste transportation difficulties). Zero Waste Maldives and #unfpamaldives are promoting reusable and safe-disposal options to reduce menstrual waste.</p>

Equity and inclusion	Children with disabilities make up an estimated 3% of the child population and are particularly vulnerable, especially in remote islands. Only 42% of schools cater to children with disabilities.
	Rates of access to higher secondary education are low: there are challenges in identifying out-of-school children and adolescents, particularly girls.

MH Journey in the Maldives

Year	Key steps – Maldives WinS MH
2018	In 2018, the parliament agreed to abolish the 6% tax on pads, tampons, and other menstrual products; the result of a popular Twitter movement launched in 2016 under the hashtag #MassaruTax.
	Parliamentarians recommended government monitoring of retailers to ensure that menstrual products are sold at cheaper prices in the future.
2019	In the run up to the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 (International Conference on Population and Development), the campaign #IMarchFor was used to break the taboo on reproductive and menstrual health and increase options for sustainable MH products.
2020	The Cupvert Pilot project was launched in Laamu. The partners (Six Senses Laamu, SHE, Zero Waste, Women Development Committees, the Maldives Girl Guides Association, and UNFPA) reached over a 100 young girls and women from Gan, Fonadhoo, Maavah, Maamendhoo, Hithadhoo, and Kunahandhoo through Safe Space sessions where they were given information on MH and eco-friendly menstrual cups.

What's coming up? Opportunities for MH in WinS to 2024

- Including MH indicators in the MaldivInfo platform.
- Research on the links between menstruation and absenteeism in schools for advocacy purposes.

References:

<https://zerowastemaldives.com/>

<http://www.dataforall.org/maldivinfo/libraries.aspx/home.aspx>

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-05-maldives-education-sector-plan-2019-2023.pdf>

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