

# Improving Menstrual Health

A Toolkit for  
Community Facilitators  
in Solomon Islands



This document was produced in partnership with Kaleko Steifree, a social enterprise in Solomon Islands that produces affordable, attractive and comfortable re-usable menstrual pads to help women and girls be empowered to make informed decisions on how they manage menstruation. Kaleko Steifree also facilitates training programs in schools and communities with women and men to improve menstrual health knowledge and increase support for managing menstruation with dignity.

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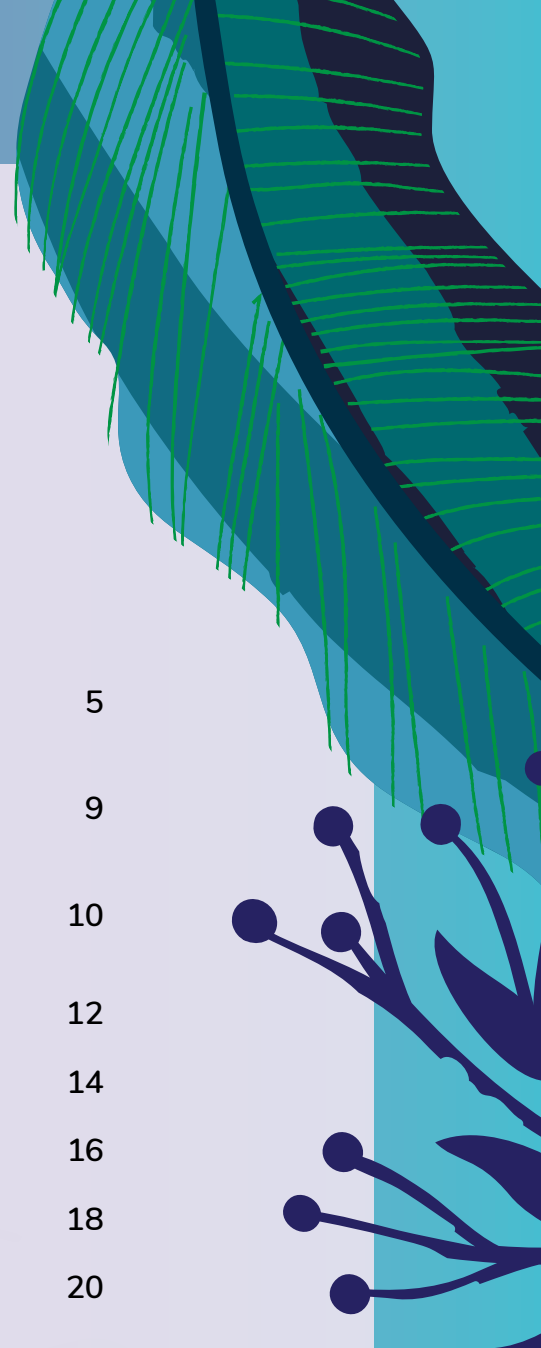
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# Introduction

Menstrual health and hygiene affects many areas of the lives of women and girls. On any given day, more than 800 million girls and women between the ages of 15 and 49 are menstruating. Menstruation is a healthy and normal occurrence in the female body, and a core function of a woman's reproductive system. However, it can – and often does – become a challenge when individuals lack access to the resources, infrastructure and social support they need to appropriately manage it.

Improving menstrual health and hygiene for women and girls involves several interconnected areas:

- correct knowledge about menstruation
- access to a variety of appropriate menstrual hygiene products
- access to appropriate sanitation facilities
- communities and families committed to ensure menstruation does not limit the daily lives and overall wellbeing of women and girls.<sup>1</sup>

This facilitation guide has been developed for use in the Solomon Islands by women and men, and girls and boys, in communities and schools. The different sessions have been designed to appropriately address the interconnected areas listed above, with an overall purpose to facilitate knowledge on the importance of managing menstruation hygienically and with dignity, and to enable practical action for improved management of menstruation by women and girls.

The activities in the facilitation guide can be used to strengthen existing knowledge on menstruation practices, as well as to introduce new information and cultivate awareness about the fundamentals of good menstrual health.

In schools, the activities should be used in conjunction with any formal, government approved curriculum on menstrual health. With support from their schools, families and communities can use the guide to enable women and girls to reach their full potential. The activities have been piloted by Kaleko Steifree in multiple communities and schools and written to be able to be facilitated by local government health workers, or trained community facilitators from non-government or community organisations.

<sup>1</sup> [www.fsg.org/publications/advancing-gender-equity-improving-menstrual-health#download-area](http://www.fsg.org/publications/advancing-gender-equity-improving-menstrual-health#download-area)

# Overview of Session Activities and Target Audiences

Below is a table presenting all the activities included in this guide. We have put specific activities together into session plans for specific target audiences. These session guides use a basic structure of:

*Coming together to share*

*Going deeper into the issue*

*Making a commitment for action*

Experienced facilitators may choose to combine activities in different formats to tailor their own facilitation program to a specific group context.

In the session guides there are activities that divide females and males into separate groups, to reduce any cultural barriers to speaking openly. This needs to be planned for, as a minimum of two facilitators for the sessions will be needed.

**NOTE:** All handouts or slides referred to in specific activities appear in the Resources and Handouts section at the end of the facilitation guide.

Activity	Key Message	Suitable for:	Page
<b>Windows of perception</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dismiss harmful cultural/social practices/myths relating to menstruation (the value of a woman as human – emphasis on dignity, confidence)</li> <li>The commencement of menstruation shouldn't be linked with suitability for pregnancy or marriage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elder female and male relatives</li> <li>Senior high school children</li> </ul>	Added when design done
<b>Menstrual health management: The Basics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menstrual health should be accepted as a normal part of everyday life, and the responsibility of everyone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elder female and male relatives</li> <li>Married couples</li> <li>Out of school youth</li> <li>Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	
<b>Menstrual health materials: options, use and disposal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menstrual health should be accepted as a normal part of everyday life – connected to managing our bodies and our environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elder female and male relatives</li> <li>Married couples</li> <li>Out of school youth</li> <li>Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	
<b>Talking about the open secrets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Older individuals play an important role in establishing a supportive environment for dignified menstrual health in the households and communities where they live</li> <li>Dismiss harmful cultural/social practices/myths relating to menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elder female and male relatives</li> <li>Married couples</li> <li>Out of school youth</li> <li>Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	

<b>Talking about limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older individuals play an important role in establishing a supportive environment for dignified menstrual health in the households and communities where they live</li> <li>• Dismiss harmful cultural/social practices/myths relating to menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elder female and male relatives</li> <li>• Married couples</li> <li>• Out of school youth</li> </ul>	
<b>Wisdom from elders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older individuals play an important role in establishing a supportive environment for dignified menstrual health in the households and communities where they live</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elder female and male relatives</li> </ul>	
<b>Talking about gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dismiss harmful cultural/social practices/myths relating to menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elder female and male relatives</li> <li>• Married couples</li> <li>• Out of school youth</li> </ul>	
<b>Discussing embarrassing topics (role-play option)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Menstrual health should be accepted as a normal part of everyday life</li> <li>• Married women can choose to do what suits them during menstruation – there are no restrictions other than what a woman physically needs when she is bleeding (which might only be some rest and pain relief)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elder female and male relatives</li> <li>• Married couples</li> <li>• Out of school youth</li> </ul>	
<b>Committing to change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married women have agency and resources to confidently manage periods at home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elder female and male relatives</li> <li>• Married couples</li> <li>• Out of school youth</li> <li>• Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	

<b>Lucky ones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls should feel confident and comfortable to attend school at all times, including during menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	
<b>Taking care of yourself</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menstruation is healthy and normal and nothing to be feared or teased about</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	
<b>Menstruation facilities audit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls should feel confident and comfortable to attend school at all times, including during menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	
<b>Making connections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menstruation is healthy and normal and nothing to be feared or teased about</li> <li>Girls should feel confident and comfortable to attend school at all times, including during menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	
<b>Taking action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menstruation is healthy and normal and nothing to be feared or teased about</li> <li>Girls should feel confident and comfortable to attend school at all times, including during menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior primary school and high school children</li> </ul>	
<b>The culture of menstruation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menstruation is normal and nothing to be feared or teased about</li> <li>Girls are not limited when they have their periods and should be free to fully engage in life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out of school youth</li> </ul>	
<b>Management of menstrual health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menstruation is normal and nothing to be feared or teased about</li> <li>Girls are not limited when they have their periods and should be free to fully engage in life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out of school youth</li> </ul>	





# Notes for Facilitators

## Running Sessions<sup>2</sup>

To facilitate means to ‘make things easy’. Your role as a facilitator is to create a space where people feel safe to share ideas and experiences and learn new things. This means that participants feel comfortable not just attending sessions but also expressing their honest opinions. Think about the relationships that exist between participants and make sure that you run activities and discussions in a way that helps all participants feel comfortable about sharing their thoughts. You do not have to be an expert on the topic, but it is important to read and understand the information in each session before running a session. Each session will require at least two facilitators. Consider representation and appropriateness in selecting a facilitation team to make sure that diversity is represented.

Each session in this toolkit has been designed to cover and build up to multiple themes and issues relating to menstrual health. Icebreakers precede more serious discussions and at times men and women will be separated in order to create safe spaces for participants to ask questions before coming back together.

Each audience has been allocated three sessions. Depending on the situation all three sessions can take place over the course of a single day, or they can be broken up over days or weeks.

It is recommended the sessions follow the order in this toolkit for the content to have the most effect. However, if you are a more confident facilitator, you might feel the need to take activities from any session and create something new that suits your audience. This toolkit should work as a guide that can be built upon with communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Live & Learn, p. 11



## Facilitator Tips:

●●●● Read each session before you run it, and make sure that you understand it. Think about questions participants might ask and make sure you are ready to answer them. Ask others for help if you need it. Think about how you will translate the words and ideas into local language, if necessary.

●●●● Allow enough time to work through each session. It is important not to rush, so that there is time for all of your participants to be heard.

●●●● Don't use acronyms that are not commonly understood in communities. For example, refer to menstruation or menstrual health rather than 'MHM'. Use local terms, in local language.

●●●● Be friendly, inclusive and value diversity – make sure you encourage everyone to participate in the sessions. If you notice that some participants are not talking, then gently direct questions towards them. For example, if you notice that women are not talking, you could say, 'We have heard from some of the men, what do some of the women think?' You can do the same for young people, or people from different groups within the community.

●●●● Be conscious of people with specific difficulties with seeing, hearing, reading, talking and walking. Ensure that all materials are read aloud, shown in written form and described in pictures. Some people may need additional assistance in accessing the information.

●●●● When running the sessions, encourage all participants to share their ideas and experiences. Be open to the ideas and opinions of the participants and allow time for them to be discussed. Sometimes participants will have different views and might disagree with each other or feel uncomfortable with what other people have said. Sometimes you may disagree with a participant's opinion, but it is important to make sure you allow all opinions to be heard and you are always respectful. We all have the right to share our opinions so long as we are respectful of others.

●●●● Be aware that some participants may face challenges during some of the discussions. For example, some participants may be challenged by a discussion about traditional gender roles and women being involved in community decision-making and leadership. It is important to make sure that there is enough time and a safe space for participants to talk about these challenges.

Silences are very useful and can give people time to think and learn, and they create an opportunity for people who don't usually talk to speak up. If, however, there are long silences and no-one is speaking, try asking a question to start the conversation again, or try one of the following quick exercises to encourage participation.

### *Fist to Five:*

To see if participants agree or understand a topic, ask them to close their eyes and raise their hands in the air. If they don't agree, or don't understand, they keep their hand in a fist. If they agree or understand, they put all five fingers in the air. If they are not sure or only understand or agree a little bit, they put only two or three fingers in the air. This is so you can understand what the participants are thinking, without them having to speak up and tell you.

### *Agree or Disagree:*

Place a piece of paper with 'Agree' on it and a piece of paper with 'Disagree' on it on opposite sides of the workshop space. Read out a statement (e.g. 'Menstruation should be kept secret from men' or 'Menstruation is not about sex') and ask participants to move towards either Agree or Disagree, depending on what they believe. If participants are unsure, they can be somewhere in the middle. To start a discussion, ask several participants why they chose the spot they are standing in. This activity can be fun because it gets the participants up and moving around the room.

### *Talking Ball:*

To encourage participants who might be afraid to share an idea or opinion, you can throw a soft ball to a participant while asking them a question. The ball distracts them and makes it easier for them to say what they think. They can then throw it back to you, or to other participants to continue the discussion. This is a good way to allow different people to speak if the same people keep on speaking.

### *Secret Hat (or bucket, or pot):*

Participants write down a note or question on a piece of paper, scrunch it up and put it in a hat. They then pass the hat around the group and everyone takes a turn to read a piece of paper and comment on it. This can be a good way to start discussions about topics that might be sensitive or difficult.



## Knowing Your Participants<sup>3</sup>

The more participants can reflect on their own personal experiences, the more they will benefit from the workshop. When we are able to see our own attitudes and behaviours we can better track our path towards equality and apply the concepts learned to our lives. Helping participants to understand this insight is a key lesson in personal awareness.

A range of experiences will be shared throughout the discussions and it is important that these experiences are treated with respect. Both facilitators and participants are likely to enter sessions with a conscious and unconscious bias, but it is important to value the diversity of participants taking part in the sessions.

### **Conscious bias:**

This is how we demonstrate bias intentionally. For example, you might knowingly prefer working with boys, or believe that girls are naturally better at household duties.

### **Unconscious bias:**

This kind of bias operates outside of a person's awareness and can contradict known beliefs and values. For example, you might say you believe that both boys and girls are capable of doing the same things, but then you choose a boy to do a more physical job without thinking about it.


Getting to know your participants may involve understanding participants with different disabilities, from different religious groups or different gender identities. If you are unsure of how to respond to a personal experience be aware that there are external sources of information to support you.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES:**

People With Disabilities Solomon Islands (PWDSI) – 677 25608 / Seif Ples - 132 hotline

This might be the first time menstrual health and hygiene has been discussed so openly in the communities you are visiting. It is important to be prepared for people to feel shy or shocked by the sessions. Don't let this stop you, as people are generally excited to learn and will embrace the knowledge they are given once they feel they are in a safe and trusting space to talk about these private things. So, gently encourage the participants and they will gradually feel less shy.

<sup>3</sup> LLEE ToT WASH in Schools Guide, Live & Learn, p. 88



Participants can often be distinguished by where they stand on issues related to menstruation. There are three general types: the Resistors, the Maybes, and the Transformers.



### Resistors

Participants who do not want to accept that change in how menstruation is discussed and managed is either possible or desirable.



### Maybes

Participants who are unsure that change is possible and/or desirable but are willing to learn about it. They may become transformers.



### Transformers

Participants who believe that change is possible and want to contribute to it.

Focus your training on the Maybes and the Transformers, without alienating the Resistors. Avoid challenging the Resistors – otherwise, you will likely increase their reluctance and run the risk of having the session revolve around them. Direct confrontation is not productive in the case of Resistors.

Resistors and Transformers can be in a position of privilege, where they may or may not be able to see the benefits of change. These sessions can act as a safe space to challenge privilege and ensure that diverse voices are heard as opposed to dominant ones.

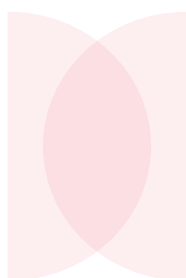


# Thinking about Systems and Power<sup>4</sup>

What is a family? What is a school? What is a community? These are names for things that are made up of many parts. When each part works together with other parts it becomes something bigger. Think about your body as an example of this. Your body is a complex system of many parts – your head, your ears, your stomach, your feet, your hands, etc. Your eyes on their own are not your body. Your body is only formed by all the different parts working together.

Let's think about the family. The term 'family' can bring to mind many things: tribes, clans, children, adults, relatives, weddings, death, disputes, compensation, safety, happiness, togetherness, etc. All of these things working together make the family. These different parts are a mix of identities, actions and beliefs or feelings.

These different parts of a family don't all come together in just one way. There are many relationships. For example, a family might be a single parent, a house might be under construction, some family members are happy, some experience shame or shyness, new babies are born, elderly relatives need care, etc. All the different parts can be working well, or some parts can need to change. Helping your participants to feel safe about looking at how their family and community systems are working in relation to managing menstruation is a key part of facilitating these sessions.



Guadalcanal and Isabel Province are matrilineal, where land ownership is passed through the women's lineage, but men make decisions on how this should work. Whilst in Malaita it is men who own the land and pass it down through their lineage. Being aware of some of the existing systems that your participants are part of is important, because the systems shape their baseline understanding about power and decision-making. Participants can then be helped to grow beyond this understanding to creating more inclusive systems in their community.

When working with the participants keep in mind that they are part of the different systems in their community or school, and perhaps illustrate this for them with some pictures if it will help their participation or understanding of an issue.

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4 Arts for Advocacy, Live & Learn, p24



Every system includes different types of power. Many of your participants might think about power as something to do with leaders like chiefs, head elders, church pastors and politicians. These examples are just one type of power.

We can think about power in four ways:

**power within, power with, power to, and power over.**

### 1 Power within

personal self-confidence and a sense of rights



### 2 Power with

collective power, through organisation, groups and working together



### 3 Power to

the ability to decide actions and carry them out



### 4 Power over

the power of hierarchy and domination



Each of these four types of power can be used in good ways and bad ways. When talking about menstruation, it is good to get your participants to understand how their families and communities are types of systems that use these different types of power every day. The activities prepared in each session guide help to discuss this, but it is important for you as a facilitator to practice identifying the different types of power that can come up during discussions, and be prepared to warmly push your participants to consider other types of power or changes in the systems operating in their families, communities and schools.



## The Learning Circle<sup>5</sup>

This guide encourages facilitators to use the ‘learning circle’ facilitation technique when delivering many of the activities and discussions. Learning circles are about creating the space and opportunity for everyone to share and participate. Sitting in a circle is also an important physical concept that acts as an equalizer and deliberately neutralizes power imbalances within the group. Generally, a learning circle is made up of 10–15 people who come together to share ideas, and discuss, explore and learn about issues.

### Key Principles of the Learning Circle:

#### In a strong and nurturing learning circle:

- everyone’s contribution, ideas and opinions are valued and respected
- the space is safe and allows each person to learn and share
- discussions, decision-making and teamwork include women, men and youth, and everyone is encouraged to participate
- supporting materials and information are available in the community
- the approach is strength-based and develops a sense of ownership
- participants are encouraged to develop a range of skills, and build self-esteem and self-confidence
- the approach is flexible and can be applied to a variety of situations and audiences (e.g. from formal training to community workshops and discussions)

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<sup>5</sup> Gud Disisons Gud Lidasip; A Community Facilitation Guide, p. 15



## Participants should feel:

comfortable  
relaxed  
familiar

participants need to get to know each other right from the beginning of the learning circle

to allow space for self-esteem and building self-confidence

the space needs to be relaxed to help people think and speak easily

This will break down barriers and help them communicate and build a sense of belonging that will encourage both women and men to participate in the learning.

### To encourage a successful learning circle, the facilitator:

- provides support for people to organise and work together, learn from each other about any issues, and contribute to finding ways to address the issue.
- motivates participants to take control of the learning process and direct the aims of the learning and the expected outcomes.
- can coordinate discussion so that through their engagement in the process participants start to answer their own questions and change their thinking. Answers and information should not be one-way from the facilitator; everyone – including women, men, youth and marginalised people – is able to speak.

# Menstrual Health and Disabilities

Many people with disabilities can't access the WASH services they needed to manage their periods properly, meaning they can lack safety, privacy and dignity during menstruation.

Different types of disabilities can include, but are not limited to, restrictions in mobility, visual and auditory impairments, speech impediments and developmental disabilities. Different types of disabilities can impact menstrual health in different ways. See the table below :

<b>Physical Disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May need help changing and accessing menstrual materials</li><li>• WASH facilities may not be accessible</li></ul>
<b>Visual Disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unable to see leaks or extent of blood</li><li>• May need help changing, washing and accessing menstrual materials</li><li>• May not be able to see or read menstrual health information</li></ul>
<b>Developmental Disabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be unable to communicate discomfort or pain</li><li>• May need help changing and washing menstrual materials</li><li>• May change in inappropriate places</li><li>• May not understand menstrual health education and activities</li></ul>

An inclusive approach means that barriers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities should be removed so they are empowered to participate fully in societal life. The inequalities faced by women and girls with disabilities are compounded by other aspects of identity that society discriminates against. For example, people with disabilities who menstruate can face additional exclusion.

While this guide does not cater explicitly for women and girls with disabilities, it is important to be mindful of the challenges they face when accessing WASH facilities and maintaining their menstrual health. Some “inclusion tips” have been provided throughout the guide to assist.

Women and girls with disabilities may experience menstruation differently (possibly more negatively) compared to women and girls without disabilities. Challenges in terms of managing menstrual health can include:

- Women and girls with disabilities may be less likely or able to gather information about relevant topics themselves
- Existing education materials usually do not represent, or include relevant information for, women and girls with disabilities, or don't cater for different learning requirements
- Women and girls with disabilities may face challenges in accessing sufficient support, especially health services. This can be due to disabilities that make movement challenging or strict cultural norms which prevent them from moving more freely
- WASH infrastructure might not cater for different impairments
- Access to suitable menstrual health products might be limited
- Maintaining hygiene (changing materials, personal hygiene and washing) can be challenging for some people, especially those with limited physical abilities
- Menstruating women and girls with disabilities might face increased discrimination and stigma

Being aware of these challenges is important for your role as a facilitator. You may observe women and girls with impairments in your sessions, or have questions asked by carers of a person with a disability.

**Every woman and girl should be able to manage their period safely, hygienically and with dignity.**



Adapted from: <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/managing-menstruation-for-women-and-girls-with-disabilities/>



# Workshop Preparation List

Before conducting a facilitation session it is important to make sure you have everything you need.

**Consult this checklist below before beginning your facilitation session.**

DO YOU HAVE:

- Enough handouts for each participant (and some extras)
- Referral phone numbers prepared. Including the contact details for local clinics (see below)
- All the stationary needed, including paper, pens and sticky notes (see 'Materials Needed' for each session)
- Name tags (optional)
- Presentations on a laptop computer (optional)
- Certificates for participants (optional, but recommended)



## Support services & Referrals

The project participants might ask questions that are difficult for you to answer, or not within the scope of the session being conducted. If someone asks a question that you are not able to answer, or do not have the time to address in more detail, you can refer them to one of the organisations below:

**Ministry of Health & Medical Services Solomon Islands** - 677 25205

**Seif Ples** - 132 hotline

**Solomon Island Planned Parenthood Association (SIPPA)** - (677) 22991/23954

**People with Disabilities Solomon Islands (PWDSI)** – 677 25608

It is also important to take note of the details for the local community health centre of the area you are visiting. This can include the phone number of the village clinic or local nurse or doctor.

A stylized botanical illustration featuring large, layered leaves in shades of teal, blue, and green. The leaves have fine, parallel lines representing veins. A large, solid purple circle is centered on the page, containing the text 'SESSION PLANS' and 'Community'. The background is white with some faint, light green and orange lines suggesting more foliage.

# SESSION PLANS

## Community





## SESSION PLAN

# Older Relatives, Male and Female

### Target audience:

Older male relatives – fathers, uncles and grandfathers (decision makers and influencers in homes and communities)

Older female relatives – mothers, aunts and grandmothers (primary caregivers and key sources of information for menstruating girls)

### Key session messages:

1. Older individuals play an important role in establishing a supportive environment for dignified menstruation hygiene management in the households and communities where they live.
2. Menstruation can be managed hygienically and with dignity in a number of ways.
3. Dismiss harmful cultural/social practices/myths relating to menstruation.
4. The commencement of menstruation shouldn't be linked with suitability for pregnancy or marriage.
5. Menstrual health should be accepted as a normal part of everyday life.



### Materials needed

- Flip-chart paper or large sheets of paper
- Sticky notes (at least 4 different colours)
- Pens/markers
- Handout 4: The Female Reproductive System and Cycle
- Menstrual Health materials. Preferably as many as possible, including: tissue, cotton wool, cotton/ fabric, tampons, underpants, menstrual cups, different types of disposable and handmade menstrual pads etc.
- Optional extra: Certificate of participation
- Optional extra: Posters and/or stickers on MHH that participants can distribute to their family and community
- Printed list of referral services and contact details to pin to community noticeboards



## SESSION

# 1

# Opening up the Conversation

**Participants:** males and females together

**Purpose:** To get the participants reflecting on menstrual health practices and discussing them openly. This is the first step to accepting menstrual health as a normal part of everyday life. This activity contributes to key messages 3 and 4.

Allow approximately 2 hours for Session 1.

## ● Activity 1:

### *Windows of Perception*

#### **GROUPWORK<sup>6</sup>:**

Before the session starts, create a large chart, divided into four sections, with headings as below. This needs to be stuck on a wall or board.

Open

Private

Open Secret

Secret

For a group of approximately 25, each of the four boxes needs to be big enough to put 20–30 sticky notes in it. Two sheets of standard flip-chart paper should do.

<sup>6</sup> Menstrual Hygiene Matters – MHM Training guide for practitioners, p. 8-9





## + INCLUSION TIP:

Be conscious of people with specific disabilities related to seeing, hearing, reading, writing, talking or walking. Ensure that all materials that are written down are also read aloud. Some people will need additional assistance accessing the information. For example, encouraging verbal participation might be more beneficial for participants who cannot read or write.

## GROUP EXERCISE:

- 1 Ask the group to stand up and gather around the chart.
- 2 Explain to the group what each of the headings mean:
  - a. Open: something you would easily talk about in public, with anyone.
  - b. Open secret: something many people know about but do not talk publicly about.
  - c. Private: something you would talk about confidentially with specific people.
  - d. Secret: something people do not share or talk about with anyone.
- 3 Ask the participants to give an example of a topic for each of the boxes. They can raise their hands or call out their answers for the facilitator to write down on sticky notes (all of the same colour). Then place the sticky notes in the relevant box.

## > FACILITATOR TIP:

Give the participants some time to think about the exercise. If they are unclear, some examples may be given, such as:

<b>Open</b>	– the weather
<b>Open secret</b>	– corruption
<b>Private</b>	– a personal health issue
<b>Secret</b>	– HIV status

Where possible, select examples that you know will be triggering points the participants can relate to (based on your knowledge of the group).

- 4 Next, give all the participants one sticky note of a second colour. Ask them to come and place the sticky note in the box where they think communities/families they live in would put talking about menstruation and menstrual health.

- 5 Give all the participants one sticky note of a third colour. Ask them to place the sticky note in the box where they think girls would put talking about menstruation and menstrual health.
- 6 Now give all the participants one sticky note of a fourth colour. Ask them to place the sticky note in the box that matches how they (as elders) feel about talking about menstruation and menstrual health.
- 7 Ask the group to reflect on the chart. Do they have any observations?



## DISCUSSION:

### Questions to prompt discussion:

- Q What influences the way we do or don't discuss menstruation in our homes and communities?
- Q What are the consequences of people being in one box or another? Does it affect other parts of life (like self-confidence)?
- Q How might this affect the way we talk about menstruation at home?

## > FACILITATOR TIP

Let the group have some time to think. Responses may be slow at first, but the discussion usually gets going. If you think there is too much hesitation, the questions below may help to prompt the discussion. However, often these points are raised by the group themselves. Don't go into too much depth here, keep the session moving as there is opportunity to go into more depth in the following sessions.

## SUMMING UP:

Summarise some of the points raised by the group and share the key messages below.

### Key messages:

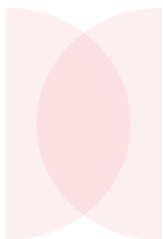
- Menstrual health should be accepted as a normal part of everyday life.
- We can all play a role in encouraging open conversation in our homes and communities about menstrual health.

### Different positions:

- Discuss the different positions on menstruation and menstrual health between elder aunties and elder uncles.
- Explain that people may be in different boxes depending on where they are or who they are talking to. For example, girls may talk to other girls privately about some subjects, but may keep them secret from men.

## > FACILITATOR TIP

There is a diversity of cultural/social perspectives that influence whether issues are considered open, private, open secret or secret. Sometimes these norms can have unintended consequences.



We need to de-link menstruation from being a sign that a girl is old enough to have sex/get married. Internationally girls are getting their first period much younger than previous generations. We are not sure for the reasons for this, but it is important to discuss if the group shares the opinion that menstruation means that a girl is ready to become a woman, and get married/have children. Menstruation should be regarded as a vital sign of health for women, but not a signal for marriage.



## SESSION

## 2

# Information and Thinking about Menstruation

**Participants:** Separate groups – men and women

**Purpose:** Participants can learn about menstruation hygiene management practices in a safe space. This contributes to key messages 1 and 3.

Allow approximately 2 hours for Session 2.



### Activity 1:

## *Menstrual Health: What You Need to Know<sup>7</sup>*

### PRESENTATION:

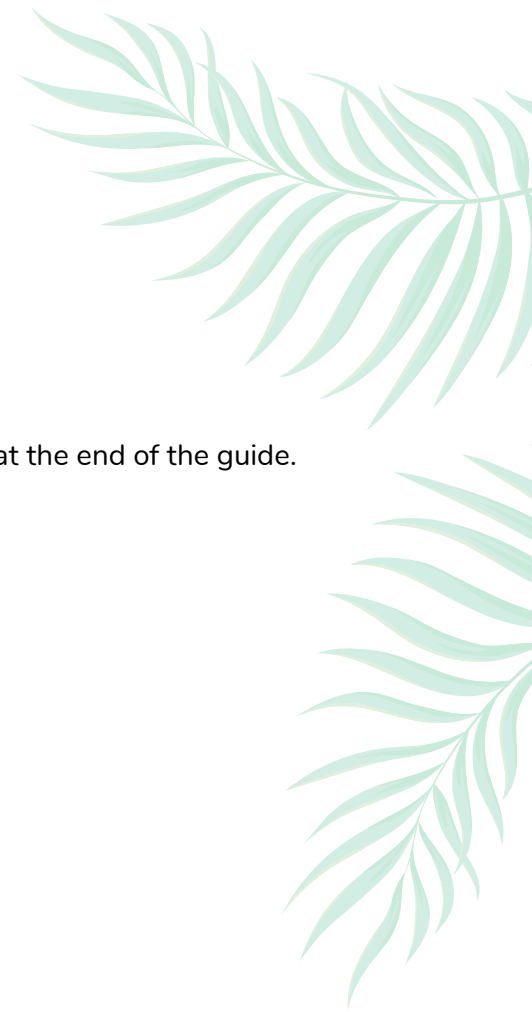
Handout or Slides – Handout 4: The Female Reproductive System and Cycle (find this handout in the Resources & Handouts section of this guide).

Distribute printed copies of the handout – or share the handout information using a data projector and screen. Share a brief overview of the information.

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<sup>7</sup> Champions of Change: Being Body Confident, Plan International, p. 40





## ● Activity 2:

### *Menstrual Health Materials: Options, Use and Disposal\**

See the instructions for this in the Resources & Handouts section at the end of the guide.

## ● Activity 3:

### *Talking about the Open Secrets*

Ask the participants the following questions:

- **What are the local terms for menstruation?** Get everyone to call them out, or write some on pieces of scrap paper or post it notes and stick them to a wall or flip-chart paper. We want to collect all the words used.
- **What meaning is in these local words?** Are these meanings positive or negative? For example, in Western Guadalcanal in Solomon Islands menstruation is referred to as “Rei Vaula, which means “to look at the moon”. In New Ireland in Papua New Guinea, women refer to getting their period as “tomato i bruk” (the tomato broke and spilled).
- Get some volunteers to organise the scrap paper or post-it notes (or the notes from the called-out answers) into two columns:
  - positive or neutral meaning
  - negative meaning
- Discuss together the history or thinking behind using these words. Do they express the positive values that families and communities need to have? What values do the words demonstrate to younger women and men?

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8 Menstrual Hygiene Matters – MHM Training guide for practitioners, p. 22

- Get the group to call out what changes they would like to be made in the language used to talk about menstruation. How we can be more open in our homes and communities and schools and create safe spaces for talking? **OR** put the participants in pairs to discuss and then report the changes they want to see back to the group.

The facilitator, or a helper, can write all these changes down on the board or flip-chart paper and refer to them in Session 3.

### > **FACILITATOR TIP** - HOW CAN WE BECOME MORE OPEN?

There are often different opinions about how open we need to be when talking about menstruation and menstrual health. There are challenges because it is seen to be secret – this leads to misinformation, stigma, fear and exclusion. Also, if women and girls are not able to voice their needs relating to menstrual health, it is unlikely they will be met. The more we discuss stigmatised issues, the more open the conversations can become, and the more the stigmas are broken down.

## ● *Activity 4:*

### *Talking about Limitations*

Ask the participants the following question:

- **What restrictions are in place when someone has their period?** Get everyone to call them out, or write some on pieces of scrap paper or post-it notes and stick them to a wall or flip-chart paper. We want to collect the most common restrictions in the community.
- Get some volunteers to organise the scrap paper or post-it notes (or the notes from the called-out answers) into two columns:
  - choices made by women during menstruation based on how they feel and their physical experience
  - restrictions expected by, or enforced by family or the community
- Discuss together the thinking behind the different types of restrictions on behaviour. Do they express the positive values that families and communities need to have? What values do the words demonstrate to younger women and men?

- *Optional activity* – divide the participants into groups of 3 or 4 and get them to role play different scenes that demonstrate different types of restrictions during menstruation – including positive choices made by women, and any negative experiences observed in their community (can be from the past).
- Get the group to call out what changes they would like to be made in the way they think and talk about restrictions during menstruation. **OR** put the participants in pairs to discuss this and then report the changes they want to see back to the group.



It is ok to want to have a rest from normal work or social or church responsibilities during menstruation. There are different physical effects (like heavier or lighter bleeding) and energy levels during menstruation due to age or based on different health conditions – especially after childbirth. There is a difference between choosing some time for rest during menstruation and being forced to follow the restrictions of others or the community.




## ● *Activity 5:* *Wisdom from Elders*

Ask the participants to describe their roles as elders in the family and community, especially related to advising younger women and men – single and also newly married – about menstruation. What are some of the issues relating to menstruation management in their home? What kind of advice can they give?

If the participants are unsure, share the talking points from the list below to generate discussion:

Talking points on sharing advice (from older male relatives to younger male relatives):

- Young men can be involved in menstrual health conversations at home and in the community. Menstrual health isn't a 'women's only issue'

- 
- Boys and young men can help create a supportive environment for women and girls who are menstruating by:
    - o being informed about menstrual health
    - o speaking openly about menstruation
    - o dismissing harmful myths about menstruation, e.g. menstrual blood is dirty or dangerous
    - o allocating family resources to go the management of menstrual health
  - Women and girls can choose to do what suits them when they are menstruating; they are not limited in any way from partaking in normal activities
  - Men and boys can help ensure that homes and communities are menstrual health friendly by using their voice to support women
  - There are multiple choices to help women manage their periods hygienically and with dignity and it is up to each individual woman what she would like to use
  - What other points can the men or boys identify themselves?
  - What other points can the women or girls identify themselves?

## SUMMING UP:

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To conclude the session, summarise the points raised by the group and recap on the key messages from the session and discuss talking points with older male relatives to help them with advice they can share to young men:

- Menstrual health management is no longer considered a ‘women-only’ issue. Information and decisions related to menstrual health management should involve both men and women
- It is important that family members create a positive environment for good menstrual health management
- There are multiple options available for managing menstrual health and many things to consider when choosing menstruation items, including availability, cost, comfort, absorption and disposal





## SESSION

# 3

# Commitment to Change

**Participants:** men and women together

**Purpose:** Recap on what has been shared and discussed in previous sessions. Give participants an opportunity to commit to taking action in their homes and communities, contributing to key messages 3 and 4.

*Allow approximately 1 hour for Session 3.*

## DISCUSSION:

Bring everyone together and facilitate a final question and answer session about what has been learned during the workshop regarding gender, managing menstrual health and accessibility. Remind the participants that the activities today are only an introduction to these important areas of life, specifically focused on their roles as elders.

Questions for discussion could include the following:

- Do you feel differently about menstrual health now compared with how you felt before the session?
- Did you learn anything new?
- What do you agree with or disagree with?
- Do you feel more comfortable discussing menstrual health with your family and community?

Thank the participants for their openness to discussing topics that may have been challenging for some of them, and encourage them to go back to their families and continue to talk about these issues, and examine their own thinking and behavior.

## COMMITMENT:

Get each participant to write a personal commitment on sticky notes of three things they will do in their homes to improve menstrual management and the advice that they will give younger people. Give men and women sticky notes of different colours.

Depending on the group (remember – know your participants!) there are two options for expressing commitment:

### Option 1

(preferred)

Have everyone read their commitments aloud to the group, and then place on a piece of flip-chart paper. This is the preferred option because it provides powerful personal commitment and allows for accountability after the training.

### Option 2

Use the Secret Hat method (see Facilitation Notes) and get everyone to put their personal commitments into a container. Pass the container around and have every person take three (random) sticky notes out. Read them to the group. This way the commitments are made public but remain anonymous. Only use this option if the participants have difficult dynamics or are extremely quiet.

### + INCLUSION TIP:

For groups with low literacy levels, you can put people into pairs or groups with someone confident in writing. Or use the Option 1 exercise and have each person speak their commitment without having to write it down.

### Optional Extra:

Provide participants with a certificate of participation, and some posters and stickers they can distribute in their family and community.



## SESSION PLAN

# Married Couples

### Target audience:

Married couples – both female and male, newlyweds and a younger demographic than older female relatives.

### Key messages:

- 1 Married women can choose to do what suits them during menstruation – there are no restrictions other than what a woman physically needs when she is bleeding (which might only be some rest and pain relief).
- 2 Married women have agency and resources to confidently manage periods at home.



### Materials needed:

- Flip-chart paper or large sheets of paper
- Pens/markers
- Handout 4: The Female Reproductive System and Cycle
- Menstrual Health materials. Preferably as many as possible, including: tissue, cotton wool, cotton/ fabric, tampons, underpants, menstrual cups, different types of disposable and handmade menstrual pads etc.
- Sticky notes
- Optional extra: Certificate of participation
- Optional extra: Posters and/or stickers on MHH participants can distribute to their family and community



## SESSION

# 1

# Sharing Perspectives

**Participants:** Married couples – men and women together

**Purpose:** Help men and women communicate effectively with each other about sensitive topics and bring to light some issues of gender discrimination. This activity contributes to key message 2.

Allow approximately 1 hour for Session 1.



## ● Activity 1:

### Talking about Gender

#### DISCUSSION<sup>9</sup> (IN PAIRS):

Explain that when we are young children we don't think about being a boy or a girl (babies do not know anything about this!) and as we grow we start to notice that boys and girls look different in some ways, and are treated differently.

For example:

- A woman may remember the first time she was told that she couldn't go out and play because she needed to help with the laundry.
- A man may remember the time when his schoolmates teased him because he wanted to play with the girls or help with cooking.
- Ask participants to think about the first memory they have of realising they are a boy or a girl. Explain that everyone needs to think of her or his own experience. Ask participants to share their story with their partner.

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<sup>9</sup> LLEE ToT WinS Guide, p. 90



## > FACILITATOR TIP -

GENERALISATIONS ABOUT BOYS AND GIRLS ARE NOT USEFUL IN THIS EXERCISE.

Give participants a few minutes to identify this memory and then ask them to think about the three questions below:

- What was the situation that made you realise you had to behave like a girl or a boy?
- How did it happen? (Describe the context: who was involved? When? Where?)
- What are the long-term effects? (How did this situation influence the type of man or woman that you are today?)

## GROUPWORK:<sup>10</sup>

Divide the participants into mixed-sex groups of 3-6. Instruct them to create two columns in a notebook or on a big piece of paper, with a drawing of a 'typical man' in one column and a 'typical woman' in the other. Ask the participants to add in key characteristics (physical, clothing, emotional, activities, etc.) that make 'a typical man/woman'.

## + INCLUSION TIP

This exercise can be modified for people with difficulty seeing, reading and writing. The facilitator can write and draw examples that are called out by the participants.

Once the participants have finished, ask a few groups to share their drawings. For each characteristic, ask a question or provide a statement that counters the gender stereotype. Some examples are given below:

- Real men do building work – do women do construction work too? Do you know any women in your family or community that fix the house, build a shelter for a toilet, or do other types of building and repairs?
- Real women do cleaning – can men/boys clean for themselves/their families too? Do you think this is an important skill for everyone to learn? Who should do the cleaning of school toilets?
- Once the participants have shared their drawings, facilitate a short general discussion on doing these activities.

10 LLEE ToT WASH in Schools Guide, p. 90

Here is a True/False table concerning gender stereotypes that might come up during this activity:

TRUE	FALSE
Girls often have more duties at home, limiting their time for school work	Girls are naturally better at household duties
Jobs and games that are 'only for boys' or 'only for girls' can keep students from learning	Girls are naturally weaker than boys and so should not do hard tasks or play like boys
Boy's education is often viewed as more important because it is expected they will earn money for the family	Challenging gender stereotypes is disrespectful to Melanesian culture
Boys may not be as good at household duties because they don't practice them	Boys are naturally better at jobs that require physical strength
Jobs given to girls and boys at school make boys better at some jobs than others	Boys and girls should not practice jobs for the other gender
One way to challenge gender stereotypes is to show someone an example that doesn't fit their belief	Only older people hold harmful gender stereotypes
Jobs and games that are only for boys or only for girls can keep students from learning	There are games that are good for boys and games that are good for girls





## SESSION

# 2

# Communicating Confidently

**Participants:** Separate groups – women and men

**Purpose:** This activity is designed to give women the knowledge and communication tools they need to confidently manage their periods at home (relating to key message 2).

*Allow approximately 1 hour for Session 2.*

## Activity 1:

# Menstrual Health, What you Need to Know

### PRESENTATION:

Handout or Slides – Handout 4: The Female Reproductive System and Cycle (find this handout in the Resources & Handouts section of this Guide).<sup>11</sup>

Distribute printed copies of the handout – or share the handout information using a data projector and screen. Share a brief overview of the information.

### FACILITATOR TIP

This is an opportunity for participants to ask any questions they might have about menstrual health that they might be too insecure to discuss with their spouse.

11 Champions of Change: Being Body Confident, Plan International, p. 40



## Activity 2:

# Menstrual Health Materials: Options, Use and Disposal

See the instructions for this activity in the Resources & Handouts section at the end of the guide.



## Activity 3:

# Discussing Embarrassing Topics<sup>13</sup>

### GROUPWORK:

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- 1 Tell the group that managing menstrual health is often hard to talk about. Explain that no one is expected to be an expert and that this is just a chance to discuss the issue and learn more from each other.
- 2 Divide the participants into pairs.
- 3 Ask each pair to talk about some of the topics about menstruation that they might have felt too embarrassed to discuss or ask. If they are not sure you may think of some examples. Topics that have come up in other groups include:
  - explaining the reproductive system and cycle
  - answering questions such as whether it is OK to have sex during menstruation
  - discussing how to actually use menstrual health materials
  - issues relating to the appearance and smell of menstrual materials and blood
- 4 After 10 minutes ask each pair to share at least one of the topics they identified as embarrassing. The facilitator can draw or write these on the board if useful.

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12 Menstrual Hygiene Matters – MHM Training guide for practitioners, p. 36



5 Ask each group to discuss these topics:

- a. What might make it hard to ask questions or talk about menstruation?
- b. What would be good questions to ask?
- c. What approaches could be used – e.g. use of tools, creating enabling spaces – to make it easier to discuss these topics?

## ROLEPLAY:

Ask each group to practice their suggestions in roleplays. Give them time to practice a presentation that they will perform to their group and to their husbands and wives.

### > FACILITATOR TIP

The purpose of the roleplay is to provide the opportunity for participants to try out techniques for talking about menstruation hygiene management. Encourage them to set up encounters/scenarios that are as realistic as possible. Encourage participants to reverse roles (e.g. see what it would be like for a man to roleplay a woman in different scenarios, e.g. when she has bad period pain.)

### + INCLUSION TIP

Be aware of participants with physical disabilities. Ensure they are getting involved on an equal level as the other participants and aren't being excluded from the activity.

## SUMMING UP:

To conclude the session, summarise the points raised by the group and recap on the key messages from the session.

- There are multiple options available for managing menstrual health that a woman might want to use.
- Information should be provided on how to use different materials hygienically, to male and female family members.
- It is important that husbands help create a positive environment for their wives (and daughters) where discussions and decisions about the materials and/or products are supported.
- Menstrual health is no longer considered a 'women-only' issue and WASH decision-making comes from all members of the household.
- Consideration needs to be given in the home for how to adequately dispose of menstruation items.



## SESSION

# 3

# Coming Together

**Participants:** married women and husbands together

**Purpose:** Married women can choose to do what suits them during menstruation and husbands will support their needs. This supports key message 1.

*Allow approximately 1 hour for Session 3.*

### ROLEPLAY:

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If time allows, and the participants are willing, ask them to perform their roleplay – or a few minutes of it – from the previous session to the rest of the group. The separate female and male groups may like to vote on which roleplays they feel are the most useful (and entertaining) for sharing with everyone.

### DISCUSSION:

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1. Bring the groups back together to discuss what was learned about asking questions about and discussing sensitive subjects.
2. Encourage all participants to discuss their ideas and concerns, even if they feel awkward about them. Discussing embarrassing topics gets easier and less embarrassing the more you do it.
3. Ask participants to note how they feel talking about menstrual health. Would they be uncomfortable talking about the issue at home with their spouse and family members? Discuss what was challenging and how it could be eased.
4. Write down key points on the flip-chart.

### SUMMING UP:

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Summarise the points raised and recap on the key messages.



### Key messages:

- Married women should feel confident managing their periods and talking about managing menstrual health with their husbands.
- Women no longer feel the need to hide stained clothing or wash stained clothing in secret.
- It is important that home is a positive environment for women and girls, where discussions and decisions about menstrual health are supported.
- Menstrual health is no longer considered a 'women-only' issue and WASH decision-making comes from all members of the household.

### COMMITMENT:

Get each participant to write on sticky notes a personal commitment of three things they will do in their homes as a couple to improve menstrual management and the advice that they give younger people. Give men and women different coloured sticky notes. Depending on the group (remember – know your participants!) there are two options for expressing commitment:

#### Option 1

(preferred)

Have everyone read their commitments aloud to the group, and then place them on a piece of flip-chart paper. This is the preferred option because it provides powerful personal commitment and allows for accountability after the training.

#### Option 2

Use the Secret Hat method (see Facilitation Notes) and get everyone to put their personal commitments into a container. Pass the container around and have every person take three sticky notes out. Read them to the group. This way the commitments are made public but remain anonymous. Only use this option if the participants have difficult dynamics or are extremely quiet.

### + INCLUSION TIP

For groups with low literacy levels, you can put people into pairs or groups with someone confident in writing. Or complete use the Option 1 exercise and have each person speak their commitment without having to write it down.

### Optional Extra:

Provide participants with a certificate of participation and some posters and stickers they can distribute in their family and community.



# SESSION PLANS

## Young People





## SESSION PLAN

# Boys and Girls at Senior Primary School or High School Level

**Target audience:** boys and girls at senior primary school or high school level.

**Key messages:**

- 1 Menstruation is healthy and normal and nothing to be feared or teased about.
- 2 Girls should feel confident and comfortable to attend school all the times, including during menstruation.

Schools and families should provide services and support to enable dignified and hygienic menstrual health. These sessions can be conducted over one day with a WASH Club, or with selected senior primary school or high school students. Or they can be conducted one session at a time over a few weeks in home economics class – which is where students learn about the reproductive cycle.

**NOTE:** These sessions are designed to complement the training that teachers receive through the Training of Trainer session 5 in the Live & Learn WASH in Schools Guide.

### > FACILITATOR TIP

The girls participating will be at different stages of development, some might have started menstruating while others won't have experienced their first period yet. It is important to consider this while hosting sessions to make sure that everyone feels comfortable participating and that too much focus isn't given to those who have experienced menstruation.

### + INCLUSION TIP

Be aware of participants with physical disabilities. Ensure they are getting involved on an equal level as the other boys and girls and aren't being excluded from any of the activities.

✓ **Materials needed:**

- Game Cards: Who are the Lucky Ones? (Handout 5 & 6)
- Enough 'treats' needed for the 'Who are the Lucky Ones?' game. This can be in the form of fruit, lollies or preferably something else desirable. Make sure there are enough treats for the purpose of the game, or else the game will not work properly.
- Handout 3: Taking Good Care of Myself
- Menstrual Health materials. Preferably as many as possible, including: tissue, cotton wool, cotton/ fabric, tampons, underpants, menstrual cups, different types of disposable and handmade menstrual pads etc.
- Handout 2: Why Period Friendly Toilets Matter
- Handout 7: Student Toilet Audit Sheet (one sheet per group of two or three students)
- Handout 1: Just the Facts: Understanding Menstruation
- Paper (flip-chart paper/ large sheets of paper and smaller sheets for individual use)
- Pens/markers
- Sticky notes
- Optional extra: Certificate of participation
- Optional extra: Posters and/or stickers on MHH participants can distribute to their family and community



## SESSION

# 1

## Thinking about Stigma

**Participants:** boys and girls together

**Purpose:** An ice-breaker/creative way for students to understand the impact of community and institutional support in being able to manage periods with confidence and dignity. To minimize any adverse outcomes, we highly recommend that parents are engaged at the same time as students and that they consent to their children engaging in the activities.

Allow approximately 2 hours for Session 1.



### Activity 1:

## Lucky Ones

Cut out each card from the 'Who are the lucky ones' resource in preparation for the session.

### > FACILITATOR TIP

Get two sets of cards printed so you can divide the group into two if there are lots of participants.

Treats will need to be allocated for the positive and negative outcomes (the number of treats will be written on the cards). Be sure to prepare lollies, fruit or a popular snack food beforehand. This exercise works best if the treats are desired by the participants.

Ask the participants to sit in a circle with the cards face down in a pile in the center. Participants take turns selecting a card from the top of the pile and read aloud the instruction on the card (e.g. Take 5 treats or Take no treats). Participants take the number of treats written on the card but are not allowed to eat them until the end of the game.

Once all the cards have been read out and the treats distributed everyone needs to count their treats to see who had the most. For big groups this can be done by a show of hands, starting from who got the highest amount.

### + INCLUSION TIP

Be aware of students who have difficulty seeing, reading and hearing. They might require extra assistance during this activity or can buddy up with a friend who can help them.

## DISCUSSION:

- 1 The facilitator then begins a discussion on the results of the game. Some questions to ask are:
  - a. How does this activity make you think about how girls manage menstruation in real life?
  - b. What things about menstruation management at school can we make better so that all girls get the most benefit, not just some?
- 2 After the discussion, the participants are then allowed to eat their treats. (You can suggest that the participants share with those who have fewer/no treats.)

### > FACILITATOR TIP

Have some treats spare to share with the participants who didn't get many/any if no one decides to share.



## Activity 2:

# Taking Care of Yourself<sup>13</sup>

### DISCUSSION:

---

1 Lead with a brief conversation about why periods are normal.

Q

Why does it matter when a girl or woman has their period?

Q

How can girls feel better when they have their period?

Q

What can you do to make sure you are healthy when you have your period?

### > FACILITATOR TIP [BOX]:

It is important for facilitators to give room for students to be a part of untying the negative mindset about menstruation. Facilitators should have a good base knowledge of the biology of menstruation to ensure that factual clarifications and advice are provided when misinformation is shared. This includes creating a deeper sense of respect and appreciation for the female natural cycle. Some girls might start menstruating earlier or later than others, but it is all normal. Creating a 'growth mindset' environment that encourages continuous learning will inspire and create a correct and broader understanding of menstrual health, and its interconnectedness to scientific knowledge, beyond traditional beliefs.

2 Support the girls in understanding a broad definition of a normal period. 'Being healthy' is not only about being hygienic or not being ill when they have their period. Being healthy also requires feeling happy and confident about one's body, feeling well emotionally, and feeling happy and supported in one's relationships (with family, friends or partners). It is important that girls and women don't feel self-conscious or ashamed of their period, but proud of being female and what their body can do. Explain that menstrual health is a natural process to be proud of. It is a monthly reminder of what our bodies can do. It is important to be open about it because it helps us to practice good menstrual health.

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13 C, p. 30



3 Lead a brief conversation about the meaning of 'self-care', using these questions:

- What does 'self-care' mean?
- What does it mean to take care of yourself?
- Why is it important to take good care of yourself when you have your period?
- How do you feel about yourself when you are menstruating?
- How does your menstruation relate to your body image?

### > FACILITATOR TIP

Pay attention to the responses. Some answers might revolve around a lack of sufficient water, product availability or financial constraints. This is where the facilitator can navigate the mindset towards keeping physically clean to the best of your abilities or confiding in someone when help is needed – menstrual health is not something to be ashamed of.

4 Support the girls and boys in understanding the meaning of 'self-care': the act of taking care of your own physical, mental and social well-being. Help them see that if they have a positive body image, they will appreciate their body, and they will be more likely to take good care of it. In addition, taking good care of their body will help them appreciate their body more.

**Presentation:** Handout or slides – *Taking Good Care of Myself*.

5 Explain that there are many things they can do to take care of their body and of their health. Ask them to look at the drawing and to look of examples of things they can do that are represented in the drawing on the handout/in the slides.

### + INCLUSION TIP

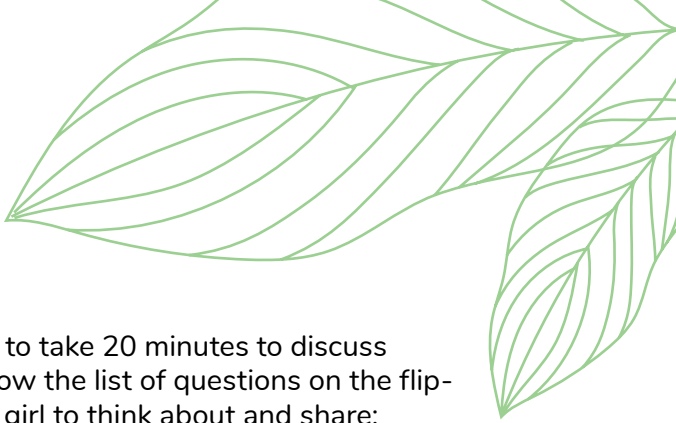
It is important to be mindful of participants with vision impairments. To make sure they aren't excluded from this activity, pair them with a buddy who they can discuss the drawing with.

## GROUPWORK:

- 6 Lead a brainstorm of self-care practices (5–10 minutes). Begin by asking: What do you do to take care of yourself and others who are menstruating? The girls and boys will likely bring up some or all of the following aspects. When they do, ask them to describe what that looks like.

The discussion should cover the following self-care practices:

<b>Eating Well</b>	The importance of eating sufficient healthy foods when you are menstruating.
<b>Exercise</b>	The importance of taking on physical activity, whether through sports, dancing, play, or even walking or biking to get places. Some girls or women might not feel like being physical while menstruating, but others will feel uninhibited by their periods and happy to get out and move their bodies.
<b>Hygiene</b>	The importance of keeping clean, including changing menstrual pads and washing regularly. Having places to dispose of menstrual waste in toilets at home and at school can help girls manage their periods hygienically. Boys can be an advocate for this – making sure that household expenditure includes menstrual products and making the home menstrual health friendly.
<b>Play and relaxation</b>	The importance of having time to relax and of having fun with people you enjoy being around, like family and friends. There are no limits to what girls and women can do when they have their period and their family can support them in this.
<b>Sleep</b>	The importance of giving time for your body and mind to recover during sleep. Girls and women might need to rest more when they are menstruating because their body is hard at work and might be causing them pain. Boys can support women to make sure they aren't overworking during this time.
<b>Body image</b>	The importance of having a positive body image. If you feel positive about your body and what it can do it can improve menstrual health habits.
<b>Communication</b>	The importance of opening up and sharing how you feel with those around you. If you are struggling with menstrual health physically or emotionally you can talk to friends or family who can support you.



- 7 Use a fun way to form groups of 4–5. Ask them to take 20 minutes to discuss different ways of taking care of their bodies. Show the list of questions on the flip-chart you prepared ahead of time, and ask each girl to think about and share:

- Q What am I doing well to take care of myself when I have my period?
- Q What could I do better when I have my period?
- Q Who can I ask for help to improve my self-care when I have my period?
- Q What can I do to help other girls in my group to take care of themselves when they have their periods?

Ask the boys to think about these questions from a different perspective:

- Q What am I doing to take care of others (sisters, friends or mother) when they have their period?
- Q What could I do better to take care of others when they have their period?
- Q Do the women and girls in my life feel like they could ask me for support when they have their period?

### > FACILITATOR TIP

Explain the questions with an example for each one. For example: I always make sure I dispose of my menstrual pads hygienically when I have my period. I make sure I get plenty of rest and a full night's sleep. I can talk to my family about how I am feeling when I have my period.

- 8 Once the time is up for group discussion, invite the girls and boys to come back to the main group. Ask them: What was the most important thing you learned from each other about taking care of yourself? Invite them to remind each other of taking care of themselves and to support each other in doing so.



SESSION

2

## Making Change

**Participants:** separate groups – boys and girls

**Purpose:** Help students understand different menstrual health products and enablers for a supportive environment for menstrual health that should be provided at schools and households to help girls manage their periods hygienically and with dignity.

Allow approximately 2 hours for Session 2

### Activity 1:

## *Menstrual Health Materials: Options, Use and Disposal*

See the instructions for this activity in the Resources & Handouts section at the end of the guide.





## ● Activity 2:

# Menstruation Facilities Audit

### GROUPWORK:

---

Get the participants to form groups of 2 or 3. The groups should be separated into boys and girls.

- 1 Share the handout Period-Friendly Toilets.
- 2 Share the handout Audit Sheet for an assessment of the toilets at the school – one sheet per group of two or three students.

Have the boys complete the audit sheet for the boys toilets.

Have the girls complete the audit sheet for the girls toilets.

After they have done the audit have the students report their findings back to the whole group. What things are missing? What needs to be improved?

The findings from the audit will be used in Activity 3.

## ● Activity 3: Making Connections

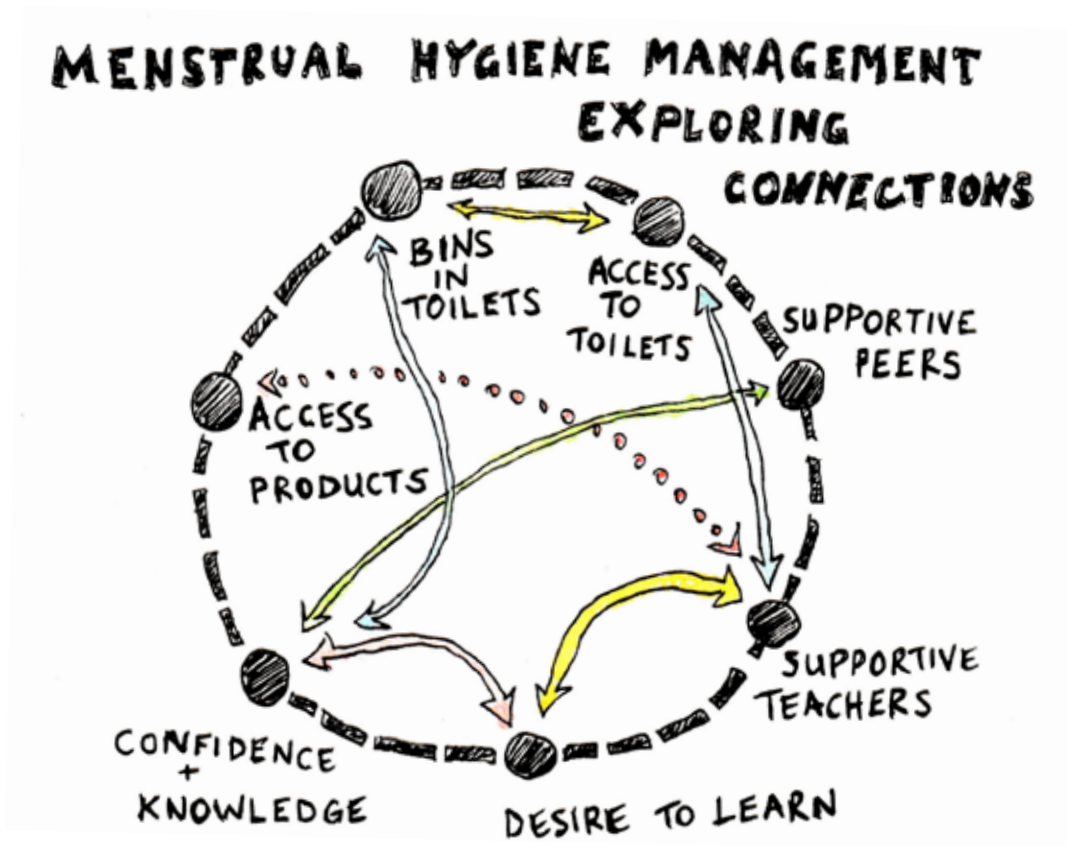
- 1 Share the handout Just the Facts: Understanding Menstruation with the participants. Ask if any participants have any questions – especially the boys.

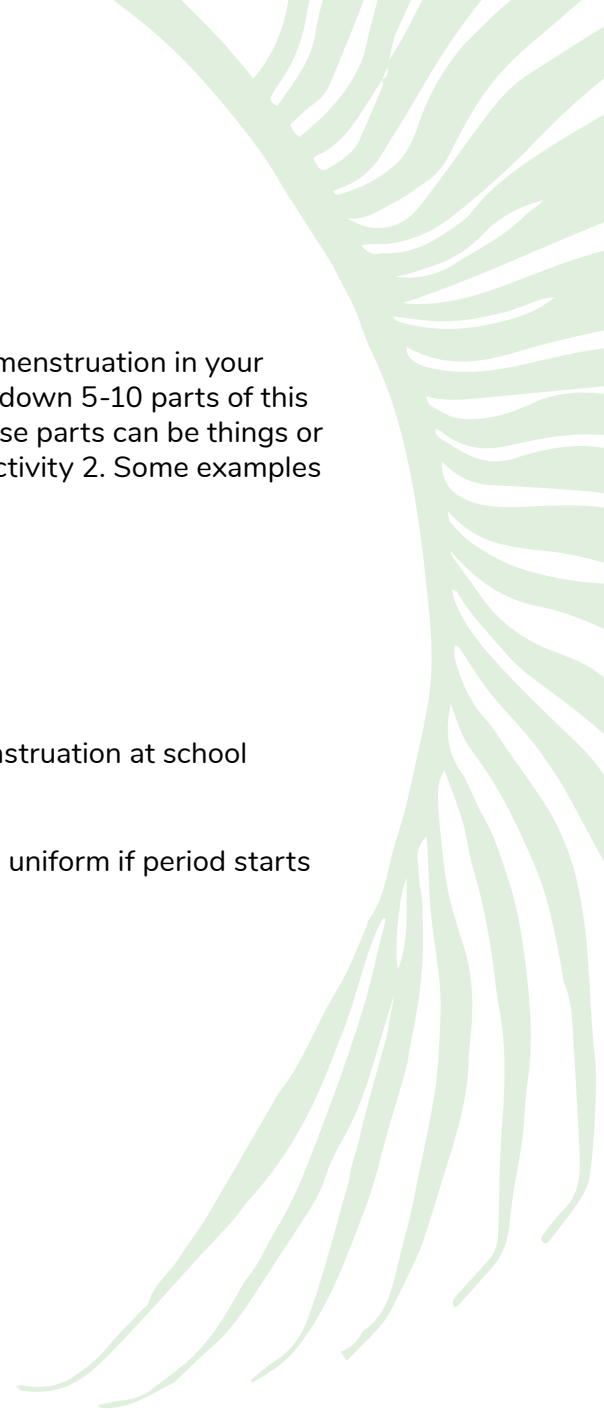
### GROUPWORK:<sup>14</sup>

The connection circle is a tool to help you explore the different parts of a specific menstrual health issue in your school. It will help your brainstorm about how all the different parts in an issue can change other parts.

You will need a blackboard or large sheet of paper. On the paper you should draw a big circle.

Example connection circle:



- 
- 1 Remember that the issue is the system for managing menstruation in your school. On scrap paper or cards brainstorm and write down 5-10 parts of this system that can be changed to improve the issue. These parts can be things or feelings/ideas, and should refer to the audit done in Activity 2. Some examples for menstrual health could include:

### THINGS:

- bins for used pads in the toilets
- access to appropriate toilets for managing menstruation at school (space, water, etc.)
- access to menstrual health products and spare uniform if period starts while at school

### FEELINGS:

- confidence about menstruation knowledge
- supportive peer influence (WASH club)
- supportive teacher influence (male and female)
- desire to learn about menstrual health

- 2 Write down the different parts you have brainstormed for your issue around the circle. There is no special order. You can write them anywhere. See the example image above if you are not sure.

- 3 Look at each part around the edge of the circle. Talk with each other and discuss if an increase or decrease in one part will cause an increase or decrease in another part. This might be hard at first, because we are used to thinking in a straight line: A leads to B leads to C, etc. But in real-life systems like your school each part relates to other parts in many different ways.

## + INCLUSION TIP

For participants who have difficulty reading or seeing it is important to read aloud the changes you are making in the connection circle and describe the connections verbally.

- 4 To help you practice, look at the red lines in the example connection circle. These red lines show that there could be connections between confidence about menstruation knowledge, teacher support, access to products and desire to learn about menstrual health that all contribute to better menstruation management in schools.

As a group, talk about the different parts around your circle and draw some connections. Use pencil or chalk if you are unsure so you can change your mind if you want.

- 5 Soon you will see that your circle starts to look like a spider web, with many lines and arrows connecting the different parts. Use different colours and try to find parts that all connect like a loop.

The example image shows both physical things – we need to have bins and water in the toilets if we want to be able to manage periods at school – and actions or feelings – teachers and students supporting each other, everyone having knowledge about why menstruation management at school is important – and these are all interconnected.

## DISCUSSION:

- 6 As a group look at the parts on your connection circle that have lots of arrows coming in and out of them. These are the places in your system where it might be easier to make changes, possibly through an advocacy campaign. Discuss with students where they might be able to help make these changes.





## SESSION

# 3

# Action and Commitment

**Participants:** boys and girls together, invited school leaders

**Purpose:** Help students think about the menstrual health needs of female students and what everyone can do to be more proactive. This contributes to key message 1.

Allow approximately 2 hours for Session 3.



## Activity 1:

### Taking Action

Doing the audit on the school toilets and the connection circle activity is a good way for students to identify areas they would like to improve. This activity is to help them plan suggestions they can make to the school leadership on improving the toilets, especially for menstruation management.

#### GROUPWORK:

1. Have the class break into groups of 5 or 6.
2. Give each group a large piece of paper.
3. Have them draw a table like the one below.
4. Get the students to use the information collected in the toilet audit, the connection circle and the handouts on period-friendly toilets to write down problems with the school toilets.
5. After they have found possible problems ask the students to write suggested actions they can take.

## GIRLS TOILETS

<b>Why are the girls toilets not period-friendly?</b>	<b>How can we make it the girls toilets period-friendly?</b>
<b>Problems seen from the audit</b>	<b>Actions you recommend for the school</b>

## BOYS TOILETS

<b>Why are the boys toilets not student-friendly?</b>	<b>How can we make the boys toilets better?</b>
<b>Problems seen from the audit</b>	<b>Actions you recommend for the school</b>

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:

- Get the students to prepare an information poster that they can take home to share and discuss with their families.
- Organise representatives of school leaders responsible for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in the school (this could be a WASH committee, a health committee or the school board of management) to come to this session.
- Get the students to make a presentation of their findings and recommended actions to improve the school toilets, especially for management of menstruation.

### Activity 2:

## Commitment

Bring everyone together, including the school leaders present for Activity 1, and facilitate a final question and answer session about what has been learned during the workshop regarding support for girls at school, reducing stigma and advocacy for improvement. Thank the participants for their openness to discussing topics that may have been challenging for some of them, and encourage them to go back to their classes and their families and continue to talk about these issues, and examine their own thinking and behavior.

## COMMITMENT:

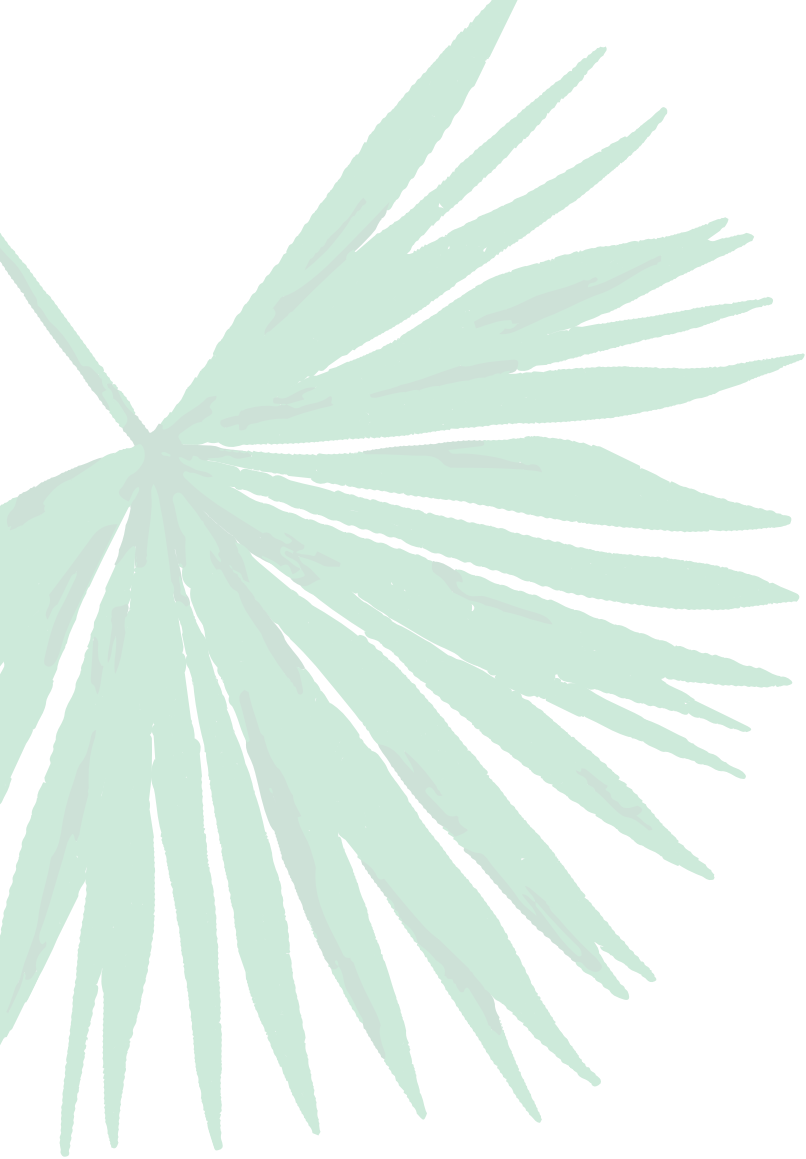
Get each participant to write on sticky notes a personal commitment of three things they will do in their school to improve menstrual management. Depending on the group (remember – know your participants!) there are two options for expressing commitment:

### Option 1

Have everyone read their commitments aloud to the group, and then place them on a piece of flip-chart paper. This is powerful and allows for group accountability after the training.

### Option 2

Use the Secret Hat method (see Facilitation Notes) and get everyone to put their personal commitments into a container. Pass the container around and have every person take three sticky notes out. Read them to the group. This way the commitments are made public but remain anonymous.





## SESSION PLAN

# Boys and Girls out of School

**Target audience:** boys and girls outside school – will be varying in age and maturity

**Key messages:**

1. Menstruation is normal and nothing to be feared or teased about.
2. Girls are not limited when they have their periods and should be free to fully engage in life.

To minimize any adverse outcomes, we highly recommend that parents are engaged at the same time as the young participants and that they consent to their children engaging in the activities.



**Materials Needed:**

- Handout 4: The Female Reproductive System and Cycle
- Menstrual Health materials. Preferably as many as possible, including: tissue, cotton wool,
- cotton/ fabric, tampons, underpants, menstrual cups, different types of disposable and handmade menstrual pads etc.
- Flip-chart paper/ large sheets of paper
- Pens/markers



## SESSION

# 1

## Understanding the Basics

**Participants:** boys and girls together (but separate into sex groups if required, depending on the group dynamics)

**Purpose:** This opening activity contributes to key message 1 and 2 by discussing cultural norms in relation to menstruation and basic information regarding management of menstrual health.

Allow approximately 1 hour for Session 1.



### FACILITATOR TIP

The girls participating will be at different stages of development, some might have started menstruating while others won't have experienced their first period yet. It is important to consider this while hosting sessions to make sure that everyone feels comfortable participating and that too much focus isn't given to those who have experienced menstruation.



## Activity 1:

# The Culture of Menstruation<sup>15</sup>

### DISCUSSION:

- 1 It is important to begin by establishing common language about menstruation. Open the session with some general questions to the group that the facilitator can draw on the board.
  - What words do your families and communities usually use to refer to menstruation?
  - Do girls use different words than boys?
  - Do younger family members use different words to older family members?
  - Why are there so many words to name the same thing?
- 2 Explain that in this activity we will speak in an open way about menstruation, because it is a natural process that women all share. We can all be proud of it! It is a monthly reminder of what our bodies can do. It is important to be open about it because it helps us to practice good management of menstrual health.



### INCLUSION TIP

The reading and writing ability of the participants will be different in each group. So as much as possible draw pictures alongside the words that the participants share.

15 C, p. 36



**PRESENTATION:** Handout or slides: The Female Reproductive System and Cycle

### > FACILITATOR TIP

If the group seems hesitant to talk, divide them into males and females to encourage more openness, and then bring the group back together again. Take some time to ask the participants if they have any questions about this information and answer them to the best of your knowledge. Don't be afraid to admit that you do not know the answer to a question. If a question comes up that you can't answer, tell the boys and girls that you will research the question and get back to them the next time or give them a resource where they might be able to find more information.

- 3 Ask the boys and girls, 'Is menstruation seen as a natural and positive process in your families and communities?'

Take some time to take comments from different boys and girls, encouraging them to share their own thoughts on menstruation.

- 4 Explain that in many societies menstruation is associated with shame and rejection. This makes it difficult for girls and women to talk about menstruation openly. Ask participants what impacts this might have on girls and women. Highlight the key points below:

- Girls and women having to hide they are menstruating might be humiliated or shamed when others see or smell the blood.
- Girls and women think they have to hide their menstrual products. For example, they cannot dry their reusable pads outside in the sun.
- Girls and women feel embarrassed to talk about it, even among each other in private. This prevents them from being able to support each other.
- In some places, there are norms that restrict girls and women to do their daily activities. For example, they cannot cook or are not allowed to sleep in the same place as their husband. These norms are based on persistent myths on menstruation.



- 5 Ask the boys and girls if they know some myths about menstruation that people in their communities believe. Have them share these in the group and discuss the facts behind them.

Support the boys and girls in understanding that most myths are not based on facts but cultural and social norms. Everyone needs to have the information and confidence to be able to speak openly about menstruation. If girls are not given clear information, starting menstruation can be frightening or a bad experience, when it should be a normal reminder of how amazing our bodies are.

## ● *Activity 2:*

### *Menstrual Health Materials: Options, Use and Disposal*

See the instructions for this activity in the Resources & Handouts section at the end of the guide.





## ● Activity 3:

# Management of Menstrual Health<sup>16</sup>




Explain that you will now discuss menstrual hygiene management: the way girls and women deal with their menstruation. Together they will make a plan how girls in their community can best deal with their period.

### > FACILITATOR TIP

There is a reference sheet for facilitators in the *Resources & Handouts* section called *Options for Menstruation Hygiene Management* that provides answers to common questions about management of menstruation. The reference sheet does not need to be given to the participants.

### DISCUSSION:

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- 1  What do women and girls in your community do to capture menstruation blood?
-  What should a girl do the first time she gets her period?
-  What can a girl do to manage pain and feelings of discomfort during her period?

After boys and girls share their answers, explain the advantages and disadvantages of each option mentioned. Explain other options that are available to the girls, but that they did not mention about how to manage their periods. Make sure you also cover the information on keeping yourself comfortable and your menstrual products clean. Make sure to suggest the actions listed in the handout *Common Questions and Answers about Managing Menstruation* if the girls don't bring them up themselves.



## + INCLUSION TIP

Some boys and girls may have difficulty reading or seeing, which is why it is important that they are not put on the spot to read from the handouts and that everything on the handout is explained clearly by the facilitator. Boys and girls should be encouraged to take the handouts home with them to share with family.

## > FACILITATOR TIP

Listen carefully to all the practices that the girls bring up. If any of them reflect common myths about menstruation, make sure to point this out, and encourage them to challenge these myths. For example, if a girl suggests that a girl should stay home when she sees her first period to avoid being teased by her friends, explain that having a period should not prevent a girl from playing or from going to school and that it is entirely the choice of the girl/woman what she feels comfortable doing while menstruating.

- 2 To wrap up the activity, ask the girls and boys if they have any additional questions about the topics you discussed today. Take some time to answer any questions that come up.

It is important to reflect on what are the best options available to manage menstruation effectively and hygienically. Managing menstruation well will help girls to experience their period not as a burden but as an opportunity to appreciate their cycle as a normal part of their everyday life.



## SESSION

## 2

# Overcoming Embarrassment

**Participants:** separate groups – boys and girls

**Purpose:** Continue the conversation that revolves around normalising menstrual health. This activity contributes to key messages 1 and 2.

Allow approximately 2 hours for Session 2.

### Activity 2:

## Discussing Embarrassing Topics<sup>17</sup>


### GROUPWORK:

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- 1 Tell the group that managing menstrual health is often hard to talk about. Explain that no one is expected to be an expert and that this is just a chance to discuss the issue and learn more from each other.
- 2 Divide the participants into pairs.

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<sup>17</sup> Menstrual Hygiene Matters – MHM Training guide for practitioners, p. 36

- 
- 3 Ask each pair to talk about some of the topics about menstruation that they might have felt too embarrassed to discuss or ask. If they are not sure, you may think of some examples. Topics that have come up in other groups include:
    - explaining the reproductive system and cycle
    - answering questions such as whether it is OK to have sex during menstruation
    - discussing how to actually use menstrual health materials
    - issues relating to the appearance and smell of menstrual materials and blood
  
  - 4 After 10 minutes ask each pair to share at least one of the topics they identified as embarrassing. The facilitator can draw or write these on the board if useful.
  
  - 5 Ask each group to discuss these topics:
    - a. What might make it hard to ask questions or talk about menstruation?
    - b. What would be good questions to ask?
    - c. What approaches could be used – e.g. use of tools, creating enabling spaces – to make it easier to discuss these topics?

## ROLEPLAY:

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Ask each group to practice their suggestions in roleplays. Give them time to practice a presentation that they will perform to their group and to the other boys/girls.

### > FACILITATOR TIP

The purpose of the roleplay is to provide the opportunity for participants to try out techniques for talking about menstruation hygiene management. Encourage them to set up encounters/scenarios that are as realistic as possible. Encourage participants to reverse roles (e.g. see what it would be like for a boy to roleplay a girl in different scenarios, e.g. when she has bad period pain).

### + INCLUSION TIP

Be aware of participants with physical disabilities. Ensure they are getting involved on an equal level as the other boys and girls and aren't being excluded from the activity.



## SESSION

# 3

# Moving Forward



**Participants:** boys and girls together

**Purpose:** Encouraging accountability and positive action toward normalizing menstrual health. This relates to key message number 1.

*Allow approximately 1 hour for Session 3.*

*If time allows, and the participants are willing, ask them to perform their roleplay – or a few minutes of it – to the rest of the group.*

### SUMMING UP:

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Summarise the points raised and recap on the key messages.

#### Key messages:

- Menstruation is normal and a natural part of the female body and so nothing to be feared or teased about.
- Girls are not limited when they have their periods and can do anything they are comfortable with.
- Women and girls can be supported at home and in their communities through open discussion about managing menstrual health.

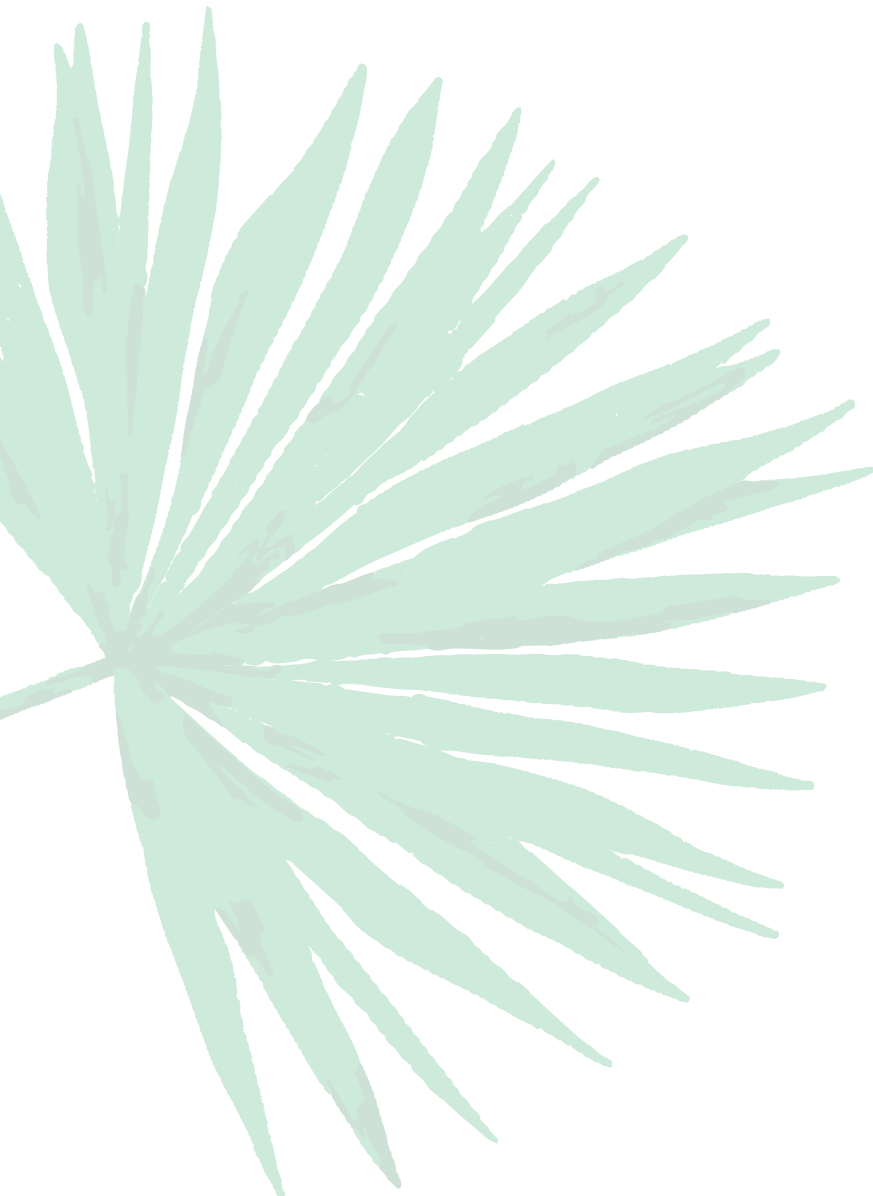
## COMMITMENT:

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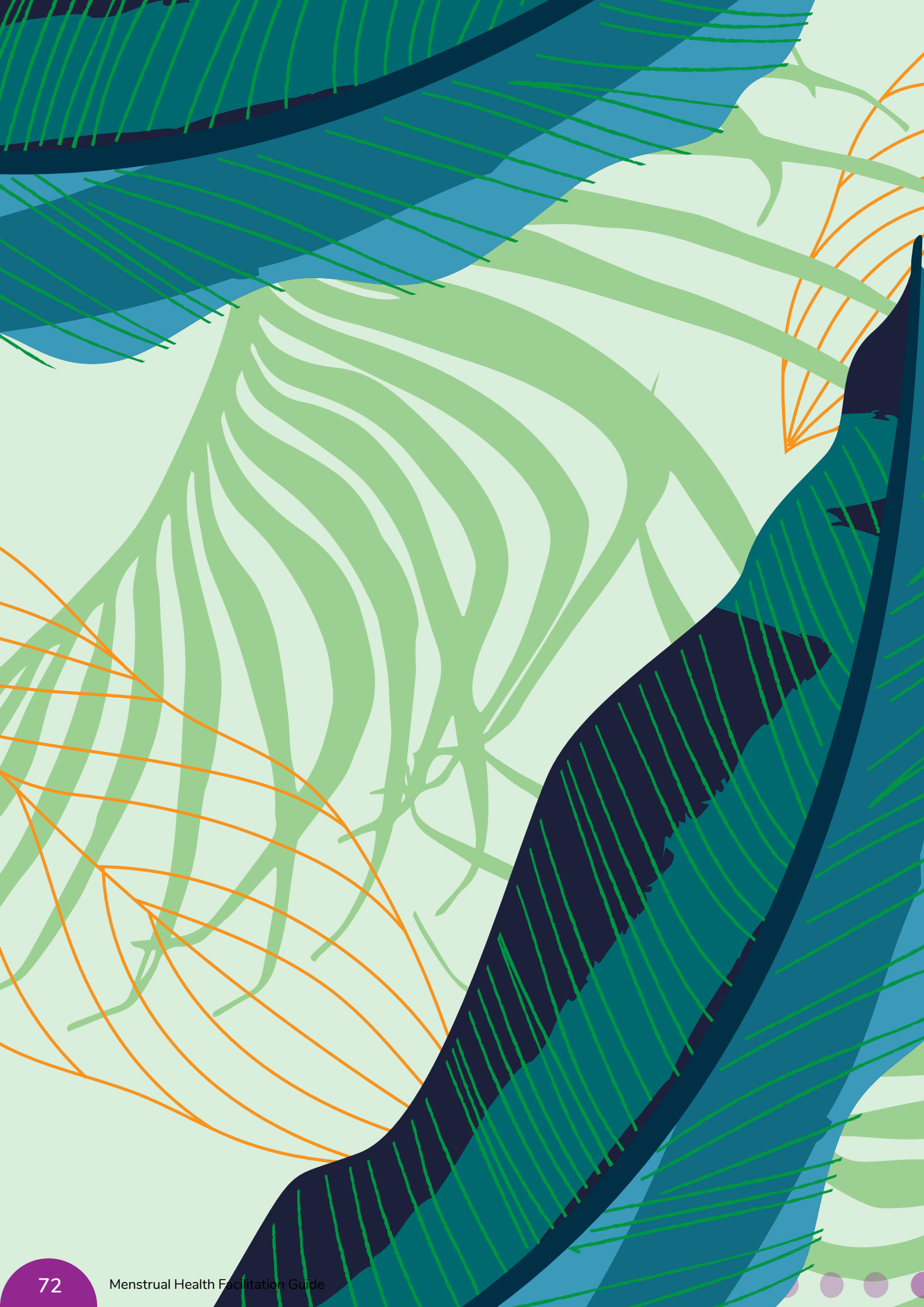
Get the participants to sit or stand in a circle.

Get each participant to think about a personal commitment of three things they will do to improve menstrual management for women and girls in their community. Depending on the group (remember – know your participants!) there are two options for expressing commitment:

- Have everyone share at least one of their personal commitments with the group, with the group applauding after each commitment.
- The facilitator can write the commitments on a piece of flip-chart paper, and point out how many personal commitments are made by the group, and how powerful this will be for making positive change.











# Resources & Handouts

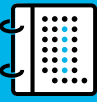
# JUST THE FACTS: UNDERSTANDING MENSTRUATION

## THE BASICS

MENSTRUATION IS NORMAL! IT IS THE MONTHLY SHEDDING OF BLOOD AND UTERINE TISSUE AND AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE. TYPICALLY, IT LASTS...

2-7

DAYS



THE AMOUNT OF BLOOD IS USUALLY BETWEEN


1

AND

6

TABLESPOONS EACH MONTH AND CAN BE MESSY.

ABDOMINAL CRAMPS, NAUSEA, DIARRHEA AND HEADACHES ARE COMMON BEFORE AND DURING A PERIOD.



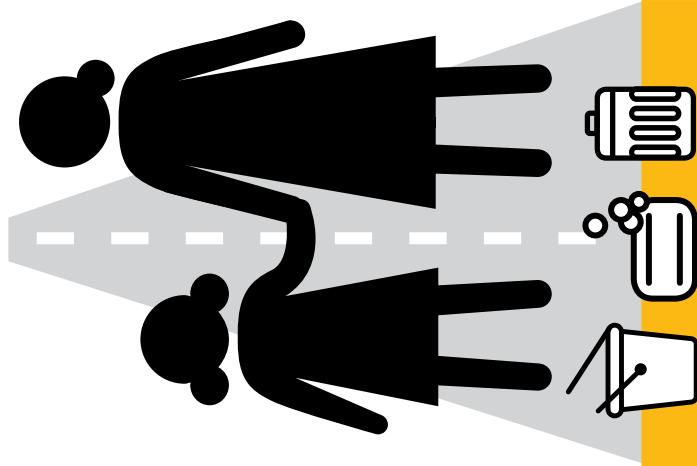
## WHY IT MATTERS?

- Girls who get blood on their clothes are often teased by teachers, boys or other girls.
- Social norms may lead women and girls to feel that menstruation is dirty, shameful or unhealthy.
- Without access to good menstrual materials and private toilets or washrooms for changing, girls and women may not want to go far from home. Teachers may miss school, health workers may miss work, and girls and women may not attend school, go to the market or wait in line for supplies.

**Menstruation is very personal.**  
Women and girls often do not want others to know they are menstruating – even other women and girls.

## WHAT IS MENARCHE?

- Menarche is the onset of menstruation. Girls generally get their first period between 11–15, although some can be younger or older.
- **The first period is generally a surprise!** Sometimes girls are scared or worried they are sick. They may not know who to ask for advice.
- Information about menstruation is frequently passed on from mothers, friends, sisters or aunts, and is often a mixture of cultural beliefs, superstition and practical information that is sometimes helpful and sometimes not.
- In many cultures mothers may feel uncomfortable to talk to their daughters about periods because it is linked to sexuality.



## WHAT DO THEY NEED?

- A range of materials can be used to catch the blood, including a sanitary pad (disposable or reusable), a tampon, or a piece of cloth in their underwear.



- **Menstrual periods are irregular and can catch girls and women by surprise.** This causes anxiety about finding a bathroom and materials quickly!
- Menstruation can be messy! Women and girls need a private space with water and soap to clean themselves and soiled materials.
- Even when using good menstrual materials, women and girls may be worried about blood stains on their clothes.
- Women and girls need access to a private, clean space (toilet or washroom) to change materials throughout the day and night and to hygienically dispose of menstrual waste.





# WHY PERIOD FRIENDLY TOILETS MATTER

On any given day, approximately 300 million women and girls menstruate. In order to manage their menstruation safely, hygienically, with confidence and with dignity, they need a private space to attend to their menstruation-related needs, such as washing themselves and changing materials. For most women and girls, this will be a toilet.

Where do women and girls need period friendly toilets?

at home



at school



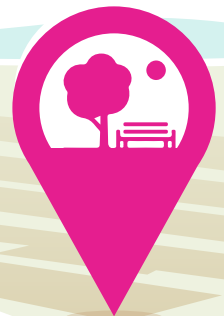
at work



at health centers



in public spaces



What makes a toilet period friendly?

Provides privacy (doors, locks)



Water and soap is available to wash hands, bodies and any reusable products

And of course the toilet must be clean!

Accessible during day and night (area and internal lighting)

Culturally appropriate menstrual waste disposal option (dustbins, chutes, pits)

Public and community toilets should be separated by gender, also provide access to menstrual products and have hooks, shelves and mirrors

Safe and conveniently located and accessible for all women and girls, including those with disabilities

How do women and girls benefit from period friendly toilets?

**Increased overall well-being and reduced psychological stress**

Having access to period friendly toilets at all times makes menstruation a less stressful experience

**Increased ability to carry on with daily educational, income-earning and social activities**

Period friendly toilets are critical to ensure that girls don't miss school and women can go to work during their periods

**Increased safety**

With period friendly toilets, women and girls no longer need to put themselves at risk of violence when trying to dispose of their menstrual waste in secluded places or under the cover of darkness

# Taking Good Care of Myself



Can you name everything Dolin does to take care of herself?

Take some notes while you are discussing with your group, so you can remind yourself of all the ways you can take good care of yourself!

# Taking Good Care of Myself



Can you name everything Dolin does to take care of herself?

Take some notes while you are discussing with your group, so you can remind yourself of all the ways you can take good care of yourself!

# Common Questions and Answers about Managing Menstruation

'How To' Questions	Possible Answers
<p><b>How do I manage my first period?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to other girls and women, such as your mother, sister, aunt, grandmother, female friend or an older woman in your community.</li> <li>• Don't be afraid. It can be scary to see the blood on your underwear, but it is normal and natural.</li> <li>• If you are at school, tell the matron, a female teacher, or a fellow student.</li> <li>• Feel proud! Your body is developing!</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do I capture the blood?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place a cloth, pad, cotton or tissue on your underwear.</li> <li>• Never insert a pad or cloth inside your vagina. Only special products like tampons and menstrual cups have been made to be used inside the vagina.</li> <li>• Change the cloth, pad, cotton or tissue every two to five hours, or more frequently if you think that the blood flow is getting heavy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How do I dispose of the cloth, pad, cotton or tissue?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are re-using a cloth, put it into a plastic bag until you can wash it with hot water and soap and then dry it in the sunshine or iron it.</li> <li>• If you are using a pad, tissue or cotton, or want to dispose of your cloth, wrap it in paper to make a clean package and put it in the bin so it can be burned later.</li> </ul>

**How do I keep myself comfortable during my period?**

- Every day (morning and evening if possible) wash your genitals with water.
- Keep unused cloths and pads clean (wrapped in tissue or plastic bag) for further use.
- Pat the area dry with a cloth, and put a fresh cloth, pad, cotton, or tissue on your underwear.
- Always wipe from front to back after defecation.
- Never wash the inside of the vagina with water.

**How do I manage the pain from my period?**

- You can put a bottle with hot water on your stomach area when you are resting.
- Try to do some exercises and keep your body active.
- You can take pain medication every four to six hours on the most painful days.





**How will I know when periods start happening regularly?**

- For the first few years after a girl starts her period, it may not come regularly. This is normal at first. By about 2–3 years after her first period, a girl's periods should be coming around once every 4–5 weeks.

**How do I know when a girl can get pregnant after getting her first period?**


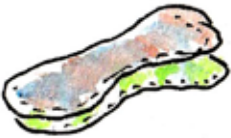

- A girl can get pregnant as soon as her period starts. A girl can even get pregnant right before her very first period. This is because a girl's hormones might already be active. The hormones may have led to ovulation and the building of the uterine wall. If a girl has sex, she can get pregnant, even though she has never had a period.

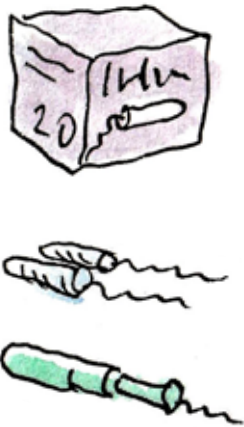


# Options for Menstruation Hygiene Management (for Facilitator)<sup>18</sup>

Menstrual Product Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p><b>Strips of sara, kanga or other cloth</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily available in the local market</li> <li>• Reusable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If old cloths are not cleaned well they can become unhygienic</li> <li>• Users need somewhere private, with a water supply and soap, to wash and dry cloths</li> </ul>
<p><b>Toilet paper or tissues</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily available at the local market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loses strength when wet and can fall apart</li> <li>• Difficult to hold in place</li> <li>• May be too expensive</li> <li>• Generates waste, so not environmentally friendly</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cotton wool</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good absorption properties</li> <li>• Easily available in the local market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to hold in place</li> <li>• May be too expensive</li> </ul>
<p><b>Locally made reusable pads</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally available</li> <li>• Income generation opportunity</li> <li>• Cost-effective as are reusable</li> <li>• More environmentally friendly than disposable pads</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply chain limitations may make it difficult to reach potential users</li> <li>• Users need somewhere private, with a water supply and soap, to wash and dry the pads</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Locally made biodegradable disposable pads</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally available</li> <li>• Income generation opportunity</li> <li>• Environmentally friendly as degrade on disposal</li> <li>• Natural products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not always absorbent enough or the correct shape for higher flow days</li> <li>• Less environmentally friendly than reusable products</li> </ul>
<p><b>Commercially available reusable pads</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost effective as are reusable</li> <li>• More environmentally friendly than disposable pads</li> <li>• Available on the internet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial cost may be prohibitive</li> <li>• Users need somewhere private, with a water supply and soap, to wash and dry the pads</li> <li>• Most poor girls lack internet access</li> </ul>
<p><b>Commercially available disposable pads</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often available, except in remote locations</li> <li>• Range of sizes and types available in some locations</li> <li>• Well designed through research and development</li> <li>• Hygienic, as a new one is used each time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost is prohibitive to many users</li> <li>• Generate a lot of waste, so not environmentally friendly</li> </ul>

<p><b>Tampons (with or without applicators)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convenient and comfortable to use</li> <li>• Hygienic, as a new one is used each time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not available in many countries</li> <li>• Cost is prohibitive to many users</li> <li>• Generate a lot of waste, so not environmentally friendly</li> <li>• May not be culturally appropriate for adolescent girls, as need to be inserted into the vagina</li> <li>• Hygiene and availability of water and soap for handwashing are particularly important, as need to be inserted into the vagina</li> </ul>
<p><b>Panties (also known as 'pants', 'knickers' or 'underwear')</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful for keeping sanitary product in place</li> <li>• Good for keeping the vaginal area hygienic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost may be prohibitive to potential users</li> <li>• Cheap elastic can wear out relatively quickly</li> </ul>
<p><b>Period panties (panties with a rubber lining)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an additional level of protection against leakage during menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be sweaty to wear in hot climates</li> <li>• Not readily available to purchase in many regions</li> <li>• High initial cost</li> </ul>

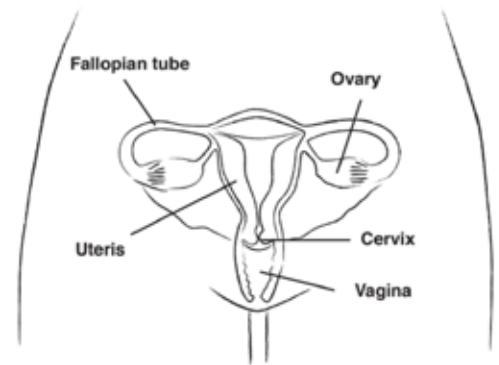
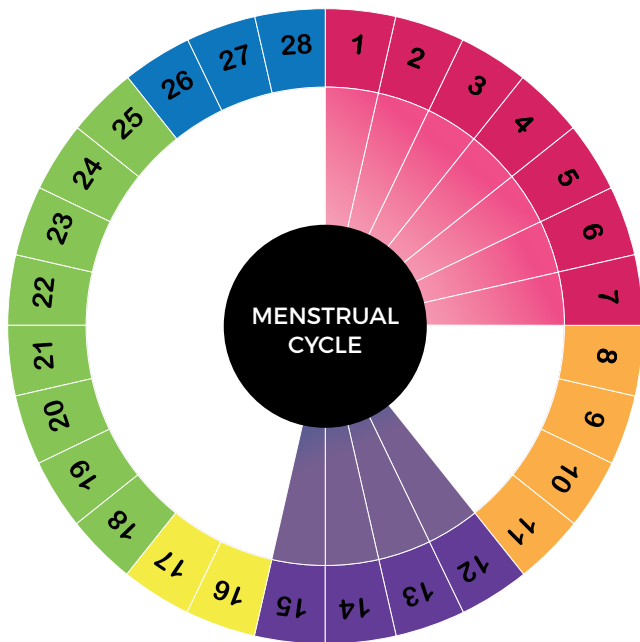




<p><b>Menstrual cups</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reusable</li><li>• Only need emptying, washing and drying</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May not be culturally appropriate for adolescent girls, as need to be inserted into the vagina</li><li>• Hygiene and availability of water and soap for handwashing are particularly important, and need to be inserted into the vagina</li><li>• High initial cost</li></ul>
<p><b>Menstrual Sponges</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reusable</li><li>• Only need emptying, washing and drying</li><li>• Natural product</li><li>• Comfortable because they are flexible and soft and mold themselves to the shape of the vagina</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May not be culturally appropriate for adolescent girls, as need to be inserted into the vagina</li><li>• High initial cost</li><li>• Last for a maximum of six months</li><li>• Delicate and easily ripped</li></ul>



# The Female Reproductive System and Cycle



- Days 1-7** Menstruation
- Days 8-11** The lining of the uterus thickens in preparation for the egg
- Days 12-15** Ovulation
- Days 18-25** If fertilisation has not taken place the lining of the uterus dissolves
- Days 26-28** The uterus lining detaches leading to menstruation

- The menstrual cycle is usually around 28 days but can vary from 21 to 35 days.
- Each cycle involves the release of an egg that moves into the uterus through the fallopian tubes. This is called ovulation.
- Tissue and blood begin to line the walls of the uterus in case the egg is fertilised. If the egg is not fertilised, the lining of the uterus is shed through the vagina along with blood. This is called menstruation.
- Menstrual bleeding generally lasts between two and seven days, with some lighter and some heavier flow days.
- When a cycle lasts the same number of days every time, it is called regular. The cycle is often irregular for the first year or two after menstruation begins. Some girls and women have irregular periods for longer times.
- Most women and girls have some pain during their periods, and can also have nausea, feel very tired, have headaches and/or general discomfort. They can also feel sad, irritable or angry. All these symptoms vary from person to person and can change over time.
- Menstruation is a healthy, normal and vital process. It shouldn't prohibit women and girls from doing the things they want or need to do. When women and girls take the right menstrual health measures, they should be able to continue with their usual everyday activities.
- If a period is extremely painful, unusually heavy, or very irregular, or is a period is missed, it is important to tell a trusted female adult and to go see a doctor, as these could be signs that something is wrong.

## ● Activity 1 :

### Menstrual Health Materials: Options, Use and Disposal

Lay out a range of different materials to make the display as interesting as possible. These could include tissue, cotton wool, local types of material such as cotton and toweling, different types of disposable menstruation pads including commercial products and locally made products if available, reusable menstruation pads including home-made pads or commercial products, tampons, menstrual cups, underpants (to demonstrate how pads are fixed in place).



#### DISCUSSION:

Display and review of menstrual health materials.

1. Ask the group to stand up and gather around the table to look at the menstrual health materials.
2. Encourage the group to pick up and touch the different items and to discuss them with each other.
3. Briefly explain to the group what each of the materials is and answer any questions they may have.
4. Ask the participants whether the different materials are likely to be comfortable, effective for managing menstrual blood, appropriate, affordable, available, sustainable, environmentally friendly, etc. What sort of facilities or resources would be needed for them to be used and disposed of hygienically?

#### > FACILITATOR TIP

Give the participants some time and space to look at the materials. Usually the participants are interested in the different items; some may have questions about specific materials. It might also be necessary to demonstrate how they work – for example, how to fold and unfold a reusable pad.

#### + INCLUSION TIP

For people with difficulty seeing, describe the different options and hand it to them so they can feel the different shapes and materials being discussed.

After participants have looked at the materials, ask them to go back to their seats.

## Game Cards:

# Who are the Lucky Ones?

This girl goes to a school with good menstrual health facilities and doesn't miss classes when she has her period

**Take 5 treats**

This girl goes to a school without facilities for menstruation waste in the toilets, so she stays home for one week every month when she has her period

**Take no treats**

This boy makes sure that the school has spare pads and a clean uniform for girls who get their period at school

**Take 5 treats**

This girl was teased by boys when she got blood on her dress when her period started at school, now she is anxious and worries every month about stains

**Take 1 treat**

This girl got her period at school and was going to go home, but a friend gave her the spare pad she carries in her school bag

**Take 4 treats,  
give 2 to your neighbour**

This boy stood up for a girl who was being teased about having period stains on her dress

**Take four treats,  
give 2 to your neighbour**

This girl has her period but knows that she can still play sports with her friends

**Take 3 treats**

This girl got her first period but isn't scared because she learned in class that menstruation is normal

**Take 5 treats**

This girl never learned about menstruation in school and feels like she can't talk about it with her friends, so she goes home when she gets her period

**Take no treats**

This girl is experiencing bad period pain at school but feels supported by her friends and teachers

**Take 4 treats**

This girl's school toilets are next to the play area and she feels embarrassed walking there to change her menstruation pad

**Take 3 treats**

This boy sees that a girl has her period at school and helps get her spare pads and a new uniform

**Take 4 treats,  
give 2 to your neighbour**

This boy feels engaged talking about menstrual health at his school

**Take 3 treats**

This girl feels confident attending school when she is menstruating knowing that she can talk about it with her friends and teachers

**Take 5 treats**

This girl was taught that menstrual blood was dirty and now she feels ashamed when she gets her period

**Take no treats**

This girl feels engaged talking about menstrual health at school

**Take 3 treats**

This girl/boy can take what she learned at school and talk about menstrual health with her family

**Take 3 treats**

This girl was taught that menstruation is natural and nothing to be ashamed of

**Take 4 treats**

# Student Toilet Audit Sheet

Complete this audit sheet on the boys and girls toilets in your school.

**What type of toilets do you have at your school?** (circle)

- Pit/VIP toilet       Flush with septic tank       No toilets (use bush)

**Does your school have?** (circle)

- Shared toilets       Separate toilets for girls and boys

**How many toilets does your school have for girls only?** .....

**How many toilets does your school have for boys only?** .....





# GIRLS TOILETS

Are the toilets easy to access (smooth path, no steps, not too far away)?	Yes	No	Comment:
Does each toilet have doors that lock?	Yes	No	Comment:
Does each toilet have good light so you can see?	Yes	No	Comment:
Does each toilet have a bin for used pads or other waste from period products?	Yes	No	Comment:
Is there water and soap available in the toilets to wash hands, bodies and any reusable period products?	Yes	No	Comment:
Does the toilet block have mirrors and hooks for hanging clothes or towels	Yes	No	Comment:
What other improvements would you like to see for toilets for girls in the school?			


## BOYS TOILETS



Are the toilets easy to access (smooth path, no steps, not too far away)?	Yes	No	Comment:
Does each toilet have doors that lock?	Yes	No	Comment:
Does each toilet have good light so you can see?	Yes	No	Comment:
Is there water and soap available in the toilet area to wash hands?	Yes	No	Comment:
Does the toilet block have mirrors and hooks for hanging clothes or towels	Yes	No	Comment:
What other improvements would you like to see for toilets for boys in the school?			



# Game Cards:

## Who are the Lucky Ones?



<b>YOU GET</b> 	<b>YOU GIVE</b> 
---	--



<b>YOU GET</b> 	<b>YOU GIVE</b> 
--	--



<b>YOU GET</b> 	<b>YOU GIVE</b> 
---	--



<b>YOU GET</b> 	<b>YOU GIVE</b> 
--	--



**YOU GET**



**YOU GIVE**



**YOU GET**



**YOU GIVE**



**YOU GET**



**YOU GIVE**



**YOU GET**



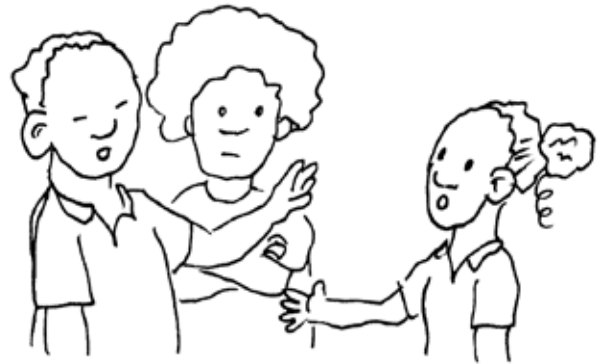
**YOU GIVE**



YOU GET



YOU GIVE



YOU GET



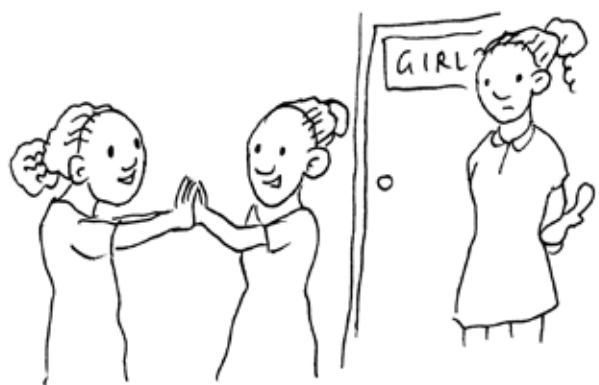
YOU GIVE



YOU GET



YOU GIVE



YOU GET



YOU GIVE





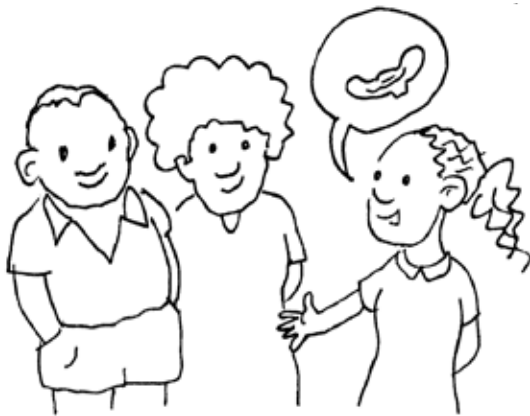
YOU GET

YOU GIVE



YOU GET

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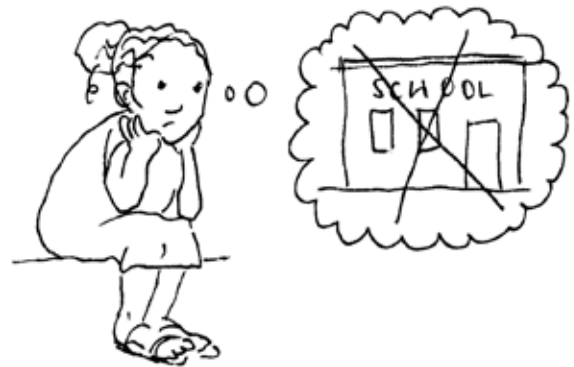
YOU GIVE



YOU GET



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YOU GET

YOU GIVE



YOU GET

YOU GIVE





