



# **Menstrual Hygiene Management in Africa**

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# The facts

- On average menstruation last for about 4 days a month
- Up to 40 days may be missed for every African girl per school year due to menstruation.
- Menstruation is natural and normal.
- Menstrual hygiene requires clean water for washing cloths and bathing; somewhere private to change cloths, access to sanitary pads and facilities for disposal.

# Evil Spirits, Taboos, Restrictions

- In Tanzania, some believe that if a menstrual cloth is seen by others, the owner of the cloth may be cursed.
- In Sierra Leone, it is believed that used sanitary napkins can be used to make someone sterile.
- In Uganda the start of menstruation means a girl is ready for marriage.
- In Zimbabwe a menstruating girl is not allowed to cook food.

- Lack of proper Sanitary wear force girls to stay away from school.
- The fear and embarrassment of being soiled from menstrual blood keeps girls from schools
- Inadequate or absence of sanitary facilities to enable girls to change sanitary towels / pads
- In Egypt Menstrual blood is know to have healing effects???

# Extinction of Menstrual Huts??



- Menstrual Hut (Ponulu)
- Dogon People of Mali
- Woman considered impure during her menstruation.
- A woman is excluded here for five days at least per month
- She still performs regular farming duties.

# Adaptation methods for menstruation

- Leaves
- Squatting in the toilet
- Exclusion from family and communities
- News Paper
- Toilet Paper
- Sanitary towels / cloths (but how are they washed and dried)
- Menstrual pads / tampons (too expensive)
- Menstrual cup (cultural taboo or not)

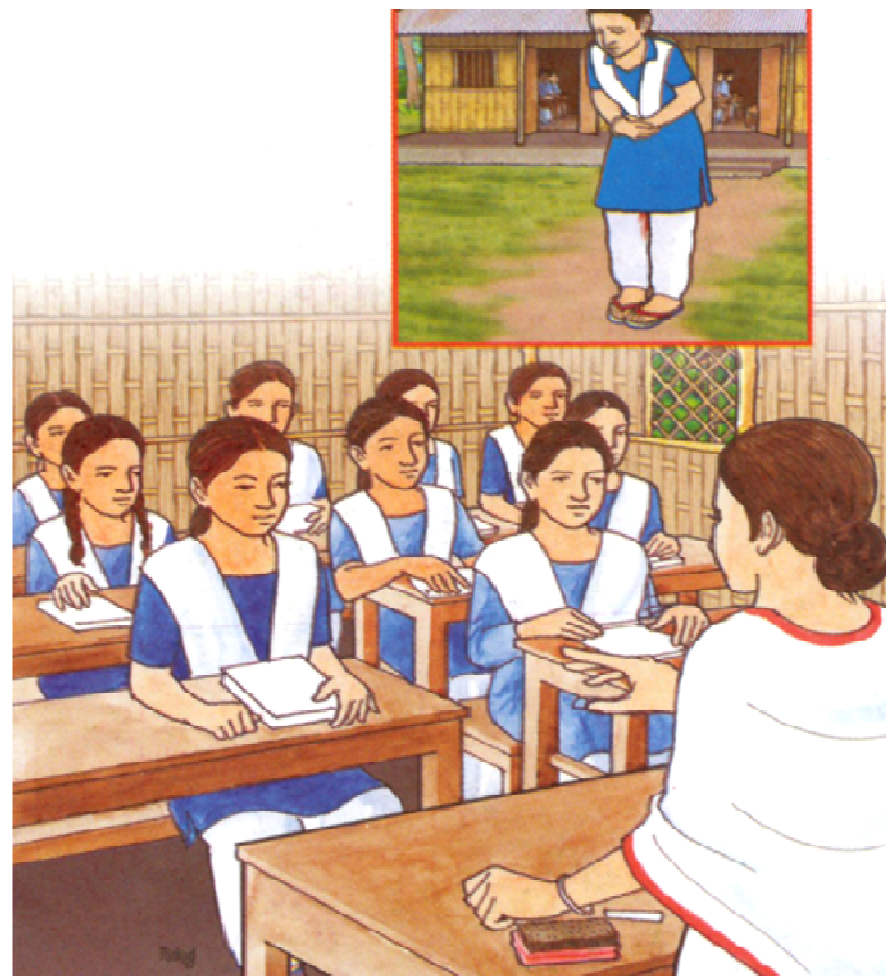
# A neglected issue in the WASH sector

- Cultural taboos, shame and embarrassment create a culture of silence
- Unhygienic method to deal with menstruation
- Menstrual hygiene issues are not incorporated into hygiene and sanitation programmes
- Menstrual hygiene products too expensive (on average 3 USD = 1 Kg of maize meal)
- Sanitation facilities can some times be inadequate to cater for menstruation



# Impact on girls' education & health

- Girls withdrawn from school by parents at onset of puberty
- Girls avoid going to school during menstruation (49 – 90 %)
- Girls miss school on the second day because of pains (psychological / nutritional / medication)
- Girls' performance affected by anxiety
- Reproductive & urinary tract infections



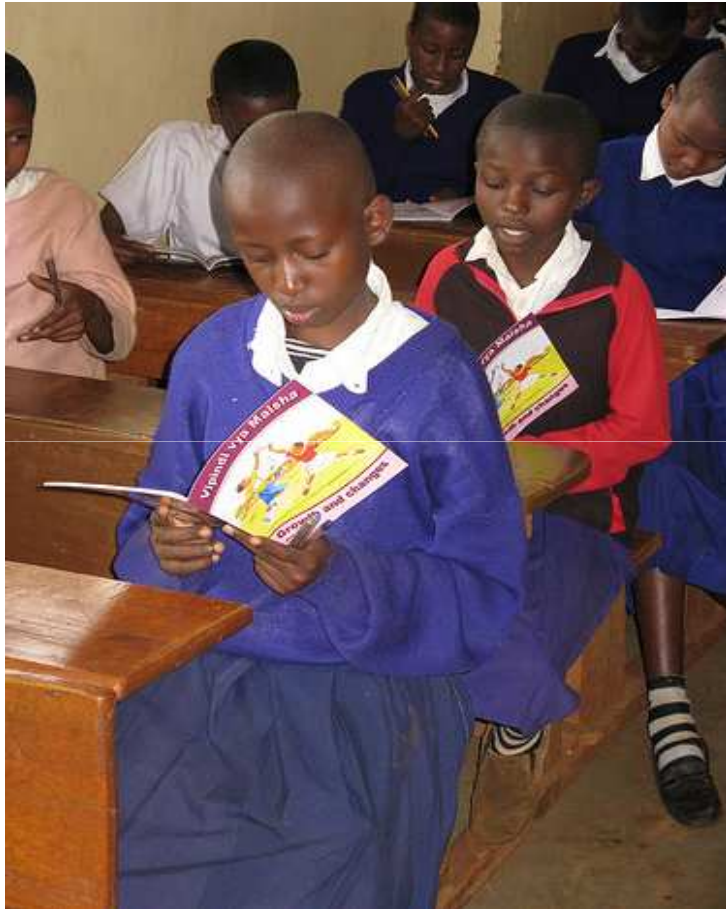


# Adequate Sanitation facilities



- Larger toilets for girls
- Hand washing facilities in toilets
- Toilets have doors to ensure privacy
- Toilets for menstruation are NOT separated from toilets for non menstruation

# Breaking the myth



- Girls puberty book produced in Tanzania and provided to all children of 10 - 14 years
- Replicated in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Ghana etc.
- School and communal groups to discuss menstruation

# Locally produced sanitary material



- School children (both girls and boys) in Uganda's northern Amuru and Gulu regions taught how to make sanitary pads using cheap, locally available materials.
- Increase enrolment of girls from 268 in 2010 to 310 in 2011 in Awich School



Reusable pads produced by local women  
in Uganda: Afripads

# The Menstrual Cup (Ruby / Diva / Mia ...)



Pilots with Ruby Cup in Kenya



# Recommendations

- Adequate toilets in schools to cater for menstruating girls
  - Water and soap in toilets to enable proper hygienic management of menstruation
  - Education on menstruation for both boy and girl
  - Free or highly subsidised sanitary materials
- = Increased Retention of the girl child in schools.

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