MENSTRUAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT
MODULE FOR TEACHERS
CONTENTS
Introduction to the module……………………………………………………………3
Training implementation……………………………………………………………4
Welcome and introduction………………………………………………………9
Session 1: The problem…………………………………………………………11
Session 2: Role of the teacher………………………………………………14
Session 3: Barriers teachers face………………………………………………17
Session 4: MHM – Teaching and practicing …………………………..20
Session 5: Making schools a supportive place…………………………25
Session 6: The next steps……………………………………………………27
Feedback and closing discussion…………………………………………29
Introduction to the module

Why do we need a module for teachers on Menstrual Hygiene?

According to UNICEF, only 13% of girls are aware of menstruation prior to menarche. When girls get their first period, they often feel afraid and don’t know what to do, resulting in them being too embarrassed to leave the house at this time.

A needs assessment conducted by Restless Development showed that girls will go to their mothers as a last resort for information on menstruation, often preferring to speak to a female teacher or a friend first. Information was often inconsistent, and even mothers admit that they are not always correct. This has resulted in 75% of girls across India not knowing what material to use to absorb the flow, with 27% of girls outside school not using anything at all, while others use cloths which are often unclean, and ash.

While mothers still believe that they should play a part in teaching their daughters about Menstrual Health Management, they agree that their daughters should get the best information possible, and are happy for them to learn it in school. Young girls also believe that they should be taught about Menstrual Health Management in school, in either 6th or 7th class, before the onset of menarche, so that when it happens they will be prepared and will not feel scared or embarrassed. This is where teachers come in. Teachers can be a source of consistent, correct information at the school where they teach, and someone who girls feel comfortable approaching if they have any questions about menstruation or menstrual health management.

Even when girls do know proper Menstrual Health Management, they may still be stopped from practicing it in schools because they are not provided with proper facilities. Teachers also have the ability to ensure that there are separate toilets and washing spaces for girls so that they are able to change the cloth or sanitary napkin they are using and wash or dispose of these properly. Not having such facilities is another cause of embarrassment for girls, so they avoid changing, which may result in infection, or they will stop coming to school during this time altogether.

Who is this training for?

This training is for female school teachers who will help adolescent girls understand menstruation and how to care for their bodies during their period.

Total Time
125 minutes

Module Objectives

When the training has finished, teachers will have developed an understanding of the following:

1. Why it is important that girls learn proper menstrual health management
2. What their role is in ensuring girls know and can practice MHM at school, and why it is essential
3. How to overcome barriers they feel they will face teaching MHM
4. What needs to be covered in an MHM class
5. What facilities and support are required to make school a comfortable place for girls to practice MHM
6. A plan on how they will carry this out in their schools
Training Implementation

i. TRAINING METHODOLOGIES

Workshop Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity/description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Welcome and introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>The problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Role of the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>Barriers teachers face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 minutes</td>
<td>MHM – teaching and practicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Making schools a supportive place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Planning the next steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Final discussion and questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tips

Be prepared
This manual will include a checklist on how to be prepared for this training, and it’s important that these steps are followed so that you can run the training to the best of your ability. Before each training, double check that you have everything required. Prepare at least a day before you run the workshop. If someone else will be setting up the space for you, ask them to make sure the room has everything you need, such as a certain number of chairs or a table.

Has the group participated in discussions about MHM before?
Preferably before the training, try to get an idea of whether people in the group have been involved in open discussions about this topic before. Try to get an understanding of how much they already know about MHM, and if they will feel comfortable or uneasy when discussing it. Based on this, you will know which sessions in this manual will need particular emphasis. For example, teachers who already know a lot about MHM may need more help understanding how to overcome the barriers they feel are stopping them from giving this information to students, while some other teachers may not know anything about MHM, so you will need to concentrate on this area of the training more.

Large groups
When running a training for a large group, avoid large group discussions, as this will often result in the more confident participants talking over shyer participants. It is best to break up into smaller groups or pairs to discuss a topic or question, and then some of these small groups can be chosen to tell the group what they discussed. Avoid asking all groups to report back if it will take up too much time.

In this manual, each module will include an example of how to run the session. If the exercise provided won’t work in this type of group setting, and alternative will be provided.

Small groups
Game-like exercises such as role plays, and others that are suggested in this manual may not work without the minimum number of participants. Training a small group means that there is more opportunity for in-depth discussion, and more personal exercises. Some of the suggested exercises in this manual may need to change if group size is too small. There will be suggestions on how to do this.

ii. FACILITATION SKILLS

It is the facilitator’s role to run the training, encouraging discussion, while also ensuring that this discussion stays on track. A facilitator is not a lecturer. It is the facilitator’s job to make sure that all participants have a chance to speak, so if some participants are quieter than others, you may have to specifically ask them a question to hear their thoughts. However if they aren’t comfortable about answering, don’t force them.

An ideal facilitator will have the following attributes:

The perfect facilitator

- Is a quick thinker, able to adapt answers and questions according to how the discussion is running
- Watches to see if some participants are quieter than others, and if all look comfortable
- Is a good listener
- Is prepared with a copy of the agenda and any other materials required for the training
- Speaks loudly and clearly, not using any jargon and expanding acronyms
- Keeps track of the time, ensuring that all topics are covered
- Has a big heart and is open and accepting of the opinions of others, as well as patient
- Is grounded – fully present and conscious in the discussion

What a facilitator needs to do before training:
• **Make sure room is set up with chairs or other forms of seating in a circle.** A circle around a table is best so that participants can take notes if they'd like to. The facilitator will require a hard surface to make notes on for the group to see as well.

• **Develop a solid understanding of the topic**, in this case MHM, the cultural practices and taboos surrounding menstruation, barriers teachers face in talking about it and how they will overcome these.

• **Gain as much information on the participants as possible.** Eg. Is MHM taught at their schools; have they had any experience discussing MHM previously, what are people's opinions on MHM in the area they are teaching. If the facilitator does acquire information on these things, they can adapt how the training will run accordingly.

• When running the training with a co-facilitator, speak to them about how the training should run, and what each other’s roles are

• Write a clear agenda

• Have all materials ready

**What a facilitator needs to do at the start of the training:**

• **Introduce themselves** if participants don’t yet know who they are

• **Let participants know what to expect from training by explaining what is on the agenda and the training objectives.** Ask the participants if they think there is anything missing that should be covered.

• **Gain a firsthand idea of how much participants know about this topic, and whether they will feel comfortable talking about it.** There will be an exercise in Session 1 explaining how this can be done.

• **Make all participants feel welcome and comfortable in the space.** For this particular training, the facilitator may need to shut the doors, and also ensure that no men are present. If one person is ranked higher than others in some way, make sure that others don’t feel uncomfortable expressing their thoughts in front of them. It is better to establish who this person might be prior to the training. This way, the facilitator can speak to them in advance about not being to open about their opinions and therefore leading others to say they are in agreement.

**What the facilitator needs to do during the training:**

• **Clearly articulate at the beginning of each session what is to be covered.** There is more chance that participants will stay on track this way. Write down this topic on a large piece of paper that everyone can see so that it can be referred back to throughout the discussion.

• **Encourage everyone to participate in the discussion.** If some people are more quiet than others, direct questions at them. Avoid doing this if it seems like they may be uncomfortable answering.

• **Keep the conversation on track.** If any participant is leading the conversation away from the discussion point you have written on the piece of
paper, it is the facilitator’s job to bring the conversation back. This is often tricky, because the facilitator also needs to be flexible, still allowing participants to speak about what they believe is important.

- **Establish a “store room”**. A lot of the time, people will start to talk about something important, but it might not relate to the topic at hand. Have another piece of paper, or a section on the whiteboard or a chalkboard where you can write down the issue the person has highlighted and let them know you will come back to it if there’s time at the end, or in a later session.

- **Ask pointed questions**. Don’t lecture participants. Ask them specific questions that will lead them to think and talk about it themselves, and come up with solutions and answers together. This will make the training more engaging, and participants will be more likely to take new things on board if they have taken part in thinking about it themselves. This manual will include examples of the questions you should ask.

- **Be open and understanding**. A lot of the people in your training session might not share the same opinion as you. As a facilitator, you have to remain patient with these people. Let them reach a similar understanding to you through group discussion, and again, don’t lecture them. If you used to think in a similar way to them, tell them why you used to think in this way, and why you changed, or perhaps another participant could explain a similar experience. Be prepared to hear everyone’s thoughts and reasoning, and understand where they are coming from. In doing this though, remember that the training needs to continue moving forward, don’t get caught on these points for too long.

- **Take notes** if there were any questions or issues that came up that you had trouble solving. This way, you can find out the answer to this before you run another training.

**What the facilitator needs to do at the end of the training**

- **Gain feedback from participants**. This way you will know what areas you need to improve next time you run the training. An exercise on how to do this will be included in the final session of this manual.

**iii. PREPARATION CHECKLIST**

- Organise to have a closed or private space in which the training can be held
- Organise seating in a circle
- Speak to organiser and find out how many participants there will be so you have enough resources
- Read through this manual, taking notes of how you will run the training
- Write up the agenda, with reminder notes on what you need to do in each session. You can’t read through this whole manual as you go!
- Have this agenda clearly written on the blackboard or a large piece of paper in clear view, as well as on a piece of paper with any notes you might have to quickly remind yourself of how the session will run
If working with a co-facilitator, go through the agenda together and divide up the sessions. Get to know each other’s strengths and weaknesses.

Think of a story based on your local religious beliefs that justifies why girls need to be taught MHM for Session 3. Put this on paper and make copies for participants if you can.

Small pieces of paper or Post-it notes for Session 3

For a group of six or more, make “agree” and “disagree” signs for Session 4

A piece of paper for each participant to write their lesson plan in Session 4

Example of the “staircase to success” drawn on a large piece of paper or the blackboard for Session 6

A large piece of paper for each participant to make their own “staircase to success” in Session 6

iv. REFERENCES

Training techniques in this manual were taken from Australian Environmental Student Network training handbooks. 
< http://asen.org.au/learn/activisteducation/>

Information on how to train adolescent girls on MHM found at: 

Information on myths and cultural practices that act as barriers to MHM and how to overcome them: http://menstrupedia.com/blog/category/menstrual-myths/
Welcome and introduction  Time: 10 minutes

Objectives: Introduce yourself, introduce the agenda, get an idea of how much experience training participants have in discussing this topic

ACTION

Welcome everyone to the training, telling them your name, and what you do as a peer educator. You could also tell the group about your experiences first learning about this topic and how you felt. You could then go on to say briefly how learning about it has helped you, and how you want other girls to know how to stay healthy. All of this will make participants feel more comfortable and willing to speak on this topic.

1. ICE-BREAKER EXERCISE

SPEAK UP

“Now that I’ve introduced myself, all of you can too. Going around the circle, tell us all your name, and then tell us what you expect to learn today.”

TIPS

Listen to each participant carefully. Participants will have more respect for you if you learn and use their names.

Equally important though, is what this exercise can tell you about how comfortable each participant is talking about this topic. They might answer the second part in the following ways:

a. avoid saying what they expect to learn, or go off topic, which shows that they aren’t comfortable talking about menstrual health. If the whole group answers in this way, you should use this manual as it is written.

b. say they are “expecting to learn more about menstrual health management, and how I can use this knowledge to help young girls”. This person is probably much more comfortable speaking about the topic, and is open to teaching it already. If you meet a whole group who answers like this, you could focus less on sessions 2 and 3, and put more emphasis on sessions 4, 5 and 6, so that participants can learn more about what to teach and how to teach it.

Note: You might find out why teachers are reluctant to talk about this topic further along in the training as well, for example, they might be most worried about the barriers they will face teaching girls, and so this could be the focus of your training.

2. TRAINING OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA
Have the agenda written on a piece of paper or on the blackboard in clear view for everyone to see.

**ACTION**

1. Go through the module objectives, listed on pages 1 and 2
2. Briefly talk about what each session will involve
3. Ask participants if they think anything should be added to the agenda for discussion. If it’s a topic you think you can manage, work out which session it could be incorporated into, or leave time to discuss it at the end. If you don’t know if this is something you know about, tell participants this will be discussed at the end, or direct them to another person they could ask.
Session 1: The problem  Time: 20 minutes

Objectives: Participants understand consequences of bad menstrual hygiene and can empathise with girls this happens to.

1. FACILITATOR BECOMES THE CASE STUDY – STORY TELLING

ACTION

Explain the following facts:

- Talking about menstruation is taboo in India
- As a result, 71% of girls in India reported that they are unprepared for their period
- 85% of girls reported not having access to proper facilities during menstruation, leading to bad hygiene and infection
- 66% of girls do not have access to private or functioning toilets in school. In absence of these, girls often miss school altogether.
- 87.5 million adolescent girls in India currently attend. 30% of these girls are at risk of dropping out due to lack of facilities required to manage menstruation at school.

Source: Action India <http://www.action-india.org/>

If you had bad experiences prior to learning menstrual health management, such as feeling scared, not knowing what to do, getting sick and even dropping out of school you can tell the group about this. Tell them how you felt during this time.

OR

If you had a friend, sister or even a daughter who experienced something like this, you can tell them her story.

OR

If you don’t want to share your own, or your friend’s experiences, or you didn’t have an experience like the one mentioned above, read out this story as though it happened to someone you knew:

“My friend Sapna was the top of 8th class at school with me. We all wanted to be teachers one day, and were jealous of Sapna because we knew she was the smartest and would get to be one. Then one day she started menstruating. She asked me if I knew what was happening, but back then I didn’t know anything about menarche, it hadn’t happened to me yet. She was very scared, and I was worried about her. Sapna tried to act like normal but the whole class noticed when she stood up from her chair and the blood had gone through her clothes. Some of the boys laughed at her, and the teacher sent her home. She didn’t come back to school for the rest of that week. When we saw her again on Monday she was very tired. It was hard for her to concentrate and catch up.
Four weeks later, the same thing happened. Sapna’s mother found out, and Sapna told me that her mother said that this was natural and that it happened to all girls. Hearing this made me worried as well. I didn’t want it to happen to me. Her mother told her to start using a cloth to absorb the blood. It was still hard for Sapna at school though, because she couldn’t change the cloth, and she told us it was uncomfortable. She still always felt weak during this time, and couldn’t concentrate at school. Eventually, Sapna developed an infection. She missed too many weeks at school, and when she came back she failed. She was really upset, because she knew that meant she could never be a teacher.”

TIPS
Hearing your experiences can connect participants with the statistics on a personal level as participants will be able to relate to this. The facts will begin to matter more. It will also make participants feel more comfortable about sharing their experiences, especially if you have shared your own.

2. PARTICIPANT REFLECTION
Minimum number of participants needed: 4
If there are less than 4 participants present, discuss as one group.

SPEAK UP
“In pairs, tell each other if you had an experience similar to mine/Sapna’s, or if you’ve known someone this has happened to.”

ACTION
Allow the group four minutes to discuss.

TIPS
If there is someone without a pair, you can pair up with them and listen to their experience. Otherwise, walk around the circle, and listen to what some of the pairs are saying.

SPEAK UP
“If you and the person you were working with is comfortable, tell the group about the other person’s experience.”

TIPS
The group may want to discuss this for several more minutes. Allow them to do so, as this will help them to realise how important it is that young girls learn about menstrual hygiene. Remember your role as facilitator – don’t let the conversation go off track, and don’t let it last too long. You need to keep the training moving.
Session 2: Role of the teacher Time: 20 minutes

Objectives: Develop understanding of how teachers are in the best position to give all of the girls in the village correct, consistent information about menstrual health management.

1. TEACHERS CAN CHANGE THE STORY

ACTION
Tell the participants a good experience you have had, or someone you know has had because they were told about menstrual health management by a teacher, and had someone to talk to.

It may be something like this:
“Even though I teach this topic to other girls, my daughter was too embarrassed to tell me when she began menstruating. There was a female teacher at her school who taught the class though, and when my daughter began menstruating her friends made her go and see the teacher who was able to give her sanitary napkins that a women’s group in the village make for the school. I’m very glad this happened and that my daughter didn’t miss any school.”

OR

If you are a peer educator, it might be something like this:
“I’m really glad I had a teacher who told me about menstrual health management so I didn’t feel scared or embarrassed. Like Sapna, I was too afraid to ask my mother. When it happened I knew nothing was wrong with me, and I knew what to do. I made sure I rested and ate really well too so that I had the energy to keep attending school everyday.”

2. POINTED QUESTIONING

Minimum number of participants needed: 4
If there are less than 4 participants present, discuss as one group.

ACTION
Group of less than four: Direct the questions to the whole group and discuss. During or after each question has been discussed, you may like to say the points in red.

Group of more than four: Ask the group to split into pairs once again, this time with a different person to last. Tell them you will discuss the question first in pairs for two minutes, and then some will share their thoughts with the larger group. You may like to walk around and speak to pairs, and can add the sample answers to the discussion, or you could say it once everyone has
finished explaining what they think. Once enough people have shared their answers, move on to the next question.

QUESTIONS AND SAMPLE ANSWERS

SPEAK UP

“Q. Do you think it’s important that girls get correct information on MHM so that they can stay healthy and keep attending school?”

“A Restless Development needs assessment found that mothers themselves did not think they knew everything there was to know about menstrual health management. Their daughters had been taught by teachers, and the mothers agreed that learning MHM this way was best for their daughters, especially as they are often too embarrassed to ask their mothers.

“Q. Whose opinion do you think young girls value more, their mothers, or their teachers?”

The same needs assessment found that girls always expect their teachers to know more than anyone else they know. They all idolised their teachers and aspired to become like them some day.

“Q. What do you think would be the best way for all of the girls in a village to learn correct information about MHM before they started menstruating?”

Again, you could mention that even mothers felt that the best way for their daughters to learn about this topic was from a teacher. Girls said the first people they would ask were their friends, however friends do not always have correct information themselves. If MHM was taught in schools, friends would be better equipped to help each other. Girls would feel as though they could approach their teacher about it, so they would have support. With both friends and teachers at school, being supportive, girls are more likely to continue attending.

“Q. Girls might learn about menstruation and their reproductive organs in science class, but do you think they are taught how to stay healthy? Do you think they should have a female teacher they can turn to for advice?”

Girls aren’t taught about their health in science. The topic is barely touched on. They are taught about their health in 11th and 12th class, but by this time they have been menstruating for years. In the Restless Development needs
assessment, all girls said that they wished they had been told about MHM prior to menarche.

**TIPS**

- Keep in mind that as facilitator you need to be flexible. Ask the next question when participants have finished discussing the last one, or when it fits into the conversation.

- Participants might argue here that girls could ask the local doctor, however the doctor won't see all girls. Local doctors often don’t know all of the correct information.

- Participants may talk about the problems with teaching girls at this point in the training. Remind them that you will cover this topic, and keep the discussion moving forward.
Session 3: Barriers teachers face  Time: 20 minutes

Objectives: Identify what barriers there are to teaching MHM, and how these can be overcome

1. POST-IT EXERCISE

SPEAK UP

“So we know that school teachers are in the best position to teach girls about MHM. Some of you may be feeling as though you want to teach this topic and help your students, but there are certain things stopping you. Can everyone write one thing that they think will stop them from teaching students on the paper that I give you. Please write clearly.”

ACTION
Give participants a small piece of paper and something to write with if they need it. Wait a minute for them to write their response.

SPEAK UP

“Okay, now everyone give their piece of paper to me.”

ACTION
Collect the pieces of paper. Read one of them out. It might fit into one of the following categories.

1. Students won’t take the teacher seriously in an MHM class
2. Parents won’t approve, and will be angry at teacher for telling their daughters this type of information
3. It is embarrassing to talk about

If it doesn’t fit into any of these categories, you might need to make a new one. Divide a large piece of paper into 3 to 4 sections, and place each piece of paper in them.

SPEAK UP

“All off these barriers have been overcome by people in various villages. We’ll now run through how to do this with each of these.”

“First, I’ll ask you, how do you think you could get your students to take this topic seriously?”

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

- Other organisations, such as SPECTRA, found that girls who are fourteen years of age and above will take these classes seriously, because they know they won’t be able to get this information anywhere else.
- You could ask an older student in to help you teach the class. Girls said they would take their peers seriously if they were trying to help them.
Explain the consequences of not knowing to girls, and why they need to take the topic seriously.

“If you find talking about this topic embarrassing, do you have any suggestions for how to make it less so?”

SAMPLE ANSWERS
- Keep in mind that what you’re talking about is natural. As facilitator, point out that you can talk about it with ease. The more practice you have, the better you get.
- Remember that it’s important to help these girls so that they don’t become one of the statistics.
- Remember it is your job to make sure girls don’t feel embarrassed in the future. They should one day feel comfortable speaking about the topic around men and boys without risking being teased. They shouldn’t have to hide something that is natural. If possible, classes should be taught to both boys and girls, so boys come to understand that this is not a taboo subject.

SPEAK UP
“Parents might not understand the need for their daughters to learn about MHM at first. It can take a lot to earn their trust, but as I said, it has been done before. A Restless Development needs assessment found that mothers felt that it was best for their daughters to learn about MHM from their teachers. They love their daughters, and want them to learn new information. If you are confronted by a parents, you can tell them this story.”

ACTION
The Restless Development needs assessment found that the best way to convince parents that their daughters should be taught MHM was through religious reasoning, along with a gradual build up of trust.

1. Make up an example of a religious story, based on your local village beliefs that could be used to justify why girls need to learn about proper Menstrual health Management.
2. Tell the teachers this story, and say they may like to use it themselves, or make up their own version.
3. If you have written the story down and been able to copy it, you can give a copy to each participant.

TIPS
- Another issue that may come up are the cultural practices which stop menstruation from being talked about. These, along with reasonings as to why these don’t apply anymore will be listed in Session 4. You may like to go over these now.
To gain parent’s trust, it helps if teachers have an open door policy. If parents want to come in and hear what is being taught, let them. The more people who learn MHM, the better.

EXERCISE: ROLE PLAY

ACTION
Work out which situation the participants are more concerned about. You will ask them to act out this situation. The rest of the class will watch the role play carefully. Afterwards, you will ask the group looking on to comment on what the person in the role play did well, and make suggestions for what they could have said or done to improve.

1. Students laughing: As facilitator, it is best for you to play the role of a troublemaker in class, as teachers might be offended if you put them in this position. Tell one teacher to play themselves, attempting to teach you about MHM. If you have a co-facilitator with you, pretend to know nothing about menstruation, and giggle and chatter with them, while the teacher works out how to get you to listen. You may like to also make some suggestions.

OR

2. Dealing with parents: As above, except tell one teacher to play the part of the difficult, concerned parent, and another teacher to play themselves. Let the role play go on for two or three minutes, or until the issue is resolved.
Session 4: MHM – teaching and practicing  Time: 25 minutes

Objectives: Understanding of what needs to be taught and who it needs to be taught to

1. MYTH BUSTING SPECTRUM

   TIPS
   - This exercise will work best with a larger group of six or more people, with at least two people who have talked about this before and are comfortable. If the group is smaller, or less experienced, frame the following statements as questions, and use them to start discussion.
   - This exercise is good for getting all participants involved, and can give them a boost of energy if they have stopped concentrating on what is happening in the training.

   NOTE: This exercise will only work if you think people in the training will have different opinions. If you think they will all agree that cultural practices such as girls not being allowed to bathe during menses are correct, then run this exercise like a normal discussion.

   ACTION
   Stick signs on opposite walls, one saying “agree” and the other saying “disagree”.

   SPEAK UP
   “I am going to make a statement. You might agree with it, or you might not. If you agree with it, but are unsure, you will stand close to the agree sign, but not all the way at that end. If you don't agree, nor disagree, you will stand in the middle of the room. If you're very sure that you agree, you will stand right next to the sign. The same goes for if you disagree. After you have had thirty seconds to decide where you stand, stop and talk to the person closest to you about why you're standing there. After you've talked about it for a minute, I will ask some people to report to the group about why they chose to stand where they are.”

   ACTION
   After following the above instructions, pick two to three people from different sides of the room to explain why they feel the way they do.

   These are the statements, along with answers, which you will need to explain if none of the participants do.

   “Girls should not bathe during their period”

   A. During times when people bathed in shared water sources such as rivers and ponds, a woman on her period may have contaminated it. We now have private places to wash with water from taps, so
contaminating other people’s water is no longer an issue. It’s essential that girls stay clean during their period, so they must be able to bathe.

“Girls are unclean during their period”

A. If girls are taught proper MHM, and are able to practice it, including being able to bathe, as suggested above, there is no way they can be viewed as unclean during this time.

“Girls should not come into the kitchen or touch food during their period”

A. Kitchens are areas that need to be kept clean. In the past, when women didn’t know proper menstrual hygiene, blood may have gotten onto the floor of mud-houses and stained the floor, attracting flies and other insects. Nowadays, girls are being taught proper MHM (thanks to people like these teachers), and this is not a problem.

“Girls should not leave the house during their period”

A. It may have been easier in the past for girls to stay inside the house during their period, because of lack of proper resources to manage their period, lack of awareness on how to manage this, and lack of hygiene. With access to proper resources, like sanitary napkins and understanding on how to look after themselves, girls can go out.

“Girls are now mature, and can leave school and should begin doing agricultural work instead.”

A. A statement from the UN said that for every year that a girl is educated, her future wage will go up by 10%. Educated girls are a great asset to their families and their country. They should all have the chance to become a teacher one day.

SPEAK UP

“You need to tell girls you classes these reasons so that they understand and are able to look after themselves. Girls will also often need to explain this to their parents, so ensure that they understand that a lot of these cultural practices are myths. They aren’t true.”

2. BRAINSTORM

TIPS
This exercise will work best with a more experienced group, or a group with one or two experienced individuals.

SPEAK UP
“Tell the group anything you already know about menstruation. We will make this fast, so there will be no comment on what anyone has said until afterward. Just say the first thing that comes into your mind.”

**ACTION**
Write answers down so that the whole group can see. Example answers could include:

Menstruation
- Start of a girl’s period
- It means that a girl can now have children
- When a girl begins to bleed from her vagina
- Happens around the time a girl’s breasts start developing, discharge from the vagina, hair growth in underarms and on and around labia
- Cramps
- Premenstrual syndrome

**SPEAK UP**
“Think of any questions you may have had as a young girl, or that young girls might have today in regards to menstruation. We will make a list and as a group, try to answer them at the end”

**ACTION**
Write down the list of questions, then encourage the participants to answer them.

Example questions might include:

“What do I do about the blood flow?”
It is best to use a sanitary napkin as they absorb moisture, keeping it away from the skin, preventing the growth of germs and bacteria. If sanitary napkins are too expensive, ensure that the cloth used has been washed properly and dried in the sun, or else it could cause infection. These need to be changed every two hours.”

“What do I do about cramps?”
Girls can apply a hot water bag to the affected area, however not straight onto the skin. It’s also important that they don’t take Baralgan tablets, as these severely weaken the immune system. Girls should not fast at this time either.

“What do I do with dirty cloths or sanitary napkins?”
It is preferable that girls use a sanitary napkin, which can be disposed of into a hole leading out to an incinerator. These are simple and cheap to install. If using a cloth, it must be washed properly and dried in the sun. When girls aren’t at home, they can put dirty cloths in a plastic bag to take home to be washed.”

“Why do I feel so tired during my period?”
Girls often feel tired during their period due to poor diet. It’s important that girls eat well, particularly around the time they will get their period. Eating lots of
fresh vegetables is important, but girls should be given the chance to rest while at home also.

3. STAYING CLEAN – QUESTIONS

ACTION
Ask the group how cleanliness and hygiene should be maintained by young girls. Write their answers on the board, or on a large piece of paper so all can see.

TIPS
If nobody makes a suggestion, ask that everyone go around in a circle making suggestions, beginning with yourself.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS
- Bathing regularly
- Keeping area around vagina clean
- Using clean underwear daily
- Use a sanitary napkin
- Use a clean, dry cloth if sanitary napkins are not available
- Wash hands with soap and water each time sanitary napkin or cloth is changed

4. HOW TO TEACH

ACTION
Ask teachers what they think the best way of teaching girls about menstruation and menstrual hygiene would be. Write these on the board or a large piece of paper.

Give the following answers to the class if any are not mentioned.

POSSIBLE ANSWERS
- Share experiences, as was done in the first session. This is one of the best methods, along with explaining how bad experiences can prevented, whether it has to do with infections, or myths.
- Tell religious stories that explain why girls need to stay clean
- Let girls ask questions and encourage the rest of the group to answer them
- Have girls write problems on pieces of paper which they scrunch up and give to the teacher. The teacher can explain the problems to the class, who together can try to answer them
- Ask the girls what they know about menstruation and menstrual health management, and correct and add to this
- Reason with girls about why myths that say girls are unclean during menstruation may be wrong
- Make sure there is a maximum of 15 girls in the class, so that girls feel comfortable participating

4. CREATE A LESSON PLAN
ACTION
Ensure that all teachers have pen and paper. Using the answers the participants have come up with as a group, ask them to create a lesson plan for teaching their students about menstruation and MHM. Give them 5 minutes to complete this task.

SPEAK UP
“You should have finished at least an outline of your lesson plan by now. Can someone please tell us how they plan to run their MHM lesson, and as a group we will give you feedback on what we think will work best, what we don't think will work, and what we think you need to add in.”

ACTION
Pick someone to read their plan if nobody volunteers. Let the group give most of the feedback, but ask questions that will lead them to think and give feedback on certain areas.
Session 5: Making schools a supportive place  Time: 10 minutes

Objectives: Gain understanding of what can be done to make school a supportive environment for girls while menstruating

SPEAK UP

“Girls need to feel comfortable changing sanitary napkins and clothes at school so that they can maintain proper hygiene. Not being able to change can distract girls from learning because of the discomfort it creates, as well as worry of embarrassment if it leaks. These factors can cause girls to avoid school during this period, resulting in them falling behind in their studies”

1. DRAW THE PERFECT SCHOOL BATHROOM

ACTION

Have a square drawn on the blackboard or a large piece of paper. Tell the participants that this is a school bathroom, and ask them to draw different things that need to be in the bathroom in order for school to be a safe and comfortable environment for girls on their period. Ask each participant who draws to explain to the class why the item is needed.

The below picture is an example of what the end product might look like:
ACTION
If participants don’t come up with these themselves, suggest them, or ask questions that will lead them to add them in. If they come up with extra things the bathroom would need, this is good.

Encourage participants to explain the purpose of these facilities, however if they don’t know the purpose of some things, tell them:

Private cubicles are required so that girls feel comfortable changing. If possible, the girl’s bathroom should be separate to the boys.

An incinerator or a deep pit is needed to dispose of sanitary napkins properly. Incinerators are best, and are cheap and easy to install, with a hole in the bathroom wall to put pads through, and another hole on the outside where a fire can be lit.

Plastic bags need to be provided for girls who can’t use sanitary napkins, and need to take used cloths home.

Running water and soap for girls to wash their hands properly.

Supportive teacher who can provide sanitary napkins to students, and can answer any questions girls have about menstruation and MHM.
1. STAIRCASE TO SUCCESS

ACTION
Draw an example staircase like the one below on a large piece of paper or the blackboard. Include only what has been drawn in orange, don’t add the black writing. Give participants one large piece of paper between two, and allow them to come up with their own goals and time limits. The black writing is only to help you understand the exercise and make suggestions to participants as they work through the exercise. Allow participants 10 minutes to make their plan.

SPEAK UP
“We’re going to make a plan now for how to teach girls how to stay healthy, along with how we will provide them with safe, supportive environments at school. This is our end goal, up here at the top of these stairs. Each step leading up to our end goal represents a mini goal that will help us reach the top. You also need to think about how much time it will take you to go up each step. Get into pairs and on the piece of paper I give you, make your own set of stairs with our end goal at the top. You can have as many steps in your staircase as you want, and each step can take as much time as you think you need. Try to set your plan so that you will complete it as quickly as possible, but ensure that it is still achievable. You have 7 minutes.”
SPEAK UP
“Now can I ask one or two pairs to share their plan, and we will again provide feedback.”

ACTION
Choose two pairs to share their plans if nobody speaks up. Give them feedback on areas of their plan such as whether the time limits they have set themselves are achievable, or if they have missed a step, such as creating a private place for girls.
Feedback and closing discussion  Time: 5 minutes

**SPEAK UP**
“Going around the circle, tell the group the most important thing you learnt today, and what part of this training you didn’t think worked well”

**TIPS**
- This exercise will tell you how well the training has worked. The parts people remember and think worked well are what you have done well, and you may have to do what they think didn’t work differently next time.

**ACTION**
Thank the participants for attending the training. Ask them if they have anything else to ask you, reminding them that if they need more information, this is the best time to get it.