

Status of School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Facilities in Addressing Gender Needs for Menstrual Hygiene Management and its Effect on Schoolgirls

Angela Shija¹, Judith Msovela¹, Calister Imelda¹, Erick Mgina¹, Aidat Mugula², Anastazia Egidio³

¹National Institute for Medical Research

²Kasole Secrets Company

³People's Development Forum

Background: Adequate Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities are essential for proper Menstrual Hygiene and Management (MHM) in school. These facilities must address the gender needs that will assist girls in managing their menses while in school comfortably, with confidence, and in hygienic ways. This is important to make schoolgirls stay in school and enjoy their studies. Objective: To assess the status of school WASH facilities in addressing gender needs for Menstrual Hygiene Management and its effect on schoolgirls in selected six public secondary schools from Kibaha Town Council.

Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted in March 2020. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used in data collection. Minimum standards for school WASH provided by the National guideline for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene for Tanzania schools that are linked to MHM were used for this assessment.

Results: WASH facilities in most schools do not meet the minimum specified standards by the national guideline for supporting MHM in schools. Some of the facility challenges found were insufficient number of latrine holes and water supply for self-cleansing in the toilet; lack of cleaning equipment for toilets; absence of handwashing facilities close to the toilet and soap for handwashing; inadequate supply of sanitary bin in girls latrine and disposal facilities. These challenges were reported contributing to mental stress during menstruation, poor attendance to school, skipping class sessions, and increased risk of infections to girls.

Conclusion: Budget allocation for school WASH facilities should consider gender needs for MHM to support girls enjoy their studies, feeling safe, and reach their full potential. This is important to improve gender equity in access to education rights. Therefore, community empowerment and multisector collaborative efforts are highly recommended to improve this situation.

