

Fund Learning & Reflection Event

Brisbane
August 1st - 4th 2017



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



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The background features a large, light green circle on the left side, partially overlapping a white circle on the right. The white circle has a subtle, textured pattern. The overall design is clean and modern.

WASH in Schools: Menstrual Hygiene Management

MHM in Schools in Solomon Islands

WASH in Schools: Menstrual Hygiene Management

Live & Learn works with schools in the South Pacific to improve water, sanitation and hygiene access, including the issue of menstruation. Menstrual hygiene is addressed through three areas:

- Providing menstrual hygiene management **guidance**
- Improving the physical and social **facilities** in the school
- The distribution of menstruation **products**



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28 May
**MENSTRUAL
HYGIENE DAY**

[#Menstruationmatters](#)

“In our school we often talk to the girls and boys about menstruation.

On Menstruation Health Day the students become our audience and we share our stories through drama.

Now the girls are comfortable talking about it, and the boys respect them.”

Guidance:

- Live & Learn staff spend time with school leadership and teachers, encouraging open discussion about menstruation, and a participatory assessment of school water and sanitation facilities for girls and female teachers.
- Information is provided to teachers, school leaders, parents and students on the impact of girls staying home from school during their monthly menstruation. The schools then plan activities to reduce the social taboo concerning discussion of menstruation.
- Activities have included discussion groups, student clubs conducting awareness and information sessions to other students and parents, and special events in the school that focus on respect, dignity and raising funds for menstruation products.



“I love my girls.
Now they feel safe
at school when they
have their period.”



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Facilities:

- When Live & Learn starts working with a school a participatory assessment of water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure and practice is done based on the UNICEF Bottleneck Analysis approach. The school is coached to develop an action plan to improve water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure and services, leveraging all sources of support the school can access. Live & Learn facilitates this in some partner schools through connecting the school to community-based sanitation enterprises who can provide improved school toilet facilities.
- In one school in New Ireland, PNG, all 300 students and 13 staff were sharing two pit toilets (a toilet:student ratio of 1:150) The school management worked with a local sanitation enterprise to construct a permanent toilet block with a septic tank and two more improved pit toilets. The school now has eight toilets – four for boys and four for girls – and a toilet:student ratio of 1:37.
- Parents, school management, teachers and students contributed money and labour towards the cost of the toilet block. There were many immediate positive impacts, but one father told Live & Learn that since the opening of the new toilet block he is no longer worried about his girls having their period at school.



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Products:

- Accessing menstruation products is an ongoing headache for women and girls. Menstruation products are expensive, and items like food and other basic needs are priorities. In some places sanitary products are just not available.
- Many girls have to use reusable cloth, but they struggle to wash them without adequate access to soap or clean water. Many women and girls can miss work or school due to vaginal infections caused by unsafe menstruation materials.
- Schools partnering with Live & Learn are addressing access to menstruation products in different ways. Some schools have students bring products at the beginning of the year to the school that are available for girls when they need them. Other schools have conducted fundraising events to purchase sanitary pads. In Vanuatu Live & Learn connected our 8 partner schools to the Mama Laef Washable Sanitary Pad project. This is a project provides Washable Sanitary Pad kits sewn by local women. The kits last for three years.

MHM in Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands L&L began work with 2 pilot Schools, Illia and Koloale.

Some of the challenges faced included:

- Menstruation was considered a taboo subject
- Teachers were ill prepared and uncomfortable to discuss
- Unsuitable or poorly maintained facilities (e.g. no separate toilets for boys & girls, not enough toilets for number of students, no locks on doors, no bins for disposal of sanitary items)
- MHM not seen as a priority by Schools

MHM in Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands L&L have address those challenges by:

- Training both female and male teachers on MHM
- Forming WASH Health Clubs in the schools
- Set up WASH Committees in each of the schools
- Training teachers and parents in the operation and maintenance of sanitation facilities
- Advocated with MoE for WASH to be included in school budgets
- Working with the schools to develop WASH action plans
- Assisted schools to seek out external funds to improve or build sanitation infrastructure



MHM in Solomon Islands

Some successes so far include:

- The students are using the improved facilities and now have basic knowledge on the hygienic disposal of sanitary items (bins are now provided) and on how to maintain the cleanliness of the facility.
- Students are now more comfortable expressing their needs in regard to MHM to teachers and the mentors
- School Managers took the lead advocating for MHM during the World Menstrual Hygiene Day celebrations



Tips or Lessons Learned

- Encouraging the school leadership and teachers to feel comfortable talking about menstruation issues at school
- Empowering students to talk about their own experiences, and the benefits to older girls of improved toilets
- Engaging parents, particularly male relatives, in taking action to improve menstruation facilities at the schools

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