



AUGUST 2021

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE*

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Women and girls all over the world experience challenges managing their periods, especially those who live and work in environments that do not support adequate menstrual hygiene management (MHM). For working women, these challenges may have critical implications for their health and general well-being, as well as for economic outcomes such as work attendance, performance, and earnings. To better understand the relationship between menstrual health and hygiene and women's economic empowerment, the USAID Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Partnerships and Learning for Sustainability (WASHPaLS) project is undertaking action research to assess the benefits and costs of improving menstrual health and hygiene in the workplace, for women workers and the enterprises that employ them. The overall objective is to determine if providing adequate MHM in the workplace contributes to improved business and social outcomes, including women's economic empowerment.

WORKPLACES

The *MHM in the Workplace* action research interventions are being implemented over a 9-11 month period in four workplaces: two carpet and rug manufacturing businesses in Nepal, a textile factory in Kenya, and a garment manufacturer in Kenya.

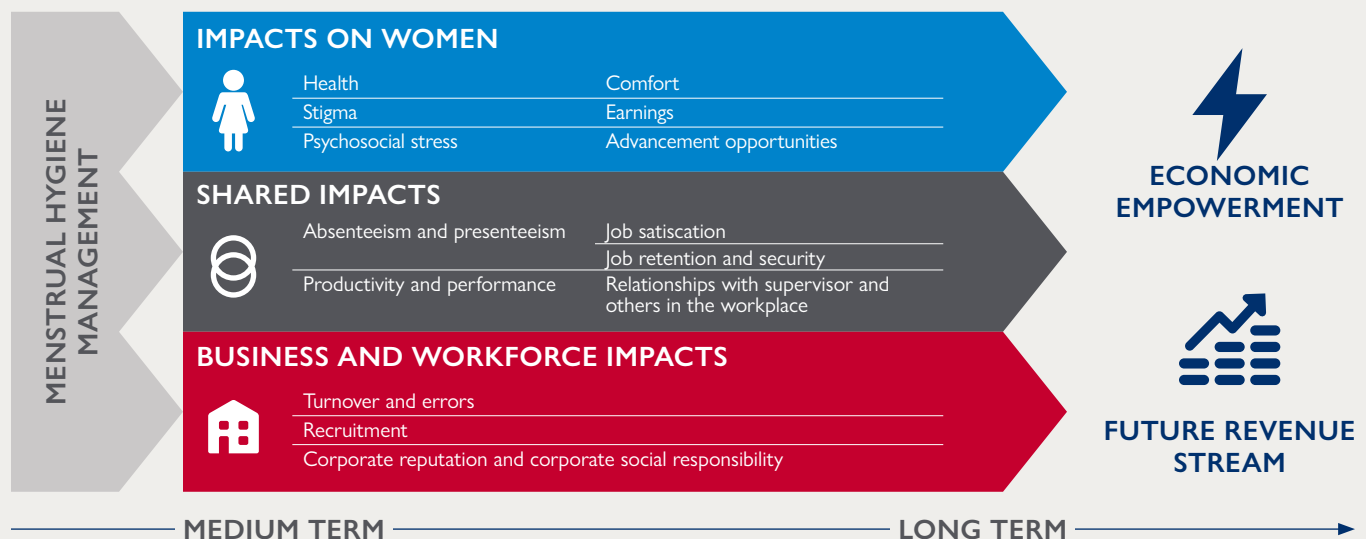


ADEQUATE MHM IS DEFINED AS WOMEN HAVING:

- a awareness, information, and self-confidence regarding menstrual hygiene;
- b access to safe/hygienic, affordable, accessible, acceptable, and absorbent materials or products and supplies;
- c access to safe and clean facilities that are equipped with water and soap to cleanse oneself and clean or dispose of materials;
- d supporting environment that allows women and girls to manage their periods without fear of stigma or embarrassment; and,
- e improved MHM practices

(Patkar, 2011; Sommer et al., 2016; Sommer & Caruso, 2015; WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2015).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



* MHM is a subset of USAID's holistic approach to Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH)

INTERVENTION

The *MHM in the Workplace* interventions focus on three broad elements, which together seek to improve menstrual health and hygiene in each workplace. Key illustrative intervention activities in each country are as follows:

	PRODUCTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE Increases access to menstrual products and improves infrastructure.	WORKPLACE POLICIES AND GUIDANCE Creates a supportive policy environment for working women to manage their periods.	EDUCATION AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION (BCC) Promotes education and behavior change based on the contextual realities of each factory.
NEPAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide menstrual products (disposable pads, reusable pads, underwear; in Kenya also offered menstrual cups) in 'Dignified Workplace' and menstrual wellness bags at launch plus routine distribution and products education. Conduct infrastructure assessment and advise on infrastructure changes that support female-friendly toilets. Encourage systems-level enhancements, including education to best support MHM-friendly workplace systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct policy analysis to recommend and offer technical assistance on policy amendments to all workplaces. At the invitation of the MHM Partners Alliance of Nepal, provide input to the Government of Nepal National Planning Commission's MHM Advisory Board and Concept Document. Develop a national-level MHM in the Workplace Policy document. Convene and draw on members of the Workplace MHM Advisory Committee to support policy changes and link with National Policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate Appreciative Inquiry sessions with managers and leadership to encourage support for adequate workplace MHM, promote approachability and confidentiality, and challenge menstrual stigma. Develop and utilize edutainment video to address menstrual health and hygiene-related beliefs and behaviors. Develop and utilize playing cards and snakes & ladders games for employees and their families in support of menstrual health and hygiene. Facilitate education and sensitization sessions for employees on topics like menstrual physiology and menstrual health, menstrual hygiene, menstrual myths, and more. Facilitate MHM sensitization sessions and discussions with MHM Champions, nurse/first aid provider, toilet facility cleaners, guards, and worker relations representatives. Develop and utilize BCC materials to accompany sensitization and lunch sessions. Facilitate Appreciative Inquiry session with women employees to overcome the culture of suffering, silence, and shame related to menstruation.
KENYA			

ASSESSING IMPACT

The *MHM in the Workplace* interventions will be evaluated to answer two key research questions:

- 1 How does the workplace menstrual health and hygiene intervention contribute to adequate MHM?
- 2 What are the financial and social costs and benefits—for women employees and the company—of improving MHM in the workplace?

Both research questions will be investigated using data collected from a mixed methods approach at baseline and endline. Research participants include women and men employees, supervisors, management and senior leadership and owners, and other critical staff (e.g. nurse/doctor). A complete set of findings will be available in a forthcoming, final project report in January 2022. For the second research question, the team will conduct a cost-benefit analysis (CBA).

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) evaluates:

- 1 the return-on-investment (ROI) for factories; and
- 2 the social benefits of the intervention through a discrete choice willingness-to-pay experiment.

To determine the ROI for factories implementing the intervention, the project is collecting data on factory productivity, including employee absences, turnover rates, and errors. Data will be used to determine the business case for improved menstrual health and hygiene in the private sector. To assess the value of the social benefits, the project will use a willingness to pay experiment where participants place a value on the changes in the workplace from the intervention. As the first available data on the benefits and costs of workplace MHM programs, results will inform future programming and policy in workplace MHM.



Learn more about
WASHPaLS at
globalwaters.org/washpals