

HYGIENE FOR THE GIRL CHILD IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

What Parents and Teachers Need to Know



unicef 

Ministry of Education & Sports/UNICEF-JANUARY 2005

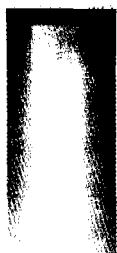
205.1-05HY-19236

HYGIENE FOR THE GIRL CHILD IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

What Parents and Teachers Need to Know

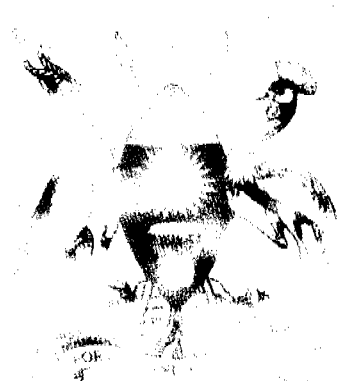
BC 19736
LO 205.1 05 HY





CONTENT

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Status of hygiene for the girl child in schools**
- 3. Facts about the body development and hygiene of the girl child**
- 4. Effects of lack of appropriate girls hygiene facilities in schools**
- 5. Benefits of good hygiene for girls in schools**
- 6. Counseling of the girl child**
- 7. Roles and responsibilities of parents, teachers and school authorities in the promotion of girls' hygiene**
- 8. Conclusion**



INTRODUCTION

The sanitation condition in Ugandan schools is still below the expected standards. Sanitation related diseases are the greatest cause of illness and death to our children and more so to the girl-child. Therefore, observation of personal hygiene is a challenge to the girl child due to lack of appropriate facilities in most schools and at home.

Girl child hygiene is the provision and maintenance of cleanliness for the girl child to ensure her comfort, preservation of good health and prevention of disease. Girls have special hygiene needs especially when they become adolescents as this is when menstruation periods usually start.

This information is for parents, headteachers, teachers, School Management Committee and members of Parents Teachers Association in Ugandan schools.

STATUS OF GIRL'S HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS

Studies and reports have shown that:

- Less than 50% of the schools have separate latrines for girls. Lack of latrines, especially separate latrines for girls, was identified as the worst school experience for girls (*Carasco et al, 1996*).
- Girls in their menstruation period have no place that is safe and private to bath or change at school. This forces them to go to neighboring homes to change or they remain home during their menstruation period.
- The dropout rate of 9.2% is higher for girls between P 5 - P 7, than that of Boys (8.4%) in the same classes. This dropout rate coincides with onset of puberty among girls in higher primary school level.
- There is lack of emergency sanitary materials in most schools.
- There is inadequate counseling for the girls especially on issues of menstruation.

EFFECTS OF LACK OF APPROPRIATE GIRLS' HYGIENE FACILITIES IN SCHOOLS

- ◆ High dropout-rate in schools
- ◆ Poor academic performance
- ◆ Time lost due to sickness
- ◆ Absenteeism due to lack of good sanitation facilities for girls
- ◆ Low self esteem
- ◆ Depression due to frustration during menstruation
- ◆ High disease prevalence

BENEFITS OF GOOD GIRL CHILD HYGIENE IN SCHOOLS

- ◆ Improved school completion rate
- ◆ Improved academic performance
- ◆ Reduced absenteeism
- ◆ Better self esteem and confidence
- ◆ Brighter future for the girl child
- ◆ A healthier nation

FACTS ABOUT THE BODY DEVELOPMENT AND HYGIENE OF THE GIRL CHILD

As the girl child grows into adolescence, she experiences physical, emotional and psychological changes. This is the period when sanitation hygiene, guidance and counseling are very vital for the her.

NEEDS OF GIRLS DURING MENSTRUATION PERIODS

Information and Education prior to menstruation time:

- ◆ Knowing the body changes
- ◆ That menstruation is normal
- ◆ Appropriate methods of handling it hygienically
- ◆ Appropriate materials to be used and their proper disposal
- ◆ Importances of eating a balanced diet especially foods rich in iron, like millet, greens and taking plenty of fluids.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:

- ◆ Counseling the girl to avoid frustration
- ◆ Adequate attention to emotional needs

OTHER SUPPORT IN CASE OF PAINFUL PERIODS AND OTHER COMPLICATIONS:

- ◆ Use of hot water bottle or small jerrycan
- ◆ Avoiding fatty foods
- ◆ Avoid caffeine drinks
- ◆ Do regular exercises

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILDREN DURING THIS PERIOD

- ◆ Give sanitary materials, emotional and financial support where necessary
- ◆ Accept the children as they are
- ◆ Build a good relationship to encourage openness in discussion
- ◆ Encourage children to discuss anything freely with you
- ◆ Be a good listener
- ◆ Be empathetic



Provision of clean absorbent and adequate materials

COUNSELING AS A CRUCIAL ROLE OF PARENTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

WHY COUNSEL GIRLS?

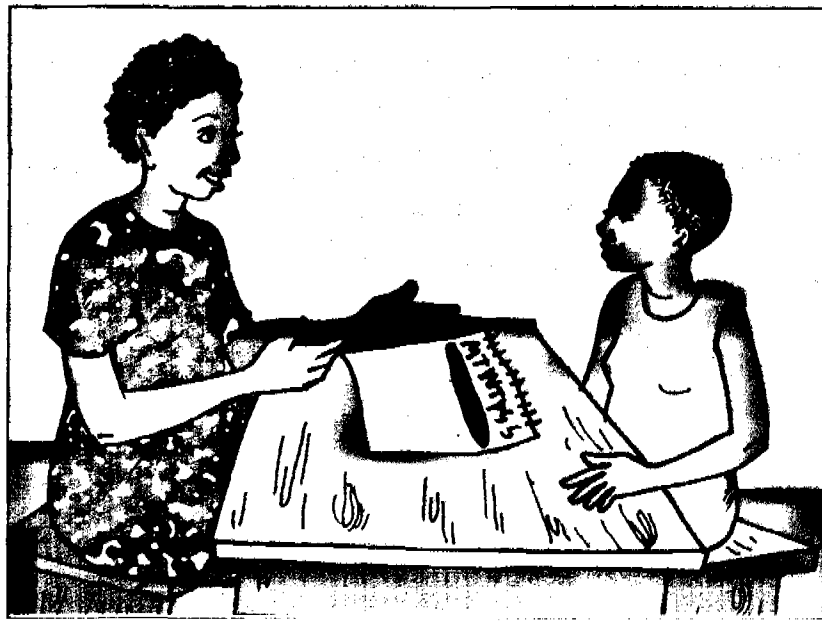
- ◆ Girls prior to and during menstruation need opportunities to talk about how they can cope with the experience.
- ◆ All family members need to help and adjust to experiences met. The adjustments are both practical and psychological. They vary from materials to financial issues.
- ◆ There is need to counsel in order to clarify existing myths about menstruation.

In this process, counseling will help girls cope with changes in their bodies.

WHO SHOULD COUNSEL?

Parents, teachers, and medical staff have a crucial role to play in counseling in their respective capacities. However, peer to peer counseling is also possible.





Individual counseling

WHEN TO COUNSEL

Counseling should begin whenever a concern is observed, reported or expected. In this case, counseling should be done prior to and during menstruation. Girls should be counseled until they are able to fully support themselves.

WHERE TO COUNSEL

- ◆ Counseling should be done in a place free from interference and comfortable for the person.

STEPS IN COUNSELING

- ◆ Develop rapport
- ◆ Listen to the individual
- ◆ Ask probing, clarifying, refocussing, leading questions but not accusing ones
- ◆ Give possible suggestions for person to choose from
- ◆ Leave the individual to make decisions and the way forward
- ◆ Make a follow up



TIPS FOR COUNSELING

- ◆ Be open and talk freely; this will encourage the person to talk also
- ◆ Show interest and ease - it will help them to trust you
- ◆ Listen to what has not been said and any underlying causes
- ◆ Be observant
- ◆ Do not exploit person
- ◆ Find out what they know about menstruation and continue from there
- ◆ Ask others to help especially if you are not sure
- ◆ Answer children's questions without beating about the bush. If you do not know, tell them you will find out
- ◆ Remember how you felt about the issue when you were young, it will help you to help your own child
- ◆ Give positive messages
- ◆ Avoid being judgmental
- ◆ Ensure confidentiality
- ◆ Do not burden person with your own problems
- ◆ If you have failed , do not insist but refer to another person

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS, TEACHERS AND SCHOOL AUTHORITIES IN THE PROMOTION OF GIRLS' HYGIENE

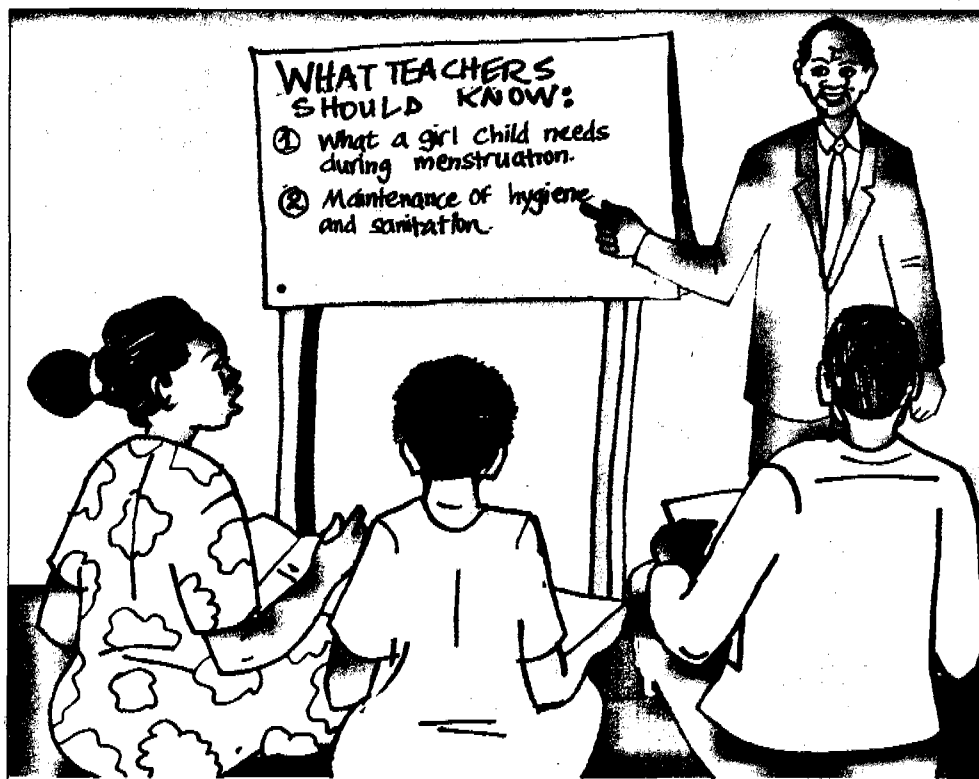
PARENTS

- ◆ Educate girls and boys on the experiences of menstruation way before the period starts
- ◆ Provide their children with necessary requirements like pants and appropriate sanitary materials
- ◆ Be knowledgeable about good hygiene and sanitation practices especially with child friendly usable sanitary materials
- ◆ Regular supervision of general personal and environmental hygiene
- ◆ Support schools in promoting good hygiene and sanitation through material support and visiting the schools
- ◆ Protect children from being misguided by myths

- ◆ Fathers should also get involved in their daughters' lives and not leave all the responsibility to their wives.

HEAD TEACHERS

- ◆ Re-orient teachers and pupils on sanitary/hygiene issues
- ◆ Encourage teachers to prepare girls for body changes and their need for proper personal hygiene.
- ◆ Monitor the use and maintenance of installed hygiene and sanitation facilities in the school.
- ◆ Equip staff with adequate logistical support.
- ◆ Provide for gender balance in hygiene/sanitation facilities favorable for the girl child.
- ◆ Sensitize the support staff about proper cleaning, handling and storage of hygiene/sanitation equipment.



TEACHERS

- ◆ Supervise/monitor and involve children in cleaning the sanitation/ hygiene facilities available in the school.
- ◆ Organize inter-class hygiene/sanitation competitions.
- ◆ Teach the girl child facts about body changes and related hygiene practices.
- ◆ Relate sanitation teaching to real sanitation practices
- ◆ Organize and integrate hygiene/sanitation messages into real life experiences through poems, music, dance and drama activities.
- ◆ Provide practical experiences in the content reflected in the curriculum regarding hygiene and sanitation
- ◆ Collaborate with the community resource persons.
- ◆ Ensure cleaning of sanitation/hygiene facilities is not seen as punishment.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/PTA

- ◆ Support the provision of adequate hygiene facilities in the school.
- ◆ Develop work plans, support and approve budgets as an integral part of the school development plan.



CONCLUSION

The girl child is a future wife, mother, and career woman. "*Educate a mother and you will have educated a nation*".

Parents, teachers and school authorities need to be responsive and empathetic to the girls' hygienic and sanitation challenges. You need to give appropriate materials, emotional and financial support where necessary. You need to accept the children as they are and build a good relationship to enforce openness in discussion. Let us all help our children stay in school and complete school.



