

Research into Use Summary

- 1. Research Project:** A roundtable meeting to develop a proposal for researching the impacts of menstrual hygiene management on health and education outcomes for adolescent girls in South Asia
- 2. Lead researcher:** Therese Mahon, WaterAid
- 3. SHARE Partners:** WaterAid, LSHTM
- 4. Research budget:** £9,410
- 5. Location:** UK

Research description:

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a much neglected issue within the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector. To address this significant gap in knowledge, a two-day roundtable meeting was held in London in November 2010 to explore MHM. A total of 16 participants from SHARE partners (WaterAid and LSHTM) and other agencies concerned with WASH (including UNICEF and WSSCC) took part. Their expertise covered many disciplines, including health, equity and inclusion, education and gender, and they shared experiences from Tanzania, India, Nepal and Bangladesh. Ideas for collaborative action from the meeting included building a community of practice that supports action and exchange on MHM, and supporting research, including SHARE initiatives, on this subject.

What is the relevance of the research to national and/or global sector challenges?

There is a need for a robust and rigorous methodology to collect authoritative evidence on MHM. Such evidence will provide a better understanding of the impact of poor menstrual hygiene on health and education outcomes, and will provide a foundation which can be used to develop appropriate interventions for policy and practice. Existing studies are based on different methodologies and have generated conflicting evidence. They often rely mostly on self-reporting from women and girls and do not tend to support their findings with sound scientific analysis. Through the production of robust research, policies and programmes can be developed to address the issues surrounding MHM.

Who are the intended users of this research?

The roundtable meeting identified the gaps surrounding MHM, including its neglect by sanitation, health and education policies, and the absence of user satisfaction surveys or systematic evaluation. This shared understanding of the state of knowledge on MHM is valuable for SHARE partners and other agencies concerned with WASH, equity and gender, health and education. Recommendations for action to address these gaps included making it an agenda item for any advocacy work in the sector, building a community of practice among the participants (SHARE partners and external stakeholders) and supporting SHARE initiatives on MHM. A briefing note based on the meeting has been written, made publicly available on the SHARE website and has been disseminated within the SHARE consortium and to a broad range of users. It is available at: http://www.sharereresearch.org/LocalResources/Menstrual_hygiene_management_Briefing_note.pdf .

