

# Research into Use Summary

- 1. Research project:** *Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM): What works? Synthesising existing knowledge to develop guidelines and an online forum for practitioners*
- 2. Lead researcher:** *Therese Mahon, WaterAid*
- 3. SHARE partners:** *WaterAid, LSHTM*
- 4. Research budget:** *£14,950*
- 5. Location:** *Global*

## Research description:

This research aims to highlight successful approaches to MHM in developing countries (particularly in Africa and Asia), as well as to understand the impact of general menstrual hygiene practices on health and education. The first stage of this research will involve a literature review to assess the various MHM approaches which have been adopted throughout Asia and Africa. Critical issues identified shall be further explored through a set of semi-structured interviews with the intent of shedding light on those practices which have been particularly successful. The literature review will also seek to expand on the core elements of MHM programmes to understand their role at different levels (home, community, school and national campaigns). Lastly, a research proposal shall be developed providing a case for further investigation on the health and education outcomes of improved menstrual hygiene.

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

Maintaining hygienic standards during menstruation is of utmost importance for the well-being, dignity and mobility of women and girls. The topic of menstruation, however, remains a cultural and religious taboo affecting gender equity. These issues were raised at a SHARE-funded roundtable meeting on MHM in November 2010 and the discussions highlighted the lack of systematic studies analysing best practices in MHM. Therefore, it was thought necessary to explore the various options used, highlighting those which have proved to be particularly successful. The limited number of studies available regarding short and long term health and education impacts associated with the usage of unhygienic materials during menstruation was also noted. Further investigation is required to confirm this idea and assess possible courses of action. This information will provide the basis for further research in this area.

## Who are the intended users of this research?

The data collected on the core elements of MHM programmes is expected to be synthesised into a practitioner's manual and targeted at workers in the hygiene sector. This manual will be complemented with a catalogue of existing resources and documentation regarding MHM programmes to enable the replication of the approaches discussed. Making information easily accessible is central to this research in order to increase awareness amongst communities, practitioners and policy-makers. A summary of the research findings will be made publicly available on the SHARE website and will be disseminated within the SHARE consortium and to a broad range of users. This will help to bridge the gaps which are currently observed in the menstrual hygiene sector, thereby encouraging programme managers and policy-makers to prioritise this neglected issue.

