

Policy Recommendations for National Menstrual Hygiene Management in Ugandan Primary and Secondary School

Simone Wahnschafft

POLICY PROPOSAL

ABSTRACT: For the past twenty years, Uganda has made significant strides in increasing access to education for all of its citizens, particularly with the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) schemes, both of which sought to eliminate monetary barriers for children to attend public schools. However, a gender gap persists in the completion of both primary and secondary school in Uganda, as girls are significantly more likely to drop out of school than boys. Several studies have pointed to poor menstrual hygiene management in schools as an important determinant of school absenteeism amongst girls in Uganda. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) can be defined as the articulation, awareness, information and confidence to manage menstruation with safety and dignity using safe hygienic materials together with adequate water and spaces for washing and bathing and disposal with privacy and dignity. An estimated 3.75 million Ugandan schoolgirls currently live without access to proper sanitary care. Not only is this a fundamental issue of ethical and human rights concern, but one with far reaching societal impacts. As an important determinant of completion of primary and secondary school education amongst girls, MHM impacts facets of society such as teenage marriage and childbearing, total fertility rate (TFR) and infant and child mortality rates. This is particularly concerning in Uganda given that the country currently faces dangerous population growth that threatens to further strain the country's available resources. Therefore, menstrual hygiene management is ultimately a public health concern and must be addressed as such at the national level. The objective of this paper is to elucidate the current state of policy interventions in Uganda aimed at addressing MHM in primary and secondary schools, identify the gaps that remain, and make evidence-based, comprehensive recommendations for addressing menstrual hygiene management at the national level.

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2017

SCHOOL: COL

MAJOR: Biology of Global Health

MENTOR: Dr. Alayne Adams (Dept. of International Health)