



# **POLICY BRIEF**

## **Creating Period-Friendly Institutions Through Policy Reform**



# **Strengthening Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in National School Health and WASH Policies**

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- Federal Ministry of Education
  - Federal Ministry of Health
  - State Ministries of Education and Health
  - Ministries of Women Affairs, Youth and Religious Affairs,
  - Faith Institutions, CSOs, and Development Partners
  - Federal and State governments, working with all.

## Executive Summary



**M**enstruation should never be a barrier to dignity, education, or full participation in public life. Yet in Nigeria, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) remains a neglected area of school and public policy, despite its mention in the 2006 National School Health Policy and the 2015 School WASH Guidelines.

These documents offer insufficient, non-enforceable guidance and lack strong monitoring or budgeting mechanisms. Girls across Nigeria face stigma, poor sanitation

infrastructure, lack of supplies, and missed school days due to inadequate menstrual hygiene support. This brief calls for urgent policy updates and implementation to institutionalize menstrual hygiene across all public institutions.

## Background

Millions of girls and women in Nigeria continue to face challenges managing menstruation with dignity due to poor infrastructure, lack of awareness, and weak institutional support. Globally, poor menstrual hygiene is associated with a 10–20% increase in school absenteeism among girls. In Nigeria, where only 43% of schools have basic water services and less than 20% have gender-segregated sanitation (UNICEF, 2022), the impact is especially severe. Although national frameworks mention menstrual health, they fall short of offering enforceable or adequately funded standards.

## Key WASH & Menstrual Health Statistics

01

1 in 10 African girls misses school during menstruation due to lack of access to safe and private toilets, sanitary products, or clean water.

02

In Nigeria, only 16% of schools have gender-sensitive WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) facilities that meet the needs of menstruating girls (UNICEF, 2022).

03

Over 25% of girls in rural Nigerian communities report using unsafe alternatives like tissue, rags, or leaves due to the unaffordability of sanitary pads.

04

70% of schools surveyed in sub-Saharan Africa lacked functional handwashing facilities (WASH in Schools Monitoring, WHO/UNICEF).

05

Globally, only 39% of schools provide menstrual health education, and less than 31% have bins for menstrual waste in girls' toilets, highlighting the need for improved facilities.

## POLICY GAPS IDENTIFIED

①

**No dedicated standards for MHM infrastructure (bins, water, private toilets, product supply).**

②

**Weak or absent training for school staff, matrons, and faith leaders on supporting menstruating girls.**

③

**No provision for emergency sanitary product access in schools or public institutions.**

④

**Limited budget allocations for menstrual hygiene improvements.**

⑤

**No integration of menstrual health indicators in national monitoring systems.**

## Policy Recommendations

### Ministries and Policymakers

- 1. Revise the National School Health Policy**  
to dedicate a full section to MHM with enforceable standards.
- 2. Update School WASH Guidelines**  
to mandate gender-segregated toilets with privacy, disposal bins, water, and soap.
- 3. Include MHM indicators**  
in education and health monitoring systems for accountability.
- 4. Allocate dedicated budgets**  
in annual education, health, and youth development plans for MHM facilities and supplies.

### Schools, Faith Institutions, and Public Spaces

- 5. Install Covered Bins and Washing Facilities**  
Ensure all female restrooms have lidded bins, clean water, and soap.
- 6. Stock Emergency Menstrual Kits**  
Schools, churches, and public youth spaces should have free menstrual products available.
- 7. Train Frontline Workers**  
Build the capacity of teachers, matrons, and religious leaders to address menstruation with empathy and knowledge.
- 8. Integrate Menstrual Health into Curricula**  
Embed age-appropriate menstrual health education in life skills, health, and religious instruction.

### Civil Society and Development Partners

9. **Co-create Culturally Relevant Programs**  
Work with adolescent girls to develop inclusive MHM initiatives.
10. **Run Public Awareness Campaigns**  
Use community and faith platforms to break stigma and normalize menstruation.

## Call to Action

We call on government bodies, faith institutions, NGOs, school authorities, and donors to take concrete steps to create period-friendly environments in Nigeria. Specifically:

- Update outdated WASH and health policies to include enforceable MHM standards.
- Establish menstrual hygiene budget lines and track implementation.
- Include MHM as a component of gender equity and inclusive education.
- Partner with youth- and women-led organizations to scale locally rooted solutions.

## Conclusion

Menstrual hygiene management is fundamental to girls' rights, health, education, and dignity. It is not a luxury but a necessity. The Federal Government, working with all sectors, must act decisively to ensure that menstruation is never a barrier to a girl's future.

## Contact

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  The Healthy African Girl Foundation

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