



AFRICAN COALITION
FOR MENSTRUAL
HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Newsletter

December 2018

A turning point for menstrual health management in Africa



It's been an exciting year for the advancement of menstrual health rights for women, girls and other people who menstruate across Africa, and we look forward to the possibilities of 2019!

Photos Credit: UNFPA Kenya

The year 2018 was historic for menstrual health management (MHM) in Africa as it was the year when bold and action-oriented decisions were taken in an effort to address the numerous challenges faced by women, girls and other people who menstruate.

Following its launch at the first East and Southern Africa Symposium on Menstrual Health Management, more than 400 practitioners in the field have signed to become members of the newly established African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management (ACMHM), with the aim of strengthening their voices and calls

to address challenges in menstrual health.

A number of countries committed to integrate policies, provide resources and coordination, and this is already yielding results, with countries such as Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe announcing the removal of Value Added Tax (VAT) on menstrual products, for example, a move that will result in significant cost reduction.

South Africa has gone further and made budgetary provisions for its Sanitary Dignity Policy Framework, implemented across various govern-

ment departments to advance and promote women's menstrual rights and dignity.

We look forward to more countries making such assertions following the numerous pledges they made in the year.



First African Menstrual Health Symposium declared bold, inclusive and sustainable solutions



The removal of VAT on sanitary products means that school girls like Moreblessing have the opportunity to access menstrual products in Zimbabwe.

Photo Credit: Nikita Little

The ground-breaking East and Southern Africa Menstrual Health Management Symposium ended on May 29th 2018 in Johannesburg, with a powerful Call to Action to ensure that the most marginalized and vulnerable women and girls and other people who menstruate are reached. Menstrual health management requires an ambitious multi-sectoral response that builds on the collective efforts of stake-

holders at all levels. In the lead up to the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action in 2019, the Symposium was a poignant time to reflect on the progress made on menstrual health management as an integral part of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Menstrual health management can

no longer be ignored as there are around 800 menstruating people on any given day. With more than 350 million of these in Africa, this issue must become both a human right and a key priority for development and it requires planning and coordination to manage the different menstrual processes and needs. Let's take a look at what has transpired in menstrual health management since the Symposium:

Menstrual Health Management since the Symposium



July: Tanzania announces removal of VAT on sanitary products



August: World Health Organisation convenes Expert meeting on Menstrual Health Management in its agenda



September and November: African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management (ACMHM) Secretariat is established



October: South Africa announces removal of VAT on sanitary products



November: Zimbabwe announces removal of VAT on sanitary products



November: The ACMHM hosts a session on MHM at the 2nd AU Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage on 24 November in Ghana



December: ACMHM, through WSSCC, participates at the Global Citizen event held in Johannesburg



December: ACMHM Leadership meets in Johannesburg

African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management springs to life!

Part of the ACMHM members who attended the inaugural leadership meeting in Johannesburg

**Photo Credit: UNFPA/
Caroline Gwature**



It's official! We welcome the launch of the African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management (ACMHM), established to strengthen coordination and efforts to address the menstrual health management needs of girls, women and other people who menstruate throughout their lifecycle.

ACMHM is membership-based, and its current members are drawn from governments, UN partners, religious and traditional leaders, Civil Society Organizations, the private sector and youth-led organizations. The members

are working at various levels including policy issues, knowledge management, products, standards setting, humanitarian settings, education, health, advocacy, as well as partnerships and coordination of menstrual health management on the continent.

The Coalition has most members from across East and Southern Africa while continuing to build its membership base and collaborative partnerships across Africa.

What does the African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management bring to the menstrual health agenda?

From the highly successful gathering of menstrual health practitioners for the inaugural Menstrual Health Management Symposium for East and Southern Africa in May 2018 came calls for an Africa-wide Coalition for Menstrual Health Management with the core mandate to achieving the following:



Meet the ACMHM Secretariat

The secretariat of the Coalition is currently hosted by UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) in Johannesburg, South Africa. Working under the leadership and support of the UNFPA ESARO Regional Director and the Regional Adolescents & Youth Programme Specialist, an initial two-member team is now in place to lead and provide overall support and coordination to the Coalition.



Puleng Letsie:
ACMHM Regional Coordinator



Caroline Gwature:
AMHM Communications Officer



Maja Hansen:
Regional Programme Specialist,
Adolescent and Youth, UNFPA
ESARO

What does success look like?

The success of the African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management will be a result of the collective contribution and commitment by its members.

Expanding the African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management to West, Central and Northern Africa. Funding and resource mobilization to maintain the Secretariat and support joint activities.

Positioning the African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management within global initiatives.

Promoting a lifecycle approach to Menstrual Health Management –moving from adolescent girls in schools to other girls, women and other people who menstruate.

Revisiting the definition of MHM and developing a common framework/Theory of Change for action.

Ensuring that no one is left behind.

The Leadership of the African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management met for the first time from December 3-4 in Johannesburg, South Africa to strategically plan for the Coalition. Among the many resolutions made by the 40 representatives of organisations and institutions working on menstrual health management, the Leadership endorsed the strategic direction and identified the Coalition's priority areas for the next five years.

Taskforces, Leads and Co-Leads endorsed

Following the revision of the ACMHM Vision, Mission and Governance structure, the ACMHM Leadership constituted itself with leads and co-leads for the seven thematic areas which will be the key focus areas for the Coalition. The taskforces leads will ensure that advocacy, research, communication, monitoring and evaluation and resource mobilisation are conducted for each of the taskforces.

Task Force	Lead	Co-Lead
Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights (SRHR)	Amplify Change, Kenya	Biomedical Research and Training Institute, Zimbabwe Hope Center, Tanzania
Education	MyAge, Zimbabwe	MIET, South Africa MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda Research Unit
Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) & Waste Disposal	Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC)	WaterAid, Southern Africa
Products	Institutions for Inclusive Development (I4ID) Tanzania	AFRIpads, Uganda
Research and M&E	MaTCH, South Africa	Research: GAGE (Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence)/ Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia M&E: Femme International, Tanzania
Humanitarian settings	WoMena, Uganda	Precious Pearls Trust, Zimbabwe
Marginalized groups	Refugee Social Services, South Africa	SRHR African Trust (SAT), Southern Africa





UNFPA Regional Director for East and Southern Africa welcomes ACMHM Leadership

Dr. Julitta Onabanjo UNFPA ESARO Regional Director.

Photo Credit: UNFPA/Sven Meela

United Nations Population Fund East and Southern Africa Regional Director, Dr. Julitta Onabanjo welcomed commitments made by the leadership of the ACMHM, describing them as historic, needed and surely to have a lasting mark for the girls, women and other people who menstruate on the continent.

“The African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management has been long time coming, but that withstanding, it remains relevant and needed now more than ever, as we project exponential growth in the continent’s population. We need to plan for this growth, ensuring that our women, girls and other people who menstruate

have all the knowledge, support, resources and an environment that does not shun them for, and when experiencing this natural process,” said Dr. Onabanjo.



**ACMHM is on Twitter,
website coming soon!**

The ACMHM is on Twitter! Follow us @AfriCoMHM to get updates on the Coalition, partners and Secretariat activities.

The ACMHM Secretariat is putting final touches to the Coalition website, www.acmhm.org to launch in January 2019. It promises to be a one-stop shop website, connecting and providing information and updates to those interested in MHM in Africa and beyond.

World Toilet Day: Toilets must meet the needs of people who menstruate

Women, girls and other people who menstruate must have access to clean toilets & water to stay healthy, to hygienically dispose of menstrual waste & to manage their periods respectfully.

Photo Credit: UNFPA Kenya



On the commemoration of World Toilet Day on the 19th of November 2018, ACMHM called on countries to avail toilet facilities that cater for the needs of people who menstruate. The day was commemorated under the theme, “**Nature is Calling.**”

“We call for more female-friendly toilets that cater for the needs of people who menstruate, in

both public and private spaces.” In line with this year’s theme to promote toilet management that does not harm the environment, ACMHM calls for menstrual health management that focuses on environmentally friendly, culturally appropriate, safe and efficient disposal systems & waste management for menstrual health products.

ACMHM hosts a parallel session at the 2nd African Union Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriages and other Harmful Practices



The ACMHM, with the support of UNFPA, hosted an interactive session on menstrual health management at the second AU Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage on 24 November in Ghana. Photo Credit: Cleopatra Okumu

Global Citizen event highlights Menstrual Health Management

GLOBAL CITIZEN

#ItsBloodyTime for World Leaders to Prioritize Menstrual Hygiene for Girls' Education

The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), an ACMHM member, partnered with the Global Citizen Festival to highlight menstrual health management issues on the continent. The Man-

delata 100 Festival, which took place on December 2 in Johannesburg, was the capstone event of Global Citizen's year-long Be the Generation campaign, in partnership with the House of Mandela, inspired by

the revered former leader of South Africa and his lifelong dedication to rallying people together to use their collective voices to speak for the most marginalized people. .

Linking Menstrual Health and Human rights



- The Right to Health
- The Right to Education
- The Right to Work
- The Right to Water and Sanitation

Knowing that these rights exist and what corollary obligations states have, can equip practitioners to better advocate for state support to address obstacles women, girls and other people who menstruate face in managing their menstruation with dignity. The African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management advocates to ensure that menstruation does not result in these rights being violated.

As we celebrate Human Rights Day this December, we should remember that menstrual health is also a human right. Women and girls encounter difficulties in managing hygiene during menstruation when there is not an enabling environ-

ment to do so. When women and girls cannot manage their menstrual health, it can negatively impact the extent to which they can enjoy these associated rights:

- The Right to Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality

Youth voices: Deciphering menstruation for African girls and women

Hyasintha Ntuyeko, a social entrepreneur and menstrual health management advocate from Tanzania, believes that inclusion and collaboration are important drivers of change. Photo Credit Didas Katona



Comedian Margret Cho once joked: “Over half the world menstruates at one time or another, but you’d never know it. Isn’t that strange? Yet there is nothing funny about the silence behind menstruation for millions of adolescent girls and young women, who are often uninformed and ill-equipped to

handle their period because no one wants to talk to them about it. Read about two girls from Uganda and Namibia as they narrate how stigma and taboo shaped their menstrual experiences: -<https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/news/youth-voices-deciphering-menstruation-african-girls-and-women>

Resources

Book Announcement - The Managed Body

By Christine Bobel

The Managed Body productively complicates ‘menstrual health management’ a growing social movement to support menstruating girls in the Global South. Bobel offers an invested critique of the complicated discourses of menstrual health management including its conceptual and practical links with the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) development sector, human rights and ‘the girling of development.’ Drawing on analysis of in-depth interviews, participant observations and the digital materials of NGOs and social businesses, Bobel shows how menstrual health management frames problems and solutions to capture attention and direct resources to this highly-tabooed topic. She asserts that menstrual health management organizations often inadvertently rely upon weak evidence and spectacularized representations to make the claim of a ‘hygienic crisis’ that authorizes rescue.

And, she argues, the largely product-based solutions that follow fail to challenge the social construction of the menstrual body as dirty and in need of concealment. While cast as fundamental to preserving girls’ dignity, menstrual health management prioritizes ‘technological fixes’ that teach girls to discipline their developing bodies vis a vis consumer culture, a move that actually accommodates more than it resists the core problem of menstrual stigma.

Menstrual Health Management Symposium report

You can request from the Secretariat, a copy of the East and Southern Africa Menstrual Health Symposium 2018 report, which captures the rich deliberations and recommendations made by the more than 300 participants. Please feel free to share it within your organisations and among partners and use it to enhance your advocacy efforts for menstrual health management to ensure this gets the attention that it deserves.





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