One year since the launch of the Joint Programme, progress is evident in all three focus countries. This issue of the Information Letter features highlights from AfricaSan 4 in Dakar, Senegal; the release of new survey data from Cameroon; and an important milestone in Niger - the MHM training workshop in Niamey.

AfricaSan

African Conference on Sanitation and Hygiene

AfricaSan is the largest pan-African conference and political initiative addressing sanitation and hygiene challenges in Africa. Under the leadership of the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), the meeting brings together ministers responsible for sanitation and hygiene, civil society and development partners and other key stakeholders.

AfricaSan lobbies to influence global, regional and national sanitation and hygiene targets; to make the case for investment in sanitation and hygiene; and to improve sectoral performance.

Since 2008, AfricaSan has tracked progress towards achieving the eThekwini commitments. These commitments were replaced, in June 2015, by the Ngor Declaration.

AfricaSan 4 - Male and female leaders speak up for MHM in Africa

WSSCC and UN Women showcased Joint Programme successes and ongoing challenges at AfricaSan 4, which took place in the Senegalese capital, Dakar, from 25 to 27 May 2015.

In keeping with the theme of the conference, Making Sanitation for All a Reality in Africa, Joint Programme partners highlighted initiatives, research findings and challenges associated with equity and inclusion in Senegal, Cameroon and Niger, as well as efforts to promote hygiene behaviour change.

His Excellency Macky Sall, President of Senegal, inaugurated AfricSan 4 and also took time to visit the MHM lab. Photo: WSSCC
The Joint Programme on Gender, Hygiene and Sanitation

Room for improvement

0.5% of GDP

This figure is the minimum recommended target budget allocation for sanitation and hygiene under the eThekwini and Ngor Declarations. Only South Africa and Namibia report that they have achieved this figure, and most countries currently allocate less than 0.1%.

Source: http://www.wsup.com/2015/05/27/africasan-4-allocating-0-5-of-gdp-to-sanitation/

Taboos are accompanied by ignorance which result in high risk practices endangering women and girls. We must raise awareness and conduct advocacy to break taboos and replace ignorance with information.

Wassalke Boukhari, Minister of Water and Sanitation, Niger

MHM is an entry point and addresses other issues, like education, where many girls are absent from classes during their periods.

Marie Siby, Ministry of Education, Senegal

In preparation of this session, a meeting took place at UN Women in Dakar on 7 May. It brought together officers from the ministries of water and sanitation, health, education and environment. They identified opportunities and challenges in their respective sectors with regards to menstrual hygiene management, which were then presented to officials attending the session.

The need for a cross-sectoral approach to improve menstrual hygiene management was underlined, with speakers calling for the involvement of stakeholders in health, education, environment, gender as well as water and sanitation to achieve success, and support from heads of state to ensure sufficient allocation of financial resources.

Mansour Faye, Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senegal, appealed for the use of specific and actionable terms like MHM, to replace generic terms such as gender. He cautioned that paying attention to women and girls may seem obvious but, unless their needs are spelled out, they may be neglected in policy.

Ngor Declaration on Sanitation and Hygiene

African ministers attending AfricaSan 4 adopted a new vision, the Ngor Declaration which, in line with the proposed UN Sustainable Development Goals, aims to achieve universal access to adequate and sustainable sanitation and hygiene services, and eliminate open defecation, by 2030.

Ngor, means ‘dignity’ in Wolof, Senegal’s national language, an appropriate name for commitments that emphasize equity, and sanitation as a service, rather than just infrastructure, thus underscoring the need for behaviour change and sustainability.

Room for improvement

Ngor Declaration 2015 – Key Points

• Replaces 2008 eThekwini Declaration.
• Focuses on poorest, most marginalized and unserved populations.
• Emphasizes equity and sustainability.
• Recommends cross-sectoral coordination.
• Prioritizes sanitation and hygiene in national development plans.
• Calls for inclusive sanitation services and handwashing facilities in public institutions and spaces.
• Encourages engagement of private sector in developing innovative sanitation and hygiene products and services.
• Highlights need for improved monitoring and evaluation to track progress towards targets.
New Cameroon survey results released

Topline findings of the studies in the Kye-Ossi and Bamounougoum regions of Cameroon reveal:

• While most girls and women had heard of menstruation, more than 70% did not understand what was happening to them at the time of menarche and 60% felt afraid. Advice from mothers and female relatives focused more on practical information about the type of sanitary protection to use rather than physiological factors. Instruction on the topic at school was also limited and almost non-existent in primary schools.

• Fewer than 50% of girls said they attended school during menstruation, and, in some cases, fewer than 10%, the biggest deterrent being the poor state of latrines in schools. Although girls’ latrines are mostly available, usually separate from boys’ latrines and have doors for privacy, the insanitary conditions and poor maintenance mean that girls prefer to stay at home during menstruation.

• Almost a quarter of working women also miss work when menstruating, citing the lack of public toilets as their main concern.

• Menstrual hygiene management is not an integral part of sanitation and hygiene policy in Cameroon.

For more information on the studies in Cameroon and Senegal see the WSSCC website
Joint Programme MHM training workshop in Niger (12-17 June 2015)

WSSCC and UN Women hosted a MHM training of trainers in Niamey in June. Sixty participants attended from Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Niger, Senegal and Togo, representing a range of sectors including sanitation and hygiene, health, women and gender, environment, education, NGOs and international organizations. The workshop was the first of its kind to take place in the Nigerien capital, and paves the way for the start of a research study in Niger that will complement the studies already completed in Cameroon and Senegal.

Feedback

Interviewed in Niamey, Khady Sonko, a high school teacher and supervisor from Louga, Senegal, explained how the Niger training, and previous Joint Programme trainings in Senegal, have helped in her role as trainer in menstrual hygiene management.

What have you accomplished since the training in Senegal and how will the Niger training help you?

I organized trainings and awareness-raising sessions for local officials as they have a role to play in providing facilities and infrastructure that meet the needs of women and girls. Recently, I participated in training and awareness-raising in villages around Louga. By involving religious leaders in the training, we take away the fears of the local people.

My goal (in Niger) is to complement and enhance my knowledge. Others, like me, who have also attended previous courses, are now able to take full advantage of the technical content. It is important to master the subject in order to be able to communicate as clearly as possible.

Next Steps:

1. 38th Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC) Conference, Loughborough University, UK, 27-31 July (MHM training on 31 July)
2. World Water Week, Stockholm, Sweden, 23-28 August
3. High Level Meeting in Cameroon to share research findings August-September
4. UN General Assembly, New York (Post 2015 Development Agenda) 15-28 September

Join the MHM Community:

- Online community of practice in hygiene and sanitation Free and open to all. To join: www.wsscc.org/cop
- Online learning and MHM resource sharing platform For those who have taken part in training run by the Joint Programme in Africa and Asia. If you have not attended our training courses but are an MHM trainer and/or you would like to share information with members of the platform, please contact rockaya.aidara@wsscc.org

Contact:

wsscc@wsscc.org and/or
news.waro@unwomen.org

To sign up to our quarterly newsletter, share news or respond contact Rockaya Aidara at rockaya.aidara@wsscc.org

The selection of Niger as one of the three pilot countries, shows the Government’s commitment to accelerating policies that encourage equity and access to safe water, sanitation and women’s menstrual hygiene.

Wassalke Boukhari, Minister of Water and Sanitation, Niger

I need useful information to help young girls in their daily lives.

Khady Sonko

By training others, I widen the circle of people who are able and willing to educate girls.

Khady Sonko

Khady Sonko (in yellow) with other participants at the MHM training in Niamey. Photo: WSSCC