A series of internal and external events marked the implementation of the Joint Programme in the last quarter of 2014 and presented some considerable challenges. First, the postponement of the AfricaSan conference resulted in the deferral of a number of activities designed to highlight specific hygiene and sanitation needs of women and girls in the region.

Many programmes in the region have experienced slow progress due to the Ebola virus, which is still not under control in West Africa. One case of the virus was recorded in Senegal. Fortunately, the patient was cured and to date there have been no other cases in the country. No cases have been reported in Cameroon or Niger. Implementation of the Joint Programme continues, with the support of increasingly committed stakeholders.

Joint Programme studies conducted in rural areas look promising, although difficulties in moving around and accessing some locations made data collection difficult. In addition to United Nations agencies, governments in the region – through their relevant ministries – are expressing growing interest in the Joint Programme and seeking technical support from the team to integrate programme ideas in their planning processes.

The team hopes to draw on everyone’s expertise to achieve more results in 2015. Happy reading!

Summary

News from the joint programme
- Tangible impact and ongoing challenges: the first review of the Joint Programme
- No to disability discrimination! The International Day of Persons with Disabilities attracted more than 300 people in Louga (Senegal)
- Rural women and MHM

Taking action on MHM
- WSSCC and SCA: an unparalleled alliance crossing the world’s oceans to break the silence on menstruation
- Join the MHM community

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

More than 30 girls participated in the sensitization workshop organized by WSSCC in partnership with SCA and the Volunteer Centre. Photo: Aleksandra Raluca Dragoi.
Focus area 1:  
Changing policies

Recommendations from the train-the-trainer sessions in Saly, Senegal, have been taken into account by the Senegalese Ministry of Water and Sanitation. The Joint Programme team is continuing to work in conjunction with the government on project manuals, specifications and other ministerial planning documents to ensure more effective consideration of the hygiene and sanitation needs of women and girls.

News from the Joint Programme

Tangible impact and ongoing challenges: the first review of the Joint Programme

December is traditionally a month for taking stock. Eight months after its launch, the Joint Programme on Gender, Hygiene and Sanitation is no exception and has delivered its first activity report, which highlights the impact of the initial actions implemented, particularly in Senegal, and the challenges that remain.

The main focus of the programme in 2014 was in Senegal, with a series of activities taking place in the country. Training, awareness-raising and action research are examples of different activities developed by the programme this year, providing opportunities to speak publicly about Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), a crucial issue for women and girls that remains a taboo subject.

In addition, the programme provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the human right to water and sanitation, including access to an affordable source of drinking water and health infrastructure that meets the needs of women and girls.

The communications strategy ensured that flagship activities were covered in the Senegalese press and broadcast media, helping to share and disseminate information more widely in Senegal and elsewhere.

Two newsletters, various educational materials, posters and videos were also produced in 2014. Information and awareness-raising materials were distributed via WSSCC and UN Women websites and at the Summit of La Francophonie in Dakar in November.

“As We Grow Up” booklet used by girls in Cape Town. The production of training materials is one of the priorities of the Joint Programme. Photo: Aleksandra Raluca Dragoi.
Towards a change of national policy and incorporating gender in local budgets

Increased awareness of the specific needs of women and girls is a reality both among political decision-makers and at community level and has already led to initial integration of gender in public policy and local and national budgets:

- The Senegalese Ministry of Water and Sanitation contributed 25% of the budget for train-the-trainer sessions on MHM by funding the participation of eight ministry staff members.

- The 38 participants at the train-the-trainer session on MHM in July 2014 recommended building toilets in schools, health centres, markets and other public places to ensure more effective integration of MHM issues (including creating a space to dry out sanitary materials; providing soap; separate toilets for boys and girls; wash basins; and bins or evacuation chutes for waste). An additional estimated cost of CFA Francs 100,000 for sanitation projects has already been identified by the Senegalese Millennium Drinking Water and Sanitation Programme (PEPAM). Additional analyses are underway to better assess these costs and menstrual hygiene management is now being included in the local budget. The Ministries of Health, Education and the Environment have been made aware of the need to incorporate MHM in policies in their respective sectors.

- Menstrual hygiene management is now being included in the local budget for the Louga region. As a first step, sanitary pads have been purchased and added to the emergency medical kit for the department’s school medical service.

Next steps

The workplan for 2015 is underway. It includes publicizing the results of research studies currently being finalized (in Louga and Kédougou in Senegal, and Kye-Ossi in the southern region and Bamoungou in the western region of Cameroon) and advocacy work with political decision-makers and civil society representatives. Flagship events, such as International Women’s Day (8 March), the Summit of La Francophonie and the campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence will provide opportunities to distribute materials and information.

The Joint Programme will undertake more activities at a regional level in 2015. Several actions are planned in Cameroon and Niger, where research has made it possible to gain a better understanding of the country context and define a strategic plan for changing policies and practices.

The lack of qualified human resources in the area of MHM remains a challenge. A second MHM train-the-trainer session will take place in Cameroon in the first quarter of 2015. The aim is to act on several levers to ensure effective policy implementation. The Joint Programme team will continue to be involved in capacity building, in particular through contextualizing, updating and finalizing training of the trainer modules on MHM in Africa, finalizing teaching materials and providing support for the trainers who were trained in 2014.
No to disability discrimination!

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities attracted more than 300 participants in Louga, Senegal

Numerous slogans resonated in the streets of Louga in Senegal on 3 December during a march organized by the UN Women Gender Equitable Local Development (GELD) Programme, a stakeholder in the Joint Programme on Gender, Hygiene and Sanitation. The aim of the event was to raise community awareness about the role of disabled people in society and development. Coinciding with the campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence the march attracted 315 people living with a disability, including 213 women. Several associations of disabled people brought together by a departmental federation, as well as local authorities took part in the event.

The event attracted 315 people living with a disability, including 213 women

Focus area 2: Knowledge and capacity building

Some 573 stakeholders, including 59 disabled people, have taken part in awareness raising and information sessions on MHM. As a result, the school medical service in Louga has committed to purchasing sanitary pads for school emergency medical kits that are available for female secondary school pupils.

Coming out of the shadows

According to the World Report on Disability published in 2012 by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, the prevalence of disability in Senegal is estimated at 15.5%. Urgent action is needed to improve the living conditions of people with a disability. Although Senegal has enshrined the rights of disabled people in its constitution and made provision for improvements in their living conditions in the Welfare Act, their day to day situation remains precarious.

Disabled women and girls, who are underrepresented in education, training, employment and all areas of public life, are particularly affected and experience poor access to healthcare services, as illustrated by the lack of appropriate medical equipment such as gynaecological examination tables and ultrasound equipment.

The interviews carried out as part of the Louga study have helped to highlight the particular problems faced by women and girls with a disability in managing their menstrual hygiene. Women with a motor disability, for example, are critical of facilities that do not enable easy access, such as the small size of public toilets and narrow doorways that prevent entry by wheelchair or with crutches.

Women who are blind or visually impaired find it difficult to know when they are having their period. The nine disabled women interviewed confirmed that they were not able to manage their menstruation discreetly, regardless of their disability. They were unable to manage on their own and relied on help from their mother, daughters, etc. Day to day lives were even more difficult in remote areas without water or permanent toilets.

The event organizers arranged an awareness-raising workshop on menstrual hygiene management enabling 59 women and girls with disabilities to learn how to use and maintain sanitary materials and how to dispose of menstrual waste in an environmentally-friendly manner.
Focus area 3: Action research

Three studies were conducted in 2014 to increase understanding of MHM. All are currently being finalized and will be published during the first quarter of 2015. The research provides an analysis of the current situation, an important factor in determining the process of programme implementation.

Rural women and MHM

In 2014, in addition to the Louga study, the Joint Programme conducted a study in Kédougou, in southern Senegal, with the aim of ensuring that programme results were as inclusive and relevant as possible. The Louga region itself is not representative of the majority of Senegalese women and girls living in rural areas.

It was also important to take account of other development factors, such as extreme poverty, the lack of autonomy among women, their lack of participation in decision-making, female genital mutilation, and early marriage and pregnancy. Each of these issues has an impact on hygiene and sanitation policies and practices for women and girls. The overall aim is to produce an inventory of public policies and infrastructure in relation to menstrual hygiene management and assess the impact on the day to day lives of women and girls.

Kédougou is Senegal’s most mountainous region, situated in the south of the country. The poverty rate in this mainly agricultural region of over 150,000 people is more than 70%. Girls in the region are less likely to attend school and over 90% of women undergo excision (compared with fewer than 26% nationally). Access to healthcare facilities is limited and over half of households have no latrines.

Over 750 women and girls surveyed in Kédougou

In addition to analysing sector specific policy documents, examining infrastructure and organizing focus groups, over 750 women and girls aged 11 to 63 were surveyed using a questionnaire. Over 50% were aged between 15 and 24 and over 62% were married, reflecting the high incidence of early marriage. Almost 29% had received no formal education.

The initial results reveal a lack of understanding and information about menstruation as well as beliefs and prejudices equivalent to those recorded in the Louga region where menstruation is considered “bad blood” and often compared with an illness.

The report of the study carried out in Kédougou is currently being finalized. The studies have helped to gather an extensive amount of information on practices and policies and are due to be published and disseminated in the first quarter of 2015.

The studies will be available on the WSSCC and UN Women regional office websites and can be requested by e-mail from rockaya.aidara@wsscc.org and/or mbarou.gassama@unwomen.org

More than 750 women and girls aged 11 to 63 were surveyed using a questionnaire

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MAURITANIA
SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN

MALI

BURKINA FASO

BENIN

SIERRA LEONE

LIBERIA

democratic republic of the congo

CAMEROON

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

bamougoum

ké dougou

Louga

kathia

kaye ossi

guinea

guinea-bissau

the gambia

sénégal

sahel

côte d’ivoire

ghana

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congo

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LOUGA

KÉDOUGOU

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CHAD

MALI

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BENIN

SIERRA LEONE

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democratic republic of the congo

CAMEROON

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

bamougoum

ké dougou

Louga

kathia

kaye ossi

guinea

guinea-bissau

the gambia

sénégal

sahel

côte d’ivoire

ghana

togo

more than 750 women and girls aged 11 to 63 were surveyed using a questionnaire

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Further reading

To find out more about the gender specific needs of women in relation to hygiene and sanitation, we recommend the following recent publications (click on the links to download):

- Sanitation Vulnerabilities: Women stresses and struggles for violence-free sanitation (available in English only)
- Coping strategies to deal with inadequate WASH facilities and related health risks (available in English only)
- WASH & CLEAN: a situation analysis of hygiene on maternity wards in India and Bangladesh (available in English only)
- Social and psychological impact of limited access to sanitation: the link between MHM and reproductive tract infections, and between WASH practices and pregnancy (available in English only)

Other resources are available in French and English at www.wsscc.org/topics/hygiene/menstrual-hygiene-management and www.unwomenwestandcentralafrica.com.
“Understanding the menstrual cycle is a prerequisite for menstrual hygiene management. It is important to educate girls on these issues.” - Sally Barkow, team member SCA during the workshop. Photo: Alecsandra Raluca Dragoi.

Taking action on MHM...
...Because tackling this issue needs better understanding and commitment by all key players

WSSCC and SCA: an unparalleled alliance crossing the world’s oceans to break the silence on menstruation

The 12th Volvo Ocean Race, the famous round the world yacht race, offers an unparalleled opportunity to break the taboo surrounding menstruation and focus the spotlight on issues of menstrual hygiene. Awareness raising activities are planned for all three stages of the race until June 2015, thanks to a partnership agreement with SCA, the leading global company specializing in personal hygiene products, and the principal sponsor of Team SCA, the only all-female crew in this year’s race.

The alliance was announced in South Africa on 17 November 2014 coinciding with an initial campaign to mark the arrival of the second stage of the race in Cape Town. This stage was particularly important for the WSSCC providing an opportunity to highlight the persistent level of inequality in South Africa. Development indicators from 2011, published by the government, indicate that the wealthiest 20% of South Africans held more than 68% of national income, while just 1.6% of income was in the hands of the poorest 20%. Gender inequality also remains a significant reality and households led by women are at a much higher risk of poverty.1

Many schools are still without water or sanitation facilities. According to a study carried out in 2013, for example, almost 350,000 schoolchildren in the Eastern Cape did not have access to adequate toilets.2

A menstrual hygiene management workshop run by experts from WSSCC and the Volunteer Centre (an NGO in Cape Town) brought together over 30 women and girls from Khayelitsha and Gugaletu, two of the city’s most disadvantaged townships. With the rate of early marriage still very high in South Africa’s poorest communities, the event provided an opportunity to answer many questions. Menstrual hygiene management will also now be included in training and awareness raising modules at the Volunteer Centre.

Next step: Awareness raising activities in Sanya, China, between late January and early February 2015.


The WSSCC / SCA partnership in brief
- 8 months of racing (November 2014 to June 2015)
- 9 stages – 9 countries: Brazil, China, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, Netherlands, United Arab Emirates and United States
- Awareness-raising actions in South Africa, China and the United States

Follow Team SCA’s race at www.volvooceanrace.com
The Joint Programme on “Gender, Hygiene and Sanitation”

During the workshop on MHM, girls in Khayelitsha and Gugaletu learned how to use hygiene materials. Photo: Aleksandra Raluca Dragoi

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

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