Coinciding with global agreement on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this issue of the Information Letter focuses on: efforts in Niger to incorporate gender issues in new national strategy and policy processes; menstrual hygiene management (MHM) training for humanitarian actors working in refugee camps in Cameroon; highlights from World Water Week in Stockholm; and Joint Programme actions to encourage the development of participatory and inclusive MHM training and collaboration tools for West and Central African users.

Niger: MHM on the agenda at annual review of the water and sanitation sector

Joint Programme representatives who attended the annual review of the water and sanitation sector, held in Niamey from 23-25 June, seized the opportunity to emphasize the importance of including women’s and girls’ needs, specifically in relation to MHM, in discussions on the national strategy for water and sanitation. Ai Abarchi, National Coordinator for WSSCC in Niger, called for MHM to be included in public policy guidelines and received wide support from Ministry of Water and Sanitation officials, many of whom participated in the first MHM training workshop in Niamey earlier in the month.

The promotion of hygiene and basic sanitation was a long-neglected area in Niger’s national policy and strategy processes, resulting in very poor progress over the past 20 years, especially when compared with improvements in access to drinking water over the same period. To date, gender and disability issues have not been taken into account in the development of the majority of public sanitation facilities in the country.

The needs of the poorest and most vulnerable populations are at the forefront of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. To achieve the SDGs, access to reliable information, adequate infrastructure and services, waste management systems, respect for the environment and improved living conditions are all a priority. Niger’s new National Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Programme 2016-2030 promises to help deliver these improvements and Joint Programme partners remain committed to supporting the policy engagement and implementation processes.

Niger: Key Sanitation and Water Statistics

- 11% of population has access to improved sanitation facilities.
- 58% of population has access to an improved water source.
- 4% increase in access in rural areas.
- vs 9% nationally (since 1995).
- 79% of population practices open defecation.

Source: WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation (http://www.wssinfo.org/)

Cameroon: Humanitarian actors drilled on menstrual hygiene management

In early October, UN Women, UNHCR and WSSCC organized a special MHM training workshop in Bertoua, Cameroon, for humanitarian workers, prompted by fears of an outbreak of vaginal infections among refugee women. The concerns came to light following the discovery of the improper use of menstrual hygiene kits supplied by humanitarian agencies and poor knowledge of menstrual hygiene management among many women in refugee camps in eastern Cameroon.

“The refugee women prefer using children’s diapers and napkins and pieces of cloth such as towels for menstrual pads,” explained Jessica Tete of the International Medical Corps, “We noticed that when menstrual hygiene kits are distributed, they use them as handkerchiefs, cleaning rags and for other purposes... Only those who have had some basic education come back to ask for more pads.”

Around thirty participants from the humanitarian sector, including community workers, refugees holding leadership positions in the camps, civil society organizations and government personnel benefited from the four-day training. WSSCC Programme Officer Rockaya Aidara and UN Women staff, took the opportunity to

The objective of the workshop is to provide humanitarian actors with the necessary tools for onward transmission to field social workers and other sensitization agents on menstrual hygiene.”

Mme Paulette Beat Songue, UN Women Programme Officer
Witness the situation firsthand during a visit to the Gado-Badgere camp, which hosts more than 24,000 refugees from the Central African Republic.

Workshop participants were trained on the WSSCC three pillars approach: breaking the silence; hygienic management of menstruation; and safe reuse and disposal solutions. They learned about menstrual hygiene management in the context of education, sanitation and the environment as well as details of the menstrual cycle itself and the proper use of training kits on menstrual hygiene.

The training ended with organizations defining strategies on how to undertake the training for refugees living in the camps and include menstrual hygiene management into their programming. All the participants took the pledge to break the silence on menstruation.

“Humanitarian actors in refugee camps must harmonize and step up actions towards the better management and education of menstrual hygiene within the refugee community.”

Mr. Mohamadou Baba, assistant site manager of Gado-Badgere camp.
World Water Week, Stockholm

Spotlight on Sanitation, Hygiene and Gender at World Water Week, Stockholm

The importance of sanitation and hygiene and the role of gender were prominent features at World Water Week 2015, in Stockholm from 23-28 August. The theme for this year’s meeting, Water for Development, provided ample opportunity for participants to focus on the integral issue of sanitation and the lack of progress in this area since 2000, as well as the specific impact on women.

Arancha Patkar from WSSCC highlighted key findings of the Joint Programme studies in Senegal and Cameroon in her presentation on the impact of women’s limited access to water and sanitation in low-income countries. She emphasized links between menstrual hygiene management, violence and psychological stress and the practical and political solutions needed to ensure WASH programmes take account of gender influences.

Mr. Mansour Faye, President of the Council of African Ministers in charge of Water (AMCOW), and Minister of Water and Sanitation in Senegal, one of the Joint Programme’s three focus countries, delivered the opening speech at a session on harmonizing monitoring, evaluation and reports for water and sanitation in Africa.

In many societies, women and girls are traditionally responsible for domestic water supply and sanitation. They are more seriously affected by lack of access to water and inadequate sanitation and hygiene conditions.

Mr. Mansour Faye, President of the Council of African Ministers in charge of Water (AMCOW), and Minister of Water and Sanitation in Senegal. Photo: Javier Acebal/WSSCC/UN Women

Goals: SDG update

On September 25, 193 world leaders committed to 17 Global Goals to achieve three extraordinary things in the next 15 years:

- **End extreme poverty.**
- **Fight inequality & injustice.**
- **Fix climate change.**

The Global Goals for sustainable development aim to get these things done, in every country and for all people. UN member states are expected to use these goals, also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years. The goals follow and expand on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were agreed by governments in 2001 and are due to expire at the end of this year.

For more information on Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and other goals and targets relevant to the Joint Programme’s mission, such as Goal 5 (Gender Equality), see http://www.globalgoals.org/.
West and Central Africans help develop new WSSCC MHM training manual

Joint Programme partners in West and Central Africa, together with staff in Geneva, are leading efforts to review and finalize a new training manual on menstrual hygiene management (MHM) specifically designed for West and Central African audiences. The original manual was developed for South Asian users.

After the MHM training workshop in Niamey, Niger in June, a follow-up manual review workshop took place in July in Louga, Senegal, also the location of the first Joint Programme study on MHM. It brought together 45 male and female participants representing a cross-section of relevant ministries, local leaders and civil society organizations to discuss and debate the form, content and practical use of the new training manual.

In addition to inputs from the country working group in Senegal, WSSCC established an online working group that brings together thematic inputs from participants in Cameroon, Guinea Bissau, Niger and Togo. The manual will also include exercises on how to identify and work with key actors in the community, such as religious leaders, and should be completed by the end of the year.

Next steps

1. High Level Meeting in Cameroon to share research findings (October).
2. MHM train-the-trainer manual finalization, Cameroon (October).
3. World Toilet Day (19 November)

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.

Women’s periods have always been a stigma... the time is now to break down these barriers and make the next generation able to speak about their own bodies.

Conversation enables innovation, which leads to better and more sustainable solutions to women’s hygiene.

Kiran Gandhi, a 26 year old woman who ran the London Marathon in April 2015. She brought attention to the shame associated with having periods and the lack of access to adequate sanitary protection in developing countries.

(Source: http://fusion.net/story/182965/kiran-gandhi-period-marathon/)

Participants at MHM manual review workshop, Louga, Senegal Photo: Geld/UN Women