A year of progress

This issue marks the end of 2015 and 18 months since the launch of the Joint Programme. A critical stakeholder mapping exercise undertaken this year serves to highlight the vital involvement of the range of multi-sectoral partners, including ministries, universities and various UN agencies, who share in the success of the Joint Programme. As the year in which UN Member States reached agreement on Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and WSSCC marked its 25th anniversary, 2015 offers a cause for celebration and optimism. On behalf of everyone at the Joint Programme, we say thank you to our valued partners and look forward to working together in 2016!

Stakeholders and Sectors involved in the implementation of the Joint Programme

Advisory Board / Steering Committee (corrective action)

- Interministerial platform
- Ministries of Gender | Education | Health and Environment
  Alliance for intersectoral work
- University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar
  Strategic partner, member of the Advisory Board
- MHM Trainers
  Critical resource of the programme
- WSSCC
  Alliance for intersectoral work
- UN Women
  (HQ, Regional and Country Offices)
- UN Agencies in the region
  UNHCR Cameroon | OHCHR/WCARO | UNFPA Senegal in National and Regional Offices | WHO Senegal | UNICEF WCARO and Senegal CO
  Support to programme implementation, dissemination of research findings
- Civil Society Organizations EAA
  WaterAid Regional Office Senegal and Niger | local and national NGOs | Croix Rouge Espagnole
  Inter-ministerial Platforms on sanitation and hygiene for women and girls under the leadership of Sanitation Ministries. Senegal platform established in May 2014
- Technical and financial partners
  Coopération luxembourgeoise | Spanish Cooperation Agency AECID Dakar and Niamey
- Water and Sanitation Ministry of Senegal & Coordination Unit (PEPAM)
- Water and Sanitation Ministry of Niger
- Water and Sanitation Ministry of Cameroon

[Diagram showing timeline and events related to the Joint Programme]
Senegal: new agreement signals concrete action to integrate MHM into policy-making

The late October signing of a memorandum of understanding between WSSCC and the Government of Senegal takes the country a step closer towards much-needed policy and behaviour change to improve women’s and girls’ rights to water and sanitation. The agreement, coordinated through the Millennium Drinking Water and Sanitation Programme (PEPAM), is an integral part of the Ministry of Water and Sanitation’s aim to include the issue of menstrual hygiene management in the updated national sanitation policy.

Public policy change lies at the heart of Joint Programme goals, requiring integration of the specific needs of women and girls, in relation to hygiene and sanitation, in policies, laws and other budgeted regulations in the three focus countries. In Senegal, women’s specific needs have been long-neglected in the design of public services and infrastructure even though they bear the main responsibility for managing water, hygiene and sanitation in their homes and communities. The recent agreement is a first step towards redressing this imbalance.

Launch of MHM research results in Yaounde, Cameroon

On November 3rd 2015, UN Women and WSSCC launched the results of a study on menstrual hygiene in Yaounde, Cameroon at an event attended by government officials, members of the diplomatic community and civil society organizations. Titled “Menstrual Hygiene Management: Behaviour and Practices in Kye-Ossi and Bamoungoum, Cameroon”, the study is the third in a series by WSSCC and UN Women under the Joint Programme.

Conducted in 2014, in two regions with very different socio-cultural profiles: Kye-Ossi in the south, and Bamoungoum in the west, the study analyses the current state of menstrual hygiene management practices and behavior, and related infrastructure and public policies in the WASH sector.

Key findings include:

- A low level of knowledge of menstrual hygiene management in both schools and general settings suggesting inadequate or insufficient provision of information about menstruation and menstrual hygiene within and outside the education system.
- Poor maintenance of sanitation facilities and sporadic use by girls. Although the majority of schools in the study had latrines, their poor maintenance results in sporadic use by girls, particularly during menstruation.
- Absence of working public toilets for women. More than one-fifth of working women reduce their activities during menstruation, largely due to concerns about the lack of public toilets.
- Environmental hazard of sanitary waste. Sanitary materials are mostly disposed of in latrines or toilets posing a risk for the environment and maintenance of the latrines/toilets.

As well as publicizing the results of the study, the launch event also presented an initial opportunity to advocate for the inclusion of issues related to menstrual hygiene management in Cameroon’s national agenda at policy, planning and community levels. The launch of the study findings was reported in print and online media, including Allafrica.com and Cameroon Concord. For more information: http://wsscc.org/resources-feed/study-menstrual-hygiene-management-behaviour-and-practices-in-kye-ossi-and-bamoungoum-cameroon/
African Union

First African Girls’ Summit
(Lusaka, Uganda 26-27 November)

UN Women representatives highlighted the relevance and importance of best practices in menstrual hygiene management during a parallel session at the first ever African Girls’ Summit on Ending Child Marriage, held in Lusaka, Zambia, from 24–27 November 2015. Building on the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, the Summit sought to mobilize African political and traditional leaders to deepen efforts to prevent and end child marriage, including by enacting, amending or enforcing laws that set the minimum age of marriage at 18 and punish perpetrators.


I hope that the data presented today will help you intensify your engagement and action for the promotion of gender equality as whole, not only menstrual hygiene management.

Mr Adama Moussa, Representative of UN Women, Cameroon

3 December 2015

Celebrating International Day of Persons with Disabilities
– “Inclusion matters: access and empowerment for people of all abilities”

This year’s theme comes in the wake of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its key message: “leave no one behind”. In the context of the mission of the Joint Programme, this theme and message is just as compelling and relevant. People with disabilities face a daily struggle to access services and support on an equal basis to their able-bodied peers. In impoverished circumstances, they struggle more and often remain hidden and invisible from statistics that would otherwise give visibility to their cause.

Although Cameroon has signed the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and Niger and Senegal have both signed and ratified the treaty, much remains to be done to improve the lives of people with disabilities in all three countries. As the Joint Programme study in Louga, Senegal highlighted, women and girls with disabilities face additional challenges in managing monthly periods and menstrual hygiene, including:

- **Lack of access to facilities** due to 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 menstruating.
- **They have difficulty managing menstruation discreetly**, regardless of disability, due to dependence on others for help.
- **Day to day lives are even more difficult in remote areas without easy access to water or permanent toilets.**


Joint Programme strategic planning meeting in Cameroon

Stakeholders at the Joint Programme’s strategic planning meeting in Cameroon from 3-4 November identified three key focus areas for the Programme’s work over the coming months. Overall, Cameroon embraced the proposed workplan which places a major emphasis on policy change with linked budget lines. Resource mobilization will therefore form an integral part of programming efforts to ensure the full support of all stakeholders as well as the availability of adequate resources for implementation.

Three new focus areas were identified:
1. **Support humanitarian response to the refugee crisis in specific sites in Cameroon:** provide technical and financial resources, including knowledge transfer, information, training, guidelines and the review of infrastructure design.
2. **Strengthen research and knowledge transfer:** due to the diversity of Cameroon a further study on behaviours and practices is proposed. Additionally, knowledge generated by the Programme (on policies, practices and innovation) will be designed for the use of practitioners and the general public, as well as policymakers.
3. **Prioritize innovation:** capture and disseminate initiatives around the three pillars of the MHM approach (addressing taboos; adequate MHM; safe reuse and disposal solutions for menstrual hygiene products) through the creation of an innovation lab and the organization of an innovation forum in the final year of the Programme.
Happy 25th anniversary!

On 4 December, WSSCC celebrated its 25th anniversary. Since 1990, WSSCC has worked to support safe sanitation, hygiene and drinking water particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Over the same period, some 2.6 billion people have gained access to safe, clean drinking water and 2.1 billion more people now have access to a better sanitation facility. WSSCC, through collaboration with thousands of committed members and partners, vows to continue to advocate for safe sanitation, hygiene and drinking water for all in the years ahead.

For more information: http://wsscc.org/resources-feed/wsscc-celebrating-25-years-of-putting-people-at-the-centre/

Next steps

3. The 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), New York, USA, 14-24 March 2016, “Women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development”.

As we look to the future, WSSCC will assist Member States to implement the SDGs. This will involve enabling countries to attain not only WASH targets of Goal 6, but also to use the process of attaining WASH targets as a means to achieve targets on poverty eradication, education, health, women’s empowerment, inequality and institutions.

Chris Williams, Executive Director WSSCC

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