

# Menstrual Hygiene Management: Rural Cambodian Girls' Experiences

---

Thank you for your patience. We will begin shortly.

---



**Gabrielle Daniels**

MPH  
Yale University



**Ray Cantwell**

Ph.D., P.Eng.  
Senior Technical Advisor  
WASH Programs  
Samaritan's Purse Canada



**Laura MacDonald**

Knowledge & Research Coordinator  
CAWST

# Menstrual Hygiene Management: Rural Cambodian Girls' Experiences

---



**Gabrielle Daniels**

MPH  
Yale University



**Ray Cantwell**

Ph.D., P.Eng.  
Senior Technical Advisor  
WASH Programs  
Samaritan's Purse Canada



**Laura MacDonald**

Knowledge & Research Coordinator  
CAWST



# Menstrual Hygiene Management: Rural Cambodian Girls' Experiences

Finding Meaningful Interventions from Their Stories

*Presenters*

**Ray Cantwell, PhD**

**Gabrielle Daniels, MPH**

*September 2016, CAWST Webinar*



# Presentation Overview

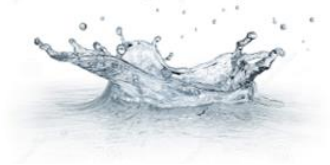
- Brief Background
- Exploring MHM in Rural Cambodia
- Key Areas Impacting MHM
- Programmatic Efforts for Intervention
- Additional Resources





# Brief Background on MHM

- Access to appropriate WaSH resources and amenities is key over **the life course of a woman, including menstrual hygiene management**
- MHM requires **access to supplies, adequate WaSH facilities and amenities, and knowledge of menstruation and MHM practices**
- February 2016, PLOS article urging **global action related to MHM**
- *How do we accomplish this?*



# Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Study





# WaSH in Rural Cambodia

- Roughly **50% of rural households do not have a latrine** or WaSH facility
- Only **60.1 - 81.4% of rural households use an improved water source**
- **37% of schools** in the provinces where SP works **lack latrines**



References:  
2014 Cambodian DHS  
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport's 2015  
Education Statistics and Indicators

---







# Overarching Findings

- **94.6%** (n=74) of girls **felt capable of managing their menses** each month
- **65.4%** (n=75) of girls **expressed feeling fear, shyness, and discomfort (FSD)** both at the onset of menarche and beyond
- Underlying factors contributing to FSD:
  - **Relational Impacts**
  - **Knowledge-related Impacts**
  - **Managerial Impacts**
- Impact of FSD on girls' behavior



# Relational Impacts: Mixed Feelings Towards Teachers

- **Girls had mixed attitudes towards teachers during menstruation:**

*“I like to talk to teachers because he or she can help. [The] teacher is old[er] and knows better, so we need teacher[’s] help.” (Girl, BMC, Grade 9)*

*“[Teachers] can’t help because they don’t bring sanitary pad along with them.” (Girl, BMC, Grade 12)*

- **Primary barrier was girls’ lack of comfort telling teachers their menstrual concerns**

*“Teachers are not helpful because students don’t tell teachers, and they [girls] feel shy” (BMC, Grade 12)*



# Knowledge-related Impacts: Pre-menarche Knowledge

- **Some girls reported having pre-menarche knowledge about menstruation and MHM**

*“Teachers tell me that first menstruation causes stomach pain, need to clean the body frequently, and keep changing sanitary pad.” (Girl, KT, Grade 9)*

- **However, lack of pre-menarche knowledge often contributed to FSD**

*“When I was grade 8, at home, I got up to the toilet and see the blood from vagina. I was scared with thought of disease. I asked my mother, and she said that this is menstruation. She bought me sanitary pad and show me how to use. At that time, I was so stomach pain.” (Girl, BMC, Grade 12)*





# Managerial Impacts: Unreliable Sanitary Pads

- Almost every girl reported **staining** as a primary factor in FSD
- When we asked further, we found **sanitary pads were often inadequate to meet girls' needs:**

*“The pads turn over when [they] get wet. [The] pad sticker isn’t used properly, [and] underwear isn’t fitting well for putting pad.” (Girl, BMC, Grade 9)*

*“The pads turn over for [the] sticker isn’t good. The pads are thin and short, [and there is] too much blood. Accidents happen especially when sleeping and playing.” (Girl, BMC, Grade 11)*



# Managerial Impacts: Inadequate WaSH Resources

- **WaSH Facilities and Amenities & Access to Supplies**
  - **33.3%** of girls reported **not having access to clean water at home**
  - **28%** of girls said there was **no private disposal option at home**
  - **81.3%** of girls said there was **no private disposal option at school**
  - **100%** of girls said they had **trouble accessing supplies (e.g. sanitary pads) at school**
- **These factors contributed to FSD**, as they made navigating MHM more challenging and increased girls' fears of staining, odors, and being teased



# Managerial Impacts: Qualitative Results

- Girls report **unclean latrines, lack of private disposal, and lack of clean water** contribute to FSD and lower standards for MHM across environments:

*“My friend does not have enough water. I saw her pants was blood stain[ed] because she did not put pad. She did not have money to buy [a] pad. [She has] no toilet at her house, and she used [the] toilet of her neighbor.” (Girl, BMC, Grade 8)*

*“[At school, I] feel scared because I don’t know where I [will] change and how I [will] throw sanitary pad.” (Girl, BMC, Grade 11)*

*“[The] toilet has no lock, afraid of someone come in.” (Girl 9, KT SFG [n=9], Grade 8)*





# Impact of FSD on Girls' Behavior

## Factors contributing to MHM challenges and FSD:

1. Lack of trust and confidence in teacher's ability to assist.  
**Impact:** Girls do not feel the school environment is supportive and prefer returning home
2. Lack of pre-menarche knowledge.  
**Impact:** Girls experience increased FSD at onset of menarche and are not well informed of MHM practices
3. Unreliable sanitary pads and inadequate WaSH resources.  
**Impact:** Girls experience increased FSD from staining, return home, leading to absenteeism



# Programmatic Efforts for Intervention



# Knowledge-related Impact: MHM Curriculum

## Topic Three: Menstrual Hygiene Management

---

### Activity: Talking & Learning Together (girls in grade 5 and older)

**Objective:** To help older girls understand that it is OK to talk about menstruation and to be at school during their period, and help prepare younger girls who have not gotten their period yet so they know what to do when they get it

**Structure:** Class of girls

**Time:** 45 minutes to 1 hour

#### Notes:

- This lesson should be taught to the female students by a female principal or teacher
- Menstruation can also be called your period
- This may be the first time girls have spoken with a teacher about menstruation. They are likely to be shy or embarrassed.
- Meet in a quiet and private place to make the girls feel more comfortable discussing the topic



# Relational Impact: Teacher Awareness & Girls' Clubs

- **2014 and earlier:** Developed MHM curriculum; trained teachers, school directors and school support committee members
  - Some success with parts of curriculum being used, mainly by female teachers
  - Little comfort on the part of teachers in general, especially with male teachers
  - Little comfort from the girls learning in a group or with boys present
- **2015 to present:** Initiate student-run, teacher-supported Girls Clubs where MHM and other gender-sensitive topics are discussed



# Managerial Impact: Improve “Supply Side” of MHM

- Poor quality adhesive in many of the locally available low-cost disposal sanitary pads resulted in a high rate of menstrual accidents among respondents
- Awareness, education, sensitization, and reducing the taboo will not help if appropriate products are not available
- Looking for opportunities to:
  - Improve the quality of currently available low-cost sanitary pads
  - Encourage new low-cost suppliers into the market place in rural Cambodia



# Additional Resources

- Sommer, M. and M. Sahin, **Overcoming the taboo: advancing the global agenda for menstrual hygiene management for schoolgirls**. Am J Public Health, 2013. 103(9): p. 1556-9.
- Sommer, M., et al., **A Time for Global Action: Addressing Girls' Menstrual Hygiene Management Needs in Schools**. PLoS Med, 2016. 13(2): p. e1001962.
- Dutta, D., Badloe, C, Lee, H, House, S., **Supporting the Rights of Girls and Women Through Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in the East Asia and Pacific Region; Realities, progress and opportunities**, B. UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Office (EAPRO), Thailand, Editor. 2016.



# Acknowledgements

God's faithfulness throughout

Ms. Kirany Leap, *Senior Research Officer*

Mrs. Ratana Yann, *Team Leader*

Dr. Debbie Humphries, *Yale Faculty Advisor*

Dr. Danya Keene, *Yale Faculty Advisor*

Ms. Marin Macleod, *Secondary Data Analyst*

Mr. Mao Prum, *BMC Coordinator*

Mr. Van Bunren, *Kratie Coordinator*

Mr. Sothea Pheap, *Logistics*

Yung, Thida, Lida, Sophorn, Nin, Sreyroth, Tangim,  
Chinda, Sreypoa, Chenda, and Navy – *Enumerators and  
Translators*

*All photos taken by Gabrielle Daniels/Samaritan's Purse*

*Map: <http://www.asiavipa.com/cambodia-map>*





# Questions?

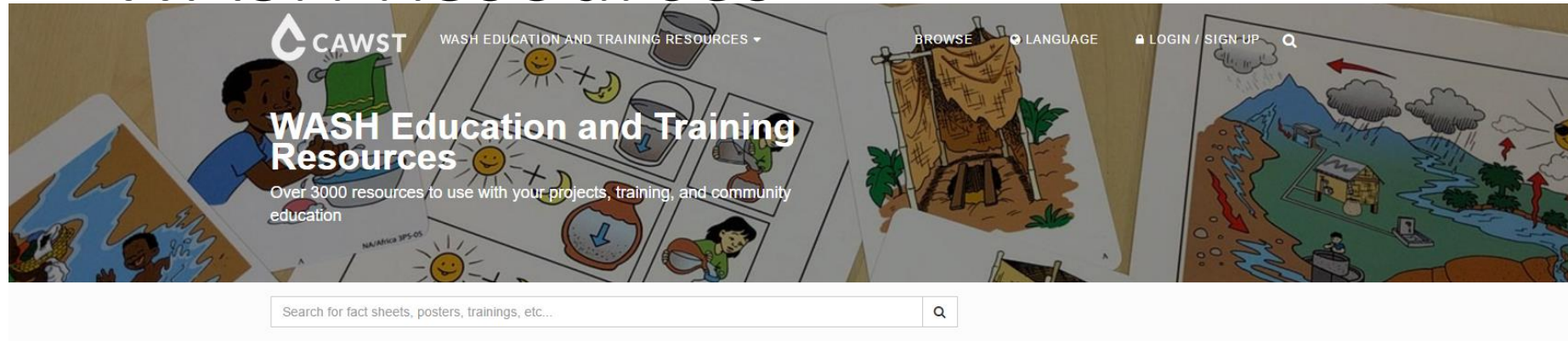


---

# Further Questions

---

# WASH Resources



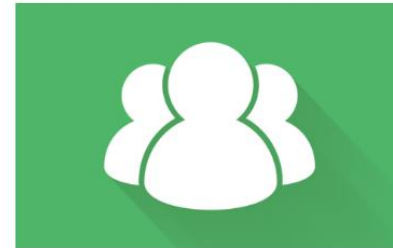
### Technical Resources

Practical resources that help you select appropriate technologies and deliver effective WASH projects



### Training Resources

Quality resources for delivering participatory WASH workshops



### Posters and Activities

Engaging visual aids and participatory activities for delivering WASH education activities

[cawst.org/trainings-resources](http://cawst.org/trainings-resources)

[www.resources.cawst.org](http://www.resources.cawst.org)



# Menstrual Hygiene Management: Rural Cambodian Girls' Experiences

---

Thank you!

---



**Gabrielle Daniels**

MPH  
Yale University



**Ray Cantwell**

Ph.D., P.Eng.  
Senior Technical Advisor  
WASH Programs  
Samaritan's Purse Canada



**Laura MacDonald**

Knowledge & Research Coordinator  
CAWST