



Girls in Control targets **25 districts** and **490 schools** across **Ethiopia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe**

The programme aims to enable safe MHM practice for **141,000 schoolgirls**

Girls in Control will build awareness of menstrual hygiene issues for **8.5 million people**

On any given day, more than 800 million women worldwide are menstruating. But despite menstruation's central role in womanhood, deep-rooted taboos, a lack of education and poor hygiene facilities in developing countries mean many women suffer shame, embarrassment and social exclusion around their monthly period.

These issues have long-term impacts on women's health, education, livelihoods and safety. Taboos around menstruation exclude women from work and study, while a lack of education and poor hygiene facilities often put them at risk of disease, harassment and even attack.

Menstrual Hygiene Management

(MHM) focuses on women and adolescent girls:

- Using clean material to absorb or collect menstrual blood
- Being able to change this material in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of menstruation
- Using soap and water to wash the body as required
- Having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials

In east and southern Africa, research indicates that some 70% of young women miss one to three school days a month due to menstruation – leading to decreased academic performance and high drop-out rates.

At SNV, we believe good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) plays a fundamental role in enabling women and girls to reach their full potential. We aim to break down taboos around menstruation and ensure menstrual health is firmly on the agenda of education policy makers and resource allocators, creating a world in which every woman and girl can manage her menstruation in a hygienic way – in privacy, safety and with dignity.

Girls in Control

Girls in Control is SNV's pilot approach to solving the problem of **menstrual hygiene management** amongst schoolgirls in rural and peri-urban areas of **Ethiopia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe**.

We believe that girls' educational performance can be directly improved through better menstrual hygiene management in their schools. Girls in Control is a comprehensive package, concentrating on provision of appropriate, girl-friendly water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools, timely information about MHM and improved access to sanitary materials.

To implement this, we target national and local governments with evidence-based advocacy for policy change, positively affecting district education plans and the financial resources allocated for school MHM facilities.

Girls in Control aims to eliminate the stigma around menstruation through addressing both school communities and the general public. This is achieved by providing timely information for girls before and during the onset of menstruation, making MHM a discussable subject among mothers, girls, boys and fathers. We aim to raise MHM awareness amongst the general public through sensitising community leaders, health extension workers and parent-teacher-associations.

The Girls in Control approach focuses on the need to provide solutions and innovations that take local contexts into consideration. We improve access to sustainable, safe and affordable sanitary materials through creating established supply chains, with entrepreneurs trained and engaged in sanitary material production and distribution.

Girls in Control recognises the need to reach all by making explicit, inclusive strategies with relevant institutions, ensuring local ownership and sustainability of the intervention.

Building the future

In 2014 and 2015 the Girls in Control approach is being piloted in the programme target countries and schools with the aim of collecting further evidence and developing best practice for further implementation.

Currently, SNV is working in Water, Sanitation & Hygiene in 26 countries, with established WASH in Schools and Sustainable Sanitation & Hygiene for All programmes across Asia and Africa. We believe MHM is the missing element in these initiatives, and aim to scale up our activities in this area to include the proven Girls in Control approach in all WASH in Schools programmes following the conclusion of the pilot phase in 2015.

Following comprehensive baseline studies in each of the programme countries, SNV has facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues at national and local levels to share our research findings, build awareness and motivate action amongst programme partners and governments.

We are currently working on making sanitary materials more affordable, while also reducing their impact on the environment. Countries are conducting supply chain studies and consumer preference surveys to come up with new solutions for private sector investment in menstrual hygiene materials.

Partnerships

- *Ministries of Education, Health, Women and Youth, and Water in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe*
- *International partners: WASH United, Water Aid, UNICEF*
- *Local partners: Prognyst, Envirocare, MSHC, HCAWFO, Eastern Bank Adolescent Group Organisation, YAASO, CHIGOTO Plus, GEODATA, Tanzania Cares, Fri-Sucode, Kawokonet, Incomet, SECO*

About SNV

SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation. Founded in the Netherlands nearly 50 years ago, we have built a long-term, local presence in 38 of the poorest countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our global team of local and international advisors work with local partners to equip communities, businesses and organisations with the tools, knowledge and connections they need to increase their incomes and gain access to basic services – empowering them to break the cycle of poverty and guide their own development.

For more information

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Learn more about Girls in Control at
www.snv.org/Girls-in-Control

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