

Improving and Expanding Pure Water for the World's Menstrual Hygiene Management Program Based in Limonade, Haiti

Quinn Slingerland^{a,b} Jamin Gelder,^b Elodie Herald^b

a. Pure Water for the World, b. University at Albany School of Public Health



Introduction

➤ Pure Water for the World (PWW) partners with rural and underserved communities where there are high incidences of waterborne diseases and a scarcity of aid. Together, they establish comprehensive safe water solutions that include the essential tools and education to serve all community members. Part of their work includes a Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) module that aims to educate and empower women and girls.¹

➤ After implementation of the module, PWW is looking to improve and expand their MHM module to be more culturally competent, involve more community members, and improve health outcomes.

Project Objectives

The goal of this internship was to identify the education level, community misconceptions, and taboos regarding menstruation amongst all community members in Limonade, Haiti in order to expand and improve the current PWW menstruation module.

Student Role:

- Researched menstrual hygiene promotion practices that have been successful in other low-income countries
- Created focus group questions for four separate groups
- Developed a facilitator guide
- Created an Excel spreadsheet displaying the focus group responses and key indicators
- Based on identified key indicators, recommendations for module expansion and improvements were made

Methods

- 1 RESEARCH** → Preliminary research of successful MHM programs such as CAWST was done
- 2 DISCUSSION** → The existing program outline was reviewed and discussed amongst PWW staff together in order to address desired changes to the program.
- 3 IDENTIFICATION** → The changes to the program the staff envisioned included: Increased community support for women and girls, increased education amongst all community members but specifically for women and girls, and the creation of a sustainable alternative to disposable feminine hygiene products that were low-cost and effective.
- 4 ANALYSIS** → Focus group interviews were conducted amongst 4 separate groups: Women (18-45), Men (18-45), Girls (under 18) and Boys (under 18) that aimed to disclose community levels of education, misconceptions and taboos. Responses were then inputted into an Excel spreadsheet and indicators were identified.
- 5 RECOMMENDATION** → Given the indicators, recommendations for changes to the program were developed

Results

- Women understand that menstruation is a natural occurrence and is a major component of pregnancy, but they do not know the biology of menstruation.
- Men avoid conversations about menstruation because they “do not like blood”
- Girls feel as though the information about menstruation they have received from their mothers or female family members is limited due to their own lack of education/knowledge.
- Community misconceptions influence how women perform MHM.
- Lack of running/clean water greatly influences MHM practices amongst women.
- Lack of safe sanitation facilities

Do you feel like women can't do certain things when they are menstruating?
Q5 Men 18-45

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
The bible prohibits women from doing certain things when they are menstruating, and we should follow that.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
She should not carry heavy objects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
She can not have sex.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
They can not walk barefoot, drink sour and cold food or drinks, and wear other female clothes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some women are in so much pain they can only lie down.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can not help prepare /be around certain foods.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

How do you dispose of or wash menstrual materials at home/in public?
Q2 Women 18-45

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
Store all used materials in a safe/hidden space until period is over.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Belief that washing, burning or disposing of used materials before period is over might widen hips.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Belief that washing, burning or disposing of used materials before period is over prolongs period.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Belief that someone could use blood for "bad things"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Discussion

Recommendations:

1. Partnering with the local health clinic to provide sex education courses to adults of all ages.
2. Expanding the menstruation module offered at school to go further into the biology of menstruation, the menstrual cycle, hormonal changes women may experience, etc.
3. Provide additional local resources for all ages and genders on any discussed topics.
4. Ensure the data collected is utilized for monitoring and evaluation.
5. Capacity training for the community agent.

Strengths & Limitations

Strengths

- Communication between staff based in Limonade was regular and effective
- Staff that facilitate the program were able to discuss their goals for the program
- Focus groups provided exceptional feedback
- Focus group questions “opened the door” for future conversations

Limitations

- Small focus groups
- Some questions were interpreted wrong
- Some answers could have been influenced by other participants responses (bias)

Conclusion

The responses from each focus group interview gave insight to the cultural and community beliefs regarding menstruation. The misconceptions, taboos, and lack of formal menstrual health education limits women and girls and leaves important health questions unanswered.

Including more community members in sex education programs and health promotion programs would reduce some of these misconceptions and empower women and girls to learn more about their bodies and feel confident when they are menstruating. Additionally, including more community members in the program would allow for PWW to collaborate with community members in developing water management solutions which is essential for life and MHM.

References

- ¹ Pure water for the world. (2023.). Retrieved April 17, 2023, from <https://www.purewaterfortheworld.org/>
- ² Rupe, E.R., Rodean, J., Hurley, E.A. *et al.* Menstrual health among adolescents and young adults in rural Haiti. *Reprod Health* **19**, 227 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-022-01533-4>