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NATIONAL POLICY ON MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

**ABRIDGED NATIONAL POLICY ON MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND
HYGIENE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA (2025-2030)**

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
LGA	Local Government Areas
MHH	Menstrual Health and Hygiene
MHHM	Menstrual Health, Hygiene, and Mana
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDGs	Supporting Sustainable Development
TWG	Technical Working Group
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH):

The needs experienced by people who menstruate, including having safe and easy access to information, supplies, and infrastructure needed to manage their periods with dignity and comfort (menstrual hygiene management) as well as the systemic factors that link menstruation with health, gender equality, empowerment, and beyond.

Adolescents:

The policy defines these as persons aged between 10 and 19 years.

Female-Friendly Facilities:

Menstrual hygiene management facilities in public spaces and private households that are designed and maintained in ways that are responsive to specific needs and desires of disabled women and girls.

Menstrual Health:

A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the menstrual process.

Menstrual Health Hygiene and Management (MHHM):

MHHM has broadly been defined as self-efficacy regarding menstrual care, including having access to clean and reliable absorbent materials, safe and functional facilities for changing and cleaning, convenient and acceptable disposal methods, and accurate knowledge of health behaviors and hygienic practices during menstruation.

Vulnerable Members of the Community:

Vulnerable members of the community are broadly defined to include children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, women and girls, orphans, the socio-economically disadvantaged, refugees and internally displaced persons, women and girls in correctional centers, and those in borstal institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) in Nigeria is an essential aspect of public health that intersects with gender equality, education, and socio-economic development. Despite being a natural biological process, menstruation is shrouded in stigma and taboos in many parts of Nigeria, creating significant challenges for women and girls.

About 52% of the female population in Nigeria is of reproductive age and menstruating. The majority of them have no access to safe sanitary products and clean water, and for cultural and religious reasons, menstruation is invisible and silent. In Nigeria, it is estimated that over 37% of Nigerian women and girls are unable to afford sanitary products and are forced to use unsafe alternatives such as rags, leaves, or old cloth.

Additionally, only 24% of Nigerian schools have basic WASH facilities suitable for menstrual hygiene management, and about 23% of women and girls in rural areas lack access to clean water, making menstrual hygiene management (MHHM) difficult.

1.1. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Menstruation remains a taboo in many cultural contexts and is often associated with stigma, shame, and discrimination. In Nigeria, these harmful social norms combined with widespread poverty drive period poverty and the persistence of unsafe menstrual practices. Many menstruators resort to unhygienic alternatives such as old rags, newspapers, or leaves due to limited access to affordable menstrual products. The resulting stigma and exclusion undermine girls' confidence and social participation and constitute a significant barrier to education, forcing many to miss school or perform poorly during menstruation. These challenges are further exacerbated by inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools and other public spaces, limiting the ability of women and girls to manage menstruation safely and with dignity.

1.1.1. Level of Information, Knowledge, and Access to Menstrual Health and Hygiene in Nigeria

The level of information, knowledge, and access to menstrual health and hygiene in Nigeria varies across different geopolitical zones, states, socioeconomic backgrounds, tribes, and age groups.

1.1.1.1. Information and Awareness

Many individuals, particularly in rural and underserved communities, lack accurate information about menstruation. Menstrual health education is not consistently integrated into the school curriculum across all levels. Research indicates that many girls and women are unaware of proper menstrual hygiene practices, such as the need for cleaning menstrual products, changing pads regularly, and using safe disposal methods.

1.1.1.2. Knowledge of Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM)

In many parts of Nigeria, menstrual health and hygiene management (MHHM) is not well understood. The importance of maintaining menstrual hygiene and the dangers of using unsanitary materials are not widely emphasized. Research shows that many girls and women do not regularly practice safe menstrual hygiene due to a lack of information about the proper use and disposal of menstrual products.

1.1.1.3. Access to Menstrual products

Access to sanitary products is a significant challenge for many Nigerian women and girls, especially in rural and low-income communities. Products are often unavailable, or if they are, they are sold at prices that are unaffordable for many families. Many schools, particularly in rural communities, lack adequate WASH facilities (water, sanitation, and hygiene), making it difficult for girls to manage their menstruation hygienically.

1.1.1.4. Menstrual Hygiene and Health Services

Healthcare providers who offer services related to menstrual health are often concentrated in urban centers. In rural areas, healthcare facilities are limited, and specialized care for menstrual health issues such as pain management, dysmenorrhea, and menstrual disorders is often unavailable.

1.1.1.5. Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) in Learning Institutions

Lack of appropriate facilities, such as gender-segregated improved toilet facilities and adequate safe water supply in schools, can prevent girls from safe hygienic management of their menstruation. These may result in absenteeism, reduced level of concentration in class, low participation in outside school activities.

1.1.1.6. Safe Disposal of Menstrual Product

In the absence of waste management strategies, used products may be thrown into pit latrines or fields or present blockages to sanitation systems. Throwing used absorbents into latrines or public waste areas may reveal menstrual status or incur embarrassment.

1.1.1.7. Access to Water and Basic Sanitation Facilities

Lack of access to water and/or sanitation facilities not only leads women and girls to avoid engaging in healthy menstrual hygiene management practices but also causes them to walk miles to find a private (often unclean) area to change menstrual hygiene products, putting them at an increased risk for violence and disease.

1.1.1.8. Cultural Beliefs around Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management

Discrimination and harmful cultural norms further complicate menstruation, stripping women and girls of dignity and confidence. In many countries, menstruation and reproductive health are taboo; these issues are seldom discussed at school or at home, and menstruating individuals may be rendered dirty, impure, or vulnerable.

1.1.1.9. Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management in Humanitarian Context

Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) during humanitarian crises in Nigeria is a significant public health and human rights concern. However, emphasis on MHHM needs during humanitarian emergencies and limited access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities during crises continue to pose a major challenge for public health experts to overcome.

1.1.1.10. Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management and Persons with Disabilities

Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) in Nigeria among persons with disabilities is a critical but often overlooked aspect of health equity and inclusion. Facilities that are wheelchair-accessible or designed for persons with visual or hearing impairments are rare, making it challenging for individuals with disabilities to manage menstruation hygienically and privately.

1.1.1.11. Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management for Women in Correctional Centres and Psychiatric Facilities

Women in correctional and psychiatric facilities face systemic barriers to accessing adequate menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) services. The lack of a standardized policy framework exacerbates disparities, leading to preventable health complications, increased psychological distress, and human rights violations.

1.2. Rationale for the National Policy on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management in Nigeria

The rationale for the National Policy on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) in Nigeria is built upon the recognition of the significant impact menstruation has on the lives of women and girls, as well as the country's commitment to improving gender equality/equity, public health, education, and overall well-being.

1.2.1. Addressing the Health Implications of Poor Menstrual Hygiene

The policy aims to improve the overall health outcomes for women and girls by promoting safe menstrual practices and reducing the incidence of menstrual-related health issues.

1.2.2. Enhancing Education and Academic Performance

The policy's focus on ensuring access to menstrual products and WASH facilities in schools aims to reduce absenteeism, ensuring equal educational opportunities for girls.

1.4. Scope of the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) Policy

The National Policy on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) in Nigeria addresses menstrual health through an integrated focus on education, access to affordable menstrual products, and supportive social norms. It prioritizes awareness and education for women, girls, men, boys, parents, teachers, and both rural and urban communities, while emphasizing the provision of accessible and affordable menstrual hygiene products. The policy also underscores the importance of gender-responsive WASH facilities in schools, workplaces, and public spaces to enable safe and dignified menstrual hygiene management.

1.5. Context of the National Policy on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management in Nigeria

The policy aligns with several existing national frameworks:

- The National Gender Policy (2021-2026), which ensures that menstrual health is recognized as a critical issue of gender equity and human rights.
- The National Policy on Gender in Education (2021) aims to ensure that girls' educational experiences are not disrupted by a lack of access to menstrual health resources.
- The National Health Policy (2016) alignment ensures that menstrual health becomes a recognized and funded public health priority.
- The National Environmental Sanitation Policy (2005) and the National Water Sanitation Policy (2004) provide the frameworks for proper management and safe disposal of menstrual waste to ensure a clean and healthy environment.
- The Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003: is Nigeria's legal framework for protecting and promoting the rights of children below the age of 18 years. While it does not explicitly mention Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM), several provisions align with ensuring that girls have access to proper menstrual health care, education, and dignity. (Note: the Child Rights Act has been domesticated in the 36 states in Nigeria.)

2.0. Policy Measures and Guiding Principles

Menstruation as a human right: The National Policy on MHHM in Nigeria recognizes that the ability to manage menstruation safely and hygienically, without stigma or taboos, and in dignity, is a precondition to meeting the human rights of girls and women.

Integrated approach: An integrated approach combining MHHM education, access to menstrual products, services and facilities, and safe disposal of menstrual waste ensures improved health, access to education and work, reduced discrimination of women and girls, and increased gender equality.

Social inclusion: Vulnerable sections of the community shall be given priority attention in menstrual health and hygiene management in Nigeria.

Sustainable access: It shall therefore be the responsibility of the state to create an enabling environment where these products and services can be accessed.

2.1. Vision of the Policy

The National Policy on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) in Nigeria envisions a future where all women and girls can manage their menstruation safely and hygienically, with dignity, free from stigma or discrimination, in an environment that supports their health, education, and well-being.

2.2. Mission of the Policy

To ensure that all women and girls in Nigeria have access to accurate information, safe, affordable, and sustainable menstrual hygiene products, and supportive environments that enable them to manage their menstruation safely, hygienically, and with dignity, while addressing stigma and discrimination through collaborative, evidence-based, and culturally sensitive approaches.

2.3. Goal of the Policy

Goal 1:

Address the challenges related to menstrual health and hygiene, promote awareness, and promote the rights of women and girls to manage their menstruation with dignity.

Goal 2:

Create a supportive and enabling environment where menstruating individuals can manage their periods with dignity, hygienically, confidently, and without stigma, thereby improving their overall well-being, education, and participation in society.

Goal 3:

Promote the availability, affordability, and accessibility of safe, affordable, and high-quality menstrual hygiene products, including both disposable and reusable options.

2.4. Objectives of the Policy

- Provide coordination mechanisms among different MDAs and partnerships among non-governmental organizations, private sector actors, and other stakeholders.
- Promote and improve access to safe, affordable, and sustainable menstrual health and hygiene products and services for all women and girls in Nigeria.
- Ensure that women, girls, boys, and men have access to accurate information about menstruation and menstrual health so as to address harmful cultural norms and taboos.
- Establish an enabling policy, legal, and regulatory environment for effective implementation of MHHM.
- Mandate the provision of gender-sensitive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools, workplaces, public spaces, and communities

2.5. The Policy Statement

- The Federal Government of Nigeria recognizes menstrual health and hygiene as a human right.
- The government commits to providing a framework for equitable access to menstrual hygiene products, services, and WASH facilities, as well as relevant information for all individuals, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- The government commits to working with stakeholders, including NGOs, private sector organizations, development partners, and communities, to implement sustainable solutions for menstrual health and hygiene management.
- The government will support local production of affordable, safe, and eco-friendly menstrual hygiene products to ensure sustainability and accessibility.
- The government commits to providing education, awareness, and information on menstrual hygiene and health management (MHHM).
- The government will provide funding, logistics, and necessary resource mobilization strategies by allocating specific budget provisions for MHHM.
- The government will establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate implementation and progress, as well as ensure accountability and evidence-based decision-making to achieve the goals and objectives of the policy.

3.0. Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Policy Objectives and Strategies

Policy Objective 1:

To establish an enabling legal and regulatory environment for MHHM at the national, state, and local government areas.

Priority Actions:

Ensure that the Federal and State Governments include MHHM in their Development Plans and National Health Plans and have dedicated budgetary allocation for MHHM activities at all levels. Enact legislation on MHHM under the relevant Federal Ministries. Establish National, State, and Local Government MHHM Technical Working Groups (TWG).

Policy Objective 2:

To ensure that myths, misconceptions, taboos, and stigma around menstruation are addressed by providing women, girls, men, and boys access to information on menstruation.

Priority Actions:

Develop a communication and media strategy, key messages, and other IEC materials. Align and mainstream MHHM education within the school curriculum. Develop an effective MHHM advocacy initiative targeting community gatekeepers.

Policy Objective 3:

To ensure women and girls have access to safe and hygienic menstrual products, services, and facilities.

Priority Actions: Ensure provision of an adequate number of gender-responsive WASH/MHHM facilities with water, soap, and disposal bins in all public and private institutions (learning institutions, workplaces, public places, etc.). Ensure that women and girls have access to a range of menstrual health and hygiene management products that are acceptable, safe, and affordable. Create an enabling environment for investments in the sector to produce affordable menstrual hygiene products.

Policy Objective 4:

To ensure a clean and healthy environment for all Nigerians through appropriate technology choices for menstrual waste management and pollution control.

Priority Actions: Promote investment and innovation to develop effective menstrual waste management systems for storage, collection, transportation, treatment, and disposal. Recommend all public spaces have MHHM waste receptacles. Develop standards for menstrual waste management.

Policy Objective 5:

To establish a functionally effective monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning framework for MHHM in Nigeria.

Priority Actions: Institute effective M&E systems at all levels. Establish mechanisms for the collection and reporting of disaggregated data for decision-making in MHHM. Encourage research by relevant agencies to address a wide range of sanitation issues and propose solutions for addressing them.

4.0. Implementation Framework

The Menstrual Health and Health Management Policy shall be implemented in line with the Constitution of Nigeria, Child Rights Act, National Gender Policy, National Health Policy, and others, through a five-year rolling multi-sectoral approach. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Health, and relevant stakeholders shall develop the Nigeria Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Strategy.

4.1. Management and Coordination of the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) Policy Framework

The Federal Ministries of Women Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Health, and the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation shall convene the MHHM Technical Working Group (TWG) on MHHM in Nigeria. The TWG-MHHM shall comprise various line ministries, representatives from development partners, CSOs, NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, the media, and the private sector.

4.2. Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

4.2.1. Federal Ministry of Women Affairs:

Incorporate menstrual hygiene at different levels of government and across the relevant ministries, schools, health facilities, correctional centers, IDP/refugee camps, and communities. Mobilize and allocate resources for MHHM programmes. Ensure the provision of WASH/MHHM facilities, services, and products in learning institutions, workplaces, and public spaces.

4.2.2. Federal Ministry of Education:

Incorporate reproductive health and menstrual hygiene into the curriculum in learning institutions for all relevant sectors. Work with stakeholders to establish sustainable strategies, guidelines, and mechanisms for the provision of free, sufficient, and quality menstrual management materials to girls in educational institutions.

4.2.3. Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation:

Coordinate with other relevant ministries to implement the adequate supply of water to ensure women and girls can manage menstruation safely and hygienically. Support the Ministry of Education and Health in the design and implementation of guidelines and standards for the management of menstrual waste.

4.2.4. Federal Ministry of Health:

Provide accurate and user-friendly information on the biological facts about menstruation and menstrual health and hygiene. Provide affordable and easy-to-access healthcare for menstrual health issues. Ensure integration of MHHM in psychiatric facilities and health institutions in the country.

4.2.5. Donors and Development Partners:

Undertake advocacy on menstrual hygiene and dissemination of good practice as an international priority. Fund programmes to increase knowledge of good menstrual hygiene management practices.

4.2.6. NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, FBOs and

Private Sector: Support the provision of MHHM information and services to girls and women in schools and the community, especially those with special needs and in marginalized areas.

Meaningfully involve women and girls in policy formulation, programme design, implementation, research, and M&E.

Advocate and mobilize resources for MHHM policy implementation.

4.2.7. States and Local Government Areas:

Facilitate adoption and domestication of the National Policy on MHHM at the State and LGA levels and ensure alignment with the structures and functions of the respective state ministries. Promote strategies and outreaches that support good menstrual hygiene practices.

4.2.8. Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget, and National Planning:

Support policy advocacy and generation of data/information. Create the necessary resource mobilization mechanisms by allocating codes for MHHM to specific budget lines and support gender mainstreaming in all MHHM and related programm

4.2.9 Federal Ministry of Environment:

Support the management of menstrual health and hygiene waste products and research the environmental and health implications of menstrual health and hygiene products in Nigeria. Work with the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation to design and implement guidelines and standards for the management of menstrual waste in all public infrastructure.

4.2.10. Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation/National Orientation Agency:

Disseminate essential information to enhance and facilitate the management of MHHM in Nigeria and promote the circulation of information, awareness, and knowledge about MHHM in Nigeria.

4.2.11. Federal Ministry of Justice:

Review and ensure alignment of the MHHM policy with existing laws and international treaties ratified by Nigeria, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and CEDAW, and provide legal backing to the policy by facilitating its integration into relevant laws and national health strategies.

Also ensure the Menstrual Health Hygiene Policy upholds human rights principles, particularly the rights of women and girls and persons with disabilities to dignity, education, and health. Work with the National Human Rights Commission and other agencies to protect girls from discrimination, stigma, and abuse related to menstruation. Guide the development of legal instruments to establish a Menstrual Health Fund that ensures sustainable financing for menstrual hygiene initiatives. Ensure government accountability for the implementation of menstrual health laws through legal audits for policy reviews.

4.2.12 National Emergency Management Agency:

Mainstream MHHM into humanitarian management in Nigeria by ensuring that adequate attention is paid to menstrual hygiene products and facilities for IDPs and natural disaster management.

4.2.13. National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC):

Develop and set standards for menstrual health and hygiene management materials and conduct forensic and surveillance audits of menstrual health and hygiene products in the market. Also, conduct the inspection of imported MHHM products at points of entry in Nigeria.

4.2.14 Nigerian Customs Service:

Regulate and control the importation into Nigeria of standard MHHM products. Facilitate the import of quality raw materials for the production of menstrual products in Nigeria.

4.2.15. Research Institutions:

Conduct continuous research on the social, economic, and public health effects of MHHM to generate information and knowledge for decisions and improvement of policies and actions. Develop and transfer new knowledge, processes, and technologies towards improving MHHM products in Nigeria.

5.0. Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

The Federal Ministries of Women Affairs and Health shall be responsible for Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHHM) at the state levels and shall take the lead in putting in place a sound monitoring and evaluation framework for this policy.

5.1. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The monitoring and evaluation frameworks shall encompass the MHHM vision, goals, objectives and targets set out in this policy by indicating required policy outcomes and impact in order to maximize accountability among different stakeholders. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, with other stakeholders, will collaboratively develop common national, state, and community-level indicators to monitor performance and measure changes at various levels.

5.2. Progress Indicators

The National Policy will develop specific detailed indicators that are proposed below that will span all aspects of MHHM and be the critical indicators of success:

- Women and girls and men and boys across Nigeria discuss menstruation openly and are well informed about the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with safety and dignity.
- Women and girls can manage their menstruation safely, with privacy, comfort, and dignity in public spaces, including marketplaces, transport hubs, workplaces, educational, and other public institutions.
- Individual disposal practices and collection and disposal methods of reusable or disposable menstrual material are safe, non-polluting, effective, and efficient at the community and institutional level.
- Women, girls, men, and boys report satisfaction with the menstrual-friendly facilities and information available on menstruation, and the monitoring efforts reveal safe and non-polluting practices.