

FACTSHEET: MEN AND THEIR ATTITUDES TO MENSTRUATION IN UGANDA



DID YOU KNOW THAT...

KNOWING THE WOMAN

...many men can understand when a woman is in her period from her body language and changes in her daily activities?

"NIGHT DANCER"

...some men still consider that it is shameful and embarrassing to talk about menstruation with their fellow men? If a man talks about it, his peers may start calling him mad or a "night dancer."

SOILING

...when a woman is menstruating, usually she and her husband do not have any sexual intercourse? They may even sleep in separate beds. It would be too embarrassing for both of them, if the man was soiled by his wife's blood.

CONTAMINATION

...a menstruating woman's blood is perceived by some men as contaminating? These men would prefer that women do not use shared household items during their periods. Some of them do note at any food prepared by their female relatives or wives when they menstruate.

LEARNING ABOUT MENSTRUATION

...men have learnt about menstruation as kids in different ways witnessing it happening to a girl, from a friend or reading books? Nowadays boys learn about it at school during the puberty education classes. However, many of them still do not know at what age girls start menstruating and how men could assist them.



Men discussing menstrual health management. Kitgum, 2015

MALE INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

- Involving males in activities and projects aimed at improvement of female sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and maternal and child health give more positive results.
- In 2014, the Ministry of Health of Uganda acknowledged the importance of male involvement and launched a Male Involvement Strategy (MIS).
- *WoMena's* approach to MIS includes:
 - 1) exploring and understanding the man's situation, social background, and perceptions dominating in the society related to SRH and MHM (menstrual health management);
 - 2) educating men of different age groups and statuses on various SRH and MHM issues;
 - 3) sensitizing them about the need of their contribution and participation in female activities.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...



BATHING

...in order to manage her period well, according to many men, the most important is that a woman keeps herself "clean"? In their opinion, she should bathe 3-5 times a day when she menstruates.

MESSY GIRL

... after spotting a stain on a girl's or woman's skirt, some boys and men would label her as being messy or untidy?

FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDERS

...husbands usually see themselves as financial support providers when it comes to the issue of menstruation? They are not skilled to provide emotional and other forms of support to their wives and daughters.

COMMUNICATION IN THE FAMILY

...generally, a man learns about his wife's, daughters' and even daughters'-in-law menstrual hygiene and health needs indirectly, i.e., from his wife who maintains communication among family members?

MENSTRUAL CUP

... the majority of fathers approve the menstrual cup as a good method for their daughters, after they are explained about its use and benefits during parental meetings?

LACK OF SKILLS

... some men would like to see changes in communication about menstruation in their communities and families? They want to be good fathers and examples to their sons, but lack skills to start the changes from themselves.

...MEN INVOLVEMENT INTO MENSTRUAL AND SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAMMES CONTRIBUTES TO WOMEN'S WELLBEING BECAUSE¹:

- 1) it increases males' awareness and acceptability of their partners' choices and needs;
- 2) it influences gender relations (often health related decisions are made based on the dynamics of gender relations);
- 3) it builds a positive environment to approach menstrual and sexual reproductive health issues;
- 4) it creates a space which empowers men and enables to discuss them menstrual and sexual reproductive health issues equally and also encourages their sensibility towards their partners;
- 5) it gives an opportunity for men to address their own sexual reproductive health needs, be heard and understood?

¹Dutki, M. *Male Involvement in the prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT) Program in Kayunga District*.

Men's attitudes vary across the country. The presented attitudes were collected by WoMena during the interviews and focus group discussions.

A part of them were collected in Katakwi, Gulu and Kitgum districts during the menstrual cup interventions follow up study. The focus group discussions were held with fathers of the menstrual cup users and community leaders.

Informal conversations, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with boys in Eastern part of the country, boda boda drivers in Mbarara, students from Kampala, and PhD students and male lecturers in the Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST).