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WASH in schools empowers girls' education: Proceedings of the 5th Annual Virtual Conference on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools

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Organizations:

unicef

Conference:

5th Annual Virtual Conference on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools

Description:

Capturing girls' voices: Channelling girls' recommendations into global and national level action. Globally, there are around 600 million adolescent girls. Adolescence is a pivotal transitional period that requires special attention to ensure progress for all girls, especially the most vulnerable, and poses a unique opportunity to break intergenerational cycles of poverty and to transform gender roles. The onset of puberty and menstruation can pose an additional barrier to a girl's personal freedom, and can signal entry into a different role in their family and wider society. Girls often face social stigma attached to menstruation, or face negative and discriminatory gender relations and norms that come into effect with the onset of puberty. A growing evidence base from low and middle-income countries indicates that many girls reach menarche with inadequate guidance on how to manage their menses and personal hygiene with confidence. Meeting the hygiene needs of all adolescent girls in all settings – both inside and away from the household – is a fundamental issue of human rights, dignity, and public health. Every girl should be able to learn, play, and safeguard her own health without experiencing stress, shame, or unnecessary barriers to information or supplies during menstruation. In past years, substantial research has detailed the difficulties girls around the world face as they manage their menstruation in school environments that lack adequate menstrual related guidance and support, and private, clean, safe water and sanitation facilities. The ability of girls to meet their menstrual hygiene management (MHM) needs at school serves as an indicator of the gender-responsive or gender-discriminatory aspects of

many school environments. The global water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) community is tackling this issue with the aim of empowering and enabling girls to manage their menstruation with safety, dignity, and privacy in school. The 5th Annual Virtual Conference on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools, co-hosted by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and UNICEF on 25 October 2016 provided highlights of this global effort. The one-day virtual conference brought together an estimated 1,000 participants from over 90 countries around the world.

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