

# MHM issues in Timor Leste

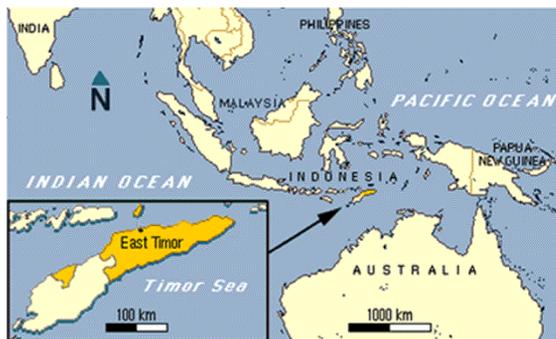
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## Background

### Timor Leste Context

- Sovereign state in 2002, recent history of conflict and civil unrest.
- Population ~1.2 million
- 72% of the population live in rural areas.



### MHM Issues in rural Timor-Leste

#### Knowledge, attitudes, practices:

- High use of disposable pads; little knowledge prior to menarche
- Behaviour restrictions (bathing, physical activity, interacting with others)

#### Institutional barriers:

- Lack of accountability for WASH in schools at all levels
- No formal school WASH guidelines: Still in draft form waiting for approval.
- No MHM education in primary schools

#### WASH barriers:

- There are no MHM disposal facilities / services at school,
- WASH facilities are inadequate for menstrual hygiene.



## Objectives



WaterAid piloted MHM in School WASH in Liquica and Manufahi districts

#### The aim of the pilot was to:

- Demonstrate to the sector the **needs** around MHM;
- Identify **approaches** to best address MHM in schools; and
- **Improve accountability** for School WASH (and MHM)

## Activities/Interventions

### First step

Established an MOU with the Ministry of Education.

### Developing IEC Materials

A critical gap in Timor-Leste is lack of information and education materials for girls in schools.

WaterAid developed IEC materials to address the following cultural barriers and taboos about MHM in Timor-Leste:

- Not to shower with cold water and not washing hair
- No cooking or eating acidic foods
- Not being near or interacting with boys or men

Pictures were locally designed and tested the rural Timor-Leste context

### Advocating to Government

Extensive coordination with Government Ministries of Health and Education at the district level were included from the project outset:

- Coordination meetings with pilot schools and WaterAid;
- Encouraging both Ministries to be involved;
- Hosting workshops with the Ministries, and also local NGO (our partners) to design, develop and test the BCC / IEC materials produced by WaterAid
- Representatives from both Ministries joined in MHM activities and co-facilitated sessions conducted in schools to see firsthand.

### Sanitation Facility Rehabilitation

WaterAid worked with schools, Government and local partner organisations to rehabilitate existing school toilets and construct dedicated MHM facilities in 8 schools with 4 in Liquica and 4 Manufahi districts



## Learning and Implications

### Key Learnings

- Collaborating with **Government** has been critical
- **Men and boys** are key change agents in MHM
- **Teachers** play a critical role in supporting students to manage MHM

### Key Challenges

- No lesson time allocated, so facilitators did series of short education sessions during break time with students.
- Time lag in constructing toilets meant girls were learning about MHM without access to adequate facilities.



*"There used to be more rubbish around. We would fall behind because of missed classes...Now we learnt how to use sanitary products, how to dispose of waste, how we can eat everything, and that we can bathe..."*

– Filomena 18 yrs old

## Conclusion

Emerging Areas WaterAid plans to consider in the future:

- Collaboration with adolescent sexual reproductive health sector
- Strengthen integration of MHM into community WASH
- Potential of male & female students as change agents
- Reaching vulnerable populations, such as girls with disabilities