

## **INTEGRATED MENSTRUAL HEALTH PROGRAMMING IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

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**Background/Purpose:** Women and adolescent girls living in low- and middle-income countries experience challenges in managing their menstruation effectively due, in part, to misinformation and social taboos. Improving menstrual health experiences can positively impact on girls' education, women's livelihoods, health, and wellbeing. However, the holistic and integrated programmatic approaches which menstrual health requires have been overlooked by sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); gender equality; and education actors. In response, an integrated WASH and SRHR project was designed by Marie Stopes International (MSI) and WaterAid in 2017, with support from the Australian Government. This innovative three-year project is being implemented in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Timor-Leste, with the aim to improve women and girls' education, health and social outcomes.

**Approach:** Utilizing results from recent research on menstrual health in Timor-Leste and PNG, including [The Last Taboo](#), project partners have been piloting new resources and trialling new implementation strategies to develop cross-sectoral, cross-cultural, and evidence-based approaches to improving access to girl-friendly WASH facilities, menstrual products, education, and health services for adolescent girls.

**Outcomes/Impact:** At two years of implementation, the partnership has increased access to WASH and SRHR information, facilities, and services for over 14,000 girls, boys, and adults. Evidence-based advocacy efforts, such as menstrual tracking calendars; male engagement videos; community and school-based education, and anaemia testing promotions, have brought together government and civil society actors into a community of practice able to facilitate positive change in practice and address harmful social norms associated with sex and menstruation.

**Innovation and Significance:** Cross-sectoral and cultural collaboration and evidence-based experimentation can lead to practical, effective approaches to improving a country's menstrual health ecosystem. Leveraging one another's expertise, the MSI and WaterAid project has demonstrated that collaborative approaches to delivering holistic solutions can increase reach and quality of education and services available to young people.

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