

INFORMATION BRIEF

Menstrual hygiene kits: Supporting girls' participation in school



Girls at the Islamic Call Society SSS, Mattru Jong, Bonthe District

In Sierra Leone, adolescent girls miss up to the 20% of their school year because of their period and being unable to afford sanitary products. This has significant consequences on their learning and participation in school.

To support girls' retention in school, Leh Wi Lan has distributed individual menstrual hygiene kits containing re-usable pads and provided orientation on menstrual health and hygiene to 536,000 girls across more than 2,650 junior and senior secondary schools nationwide.

Key results

- Over 30% reduction in girls' absenteeism when they have their period.
- Increased girls' confidence, which improves their motivation and ability to participate in school.
- Safer personal hygiene because the reusable pads are more sanitary than products they were using before, such as cotton cloth, wool and toilet paper.
- Increased savings so that girls and their families can use money previously spent on sanitary products for other purposes, with monthly savings equivalent to the cost of lunch.

"I can't express how happy I am for the Leh Wi Lan pads. In fact, I am a repeater. Anytime I am on my period I do not sit to test and even exams. I lost so many test but now I am going to be promoted to a new class."

Pupil



536,000
girls benefitting

Recommendations

In line with Sierra Leone's National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, girls should receive one menstrual hygiene kit each school year, which includes a reusable pad that can last for 12 months.

Orientation and discussion of menstrual health and hygiene should take place in school so that girls have access to quality information and the space to ask questions and learn. This will also contribute to addressing harmful social norms around menstruation.

Improvements to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools should complement menstrual hygiene campaigns. Many girls do not have adequate access to water, especially in rural areas, which makes it more challenging for them to manage their periods when in school.

Views reflect partners' findings and recommendations and are not the official position of the British High Commission in Sierra Leone. This briefing includes data from SSEIP I and SSEIP II, with a cut-off date of May 2025.

The second phase of the Leh Wi Lan programme is part of the Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme II (SSEIP II), which is funded by UK International Development. This five-year programme supports Sierra Leone's Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to deliver improved education outcomes at secondary level, with a focus on schoolgirls and learners with disabilities. Leh Wi Lan is implemented by a consortium of national and international organisations led by Cambridge Education of the Mott MacDonald Group.