

40pc girls skip schools during menstruation

A result of poor toilet facilities; 45pc school toilets found locked, says icddr,b study

UNB, Dhaka

Over 40 percent girls skip school for three days each month on average during menstruation due to poor toilet facilities, according to a icddr,b study.

It also found that menstrual hygiene is a serious challenge for girls in Bangladesh due to lack of general education on the issue.

Researchers from icddr,b's Centre for Communicable Diseases in association with the Policy Support Unit of Local Government Division conducted the study with support from WaterAid Bangladesh.

The survey also found that up to 45 percent of school toilets are currently locked, accelerating hygiene problems during menstruation, according to an icddr,b web post.

Acknowledging and endorsing good menstrual hygiene practices for girls, the government has already released an official statement recommending better school toilets.

The statement urges relevant officials, school committees and teachers to work together and build separate toilet facilities for female students, improve toilet

facilities to include soap, water and waste bin. It also mentions appointing teachers to educate female students on menstruation.

Mahbub Ul Alam, a research investigator at icddr,b, said the government's commitment and recommendations were significant because it signalled a shift in the perception of menstrual hygiene.

The statement, which has been distributed to all district and sub-district level education officers, could prompt teachers, even in resource-poor and conservative settings, to unlock currently unused toilets in order to provide separate facilities for girls.

"Most menstrual hygiene management issues are also related to perception as girls do not want to dry their menstrual clothes in the open, or clean and store them properly because they think it is shameful. There is a clear relationship between school absences, lack of facilities and perception," said Alam.

The survey was led by Dr Leanne Unicomb, former head of icddr,b's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Research group; and Dr Steve Luby, a professor of medicine and director of research, Stanford University.