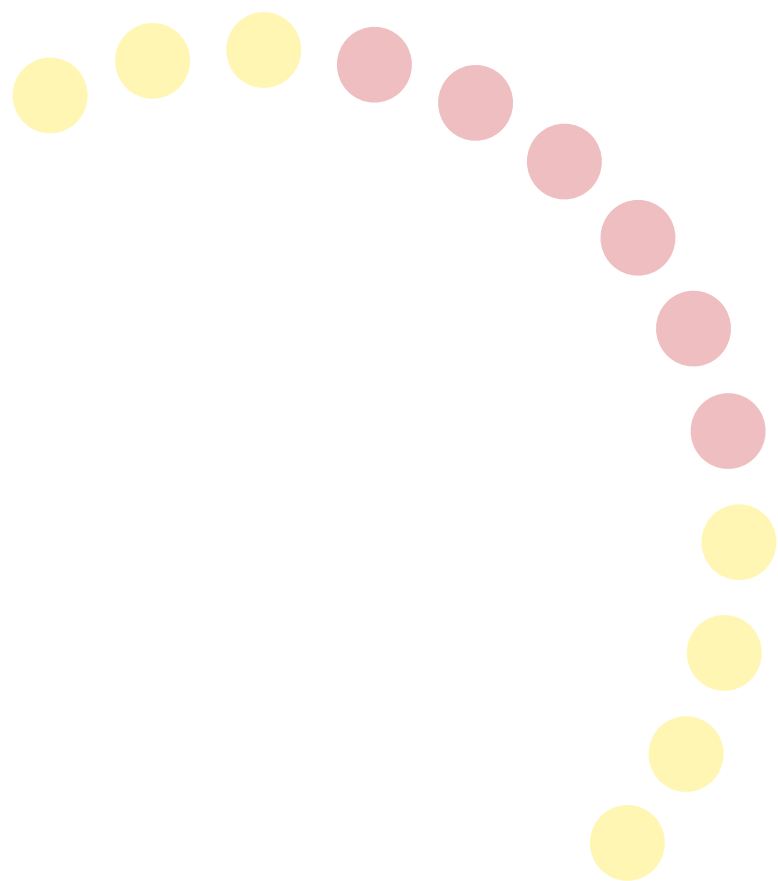


MHM Lab Convenor's Manual

v1.0



WSSCC
WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION
COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL



पंकज जैन
सचिव
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Secretary



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I am happy to learn that the Key Resource Centre, Water and Sanitation, Centre for Good Governance, Uttarakhand Academy of Administration is conducting National Level Training of Trainers programme on Menstrual Hygiene Management and bringing out booklets on Menstrual Hygiene Management with support of Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council – (i) Lab Manual, (ii) Manual for Training of Practitioners and (iii) Manual for Training of Trainers.







Sanitation and hygiene are key issues for women, consistent with their need for privacy, dignity, safety and self-respect. The Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan places a special emphasis on addressing the sanitation needs of women recognising their role in building a Nirmal Bharat.

Menstruation is a key indicator of health and vitality for women and girls. Managing this hygienically and with dignity is an integral path of good sanitation and hygiene. Hygiene promotion campaigns are most effective, I believe, among younger populations and they can be targeted both as beneficiaries and as agents of behavioural change within their families and their communities. Youth are also quick to acknowledge alternatives, process and functioning dynamics of systems involved in achieving better results. Though there are few pioneering changes that have been created, what seem to be missing are actionable ideas for building an alternate paradigm, which will assure success. Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council and Uttarakhand Academy effort is a step forward in achieving the desired goals.

I wish the Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and Uttarakhand Academy to achieve the desired results and strengthen and enlighten the community, especially women and the youth about the benefits of Safe, Healthy Environment and Improved Menstrual Hygiene and Sanitation facilities.

Pankaj Jain
Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation,
Government of India.

Building on more than a decade of the Total Sanitation Campaign, the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan was launched in 2012 to “transform rural India into ‘Nirmal Bharat’ by adopting ‘community-led’ and ‘people-centred’ strategies and a community saturation approach” – with a focus on creating awareness and generating demand for sanitary facilities and their use. The main objectives of the NBA are to:

-  Bring about an improvement in the general quality of life in the rural areas;
-  Accelerate sanitation coverage in rural areas to achieve the vision of Nirmal Bharat by 2022 with all gram Panchayats in the country attaining Nirmal status;
-  Motivate communities and Panchayati Raj Institutions promoting sustainable sanitation facilities through awareness creation and health education;
-  To cover the remaining schools not covered under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Anganwadi Centres in the rural areas with proper sanitation facilities and undertake proactive promotion of hygiene education and sanitary habits among students;
-  Encourage cost effective and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation;
-  Develop community managed environmental sanitation systems focusing on solid & liquid waste management for overall cleanliness in the rural areas.

The NBA refers to the importance of engaging women’s self-help groups to achieve its aims and the need to ensure that services reach vulnerable groups including women-headed households. The initiative calls for a demand driven approach that links to effective demand creation and infrastructure that people want, will use and will maintain. It stops short of explicitly mentioning menstrual hygiene management as an issue that affects women – half the target population of the NBA – for 35 to 40 years of their lives, with significant implications for their health. Although not explicitly stated, the provisions in the training, awareness raising, behaviour change and financial incentives available, leave it to the state and its instruments at the local level to interpret and use the NBA. Meanwhile, experiences on the ground, research and policy shows that women’s participation, management and decision making is essential for the success and sustainability of any water and sanitation service delivery in India.

The demand for facilities and services that respond to women and girls biological needs was further corroborated by primary research conducted with over 12,000 women and girls in schools and in a Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Lab designed and conducted by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) across five states in 2012. The MHM Lab was a part of a bigger platform, the Nirmal Bharat Yatra, which was organised by WASH United and Quicksand in partnership with the Government of India. The Yatra sought to raise awareness on stopping open defecation, washing hands with soap and improving menstrual hygiene management – three key dimensions of a Nirmal Bharat.

WSSCC's MHM Lab reached thousands of women and girls and was supported by a range of small and medium-sized partners including Arghyam, Goonj and Digital Empowerment Foundation. At home, in school, at work and play, the voices and demands from thousands of women and girls completely supported by the hundreds of men and boys who also engaged with the MHM Lab, were loud and clear: *let's talk about it, let's do something about it – so that we can manage our menstruation with pride and dignity and dispose used menstrual material safely without further endangering the environment.* The advocacy work of the government, coupled with its resources and ambition, provides the ideal platform for taking this message and related services to every woman and girl in rural India. WSSCC engaged with local and state government, extension workers, teachers, trainers, and practitioners in health, education and WASH from Wardha to Bettiah, as part of the push for improved understanding, information sharing, counselling, training and support on menstrual hygiene. Trainers were clear that although the topic was not new – the connection with people was missing. Girls and grown women in every state said that their discussions in the MHM Lab represented the first time ever that they had been able to ask questions, understand the menstrual cycle and learn about safe hygiene practices, reuse and disposal.

The materials in this publication were developed, tested and commented upon across five states through one-on-one interviews with people in different age groups, focus groups, and discussions held in various settings including schools. A writer's workshop was organised by WSSCC in February 2013 in Mumbai bringing together MHM Lab facilitators, designers, trainers and experts to develop the range of manuals and tools. Disability experts were a key part of the process of addressing this vital topic within the context of MHM and in developing this publication. See the Acknowledgements section of this publication for the names of the various experts that were involved in this process.

PREFACE

This publication is designed to be easy to read and use. It is meant to be used by service providers, extension and community workers, teachers, parents and peers in their efforts to reach out to large numbers of women and girls in an efficient and effective way without compromising on quality and message. It is not confined to sanitation, water and hygiene, rather it seeks to build comfort, pride, dignity, confidence and related demand so that women and girls can be full members of society at all times without shame and fear.

Women and girls menstruate and thereby produce the next generation. This publication and the accompanying materials are intended to deepen our understanding of the biological nature of this phenomenon in order to reclaim and restore the pride and confidence that should naturally be a part of it. Managing menstruation hygienically with linked sanitary facilities is an important aspect of life – the practical dimensions of which this publication also aims to facilitate – resulting in clean, convenient facilities that offer privacy and dignity for women at any time of the month. Policymakers, trainers, development partners, civil society, academics, the media and community leaders are invited to use these publications to intensify and amplify the transformation already underway in the country with regard to menstrual hygiene management. We hope these materials will help you to break the silence, take and spread the pledge inside and outside your own home and wider with women and men young and old, to install pride where there was shame and to make menstrual hygiene management a central part of the design and construction of every school, health clinic, workspace, transport centre and home.



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2. Introduction
3. How It Works
5. MHM Lab Materials
7. Running the Lab
8. Focus Group Discussions (FDGs)
10. Pad Making & Management
14. Bracelet Making

KEY:

Materials



Pictures



Important



Information



Step-by-Step



Acknowledgments

This publication was written collaboratively in a writing workshop organised by WSSCC in February 2013 in Mumbai: The writers were: Lakshmi Murthy, Maria Fernandes, Vijay Gawade, Urmila Chanam, Vaishalli Chandra, Krishna Ramavat, Shivangini Tandon, Veda Zacharia, Vinod Mishra and Archana Patkar (WSSCC). The publication also benefitted from the valuable inputs of staff at WSSCC, Geneva, including Zelda Yanovich, Andrew Kanyegirire, David Matthews, Varsha Sharma and David Trouba.

Disclaimer

This publication is jointly produced by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and the Government of India (GOI). Any errors or omissions, however, remain the responsibility of WSSCC only. The comments and contributions made to this report by representatives from the water, sanitation and hygiene, reproductive and sexual health and education sectors in India and beyond are gratefully acknowledged. The publication also draws on already existing material on the subject.

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This report and other WSSCC publications are also available at www.wsscc.org

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INTRODUCTION

A woman menstruates every month for five to six days for almost forty years of her life – that’s the equivalent of nearly 3000 days or eight years over a lifetime. Yet despite the direct effect this precious event has on half the world’s population, and its crucial role in the human lifecycle, for billions of people menstruation is a taboo subject.

Given the shame and secrecy menstruation engenders, its linked needs are all but ignored in many countries. This means that sanitation and hygiene services often fail to cater to menstruating women and girls, with gaps in understanding and knowledge resulting in unhygienic and harmful practices. Silence around the subject is responsible for mental trauma, pain and indignity. But far from being solely ‘a women’s issue’ menstruation is a social and human rights issue too.

This manual is thus designed to help practitioners’ organise an MHM Lab event that brings menstrual hygiene out of the shadows. It uses simple yet effective approaches that address this taboo issue at scale – and across diverse geographies and contexts – and can be used throughout a wide range of cultural contexts.



The MHM Lab's aim is simple: to transform menstruation into a matter of pride and help women and girls stop suffering in silence. By enabling safe and hygienic menstrual management (MHM), as well as safe reuse and/or disposal of menstrual hygiene products, the Lab allows women and girls to regain control of a basic but fundamental part of their well-being.

Creating a welcoming yet efficient workshop venue where large numbers of participants can be engaged meaningfully, but within a short timeframe, is a practical necessity for any Lab event. But it's also important to use your imagination and create a stimulating training session within a holistic, highly visual and interactive space for sharing and learning.

Each Lab runs for a minimum of three hours and is divided into four sections:

- 1)** Learning about menstruation using Focus Group Discussions (FDGs).
- 2)** Learning how to manage menstruation, e.g. pad making.
- 3)** Breaking the silence through bracelet making and taking the 'Pledge'.
- 4)** Watching a visual presentation on disposal options.

Participating in these activities leads to a variety of outcomes:

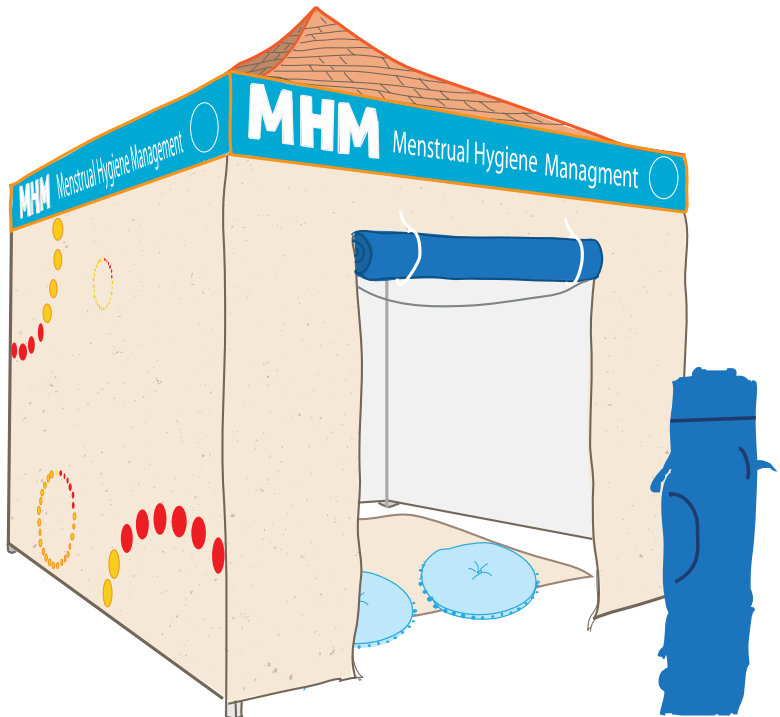
- Understanding the science of menstruation.
- Awareness of the different products available for managing menstruation.
- Knowledge of safe disposal methods.
- Confidence in breaking the silence on menstruation and removing cultural taboos.

TARGET GROUP








While the Lab is aimed primarily at girls and women, some sections are also open to men and boys. Finding ways of attracting males into the Lab may seem like a challenging idea, but it shouldn't be overlooked. After all, men and boys are often curious about 'women's issues' but can be afraid or ashamed to ask about them. The Lab gives them a rare opportunity to look, listen and learn in a non-judgemental environment.

CONVENOR SKILLSET

To be a successful Lab Convenor you need to have a full understanding of the ethical issues connected to MHM. You also need to have a range of facilitation skills, local language skills and, if you're targeting a women-only audience, you'll need to have a female facilitator working with you.



Each Lab should come with its own specially designed materials (or a kit bag) – including the following items:

-  Tent
-  Posters and display material
-  Training material for trainer to use with FGDs, including wheel, KAAVAD flip book, illustrations for the tent and visual material about disposal methods
-  Doll for demonstrating pad use
-  Material for bracelet making
-  Soap for washing
-  A display of curated sanitary materials





TENT EXTRAS

To get the most out of the Lab and make full use of the tent every Convenor needs to source a number of items, which are not provided in the kit bag. These include: cushions, chairs (only for those girls/women/men who are unable to sit due to disabilities), fans, drinking water, pedestal fans, tables, screens/dividers (to divide the tent into three sections), bolsters, a clothes line for drying pads, dust bins, a petticoat and a variety of sanitary pads and towels.



LOCATING THE TENT

Always find a clear space with good visibility that will attract a good-sized crowd (approximately 50 people per day). Look for a relatively flat surface that is dry and in an area that can accommodate the tent's dimensions (i.e. it is large enough and, if under a roof, high enough for the tent to fit comfortably).

For health and safety reasons, and as a common courtesy to others, make sure the tent does not block an entry or exit route to a building or event site, or otherwise obstruct members of the public. Also, make sure that those queuing inside or outside the tent are safe from potential dangers or hazards.

Finally, don't forget to obtain prior permission from event organisers or property owners before setting up!

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

An MHM Lab requires very little set-up and is easy to run. The following step-by-step guide shows you how to do it with the minimum of fuss:

1. Queue girls/boys/women/men outside the tent.
2. As they enter, have two FGD trainers greet them and get them into groups of no more than eight participants (Depending on the community and cultural sensitivities, it is advisable to separate FGDs into women and girls only and/or boys and men only).
3. Run each FGD for 30 minutes with 15 minutes available at the end of each session for participants to clarify doubts or questions they may have. Trainers are encouraged to make the sessions as interactive as possible by engaging the participants in discussion and gauging their existing knowledge and experience.
4. After the FGDs, move the participants onto the pad making area.
5. The pad-making demonstrator introduces the session, which runs for about 10 minutes.
6. The FGD trainers explain how to reuse the pads and dispose of them safely. This takes about five minutes.
7. Participants then move on to the bracelet making area outside the tent. Here they learn how making a special bracelet symbolises the pride of being a woman, and they celebrate the essence of womanhood ('The Flow').

BREAKING THE ICE

Spend a couple of minutes introducing yourself and the Lab, and getting to know the participants. MHM Labs are visited by a variety of people from different age groups, social backgrounds, educational abilities, professions and religions, so asking a few questions about the participants not only gives you useful background information, it helps act as an icebreaker.

Typical starter questions are:

- Where are you from?
- What do you do, e.g. study or work?
- Where do you go to school or college?
- How far do you live from the Lab location?
- How did you find out about the Lab?

With this basic information you can now link to a discussion about the participants' knowledge of the subject, namely: what do they know about the menstrual cycle; what is their cloth/pad usage behaviour; and what are their disposal methods (optional) for used pads?

To help explain and illustrate the subject make use of available training materials, such as the menstrual cycle wheel and the KAAVAD flipbook.

The images in the flipbook allow participants to visualise the changes in the body that take place from childhood to adulthood. This in turn helps them feel comfortable about the body's changing outward appearance. Taking this 'show don't tell' approach eases the participants into the topic of menstruation.



The *mahawari chakka* or 'menstruation wheel' helps answer the 'how' of the menstrual cycle, enabling participants to visualise the monthly cycle. Using the wheel helps answer questions on pain, blood, tissue/uterine wall discharge, and provides a link to talking about conception.

Once again, this gradual approach opens up the space for a discussion on associated societal taboos.



Trainer note:

- Ensure a good height sitting arrangement to allow appropriate trainer attention. Remember that some participants may have never seen their own body in detail, so use visual images to illustrate the changes the body goes through from childhood into adulthood.
- Refer to the training manual on menstruation (Maria's manual) to help guide your session.



PAD MAKING & ITS MANAGEMENT

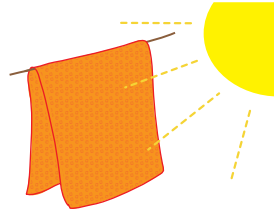
In this session, participants learn how to make clean, hygienic, eco-friendly sanitary napkins. They start by examining types of cloth and identifying sources of cotton clothing such as petticoats, cotton vests, bed sheets, towels etc., which can be used as sanitary products.

To illustrate how to make a homemade sanitary napkin, follow this 10-step guide:

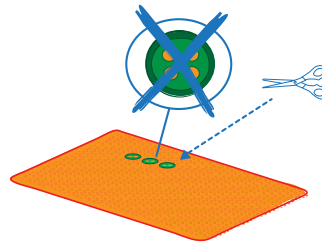
1. Clean a piece of cloth with warm water and detergent. If the cloth is old and has been lying unused for a long time use an antiseptic solution to clean/sanitise (bear in mind that many participants cannot afford antiseptic solutions).



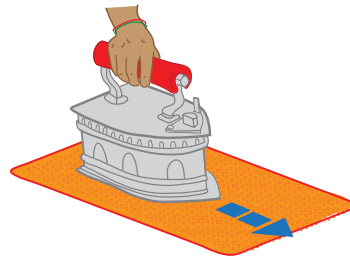
2. Dry the cloth in direct sunlight to ensure it is free of any infection-causing germs or organisms.



3. **Important:** make sure that any embroidery, hooks, buttons, metal or any extraneous materials are removed as any material remaining on the cloth can be very dangerous.

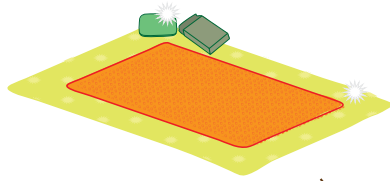


4. If necessary, iron the cloth to make sure that it's moisture-free.

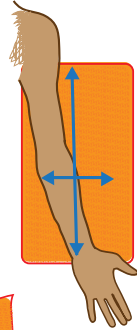




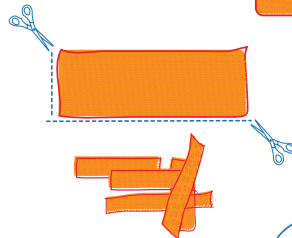
5. Place the cloth in a clean area.



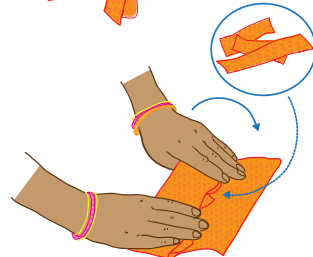
6. Measure the cloth to approximately one arm length and half an arm's width. (Modify size based on personal comfort and convenience.)



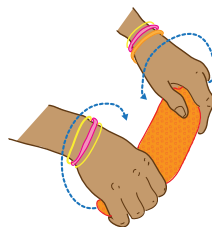
7. Save the cuttings from the cloth to fill the pad to provide comfort and better absorption.



8. Put the cuttings in the centre of the pad and fold 1/3rd of the cloth along the length over the cuttings from one side then repeat on the other side to make one long rectangle.



9. Fold the open ends along the breadth of the pad to finish it off.



10. Wrap the pads in paper and store in a clean and dry place, ideally inside a clean box or container. Make sure the pads are not vulnerable to mice, termites and other insects.

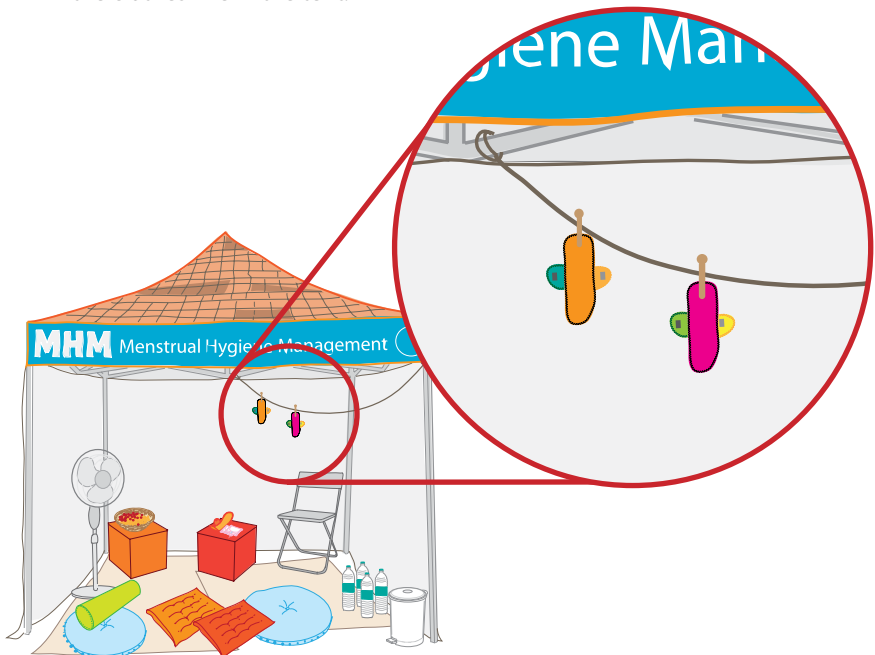


Use and care

Once you've discussed how to make homemade sanitary pads, move the discussion onto to how to use and maintain them.

Here are the key explanation points:

- Pads need to be kept in a bag or other accessible place two days before expected menses.
- Depending on need, change the pad a minimum of 3-4 times a day.
- Always carry some paper or a bag to store used pads.
- Used pads should be washed in cold water with soap to remove blood and then treated either with antiseptic (if available) or boiled water to remove germs.
- Place on a clothes line in direct sunlight, and store in a clean, dry place until the pad is completely dry. To illustrate the point, hang the pad on the clothes line in the tent.



Disposal

Explain to participants that the cloth cuttings inside the pad can be thrown away after each use and replaced, if needed. But stress that as with any waste disposal, this **MUST** be done responsibly!

Give the following advice for disposing of used cuttings and pads:

- 1.** Dig a small hole in the ground and bury the pads.
- 2.** If ground is unavailable, wrap the pad in paper and discard in a frequently emptied bin (if doing this at home an outside bin is preferable).
- 3.** If the pad's cloth is tearing, hardening or cannot be cleaned with ease, throw it away.

Remind participants **NOT** to dispose of pads:

- In any body of water.
- Near any body of water.
- In an open area.
- Near playgrounds and areas where community gatherings happen.
- In toilets.



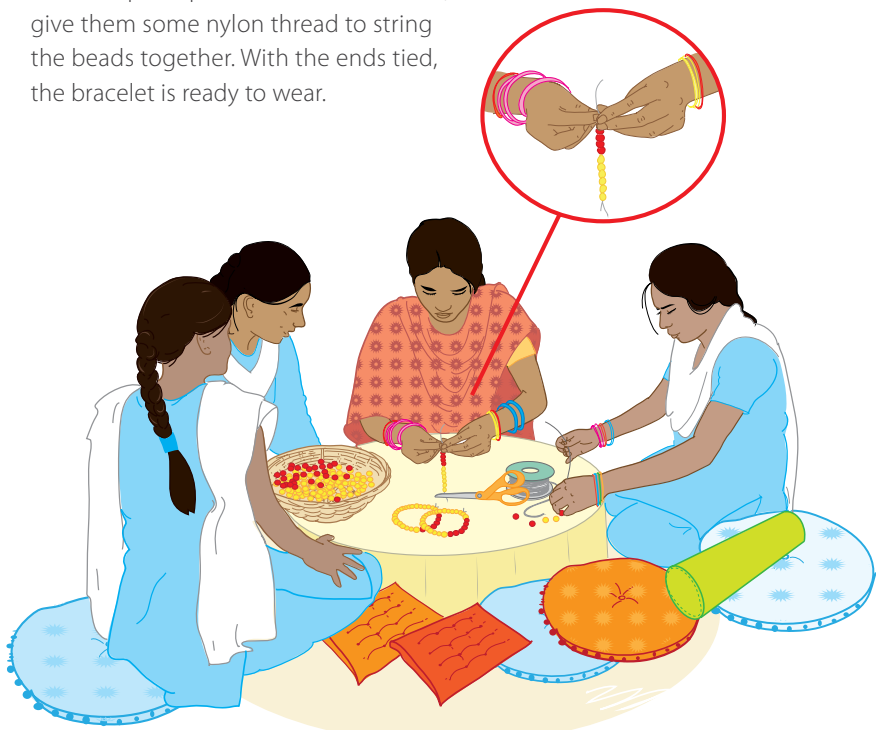
BRACELET MAKING

The Lab's closing activity is bracelet making – a symbolic act that also serves as a poignant reminder for participants of the day's event. To facilitate this session, get two volunteers to sit outside the Lab with baskets of two-coloured beads – preferably red and yellow. Up to 16 participants then sit around the baskets with the volunteers.

The activity involves asking each participant in turn how long her period lasts (answers are typically anywhere between two and seven days). Depending on an individual's answer, ask her to pick the corresponding number of red beads. For example, if a participant menstruates for five days, she picks five red beads.

Next, ask each participant in turn to subtract these days from 28 – the number of days in a woman's menstrual cycle. Once she's done this, she selects the corresponding number of yellow beads. For example, if the participant menstruates for five days, it would be $28 - 5 = 23$. So, she would pick 23 yellow beads.

Once the participants have 28 beads each, give them some nylon thread to string the beads together. With the ends tied, the bracelet is ready to wear.





THE PLEDGE

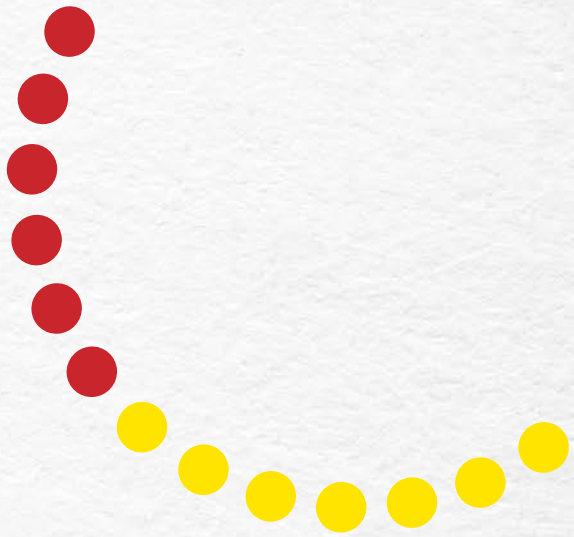
The finale of the bracelet making session, and indeed the Lab event, is the 'Pledge'. Encourage all participants to wear their bracelets on their wrists, hold them out, and take the following oath, together:

We will break the silence on menstruation

We will not feel shy, but be proud of it

We will talk about it with our families and the society at large





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