

sustainable
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alliance

MENSTRUAL HEALTH & HYGIENE RELEVANT, INTERSECTORAL AND ON THE RISE

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COMMIT TO MHH

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SPREAD THE WORD

PARTICIPATE



A COMPILATION OF MHH RESOURCES
REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION 2023

Compiled on behalf of SuSanA Working Group 7
"Sustainable WASH in Institutions and Gender Equality"
with support from the GIZ Water Policy Programme, Germany

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FOREWORD



Photo: © Photothek / Felix Zahn

Svenja Schulze, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development and members of the German civil society show their joint support to break the taboo around menstruation by wearing the Menstruation Bracelet.

From left: Judith Ringlstetter, Thorsten Kiefer, Carolin Stüdemann, Svenja Schulze, Alexia Knappmann, Mathias Mogge, Thilo Panzerbieter.

DEAR READERS

Many young people grow up in ignorance about their bodies and their rights, which deprives them of the opportunity to make their own choices about their future. During my visits to other countries, I have seen the dramatic consequences of this. I met girls who told me what it is like not to know what is happening with your own body, what it is like to regard this as a kind of black box of which you are afraid. What it is like not to be able to talk about menstruation, not even with your friends or your mother, because it's a taboo subject. Many have told me that they cannot go to school while they have their period, because there are no toilets with running water where they could change tampons or pads. Or simply because they have no access to menstrual products—in many cases because they cannot afford them. Or, sometimes, because it "isn't proper" to go to school during menstruation. That leaves girls with gaps in their education—and their education determines their future.

Unfortunately, these are not individual instances—this is a structural problem. Over 600 million girls and women worldwide have no access to information on menstruation, to gender-appropriate toilets or to menstrual products. During their period, many of them are isolated and prevented from taking part in normal life. That is unfair.

It harms their health and well-being—and that of society as a whole! No society that wants to be successful should refuse to benefit from the participation of half of its people—not even for a few days each month. There is clear evidence from studies which shows that prosperity and security increase if women enjoy equality and are able to use their potential to the full. Societies can only be peaceful and stable if all people enjoy equal participation in political, economic and social life.

That is why, in my capacity as Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, I pursue a feminist development policy. Its purpose is to reduce the discrimination and oppression that keep women from enjoying equal participation. This includes providing access to menstrual health and hygiene, and eliminating the taboo surrounding menstruation once and for all.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development supports, for example, the Fit for School program in Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and the Philippines. Working with these countries' ministries of education, as many as 27 million students, teachers and staff members have already received information on menstrual health and hygiene. We also support social media campaigns, working through influencers in the Global South—including of course boys and men. These influencers at last treat menstruation for what it is—something completely natural.

In the present publication, the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) provides a collection of knowledge around menstrual health and hygiene, in order to offer practical ideas to be used on the ground. The projects presented on the world map at the beginning of the publication give us just a few examples of successful approaches. You are invited to let these ideas inspire you—this is about much more than just a few days at a certain time of the month!

Svenja Schulze

German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development

HIGHLIGHTS

MHH PROJECT EXAMPLES

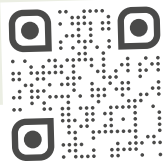
IMPLEMENTED BY GIZ
ON BEHALF OF BMZ

ALBANIA #LetsTalkPERIOD Reaching Millions via Social Media



Clicktivism is proving an effective tool for tackling taboos around menstruation and empowering young women and girls around the globe. Over the last three years, the #LetsTalkPERIOD approach has reached more than 5 million people in Albania, Nepal and the Philippines – by engaging influencers as Goodwill Ambassadors and using social media to reach a wider audience.

www.giz.de/en
> <https://bit.ly/3yA2JYL>



UGANDA Better Hygiene for All



A school in Northern Uganda demonstrates how to break taboos and address the subject of menstruation through a cooperation between the Ugandan Government and the Sanitation for Millions global programme.

akzente.giz.de/en
> <https://bit.ly/3pKvtvM>

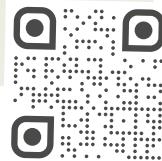


MALAWI Small Cup, Big Impact



Empowering Youth in Agribusiness, a GIZ project in Malawi, integrated MHH and collaborated with the NGO UFULU on their Menstrual Cup Initiative to improve women's access to hygiene products. In 2022, 700 menstrual cups were distributed at a 90-minute workshop to reduce dropout rates, improve concentration during training and enable women to focus on their businesses.

foodfortransformation.org
> <https://bit.ly/458qQvy>

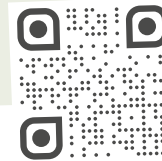


NEPAL Movement for Dignified Menstruation



More than 80 organizations and activists are now part of a growing alliance working to break the silence surrounding menstruation through education and campaigns. The Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance (MHM PA) is an advocacy and knowledge-sharing platform for organizations and individuals working on menstrual health issues in Nepal.

health.bmz.de
> <https://bit.ly/3lcJ6dq>

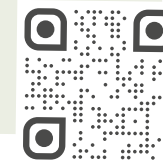


THE PHILIPPINES Period-friendly Toilets for Learners



The GIZ Regional Fit for School programme acknowledges schools' crucial role in mainstreaming MHH. The programme works with the Philippine Department of Education in establishing period-friendly toilets with daily cleaning and maintenance systems. The programme also supports the development of information, education and communication materials, which have now reached approximately 27 million Filipino learners.

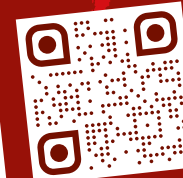
gender-works.giz.de
> <https://bit.ly/3MNIDBh>



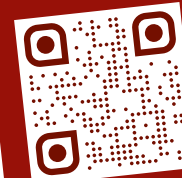
This could be your project

Apply to become a SuSanA partner and share information about your resources, projects and events.

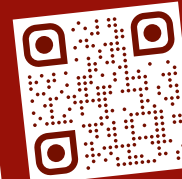
REGISTER AS A PARTNER ORGANIZATION:
> <https://susana.org/2MD0so>



SuSanA PROJECT DATABASE:
> <https://susana.org/3LJstu>



LIST OF ALL SuSanA PARTNERS:
> <https://susana.org/XIFt0V>



BACKGROUND

WHY MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE (MHH) MATTERS

Menstruation is a biological function that affects half of the world's population, yet it leads to stigmatization and exclusion. Globally, around 1.9 billion people menstruate, however, over 600 million of those women, girls and gender-diverse people lack the information, menstrual hygiene products or sanitation facilities they need to manage their menstruation safely and hygienically. Stigmas surrounding menstruation are often rooted in gender stereotypes or cultural and religious traditions which limit the social participation of people who are menstruating. A lack of access to hygiene products and sanitation further exacerbates this situation and leads to millions of learners missing school during their periods, as well as women missing out on employment opportunities. Managing menstruation is an even greater challenge in many low and middle-income countries, particularly during emergencies, pandemics or wars. This is largely due to misinformation, a lack of appropriate infrastructure and unaffordable or unavailable commercial menstrual hygiene supplies. These issues not only impact health and education but also reinforce gender inequality and exclusion.

MHH is therefore a cross-cutting issue and a crucial factor in relation to access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), gender, reproductive health, education, religion and more. Prioritizing MHH is fundamental to ensuring equality, human rights and dignity for all people who menstruate. By providing access to accurate information, menstrual hygiene products and sanitation facilities, and by breaking the taboo surrounding menstruation, we can enable women, girls and all people who menstruate to manage their periods safely and maintain their health and well-being to ensure that they are able to participate fully in social and economic activities.

Read more about the importance of MHH:

- › WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme: <https://bit.ly/41kEaA>
- › WHO: <https://bit.ly/3pJhpCO>
- › WaterAid: <https://bit.ly/3lh6QgJ>
- › World Bank: <https://bit.ly/3pOLP6o>
- › UNICEF: <https://bit.ly/30bZ00t>
- › GIZ, Sanitation for Millions: <https://bit.ly/442CbWwR>

INCLUSIVITY

Inclusivity is an important consideration when discussing the terminology around MHH because it acknowledges the diversity of individuals who may experience menstruation. While women and girls are often the focus of MHH discussions, it is essential to recognize that not all women menstruate, and that people of other genders may also experience menstruation. Therefore, using gender-neutral terms like *people who menstruate*, *menstruating people* or *menstruators* helps to ensure that all individuals who experience menstruation are included in the conversation.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE (MHH)

This term encompasses both menstrual health management (MHM) and the broader systemic factors that link menstruation with health, well-being, gender, equality, education, empowerment, human rights and access to water and sanitation. These systematic factors have been summarized by UNESCO as accurate and timely knowledge, available, safe, and affordable materials, informed and comfortable professionals, referral and access to health services, sanitation and washing facilities, positive social norms, safe and hygienic disposal, and advocacy.

Source: <https://susana.org/PrxX5>



WHY THIS PUBLICATION?

This compilation draws attention to a range of publications on MHH by INGOs, NGOs and academics. It presents opportunities to engage with the issue, providing readers with relevant guidance and in-depth information on specific aspects and intersections of MHH. It also provides a list of resources, such as webinars, podcasts, e-learning platforms and informational material for interested individuals and organizations.

This is the fourth edition of the compilation, which has been updated and expanded since it was first published in 2016. The first edition offered an overview of publications addressing menstrual hygiene management (MHM)¹ with a strong focus on schools and educational material developed to increase learners' understanding of puberty, menstruation and MHH. The second updated edition (2018) gathered more information on the focus area of school, but also expanded the list of publications to cover information on MHM in emergency situations and with regard to environmental issues. The third edition (2020) widened the scope of research to include publications on MHM in previously under-researched areas, such as refugee camps, informal settings and in the context of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); it also included people with disabilities.

MHH has since received increased attention from a wide range of actors, including academics, policymakers, donors, NGOs and the private sector. By addressing the issue of MHH, GIZ recognizes the crucial importance of improving MHH in low and middle-income countries.

GIZ's Water Policy Programme (2020–2024) is committed to advancing the MHH agenda through the SuSanA network. This network has established a platform that provides access to knowledge and facilitates interaction between GIZ programmes on MHH within the health, education, gender, waste management and WASH sectors and beyond. By continuing to expand our understanding of MHH and its many connections with other areas, we can work towards improving the lives and well-being of people around the world.

¹ You will find a more detailed note on terminology on pages 42 to 43.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT (MHM)

People who menstruate can use a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood. This can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of a menstrual period using soap and water for washing as required. Access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials are available.

Source: <https://susana.org/PrxX5>

MENSTRUAL HEALTH

Menstrual health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle.

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8098749>

It is important to note that this compilation only presents a selection of research and material on MHH. The resources presented here were subject to a pre-selection process by the editors to ensure that they are relevant and up to date. The majority of the resources included were published in the past few years and demonstrate an increasing focus on MHH.

Additional resources can be shared with the SuSanA Secretariat via email (info@susana.org) or on the SuSanA Forum: > <https://bit.ly/3yKNpb>



sustainable sanitation alliance

SuSanA's COMMITMENT TO MHH

SuSanA IS A VALUABLE PLATFORM FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN MHH. IT PROVIDES ACCESS TO MULTIPLE RESOURCES AND A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY TO SHARE WITH AND LEARN FROM. SuSanA ADVOCATES FOR MHH THROUGH VARIOUS INITIATIVES.

Photo: © Viva con Agua / Leopold Schäfer



SuSanA FORUM

The SuSanA Forum promotes knowledge-sharing on MHH by enabling individuals and organizations to share their experiences and examples of best practice.

SuSanA Forum category "menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) or menstrual hygiene management (MHM)":

> <https://bit.ly/3yKNcpb>

Key documents on the SuSanA Forum for the sub-category MHH (previously known as MHM):

> <https://bit.ly/4498Gte>



SuSanA WORKING GROUP 7

The SuSanA Working Group 7 "Sustainable WASH in institutions and gender equality" focuses on the intersection of MHH:

> <https://susana.org/gy8snq>



SuSanA LIBRARY

In addition, the SuSanA Library contains key resources on MHH. These resources include research papers, reports, toolkits and guidelines, which provide a wealth of information on this topic. SuSanA's key publications on MHH include:

Menstrual hygiene management—an overview of a neglected issue
1st edition (2016), 2nd edition (2018):

> <https://susana.org/30ppHb>

Menstrual hygiene management—relevant, intersectoral and on the rise
3rd edition (2020):

> <https://susana.org/CTW04L>

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in schools—a neglected issue
A thematic discussion series hosted by GIZ and SuSanA (2017):

> <https://susana.org/o02pt3>



OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

WHETHER YOU'RE A MENSTRUAL HEALTH ADVOCATE, A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER, OR SOMEONE LOOKING TO LEARN MORE, THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO SUPPORT MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE. BY KEEPING INFORMED AND GETTING INVOLVED, WE CAN HELP BREAK THE SILENCE AND OVERCOME THE STIGMA SURROUNDING MENSTRUATION TO PROMOTE BETTER MENSTRUAL HEALTH FOR ALL.



FIND INFORMATION KNOWLEDGE HUBS AND GLOSSARIES

If you're looking to learn more about MHH, there are many resources and platforms available to you. One way to stay informed is through discussion forums and online communities dedicated to this topic. There are also many organizations and initiatives focused on MHH around the world. The following platforms provide information on global MHH issues, share resources and tools, and offer opportunities to get involved in MHH activities.

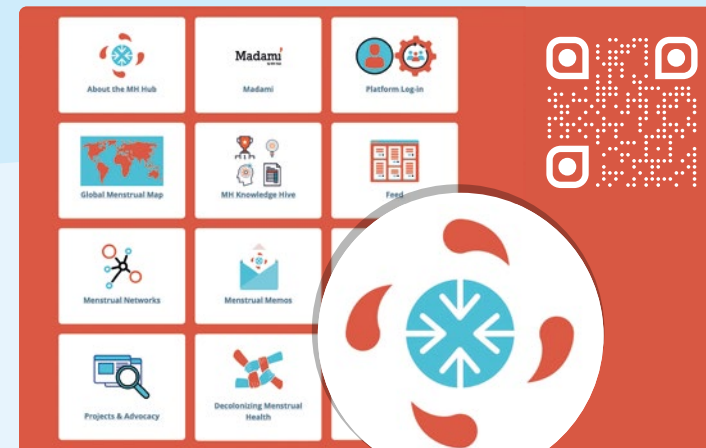
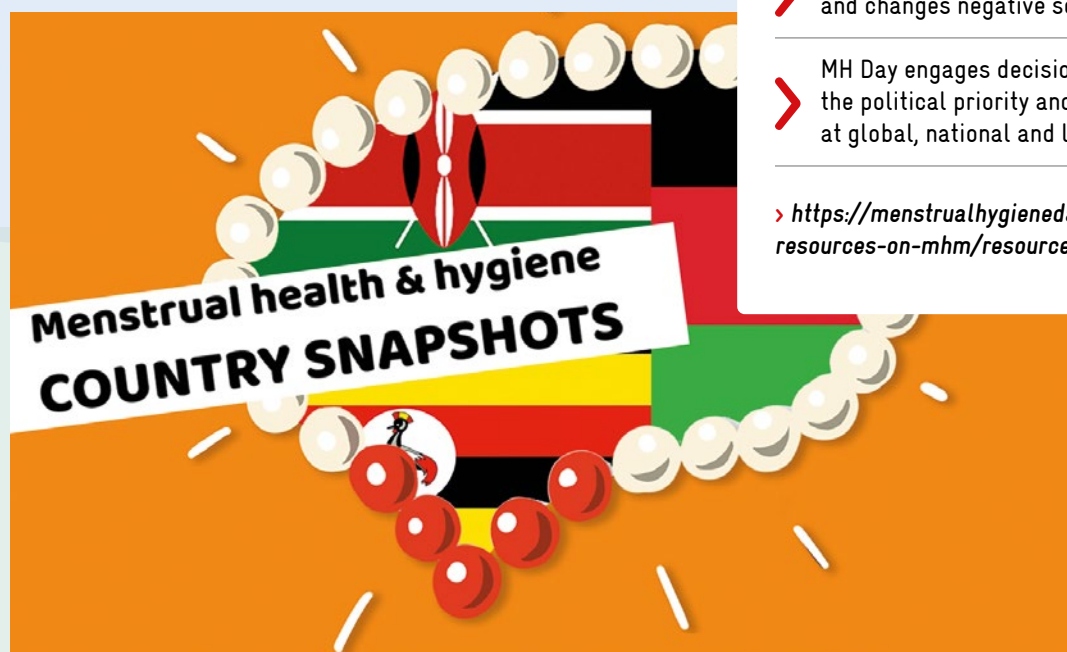


Menstrualhygieneday.org

> Menstrual Hygiene Day (MH Day) is a global advocacy platform that brings together non-profits, government agencies, individuals, the private sector and the media to promote good MHH. More specifically:

- > MH Day breaks the silence, raises awareness and changes negative social norms around MHH.
- > MH Day engages decision-makers to increase the political priority and catalyse action for MHH at global, national and local levels.

> <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/resources-on-mhm/resources-mhm>



The Menstrual Health Hub

> The Menstrual Health Hub is the world's first digital networking and knowledge platform that unites and strengthens the global menstrual community. The platform provides an online space to connect with those working on menstrual and female health. It hosts free access to a database of relevant menstrual health resources around research, education, policy and innovation.

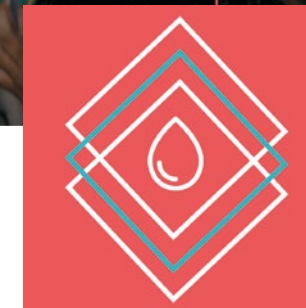
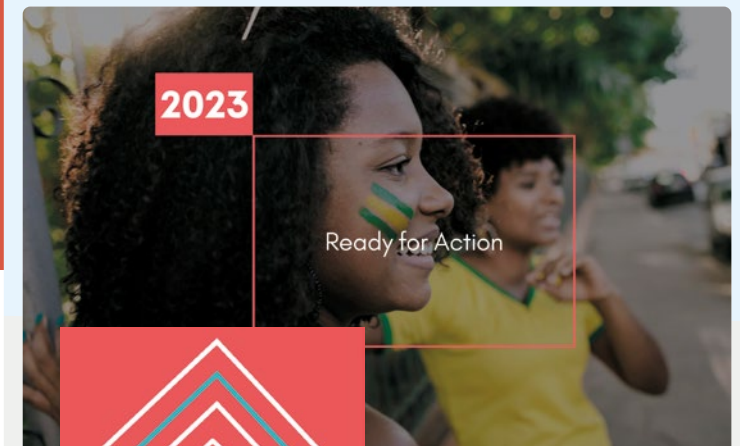
- > <https://mhhub.org>
- > <https://mhhub.org/glossary>



Society for Menstrual Research

> The Society for Menstrual Research is a volunteer-led nonprofit, interdisciplinary and global research organization. The society was founded in 1977 by a group of women from different fields who recognized the importance of menstrual cycle research for women's health. Its members consist of researchers, healthcare providers, policymakers, health activists, artists and students who share an interest in menstrual and ovulatory health throughout life. The society's mission is to provide guidance, expertise, and ethical considerations for researchers, practitioners, policymakers and funding providers interested in menstrual health.

> www.menstruationresearch.org



Pandemic Periods Collective

> Established in 2020, Pandemic Periods is a global group of volunteers on a mission to drive sexual and reproductive health rights. The focus is on menstrual health knowledge and expertise at a country level to promote the indicators for the UN's sustainable development goals (2030). This multicultural, interdisciplinary and regionally diverse group works to push forward the global narrative and ensure that menstrual health is included on the global health agenda.

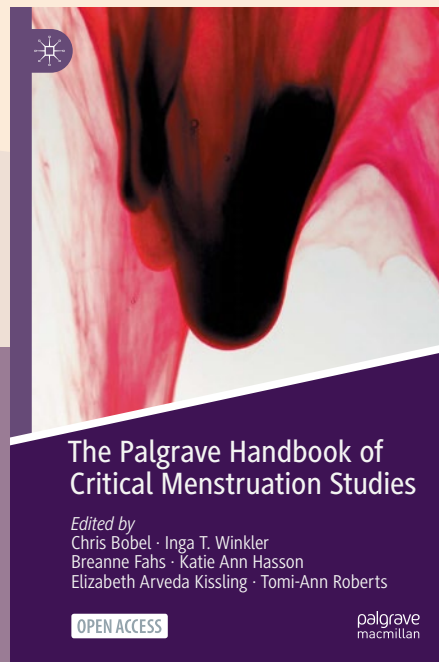
> <https://pandemicperiods.com>

Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
FIND INFORMATION
> <https://bit.ly/3W64xTn>



STAY INFORMED PAPERS, GUIDELINES AND PUBLICATIONS

With many organizations and initiatives focused on MHH around the world, there are new papers, publications and other exciting news being released all the time. These include helpful guidelines for introducing MHH in diverse settings and for different target groups, as well as new studies on the global status of MHH. It is important to note that MHH is an evolving issue and that the resources included here only provide a snapshot of some of the publications available.

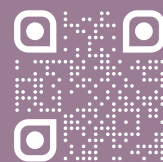


The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies

Bobel, C., Winkler, I. T., Fahs, B., Hasson, K. A., Kissling, E. A., Roberts, T-A.; Palgrave Macmillan Singapore, 2020

> Field-defining handbook which provides a comprehensive and carefully curated view of the state of the field of Critical Menstruation Studies, whilst also pointing toward new directions in research and advocacy. Readers will gain a deep understanding of the depth and breadth of the best of the extant literature as well as iterative questions pertinent to the field.

> springer.com: <https://bit.ly/3pKhmXj>



MENSTRUATION AS A
 FUNDAMENTAL
 EMBODIED
 RATIONALE
 STRUCTURAL
 MATERIAL
 NARRATIVE



Guidance on Menstrual Health and Hygiene

UNICEF, 2019

> Menstruation is a natural fact of life and a monthly occurrence for 1.8 billion girls, women, transgender men and non-binary people of reproductive age. Yet millions of menstruators around the world are denied the right to manage their monthly menstrual cycle in a dignified, healthy way. This guidance was developed for specialists in WASH, education, health and gender, as well as for country offices which are working with partners to develop programmes related to MHH.

> <https://susana.org/PrCX5>

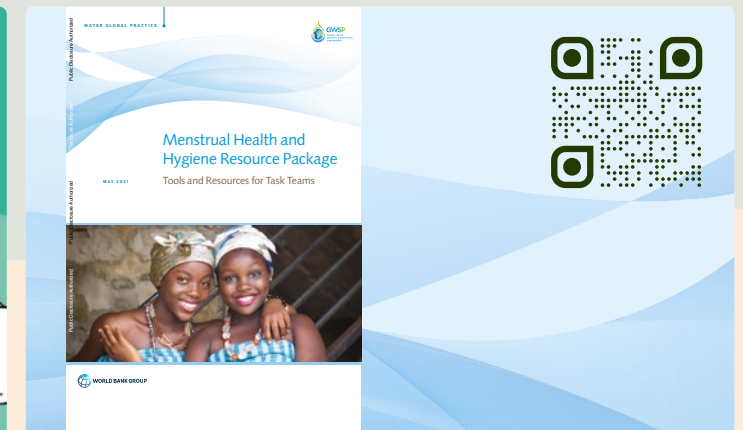


Nepal's Menstrual Movement How MenstruAction is making life better for girls and women in Nepal – month after month

Evans, R., & Broch Alvarez, V., 2019

> This publication explores the work of the MHH Partner's Alliance Nepal in improving menstrual health and hygiene; it also addresses the taboos surrounding menstruation. While this publication focuses on Nepal, it can serve as an example of good practice for establishing national alliances in other countries.

> <https://susana.org/chcYIX>

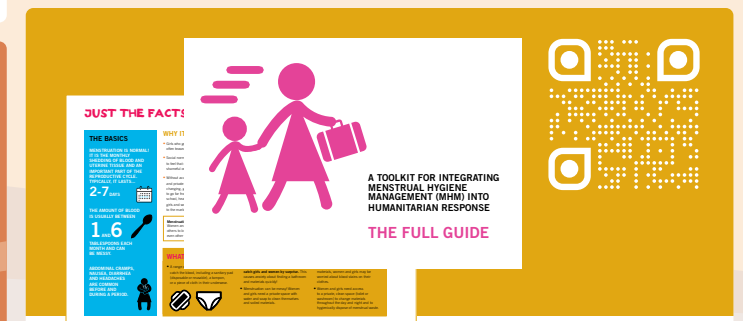


Menstrual Health and Hygiene Resource Package

World Bank Group, 2021

> The purpose of this resource package is to assist World Bank task teams in ensuring that their projects are inclusive and responsive to the needs of women and girls. The tools included in this package are practical and user-friendly and guide task teams on how to design and monitor effective, inclusive, and sustainable menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) initiatives as part of their water supply, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions.

> <https://susana.org/C77YB1>



A Toolkit for Integrating MHH into Humanitarian Response

Sommer, M., Schmitt, M. & Clatworthy, D., 2017

> The Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHH) in Emergencies toolkit aims to provide streamlined guidance to support organizations and agencies seeking to rapidly integrate MHH into existing programming across sectors and phases.

> <https://susana.org/9tma40>

Join us on the SuSanA Forum:

STAY INFORMED
 > <https://bit.ly/3VpJsTo>



LEARN E-LEARNING, WEBINARS, APPS...

The increasing variety of e-learning materials on issues related to MHH provide new opportunities for people to get involved. Webinars and online courses enable individuals and organizations working on MHH to exchange ideas and discuss new research and developments in the field.



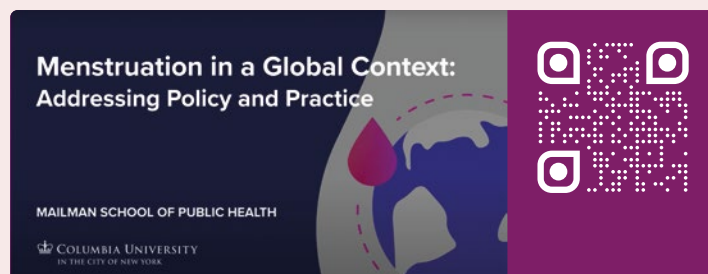
Menstrual Disposal and Waste Management in India



The Role of Advocacy in Shaping MHH Policy



Global and National MHH Policies and Guidelines



Menstruation in a Global Context: Addressing Policy and Practice

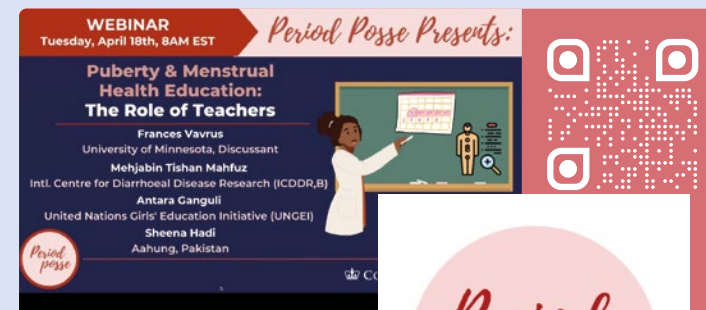
ColumbiaX @ edX

> Columbia University has released an open online course, Menstruation in a Global Context: Addressing Policy and Practice, to provide learners with a foundation on the global menstruation movement that aims to ensure that the menstrual needs of everyone, everywhere are met.

This course reviews the menstrual health and hygiene research, programming, and policies being implemented around the world. Participants will gain knowledge and skills on approaches for MHH program design and implementation, research, monitoring and advocacy, with an emphasis on the needs of low-income and vulnerable populations around the world.

The course is free and open to all on edX.org with an optional paid verified certificate program.

> edx.org: <https://bit.ly/3BCV6B7>

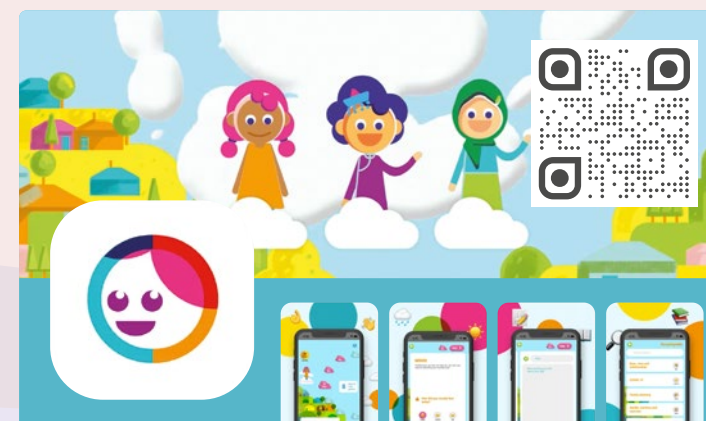


Period Posse Presents: Webinar Series

GATE Program at Columbia University

> This monthly interactive webinar series brings together experts in menstrual health and hygiene from across research, policy, and practice to discuss key emerging issues. You can sign up for upcoming webinars, as well as watch recordings of past ones.

> publichealth.columbia.edu: <https://bit.ly/431WwKA>



OKY App

UNICEF

> Stress free periods with Oky! Oky is the world's first period tracker app for girls and created with girls. It provides information about menstruation in fun, creative and positive ways straight into girls' hands through the tools they use every day—mobile phones. Oky lets girls feel in control and more confident by tracking their periods, and getting the information that all girls should know.

> <https://okyapp.info>

DAYS FOR GIRLS

Days for Girls: Podcast

Days for Girls International, 2021–2023

> Go behind the scenes with Days for Girls International, an award-winning NGO, as they interview thought leaders in international development who work to empower women and girls around the world. You'll hear from experts in the fields of menstrual health, social entrepreneurship, and international development, as well as get inside stories from the women and girls impacted by our vital work to create menstrual equity for every girl, everywhere, period.

> www.daysforgirls.org/podcast



AFRIPads MHH Curriculum

AFRIPads

> The objective of the AFRIPads MHH Curriculum is to ensure the women and girls who receive an AFRIPads Menstrual Kit are also equipped with the knowledge and skills for maintaining a happy and healthy menstrual cycle. The Curriculum is designed to function as an NGO Capacity Building Tool, specially curated alongside their partner Womena, to effectively engage women and girls and create a safe space for learning and discussing menstruation.

> www.afripads.com/partnership/mhh-education

Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
LEARN
> <https://bit.ly/3AOHqTl>

WATCH & LISTEN FILMS AND PODCASTS

In recent years, documentaries, films, short films and podcasts have played a significant role in breaking the silence and overcoming the stigma surrounding menstruation. They have also increased awareness about the importance of MHH. Here are some recent examples.



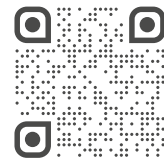
My Monthly Exile Visualizing menstrual practices and motivations in the far west of Nepal using collaborative filmmaking

Documentary by Sara Baumann, 2020

> Seven girls from a village in the Kanchanpur district of Nepal learn filmmaking to capture their experiences of menstruation in vignettes. They highlight the diversity of empowering and disempowering menstrual practices and beliefs in their community.

Collaborative filmmaking, an arts-based participatory research method, allows community filmmakers to collaborate with researchers in collecting, analyzing and disseminating data. The method helped capture sensory knowledge, leading to a nuanced understanding of different menstrual practices and beliefs. The resulting documentary film not only raised awareness about traditional menstrual practices in the far west of Nepal, it also informed policymakers to help improve menstrual health for women and girls in the region.

> www.oldfanfilms.com/?p=519



Period. End of Sentence.

Documentary, Netflix, 2019

> In 2019 "Period. End of sentence." won the Oscar for Best Documentary (Short Subject). It is a 30-minute film documenting the stigmas surrounding menstruation and follows a group of women in India that have started to work in a collective to produce sanitary pads for their communities. The documentary also shows interviews with Arunachalam Muruganantham ("Pad Man").

> <https://thepadproject.org/period-end-of-sentence>



Pandora's Box

Lifting the lid on menstruation

Documentary, Diva International, 2020

> Pandora's Box is a feature-length documentary film presented by Diva. Produced and directed by a primarily female crew, it takes us on a global journey through India, Uganda, the UK and North America to explore the cultural and social subjugation of people who menstruate. Pandora's Box asks us to lift the lid on menstruation and truly consider how eliminating period stigma can help create gender equality.

> www.youtube.com/watch?v=by03LuEbnis
> thecaseforher.com: <https://bit.ly/3ARyJYC>



Tackling Taboos

#NepalsMenstrualMovement

Short film, GIZ, 2021

> In this award-winning short film, Keki Adikhari – a well-known actress, model and film producer in her native Nepal, who has over 1.5 million followers on social media – wants to find out how far Nepal has come in the fight against menstrual taboos and restrictions. She takes the viewer on a journey to the far west of the country, where she visits a school and a village in a rural area to learn what has changed in girls' and women's daily lives – and what still needs to be done to ensure that every girl in Nepal can thrive during her period.

> www.youtube.com/watch?v=UL6v4ch18ss



28ish Days Later – Podcast

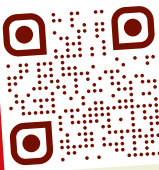
Podcast, BBC, 2022

> This intimate, bold and taboo-busting podcast series explores the menstrual cycle – the science, drama, history, personal stories and politics in-between. India Rakusen explores the whole story, discovering facts that could change your life. Periods are just the beginning. In this BBC podcast series, the menstrual cycle is explored from the beginning of bleeding to the start of the next cycle. Listeners will discover how gaining knowledge about hormones and the menstrual cycle can change their lives, one day at a time.

> www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0019r79



Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
WATCH & LISTEN
> <https://bit.ly/42D26K7>



CONNECT GLOBAL STAKEHOLDERS

If you're seeking to connect with like-minded individuals, alliances, coalitions and groups that share your interest in MHH, there are numerous ways to do so. This can be a great opportunity to link up your efforts, learn from each other and continue to empower and motivate one another. The following networks are a great place to get started.



Global Menstrual Collective

> The Global Menstrual Collective includes representatives from UN organizations, academia, governments, funders, the private sector, existing coalitions, advocacy groups, youth-focused organizations, religious groups, independent consultants, and international non-governmental organizations. The purpose of the Collective is to drive and guide investment in menstrual health and hygiene through evidence-based advocacy. Members of the Collective will work together to build the evidence and advocate for investment, policy, and programming across relevant sectors (WASH, health, education, gender, etc.), including access to information, products, and services, and establishing positive social norms and practices around menstruation.

> www.globalmenstrualcollective.org/who-we-are



African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management

> The African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management is a coalition of individuals, groups and institutions. The aim is to strengthen coordination among key stakeholders in order to build on and support the evidence base and to improve the transition between research and action. The focus is on supporting multi-sectoral policymaking and scaling up sustainable, evidence-based programmes in Africa that address the menstrual health needs of girls, women and all people who menstruate, throughout their menstrual lifecycle.

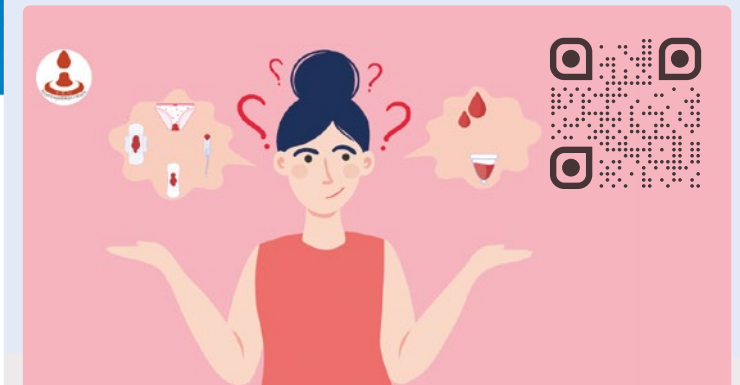
> <https://acmhm.org>



Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation

> The mission of the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation is to dismantle oppressive institutional, structural, interpersonal and social systems that currently have an impact on people who menstruate and on their ability to access basic inalienable human rights and critical resources which enable them to lead happy, healthy and dignified lives. The coalition strives to unite organizations and individuals who share their vision of reclaiming dignity for each individual during menstruation. Their aim is to transform the menstruation movement and make dignity a central focus.

> <https://dignifiedmenstruation.org>



Period Empowerment Network

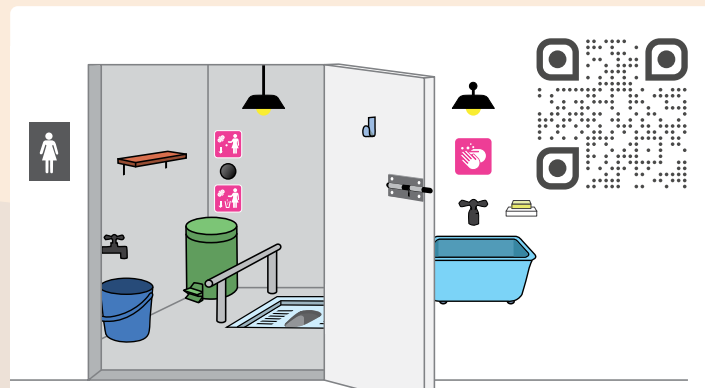
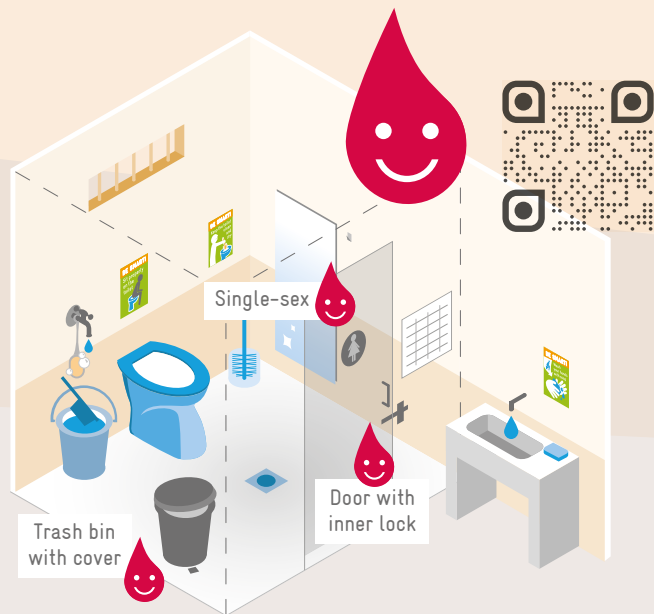
> The Period Empowerment Network seeks to strengthen the civic spirit and skills set of youth and youth workers in raising awareness on menstrual health, hygiene, and management. The network develops training programmes on planning, designing, delivering, and evaluating community and campaign-based interventions and strategies through non-formal educational practices in the field of youth education as a means of fostering menstrual health and hygiene education in youth work. The project contributes to the European Union's Gender Action Plan: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. PEN consists of 12 youth-based organizations across 12 countries. These organizations bring together the expertise of psychologists, sociologists, educators and youth workers involved in the field of health to challenge the stigma and taboos surrounding periods and to shape menstrual health education.

> terrampacis.org <https://bit.ly/433CHcK>



COMMIT TO MHH ACTION AND INVESTMENT

More than 1.9 billion people menstruate worldwide. No matter which field you work in, MHH plays a role for your staff, partners and target groups. A commitment to MHH in your project does not need to be a major component, even small changes can be a first step, such as including MHH awareness in regular training or creating a period-friendly environment for your staff. Here are some big and small examples of how MHH has been integrated into different programmes and working environments.



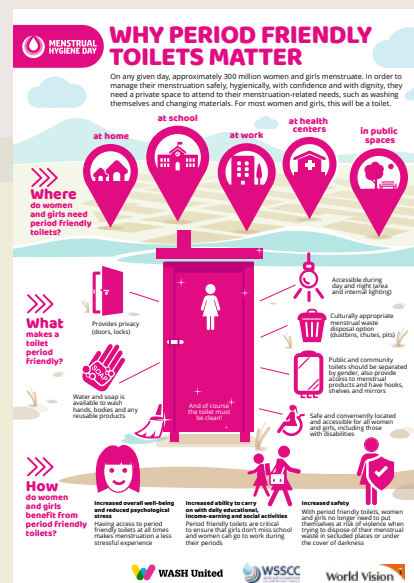
Key Components of a Period-Friendly Toilet

GATE Program at Columbia University and Fit for School

Period-friendly toilets are essential in ensuring the safety, privacy, and hygiene of women and girls. These facilities must be designed with key features in mind, such as gender-segregation, functional lighting, lockable doors, handwashing facilities with water and soap, and covered bins for menstrual waste disposal. Additionally, these toilets should be accessible and affordable to all, including those with disabilities or limited financial resources.

Improving access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools is essential for enabling girls to manage menstruation appropriately and ensuring that it does not become a barrier to their education. By prioritizing the design and maintenance of period-friendly toilets and promoting the importance of menstrual hygiene management, we can create safer, more inclusive, and equitable spaces for all.

- > publichealth.columbia.edu: <https://bit.ly/30gnTTB>
- > fitforschool.international: <https://bit.ly/3WgNqHk>
- > menstrualhygieneday.org: <https://bit.ly/30jrWP9>



Empower Girls with the free MHH Education Guide

WASH United, 2018

For girls to manage their periods safely, hygienically and without shame, they need a basic understanding of what menstruation is and how to handle it. Unfortunately, millions of girls lack access to even minimal information on menstruation.

WASH United's MHH Education Guide, developed together with girls and teachers, is a compact, easy-to-use, and low-cost solution. It is available for free in more than 20 languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Nepali, Amharic, Kiswahili, Hindi and many more Indian languages.

- > www.wash-united.org/mhm-guide/mhm-guide.html



Priority List of Indicators for Girls' Menstrual Health and Hygiene

Technical Guidance for National Monitoring

Global MHH Monitoring Group, Columbia University New York, 2022

Adequate and validated indicators are essential for tracking progress on addressing menstrual health and hygiene as an important health, education, gender equality, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) issue. Monitor your menstrual health and hygiene using activities based on priority indicators and measures for advancing girls' menstrual health and hygiene to support national and global monitoring. Find out more on pages 40 and 41.

- > <https://susana.org/ojgQG6>

PERIOD POSITIVE WORKPLACE

Period Positive Workplaces

Period positive workplaces can increase employee productivity and reduce absenteeism for people who menstruate. Organizations become stronger and more inclusive by providing for menstrual needs. Join organizations around the world to become a Period Positive Workplace and receive complimentary certification by applying here.

- > www.periodpositiveworkplace.org



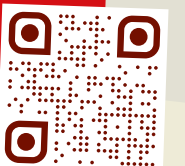
#FreeTheTampons

Free menstrual products in workplaces, schools, universities, and other public institutions

Free toilet paper, soap, and seat covers are provided in public restrooms, but menstrual products are often overlooked. Together, we can normalize freely accessible tampons and pads. More and more companies, universities, and municipalities recognize the importance of providing free menstrual products to support health and well-being and break down stigmas. Scotland and Kenya have made progress in providing free period products. By sharing success stories and advocating for menstrual equity, we can ensure that menstrual products are accessible to all who need them.

- > www.freethetampons.org

Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
COMMIT TO MHH
> <https://bit.ly/3nsEc4Y>



SUPPORT & INVEST ORGANIZATIONS AND INITIATIVES

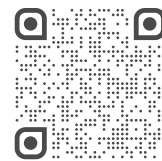
There are various organizations and initiatives working towards improving MHH and ending period poverty.

If you want to support these organizations and initiatives, there are many ways to get involved. You can visit the MH Hub, a global platform that provides information and connects individuals, organizations and initiatives dedicated to improving MHH around the world. The MH Hub also offers opportunities to get involved by volunteering or donating. However, it is important to note that organizations may be charged a fee to join the MH Hub.

In addition to supporting MHH organizations and initiatives, individuals can also make a difference by advocating for MHH in their communities, workplaces and schools. By breaking the silence and raising awareness about the importance of MHH, we can work towards a world where all women and girls have access to safe and dignified menstrual products and services.

REMEMBER: Every effort to support and invest in MHH organizations and to join initiatives can make a difference and improve access to menstrual health products and education. This helps reduce period poverty and promote menstrual equity!

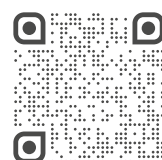
Become an official Menstrual Hygiene Day partner:
<https://menstrualhygieneday.org/get-involved/become-a-partner>



Discover more organizations on the MH Hub:
<https://mhhub.org/organizations>



Menstrual Hygiene Day brings together more than 900 partner organizations from around the world. View details of all partners here:
<https://menstrualhygieneday.org/get-involved/partnership>



Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
SUPPORT & INVEST
<https://bit.ly/44ofzXD>



ENCOURAGE CHOICE AFFORDABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Everyone should have the power to choose the menstrual product that best suits their needs, but this choice should not come at the cost of affordability or sustainability.

Raising awareness, improving accessibility and ensuring affordability are all critical goals. While reusable pads, menstrual cups, biodegradable pads, period panties and some tampons are more sustainable options than traditional disposable menstrual products, it is important to acknowledge that not all of these options may be accessible, affordable or culturally acceptable to everyone.

Cultural or religious barriers may prevent people from using certain products, while others may lack the financial resources to invest in more expensive, reusable products. What is more, some people may prefer the convenience of disposable products, even if they are not as sustainable. It is therefore essential to promote and encourage sustainable menstrual product choices while also recognizing and addressing the systemic barriers that may prevent some individuals from making these choices.

Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge that individual consumer choices alone cannot solve the larger environmental issues surrounding menstrual waste. Governments and corporations must also take responsibility by implementing policies that promote sustainability and reduce waste in the menstrual product industry. Empowering individuals by providing accessible, affordable and sustainable options – and creating policies that support these choices – will ensure that the world is a more equitable and environmentally-conscious place for everyone.

Managing Menstruation

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

Disposable Pad

A single-use pad designed to absorb blood. It is placed in your underwear and usually held in place by a sticky adhesive. Comes in different shapes and sizes for heavier or lighter bleeding.

- Easy to use, effective even when exercising, does not require washing
- Not reusable, can be costly over time



Reusable Pad

A sewn cloth pad designed to absorb blood. It is placed in your underwear and usually held in place by snaps. Comes in different sizes, shapes, and materials. Can be purchased or self-sewn. Comfort, absorbency, and ease of use vary.

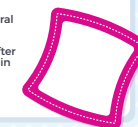
- Reusable, less likely to leak or move out of place than cloth, becomes more affordable with continued use
- Has to be washed and dried after each use



Cloth

Pieces of fabric, folded into layers and placed in underwear or tied around the waist, to absorb blood.

- Affordable, can be reused several times if properly cleaned
- Has to be washed and dried after each use, can be hard to keep in place



Tampon

A single-use cotton or rayon plug inserted into the vagina to absorb blood, with a string to help with removal. Comes in different sizes for heavier or lighter bleeding.

- Effective even when exercising, does not require washing
- Not reusable, can be costly over time, can take a few attempts to get comfortable inserting and removing



Menstrual Cup

A bell-shaped silicone device inserted into the vagina to collect blood. Comes in different sizes, shapes, and degrees of firmness.

- Reusable for up to ten years, becomes affordable with continued use, effective even when exercising
- Expensive initially, can take a few cycles to get used to, has to be washed and disinfected



Period Panty

A special type of underwear designed to absorb blood. Comes in different sizes, shapes, and materials.

- Reusable, becomes affordable with continued use
- Expensive initially, has to be washed and dried after each use



Read more about "Managing Menstruation"
www.rhsupplies.org
<https://bit.ly/3VuFV6g>

Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
ENCOURAGE CHOICE
<https://bit.ly/3AU8wbE>



PARTICIPATE ADVOCACY AND CONFERENCES

There are many ways to get involved and advocate for better menstrual health and hygiene. One way to participate is by supporting global initiatives and international advocacy days, such as the annual Menstrual Hygiene Day (28.05). Such events and campaigns aim to raise awareness about the importance of menstrual health and hygiene and to promote access to menstrual products and education. With the power of collective action, we can work towards breaking the silence and stigma surrounding menstruation to promote better menstrual health for all.



Global Menstrual Hygiene Day 28th May / Making menstruation a normal fact of life by 2030

WASH United

> The international Menstrual Hygiene Day (MH Day), initiated and led by the NGO WASH United, is the world's largest and most relevant campaign focused on menstruation. The campaign aims to ensure that by 2030, no woman or girl is prevented from achieving her full potential due to her period. Organizations around the world are joining the campaign by breaking the silence and overcoming the stigma surrounding menstruation. This raises awareness about MHH and promotes greater access to menstrual products, sanitation facilities and education.

While the major focus is on 28 May, the organization carries out advocacy activities throughout the year. The impact of MH Day 2022 was remarkable, with 225,000 contributions on social media and 14,670 articles in online news media. In total, the campaign reached 687 million people worldwide. The success of MH Day shows that there is growing recognition of the importance of MHH in achieving gender equality and sustainable development.

> <https://menstrualhygieneday.org>



Africa Menstrual Health Symposiums (2021 & 2023)

Africa Coalition for Menstrual Health (ACMH) and UNFPA

> In May 2021 and 2023, the Africa Coalition for Menstrual Health (ACMH) and UNFPA convened an online Menstrual Health (MH) symposium. The symposium is an avenue for networking and establishing alliances to strengthen advocacy efforts towards advancing menstrual health and leaving no one behind; it also addresses the lifecycle approach and emergencies.

> acmh.org: <https://bit.ly/3W9S9Sc>



Period Tax

WASH United

> In more and more countries around the world, individuals and organizations are raising their voices to demand the reduction or elimination of unfair taxes on menstrual products. And more and more governments are listening and taking action. The Period Tax website provides an overview of current and past national campaigns and shares key lessons learned around the world. The goal is to support ongoing campaigns by providing information and ammunition for advocacy work, as well as to inspire further action on this issue.

> <https://periodtax.org>



International Dignified Menstruation Day / 8th December

Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation

> December 8th is observed as International Dignified Menstruation Day as a part of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign. It is a day to raise awareness about the challenges and discrimination faced by menstruating people and to promote access to dignified and hygienic menstrual management. The day aims to break the silence and stigma surrounding menstruation and advocate for menstrual equity and justice. Organizations and individuals around the world participate in various activities and events to mark the day and promote menstrual health and hygiene.

> <https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/menstruation-day>

Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
PARTICIPATE
> <https://bit.ly/3NC9L76>



GET INSPIRED INFLUENCERS AND ADVOCACY

In recent years, there has been a growing movement of influencers and advocates who are dedicated to breaking the stigma surrounding menstrual health and hygiene. These individuals use their platforms and communities to share their experiences, raise awareness about menstrual health issues and promote access to menstrual products and resources. Following and engaging with these influencers can be a great way to get inspired and informed about MHH. By learning from their perspectives and experiences, you can become better equipped to promote MHH in your own life and community.

Reaching Millions via Social Media

GIZ, 2021–2024

> Clicktivism is proving an effective tool for tackling taboos around menstruation and empowering young women around the globe.

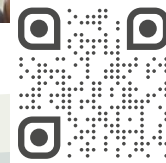
CHALLENGE: Improving education and increasing awareness on menstrual health and hygiene

SOLUTION: Engaging media personalities as Goodwill Ambassadors and using social media to reach a wider audience

Over the last three years, the #LetsTalkPERIOD approach has reached more than 5 million people in Albania, Nepal and the Philippines.



> <https://susana.org/cLYswD>



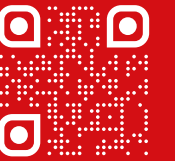
Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
GET INSPIRED

> <https://bit.ly/3Vx5MKR>



YOUNG FEMALE INFLUENCERS ENERGIZE THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST MENSTRUAL TABOOS IN NEPAL – AND BEYOND

Read the article online:
> health.bmz.de:
<https://bit.ly/3yA2JYL>



German-supported projects in Nepal, Albania and the Philippines involve local social media influencers and celebrities to break down taboos surrounding menstrual health and hygiene, and this has had a huge impact. GIZ's short film *Tackling Taboos* has been nominated for the WHO film festival *Health for all*. Shortlisted from over 1000 entries, the film is in the final 70 and is the only entry that addresses the sensitive topic of menstruation.

CLICKTIVISM IS PROVING AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR CHALLENGING HARMFUL PRACTICES AND FOR EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN IN NEPAL.

Article by Ruth Evans for BMZ's web portal *Healthy DEvelopments* (May 2022)



Keki Adhikari and Karin Kortmann, GIZ Berlin (2023)

Keki Adhikari is a well-known Nepali actress, model, film producer and social activist. Using her powerful position as a local influencer and her substantial social media following on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, Keki Adhikari has led a highly successful Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) campaign drawing attention to menstrual health and hygiene and highlighting challenges and solutions for girls and women in Nepal. Now the *Tackling Taboo* film she fronted is one of 70 shortlisted films, out of over 1,000 entries, to be nominated for WHO's *Health for all* film festival – and the only one which tackles the sensitive issues of menstruation.

"It was a very happy moment when we heard that our short film has been shortlisted for this prestigious WHO film award," says Sami Pande, GIZ Technical Advisor for the Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights programme. "We are thrilled that it will now be seen by people from all over the world."

BUILDING MOMENTUM ON MENSTRUAL HEALTH ISSUES

Most women in Nepal face restrictions on participating in daily life during their period. At the most extreme end, according to some persistent ancient beliefs in some remote rural areas largely in the far west of Nepal, a menstruating girl or woman is considered to be unclean and untouchable, and must observe the tradition of Chhaupadi. She is isolated from the rest of her family and confined to a goat or cow hut during menstruation, as explained in the article "The monthly exile: Making life better for menstruating girls and women" (health.bmz.de: <https://bit.ly/3M8Zdd9>). In addition, she is not allowed to touch men, to prepare food in the kitchen, to visit the temple to pray, and often not allowed to bathe using water from communal taps. Many girls – in rural and urban areas alike – miss school during menstruation as a result of a lack of menstrual products and period-friendly toilets.

In recent years momentum has been growing to address issues of menstrual health and hygiene management (MHM) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), with various development partners working with the Government of Nepal on school-based programmes, as well as local production and distribution of sanitary pads. In December 2018 the first "MenstruAction" summit took place with over 500 participants, from government, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, development partners, media, social entrepreneurs and representatives from the private sector, coming together to push forward the MHM agenda. Today, Nepal's MHM Partner's Alliance coordinates the menstrual health and hygiene agenda, enabling members to share experiences and information.

>>

TRUSTED LOCAL INFLUENCERS CAN HELP TO BRING ABOUT BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Much of this work came to a sudden stop when COVID hit and lock-down led to school closures. In order to try to keep the momentum going, GIZ's Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights programme decided to expand its existing social media campaign to try to reach as many people as possible virtually. And to do this effectively, they decided to work with a local celebrity influencer.

Working with stars as influencers for human rights campaigns is obviously not a new idea: Angelina Jolie for example served as a Special Envoy for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Richard Gere advocates for the rights of the Tibetan people. However, working with local influencers is a relatively novel concept in Nepal. "The purposes and benefits of local versus international influencers are different," says Tabea Seiz, GIZ Development Advisor to the MHM Partners' Alliance Secretariat. "International influencers are useful for raising awareness globally and for fundraising, but if you want to bring about behaviour change, it's more effective to have a respected local influencer whom people know and trust."

DISCOVERING KEKI ADHIKARI

The project team approached Keki Adhikari, a well-known and respected Nepali actress with a large social media following of round 1.3 million followers (from a population of around 30 million) in both urban and rural settings. Keki Adhikari has appeared in numerous music videos, television shows, commercials, print ads and more than a dozen of Nepali movies, including "Love Sasha" and "Ghampani". She also has an MBA degree in human resources management from KFA Business School in Kathmandu, and also has a BA in Information Management.

"I was really delighted and surprised when GIZ asked me to be involved in this project," says Keki Adhikari. "I wanted to give something back to my community and this was a good learning experience. I met lots of girls and learned about their reality. It is painful to hear that many girls and women are still facing these physical and psychological taboos and challenges."

FINDING THE RIGHT INFLUENCER IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Initially, all contact with Keki Adhikari had to be virtual due to COVID restrictions, but then as these relaxed, the team were able to meet and travel with her to rural areas for three weeks, to shoot the "Tackling Taboos" film and short social media clips, including one on how to make pads and the need for proper toilet facilities for girls.

Finding the right person to become a respected goodwill ambassador or influencer is crucial to a campaign's success, says Tabea Seiz: "It is important to give them freedom to use their voice and trust them." The shoot was largely unscripted, giving Keki Adhikari the freedom to interview girls about their own experiences. It produced so much footage, they decided to do a second film.

"We are very proud of Keki Adhikari" says Sami Pande. "She made the girls she talked to comfortable by sitting on the ground with them and really gained their confidence on things that are often very hard to talk about."

RESPECTING CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES

Although there is a growing awareness about these issues amongst younger people, older generations – especially in rural areas – can be more resistant and convincing them is more challenging. Given these deep-rooted cultural sensitivities and taboos about menstruation, any campaigning needs to be carefully calibrated to make sure it is not seen as imposed from outside, but as something that has evolved in Nepal itself. Without this local "ownership" it is difficult to sustain such campaigns according to Development Advisor Tabea Seiz.

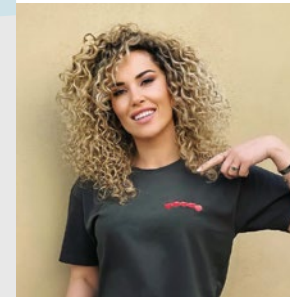
"If you push it too much, there might be a backlash," says Jan Schlenk, GIZ's WASH Policy Advisor. "We need to work with local people and influencers but not overdo it because it could backfire."

So how does Keki Adhikari herself view these boundaries? "We were very careful about respecting religious, social and psychological boundaries," she says. "We don't want to offend older generations and religious leaders, but the girls could relate to me because they have seen me on the TV and in films. My voice has to be out there, on social media or whatever other means I can get the message across on these sensitive issues. People listen to me because I am well known and have credibility."

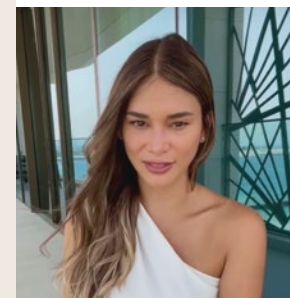
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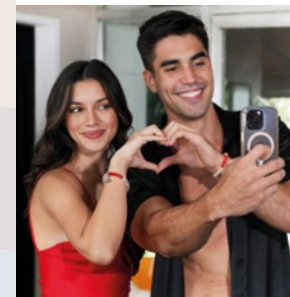
Keki Adhikari, Nepal



Fatma Haxhialiu, Albania



Pia Wurtzbach, Philippines



Kathleen Paton and Kirk Bondad, Philippines

WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESPONSE?

The films and wider social media campaign have been received very positively, with the film getting over 500,000 views (over 200,000 on Facebook), and 30,000 reactions or "likes". "People take me seriously and there has been a very good reaction to the campaign," says Keki Adhikari. "It is really changing how people view menstrual issues."

"[The campaign] has opened up the social discourse about these issues on social media and increased public discussion about things that were previously taboo," says Tabea Seiz, adding that it takes time and a step-by-step approach to build momentum on such sensitive topics.

CAMPAINING AGAINST MENSTRUAL TABOOS WITH INFLUENCERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Realising how powerful celebrity campaigners can be, Jan Schlenk, GIZ's WASH Policy Advisor, in close collaboration with the health programme in Nepal, are now encouraging other countries to adopt this approach – most recently in Albania where the #LetsTalkPERIOD campaign, supported by GIZ, is working with Fatma Haxhialiu, a local influencer with 240,000 followers on Instagram (a substantial following in a country with only 2.9 million people). A short video clip posted on her Instagram went viral on the first day of shooting, with nearly 4,000 "likes" and she has received many messages from women and girls sharing their – mostly negative – menstrual experiences.

Meanwhile in the Philippines, former Miss Universe Pia Wurtzbach, who has 13.5 million followers on Instagram alone, produced an educational MHM video last year with support from GIZ's Fit for School Programme for the Department of Education. For MH Day 2022, Pia Wurtzbach released a short video statement to raise awareness on and show her commitment to MHH. The video was viewed by approximately 500,000 people within days of its release.

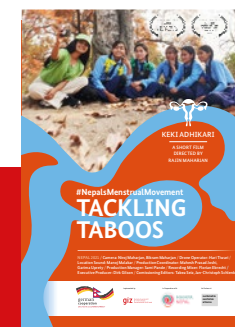
Update 2023: Joining Pia Wurtzbach are Miss Eco International 2022 Kathleen Paton and Mister World Philippines Kirk Bondad. The influencer couple is committed to serve as goodwill ambassadors for MHH and is part of the social media campaign in the Philippines as well – aimed at raising awareness on MHH, addressing myths, and providing factual information on menstruation, among others. With Kirk Bondad on board, Fit for School hopes to involve more boys and men in #LetsTalkPERIOD.

The success of Nepal's campaign, and its possible adoption elsewhere, says Jan Schlenk, is very much in line with the new German coalition government's ambitious goals for gender equality and strengthening the rights, resources and representation of women and girls worldwide through its new emphasis on a "feminist" foreign and development policy.

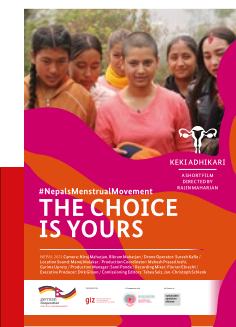
"CHANGE WILL NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT"

Whether they win or not in May at the WHO's "Health for all" film festival, Keki Adhikari and the GIZ team, as well as the Nepali production team are excited that "Tackling Taboos" has been shortlisted for a prize. They are confident that, along with the wider social media campaign, it will help to highlight deeply entrenched issues of menstrual health and hygiene still faced by so many women around the world.

"Change will not happen overnight," says Keki Adhikari. "But if our film helps in some small way to move people beyond outdated mind-sets, it was worth it."



<https://bit.ly/3l2kl2f>



<https://bit.ly/3AcNPJ6>



<https://bit.ly/30s3h8s>



<https://bit.ly/3y158Kj>



<https://youtu.be/bSCbjZxur8Y>



<https://bit.ly/30EFkM8>

SPREAD THE WORD SOCIAL MEDIA AND AWARENESS RAISING

It takes many voices to spread awareness about period poverty and break the taboo surrounding menstruation. You can raise your voice and spread the word with friends, family and colleagues, or even reach out to a wider audience on social media. An easy way to raise awareness is to post a picture with a menstruation bracelet on Menstrual Hygiene Day (28th May) or any other day! You can get creative and even make your own menstruation bracelet gif!



Menstruation Bracelet Campaign

WASH United, 2023

> Symbols have the power to catalyse awareness and action. Created by MH Day, the Menstruation Bracelet is a global symbol for menstruation. The bracelet consists of 28 elements, five of the elements are red. 28 stands for the average length of the cycle, five for the average length of a period.

By wearing the bracelet, people show that periods are nothing to hide, start conversations about menstruation and help to push back period stigma, one bracelet at a time. Help popularise the Menstruation Bracelet by using it as widely as possible: on social media, on your website or when you hold in-person events. Integrate it into any assets such as presentations, posters and reports. Not just around MH Day, but every day.

Use the bracelet in your Menstrual Hygiene Day campaign:

> <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/menstruationbracelet>

Get your campaign materials now (available in various languages):

> <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/materials/materials2023>

HASHTAGS FOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY

THE MAIN HASHTAG IS #MHDAY202X (X add the year of the Menstrual Hygiene Day). Please make sure to use this hashtag in all your posts, tweets, TikTok's and stories, so that SuSanA and other MH Day partners can find, like and share your amazing content!

TAG THE MH DAY SOCIAL CHANNELS:
Facebook, Instagram: @menstrualhygieneday
Twitter: @mhd28may

HIGHLIGHT YOUR SPECIFIC
AREAS OF WORK AND USE THE
FOLLOWING THEMATIC HASHTAGS:

#WeAreCommitted
#MenstruationMatters
#EndPeriodStigma
#EndPeriodPoverty
#PeriodEducationForAll
#PeriodfriendlyToiletsForAll



Banner: We can only achieve it together! GIZ colleagues from more than 28 countries join hands for a world free of period poverty and stigma (2023).

Bracelet: A Menstruation Bracelet design by the young women-led nonprofit Social Changemakers and Innovators (SOCHAI), Nepal. Source: <https://sochai.org/product/redcycle-bracelets>

Photo right: GIZ Albania. Mural on gender-based violence – including a Menstruation Bracelet – inaugurated in Cërrik during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence 2022.

Join us on the SuSanA Forum:
SPREAD THE WORD
> <https://bit.ly/3VsrgZn>



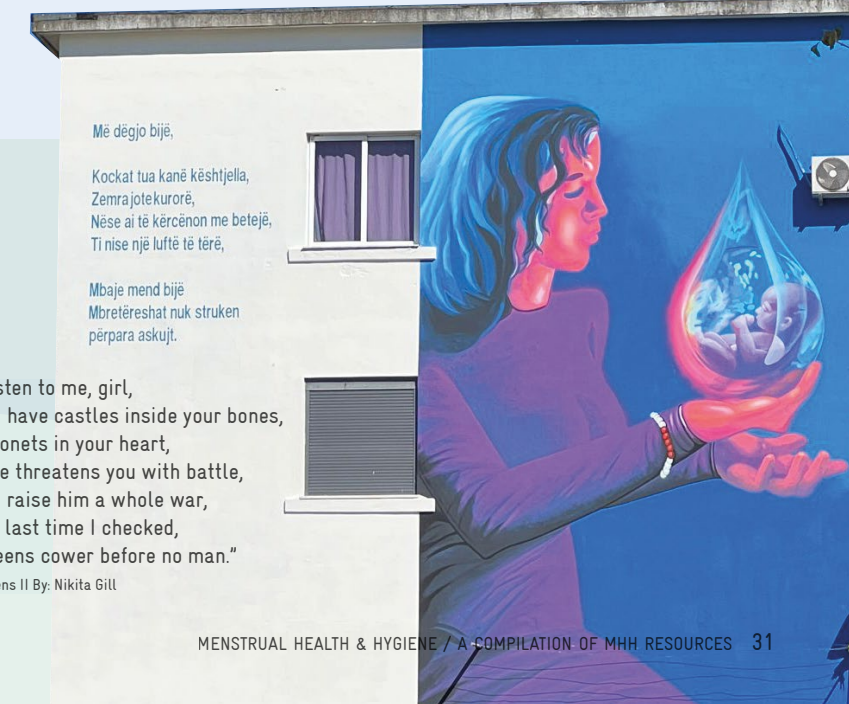
MenstruAction

GIZ

> MenstruAction, the GIZ Staff Initiative, aims to make MHH more prominent within GIZ – and also in German development cooperation and around the world.

A new GIZ publication celebrates the MenstruAction journey from its beginnings to successful recent initiatives, important milestones, and a glimpse of future ambitions. MenstruAction will continue to mainstream this taboo issue.

> gender-works.giz.de: <https://bit.ly/3IN5JWt>



Më dëgjo bijë,
Kockat tua kanë kështjella,
Zemra jote kurorë,
Nëse ai të kërcënon me betejë,
Ti nise një luftë të tërë,
Mbaje mend bijë
Mbretëreshat nuk struken
përpara askujt.

"Listen to me, girl,
you have castles inside your bones,
coronets in your heart,
if he threatens you with battle,
you raise him a whole war,
the last time I checked,
Queens cower before no man."

Queens II By: Nikita Gill

MENSTRUAL HEALTH & HYGIENE RELEVANT, INTERSECTORAL AND ON THE RISE

GENDER EQUALITY
SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS
EDUCATION
WASH
SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT
WORKPLACE
MATERIALS & SUPPLIES
WASTE MANAGEMENT
RELIGION
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION
MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS
EMERGENCIES
PANDEMICS
LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

THE INTERSECTORAL NATURE OF MHH

MHH is a truly intersectoral issue. The following overview addresses many key aspects of MHH.

GENDER EQUALITY

Improving access to information about MHH, sanitation facilities, menstrual products and health services for all people who menstruate is central to advancing gender equality. However, involving men and boys in the discussions, action and interventions relating to menstruation is vital.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

MHH is a vital component of SRHR and is integral to sexual and reproductive health throughout the life cycle. It requires access to safe menstrual products, education and understanding of the menstrual cycle. Addressing menstrual-related health problems and recognizing the unique needs of individuals who menstruate is crucial for promoting SRHR.

EDUCATION

Many schools do not have adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, menstrual products and materials, and lack knowledge or understanding to appropriately support MHH for students and teachers. For people who menstruate, this has a negative impact on their participation in school and thus the quality of their education.

WASH

Inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities—particularly in schools, workplaces or during emergencies—can present a major obstacle to women, girls and all people who menstruate. A lack of gender-segregated toilets with doors that can be safely locked from the inside, or the unavailability of hand-washing and disposal systems, can hinder people’s healthy and dignified management of their menstruation. Therefore, period-friendly toilets that are safe, private, accessible and well-maintained are essential.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

In many societies, menstruation is surrounded by cultural taboos, restrictions and stigma. Often, vital information is not shared and harmful practices are perpetuated. In some cultures, the stigma associated with menstruation is so great that those who menstruate are separated from others as they are considered “impure”.

WORKPLACE

There are various barriers and stigmas surrounding MHH in the workplace, such as a lack of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities or safe menstrual products. This impacts people’s health, productivity and access to work.

MATERIALS & SUPPLIES

Everyone should have safe options for managing menstruation. However, in many parts of the world, there is not sufficient access, affordability or awareness of different menstrual products, materials and supplies. There is an urgent need for intersectional solutions (e.g. in manufacturing standards, taxation and education).

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Menstrual products, materials and supplies are key to managing menstruation. It is important to provide adequate facilities for disposing of menstrual products safely and discreetly while also considering sustainability and avoiding environmental pollution.

RELIGION

More than 80 percent of the world’s population follow a religion; religious beliefs thus play a significant role in shaping our morals and our worldviews. Harmful practices and stigmas are often perpetuated by religious tradition, however, religion can also be a force for change and can help break taboos and improve MHH.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injuries to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Girls and women subjected to FGM face the risk of immediate and long-term complications, including menstrual problems, excessive bleeding, severe pain, infections, urinary problems, psychological problems and even death.

MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS

Refugees, displaced persons and those living in extreme poverty face unique challenges when it comes to managing menstruation. They may lack access to adequate menstrual products, facilities and information, which can lead to health complications, social exclusion and gender-based violence. Understanding the specific needs and challenges of marginalized populations is crucial for developing effective interventions to improve their MHH outcomes.

EMERGENCIES

Humanitarian emergencies, such as wars, displacements, conflicts and disasters, can cause additional issues for people who menstruate. They may have limited access to water, sanitation and hygiene, limited humanitarian support and a lack of privacy in camp structures.

PANDEMICS

Crises such as pandemics can also create unpredictable but often invisible challenges for MHH. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the production and accessibility of MHH supplies was affected and the provision of basic menstrual education was disrupted. Managing MHH while in quarantine also presented a challenge for many people.

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Women and girls are generally the main target group for MHH, however, it is important to stress that not all women menstruate (menopause, stress, illness...) and that not all people who menstruate are women (transgender men, non-binary people...). Furthermore, it is equally important to include and support people with disabilities, who may have different needs to manage menstruation safely.

MENSTRUATION MATTERS TO ACHIEVE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Attaining and maintaining Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) is essential for the human rights of women, girls, LGBTQI+ and marginalized people and is critical to achieving several of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all.

DIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS



#3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Understanding menstrual pain and norms of menstrual bleeding, hygienic menstrual management and access to healthcare and pain relief can have positive impacts on reproductive health, well-being and mental health.



#4 QUALITY EDUCATION

The ability to manage menstruation in schools has a positive impact on girls' education in terms of reducing absenteeism and increasing participation.



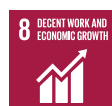
#5 GENDER EQUALITY

To reduce gender inequality and discrimination, it is important to ensure that all settings enable managing menstruation with dignity and comfort, challenge discriminatory gender norms, and engage men and boys in increasing their knowledge and support of those who menstruate.



#6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensuring access to clean water and safe, private sanitation facilities for managing menstruation—in homes, schools, workplaces and public institutions—can reduce gender discrimination and sexual violence.



#8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

By breaking down the taboo surrounding periods in workplaces, promoting period-friendly toilets and access to menstrual products, we can empower menstruating people to participate fully in education and work, and to contribute to economic growth.



#12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Supporting innovation in menstrual product waste management will help reduce pollution and provide a variety of menstrual product choices, including safe biodegradable and reusable options.



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals established by the United Nations in 2015 to address the world's most pressing social, economic and environmental challenges. The SDGs are interconnected and cover a wide range of issues. They aim to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030. Achieving the SDGs requires the collective effort of governments, civil society, the private sector and individuals. By working towards the SDGs, we can create a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS

#1 NO POVERTY

Limited access to WASH, menstrual supplies and products, and pain management solutions due to poverty can perpetuate the cycle of poverty and hinder economic opportunities for those who menstruate.

#2 ZERO HUNGER

Limited access to menstrual materials due to poverty and restrictions on movement during menstruation can impact food security by forcing those who menstruate to make trade-offs between menstrual materials and other survival necessities like food.

#7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Producing, maintaining (washing or boiling) and disposing of menstrual products requires energy, which may contribute to environmental pollution.

#9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Encouraging innovation in toilet design, disposal systems, laundering and menstrual product types may improve MHH. Small companies and social entrepreneurs who create menstrual products and sanitation-related businesses may generate employment and support the environmentally responsible production of menstrual products.

#10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Addressing MHH may help reduce inequalities in accessing resources for managing menstruation. Inadequate MHH may exacerbate existing economic and social inequalities and increase the risk of sexual and reproductive health issues and violence for those who menstruate.

#11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

MHH can be supported by the following measures: providing period-friendly toilets, adapting sanitation systems for adequate product disposal and waste management and ensuring water is available for cleaning and laundering menstrual products, as well as addressing pollution generated by disposable products and providing reusable menstrual products.

#13 CLIMATE ACTION

Addressing MHH in the context of climate change is important, as water shortages and lack of MHH considerations for women, youth and marginalized communities may exacerbate pollution, hinder education and impact the availability of menstrual products.

#14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Improper disposal of single-use menstrual products can lead to environmental pollution and contaminate rivers, lakes and other waterways.

#15 LIFE ON LAND

Improper disposal of menstrual products, especially single-use disposables, can contribute to environmental pollution. There is a need for greater attention to menstrual product disposal and waste management to prevent the contamination of rivers, forests and other natural environments.

#16 PEACE, JUSTICE, AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Marginalized groups may lack sufficient resources and support for MHH and be vulnerable to gender-based violence. These groups include people who are homeless, transgender, non-binary, refugees or victims of natural disasters.

#17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Addressing MHH intersects with other issues, such as women's empowerment, education and reducing gender gaps in schooling. Public-private partnerships are essential for providing access to WASH, menstrual products and disposal solutions, as well as addressing the impact of gender unequal taxation on those who menstruate.

Source: How addressing menstrual health and hygiene may enable progress across the Sustainable Development Goals—PMC (nih.gov), www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8253211, <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/project/infographic-mhm-and-sdgs>

Find out more about how MHH enables progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: sdgs.un.org: <https://bit.ly/3o5t12v>

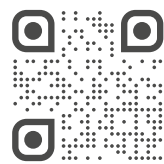


#LetsTalkPERIOD Albania social media campaign with Fatma Haxhialiu

WHY MenstruAction IS A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH: BMZ AND GIZ'S COMMITMENT TO A MOVEMENT THAT HAS COME A LONG WAY

How a neglected yet vital issue has climbed up the development agenda, why it matters and what still needs to be done.

Article by Inna Lazareva and Anna von Roenne for BMZ's web portal Healthy DEvelopments (May 2023)



Read the article online:
health.bmz.de
<https://bit.ly/423QPll>



Valerie Broch Alvarez, Public Health Expert and GIZ Programme Manager

"I am thrilled about BMZ's feminist development policy. We have worked for many years to get the menstruation issue on the German development agenda, but there was little interest in it and little money for it. With this new momentum, we will get more things done,"

says Valerie Broch Alvarez, a public health expert with decades of experience in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights for Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Looking back at the rise of menstrual health in German development cooperation over the past seven years makes her glad and a little proud. What began as a niche topic in a project component in Nepal has turned into an issue that has the explicit backing not just of countless colleagues in Germany and partner countries, but also of the GIZ Gender Commissioner, Dr Angela Langenkamp, and even the Minister, Svenja Schulze, herself. How did this come about—and what will come next?

A HARMFUL PRACTICE IN NEPAL SHEDS LIGHT ON A NEGLECTED TOPIC

In a remote region of Nepal, menstruation is sometimes accompanied by a practice known as Chhaupadi, which banishes menstruating women and girls to cattle sheds or caves (see this article: <https://bit.ly/3M8Zdd9>).

"Around 2016, our project sought to improve adolescent health services, focusing on contraception and the prevention of sexually transmitted infectious diseases and HIV/AIDS. Yet when we asked young people which health issues mattered to them, menstrual health and the stigma around it kept coming up," says Broch Alvarez. "Around the same time, the national press reported on several cases of girls who died as a result of Chhaupadi. This was a clear signal for me that we had to step up." In the following years, the Nepali-German project began to tackle the taboos and problems linked to menstruation, including the need for affordable and biodegradable menstrual products and for school toilets that ensured privacy for menstruating women and girls.

A NATIONAL SUMMIT BOOSTS A COUNTRY-WIDE MENSTRUAL HEALTH MOVEMENT



Dr Marni Sommer, Professor at Columbia University

In 2018, Valerie and her team supported the Nepalese Ministry of Health in organizing a national summit on menstrual health, entitled MenstruAction (see this article: <https://bit.ly/39g3YSm>). More than 500 participants attended the conference to discuss issues that had up to now been shrouded in silence. Dr Marni Sommer, Professor at Columbia University and an expert on menstruation, gender and sexual and reproductive health, was invited as one of the summit's keynote speakers:

"Other conferences I had attended on Menstrual Health were mainly attended by delegates from international organizations and by researchers from across the globe. This MenstruAction summit in Nepal was different: Most delegates were Nepali and their discussions were both passionate and inclusive."
 Marni Sommer

Sommer remembers how one Nepali transgender delegate took the microphone to share his difficulties in obtaining the menstrual product he needed. In her view, the fact that he did not hesitate to do so in front of a large Nepali audience testifies to the exceptional spirit of the event.

"At the summit many people approached me to express their full support" says Broch Alvarez. "They understood that this issue does not just affect women's health, but their economic development and their equality, too. Our project's aim was to let young women grow more confident and to support women's leadership." To keep the MenstruAction momentum alive following the conference, the Nepali-German project continued to support Nepal's Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partner's Alliance (MHM PA), a knowledge-sharing platform for local, international, civil society and governmental organizations working on menstrual health issues (see this article: <https://bit.ly/31cJ6dq>).

>>



First prize for Fit for School in GIZ's Gender Competition 2022 – out of 110 entries. From left: GIZ Management Board Member Ingrid-Gabriela Hoven; GIZ WASH Policy Advisor Jan Schlenk; GIZ Programme Manager Dr. Bella Monse; BMZ Parliamentary State Secretary Dr. Bärbel Kofler at the award ceremony in Bonn, Germany.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF SCHOOL HEALTH ROUTINES

In the Philippines, the German-supported Fit for School programme acknowledged schools' crucial role in tackling menstrual health taboos, both in terms of including it in the curriculum and in terms of school infrastructure and practices. This has meant, for example, ensuring that all schools have menstruation-friendly toilets and informing 27 million Filipino students about menstrual health, dispelling many myths and taboos.

In addition to providing straightforward practical guidance to schools, Fit for School made sure that these new standards and practices are included in the Ministry of Education's routine monitoring system so that they are assessed on an annual basis and, where found wanting, are followed up on and brought up to standard.

"With GIZ's support, the Philippines is today far more advanced when it comes to integrating menstrual health and hygiene into their school monitoring system. It can be seen as a guiding light for other countries to learn from."
Dr Marni Sommer

In their March 2022 publication about suitable indicators for national menstrual health monitoring (<https://bit.ly/MonitorMHH>), Sommer and her Global Consortium included the Fit for School WASH indicators as an example of best practice. "Now it's time to help other countries get to where the Philippines is," adds Sommer.

YOUNG INFLUENCERS CHANGE THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE ABOUT MENSTRUATION

In a similar vein, German-supported projects in Nepal, Albania and the Philippines have been involving local social media influencers and celebrities to shatter taboos around menstruation (see this article: <https://bit.ly/3yA2JYL>). In Albania, for example, the #LetsTalkPERIOD campaign launched by presenter Fatma Haxhialiu has been a viral success (<https://youtu.be/khg4ASiqa9k>). She encourages girls and women to talk openly about periods. Only a few months after the campaign was launched, over 1.5 million people had viewed the videos on social media – in a country with a population of 2.9 million people.

Over the last three years, the #LetsTalkPERIOD campaign in all three countries has reached over 5 million people, engaging both male and female influencers as Goodwill Ambassadors and using social media to spread the word to audiences far and wide.

>>

MENSTRUATION AND THE THREE Rs OF FEMINIST DEVELOPMENT POLICY

By encouraging people of all ages – including boys and men – to start talking about menstruation and women's and girls' menstruation-related needs and rights in a positive and affirmative way, and by integrating this into the standard curricula, WASH routines and infrastructure of all schools, the MenstruAction approach supported by German development cooperation strengthens women's and girls' RIGHTS and RESOURCES and ensures that their menstrual needs and rights are REPRESENTED in the public discourse.



Reusable pads made by students in the Philippines

AND WHY IS IT GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE TO TACKLE MENSTRUATION ISSUES?

"Working with influencers has helped us to break the taboos around menstruation," says Dr Angela Langenkamp, GIZ's Gender Commissioner. In her view, it is high time for the topic to be brought out of its niche to show the full extent to which it affects women's and girls' lives:

"Where women and girls do not have access to affordable menstrual products, this restricts their participation in education, in the economy and in public life. This puts them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis their male peers and competitors. Gender-transformative action means addressing the root causes of such disadvantages and of any discrimination related to gender. Menstruation as such is not the problem but the way we deal with it."
Dr Angela Langenkamp



Dr Angela Langenkamp, GIZ Gender Commissioner

According to the Canadian government which – just like Germany – promotes a feminist approach to development, access to pads and tampons must be treated as a basic need and doing so will improve equity, reduce stigma, and create healthier, more inclusive workplaces.

SHOULD GERMAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STEP UP AS CHAMPION FOR MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS?

Jan Schlenk, GIZ advisor in the fields of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), recognized early on that it could be a game changer to acknowledge how menstruation and its management affects women's and girls' lives. He initiated GIZ's collaboration with social media influencers and the production of video clips that, with their positive and empowering messages, quickly went viral in Nepal, Albania, the Philippines and beyond. Although he himself works in GIZ's WASH division, he is convinced that the time has come to change the image, and name, of the menstruation topic in the development arena:

"In some ways, 'Menstrual Health and Hygiene' is a misnomer. The menstruation topic goes far beyond questions of health and hygiene – it is a question of equality and of rights. How about calling it MHR – menstrual health and rights?"
Jan Schlenk

Marni Sommer believes that, though much work remains to be done, menstrual health and rights researchers, development practitioners and activists have come a long way in putting menstrual health on the international development agenda. In her view, the German contributions have been instrumental in this. And she hopes that a development partner will come forward as long-term menstrual health and rights champion to consolidate and further what has been achieved to date. Might Germany step up?

PRIORITY LIST OF INDICATORS FOR GIRLS' MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE



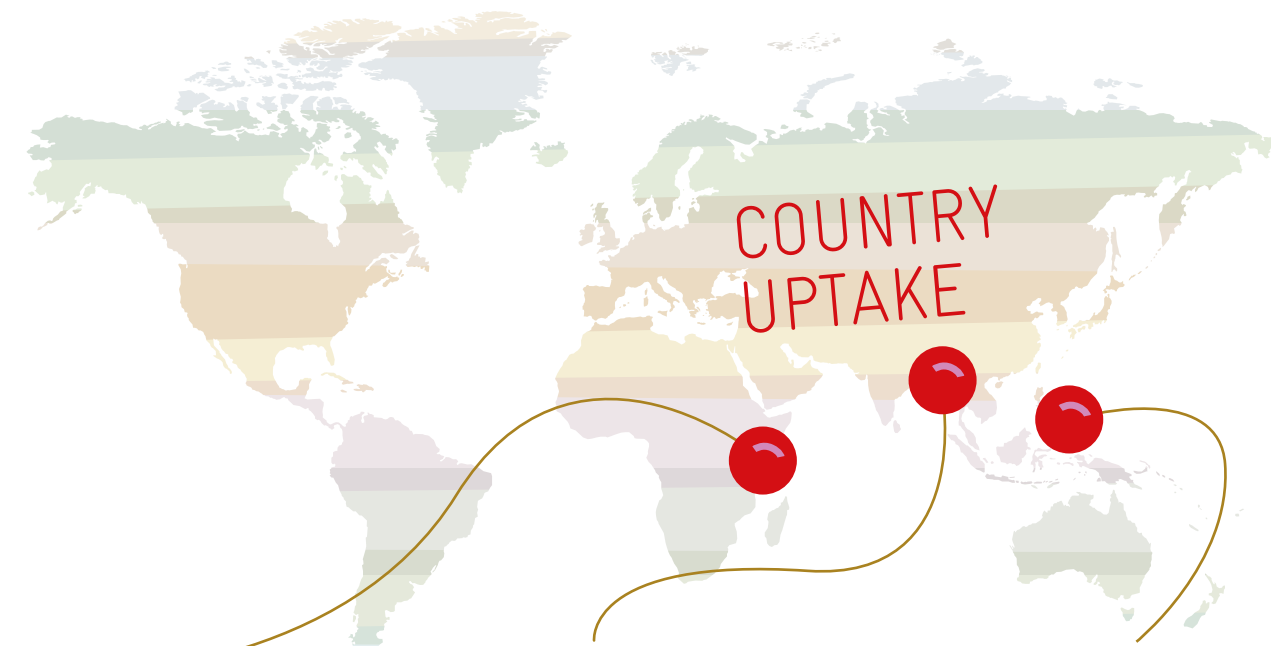
-  MATERIALS
-  WASH
-  KNOWLEDGE
-  DISCOMFORT/DISORDERS
-  SUPPORTIVE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT
-  MENSTRUAL HEALTH IMPACTS
-  POLICY



- WHAT THIS IS:**
- > Short list of evidence-based indicators and related measures for countries to get started
 - > Aimed at adolescent girls, but some indicators and measures can be adapted and tested with adult women
 - > Aligned to existing national monitoring tools where possible (e.g. JMP/DHS/MICS)



Read the Technical Guidance for National Monitoring. Available in English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Bengali. Mandarin and Portuguese coming soon:
 > publichealth.columbia.edu
 > <https://bit.ly/MonitorMHH>

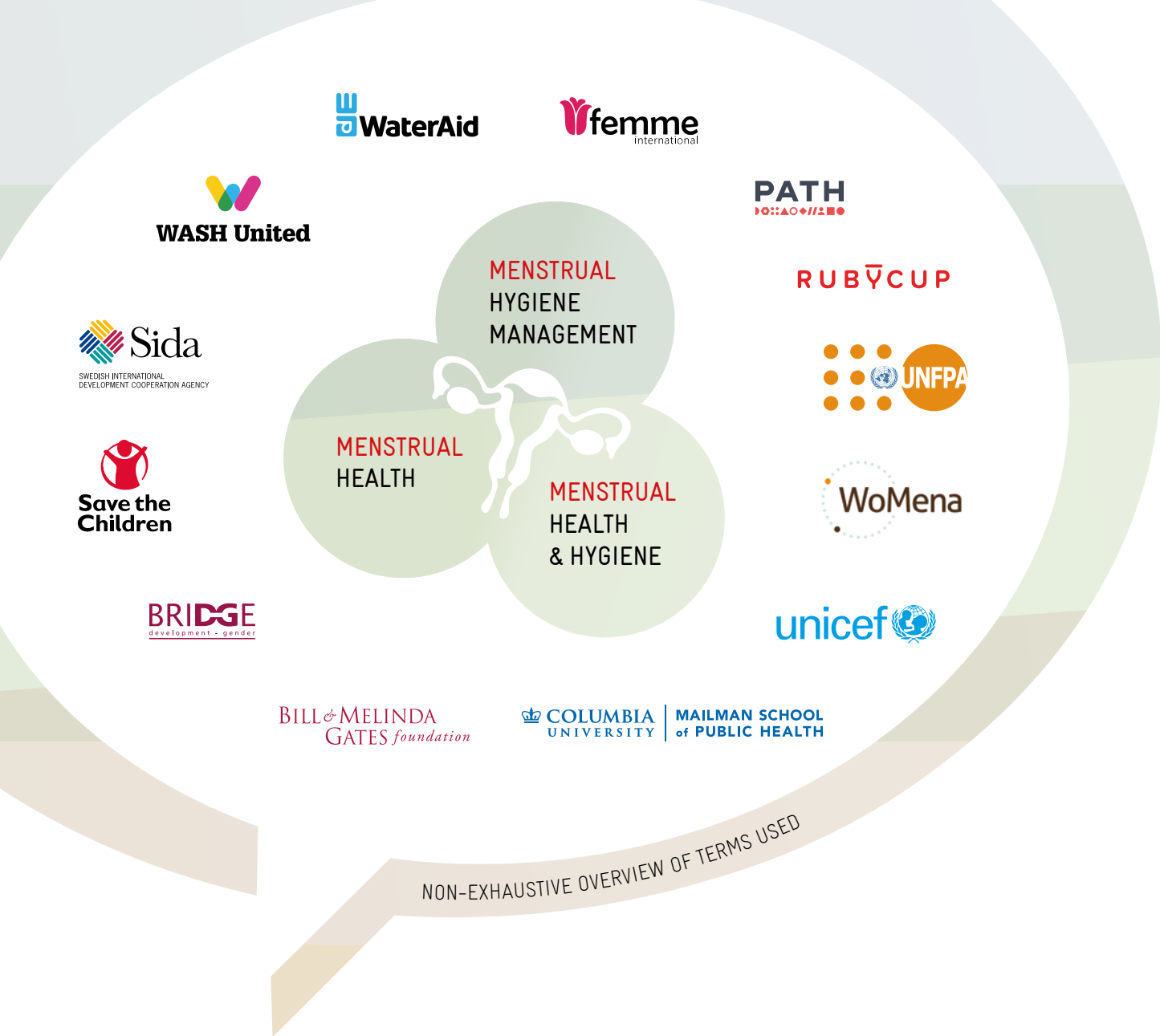


KENYA
 Kenya has a national MHH strategy and policy, as well as a guidance tool for training teachers. The Ministries of Health (MOH), Education (MOE), and Water, Sanitation & Irrigation (MOWSI) are working together to improve the monitoring of water, sanitation and hygiene—which includes MHH—in communities, schools and healthcare facilities. A workshop with the MOH, MOE, MOWSI and other relevant stakeholders is planned for June 2023 to address the following issues: integrating disparate monitoring systems, facilitating data collection and reporting, identifying and prioritizing a test WASH indicator set. The Priority List of Indicators will be included as a reference document to inform decision-making at the workshop. The aim is to test the system and tools for six months before selecting the final indicators.

BANGLADESH
 Bangladesh has been a global champion of MHH through the combined efforts of the Government of Bangladesh along with its development partners and the multi-sectoral MHH Platform. Bangladesh has pioneered efforts to monitor MHH at a national level in multiple ways: through the Bangladesh National Hygiene Survey (BNHS), the integration of MHH indicators into DHS and MICS surveys, and by monitoring systems in the health, education and WASH sectors. Indicators from the BNHS were adapted for the priority shortlist and evidence from the survey resulted in further action to address MHH in schools, which was led by the Government of Bangladesh. The launch of the National MHH Strategy in 2022 is another key achievement. This cross-sectoral strategy demonstrates a commitment to comprehensively addressing menstrual health and hygiene by the Government of Bangladesh, along with stakeholders from civil society and the private sector. The National MHH Strategy is also an opportunity to strengthen MHH monitoring across sectors and track progress.

THE PHILIPPINES
 In the Philippines, significant progress has been made in monitoring MHH-related indicators since 2016. This was achieved by a national monitoring system through the Department of Education (DepEd). The Philippines has national policies, a curriculum and a budget that incorporates MHH. To date, 13 out of 40 indicators for WASH in Schools (WinS) are MHH-related. These policies and programmes have made significant contributions to creating and refining the priority indicator list and the measures implemented. As the country continues to address MHH-related challenges, new opportunities have emerged to foster greater partnerships with other public and private stakeholders to monitor national MHH indicators and measure programme outcomes and impacts.





A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

MENSTRUAL HEALTH

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Despite variations in the terminology used by different organizations, there is a clear trend emerging – menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) is gaining widespread acceptance as the leading term for initiatives and programmes focused on menstruation. The changes in the title of this publication also point to this development:

- from “MHM – a neglected issue” (2016–2018)
- to “MHM – relevant, intersectoral and on the rise” (2020)
- to “MHH – relevant, intersectoral and on the rise” (2023).

When talking about issues such as menstrual health and hygiene, precise terminology is essential to avoid misunderstandings.

However, discussions on menstruation often lack clearly defined terms and abbreviations. The range of terms used – *menstrual health*, *menstrual hygiene management (MHM)* and *menstrual health and hygiene (MHH)* – reveals much about the underlying concepts and debates surrounding menstruation. In other words, the use of a particular term often reveals a specific focus or perhaps even an ideological approach to menstruation.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT (MHM)

From about 2010, when the issue of menstruation was primarily addressed by the WASH sector, the term *menstrual hygiene management (MHM)* was widely used in early publications. Some organizations and actors in the field use the abbreviation MHM interchangeably for two different terms: *menstrual hygiene management* and *menstrual health management*. The lack of a common understanding of MHM means that it cannot be clearly affiliated with a specific development sector. The use of MHM to refer to *menstrual hygiene management* tends to ignore the potential negative connotations relating to the term *hygiene*.

The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for WASH (JMP) definition of MHM has been widely used since 2012: “Women and adolescent girls use hygienic materials to absorb or collect menstrual blood, which can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of a menstrual period, use soap and water for washing the body as required, and have access to safe and convenient materials to dispose of used materials.” However, while many publications end the definition at this point, it is important to note that it includes another key sentence: “They understand the basic facts linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort or fear.” (WHO/UNICEF 2018: 50). This additional sentence highlights *dignity* and the *absence of discomfort and fear* when managing menstruation.

An increasing number of NGOs and academics working in this field now focus on these aspects. Hennegan et al refer to “a growing movement that believes in the use of a language that does not imply that menstruation is something dirty, but rather an aspect of health” (2017: 2). Therefore, by referring to *health* rather than *hygiene*, this growing movement emphasizes the normality of menstruation instead of defining it as a *hygiene crisis*.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH

Critics of the term *hygiene* argue that understanding MHM as *menstrual hygiene management* focuses exclusively on the physical and management aspects of MHM while excluding the broader psychological and biological aspects. For this reason, since about 2015, the term *menstrual health* has gained importance and prominence as organizations increasingly place the strategic focus regarding menstruation in the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) sector. A detailed definition of menstrual health, including access to information, facilities and supportive environments, was agreed upon by the Global Menstrual Collective in a multi-stage process and was published in 2021: “Menstrual health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle.” (Hennegan et al. 2021).

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE (MHH)

Since 2018, the term *menstrual health and hygiene (MHH)* has become more prominent. It combines the two terms health and hygiene to give both equal importance. The definition of MHH encompasses both the physical and psychological aspects of an individual’s menstruation, as well as the broader systemic factors that link menstruation with health, well-being, gender equality, education, equity, empowerment and human rights. These systematic factors have been summarized by UNESCO as: “accurate and timely knowledge; available, safe, and affordable materials; informed and comfortable professionals; referral and access to health services; sanitation and washing facilities; positive social norms; safe and hygienic disposal; and advocacy and policy.” (UNICEF 2019).

Establishing the term MHH has the potential to unite all actors who address menstruation and to reduce confusion surrounding the meaning of MHM. This will not only lead to greater consistency and clarity in the terminology used but could also bring together different advocacy groups (i.e. those focusing on either menstrual health or menstrual hygiene). This could facilitate a more encompassing and thus more successful handling of menstruation-related issues.



#WeAreCommitted



#MenstruationMatters



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KEY TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACMH	African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BNHS	Bangladesh National Hygiene Survey
DepEd	Department of Education, Philippines
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GATE	Gender, Adolescent Transitions and Environment Program
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
JMP	WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for WASH
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other people of diverse gender identities
MH	Menstrual Health
MH Day	Menstrual Hygiene Day (28.05)
MHH	Menstrual Health and Hygiene
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MHM PA	Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MOE	Ministry of Education, Kenya
MOH	Ministry of Health, Kenya
MOWSI	Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation, Kenya
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SuSanA	Sustainable Sanitation Alliance
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WinS	WASH in Schools

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WHAT IS SuSanA?

The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) works towards a world in which all people have access to adequate sanitation, regardless of gender, age, income, culture or location.

SuSanA is an open network of people and organizations who share a common vision on advancing sustainable sanitation systems. The overall goal is to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 6, by promoting a systems approach to sanitation provision.

SuSanA came into existence in early 2007. Since then, it has been providing a platform for coordination and collaborative work. Today, it connects more than 15,000 individual members and 400 partner organizations (NGOs, private companies, multilateral organizations, government agencies and research institutions) to a community of people with diverse expertise and opinions.

By supporting its partners in developing, accelerating and exchanging innovations, SuSanA also serves as sounding board for innovative ideas.

Finally, SuSanA contributes to policy dialogue through joint publications, meetings and initiatives.

HOW SuSanA WORKS

SuSanA's most important assets are the knowledge, experience, creativity and energy of a large and diverse membership. SuSanA focuses on all the different dimensions of sustainable sanitation and the full spectrum of development contexts. SuSanA provides members with forums for discussion and analysis, it provides structures to support collaboration and offers a range of channels for effective communication.

SuSanA strives to be a true partnership, in which all members have a voice and can contribute. New members and organizational partners are welcome. Decision-making is achieved through reaching a broad consensus. Interactions within the network are creative, respectful and constructive.

SuSanA is guided by the SDGs. It provides policy advice, practical guidance and up to date knowledge about how to realize sustainable sanitation for all.

SuSanA's VISION

Several billion people around the world lack access to basic or safely managed sanitation. The result is a public health crisis, with infants and young children being the most affected group.

SDG 6 on sustainable water and sanitation management aims to provide access to water and sanitation for all by 2030. This is not just about achieving a narrow sanitation access target. The SDG 6 targets address sanitation beyond toilets, including the aspects of excreta management and reuse. Furthermore, good sanitation, hygiene and wastewater management are fundamental to achieving many of the other SDGs. The SDGs and the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development make SuSanA's work more important than ever.

JOIN SuSanA

SuSanA is open to anyone who wants to join and be active in the promotion of sustainable sanitation systems. Membership is open to any individual.

Members can receive updates on SuSanA activities and discussions that interest them, take part in the discussion forum and become active in thematic working groups.

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