

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

... THE POWER OF
STORYTELLING IN
ADVOCATING FOR
MENSTRUAL HEALTH
AND HYGIENE (MHH)



#kickThe
STIGMA

#LetsTalk
PERIOD

#Period
Friendly
World

INSIGHTS FROM
SUCCESS STORIES
IN ZAMBIA



WHY STORIES MATTER

Stories have the power to shape perceptions, spark dialogue, and drive social change. They are a powerful tool for people to express their opinions and views to shape society, communicate values and influence behaviors. When it comes to Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH), storytelling can dismantle taboos, foster understanding, and inspire action. It can also bridge the gap between complex development cooperation initiatives and social causes, making them relatable, tangible, and impactful.



SHAPING INCLUSIVE NARRATIVES: WHAT IS A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO STORYTELLING?

A gender-transformative approach reimagines how stories are told by actively challenging and dismantling traditional gender roles, stereotypes, and power imbalances. By shifting the narrative, this approach can:

REDEFINE GENDER NORMS

Replace outdated stereotypes with empowering, diverse and inclusive messages.

CHALLENGE POWER IMBALANCES

Address systemic inequalities by amplifying marginalized voices and perspectives.

PROMOTE EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Use stories as tools to foster understanding, empathy and respect for everyone.

IN THE CASE OF
MENSTRUAL HEALTH
AND HYGIENE,
THE APPROACH CAN BE
ADDRESSED THROUGH:

BREAKING TABOOS
Normalizing menstruation
(including in male-dominated spaces)

ENGAGING ALLIES
Involving boys and men in
the conversations and the solutions

RESHAPING SYSTEMS
Advocating for menstrual-friendly
environments (at school,
in the workplace, etc.)

'CLICKTIVISM'
IS PROVING AN EFFECTIVE
TOOL FOR TACKLING TABOOS
AROUND MENSTRUATION AND
EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN
AROUND THE GLOBE.

What started as a social media campaign in Nepal evolved to a gender-transformative #LetsTalkPERIOD approach implemented in Nepal, Albania, the Philippines, Zambia and South Africa—having reached now more than 10 million people since 2021.

Read more on <https://health.bmz.de>: Why 'MenstruAction' is a gender-transformative approach: > <https://bit.ly/423QPll>





#kickTheSTIGMA
Goodwill Ambassadors
Inonge Kaloustian,
Evarine Katongo
and Barbra Banda (f.l.t.r).



SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN ZAMBIA MAY 2024-ONGOING

WHAT MADE THE CAMPAIGN IN ZAMBIA SO SUCCESSFUL?

BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH SPORT

When athletes like Barbra Banda speak up about Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH), they bring visibility to an issue that too often remains in the shadows. With their wide-reaching influence—including among male fans—athletes can create space for open conversation around deep-rooted taboos surrounding menstruation.

In sports—often male-dominated spaces—these taboos become especially visible: in some arenas, there aren't even basic facilities like women's toilets. The environment itself is frequently not designed for women and their needs in mind.

This emphasizes: Advocating for MHH isn't just about awareness—it's about systemic change. This includes ensuring menstrual-friendly policies in workplaces and schools, providing proper infrastructure, and educating both men and women about the importance of menstrual health.

COLLABORATION AT ITS CORE

After choosing a fitting goodwill ambassador, the success of the campaign lies in the strong cooperation between multiple actors:

- > A sector programme working on global MHH awareness
- > A country project anchoring the campaign locally
- > The wider thematic cluster creating alignment and momentum

This integrated approach ensures that messages are not only locally relevant but also part of a bigger, global shift toward menstrual equity.

IMPACT

The campaign reaches its audience primarily through Goodwill Ambassadors and their social media platforms. In the case of the #kickTheSTIGMA campaign, a month after the launch of the campaign:

> Over **800.000** people were reached on social media through the different materials.

> Around **40%** of the persons reached were boys and men.





- > In Zambia, the TRHIVE and NEWZA projects and the Water & Energy Cluster as a whole provided local anchoring of the campaign. They connected relevant stakeholders and participated actively in the social media campaigning, contributing to mainstreaming menstrual health in the GIZ teams and beyond.
- > The collaboration with GIZ's InnoBlue Sectorprogramme then ensured that the initiative was embedded in a global context, significantly expanding its reach and impact.



#kickThe STIGMA

INONGE KALOUSTIAN, as a GIZ ambassador for the #kickTheSTIGMA campaign in Zambia, visited Germany in early summer 2024 to celebrate the International Menstrual Hygiene Day on the 28th of May. Among others, she met with former German Development Minister Svenja Schulze, met the other Goodwill Ambassadors from Albania and Nepal in Berlin to discuss their journey in breaking the taboo around menstruation and sat on a panel at the re:publica—a conference about Web 2.0, especially blogs, social media, and information society—to speak about the campaign.



INTERNATIONAL MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY 28 MAY

GIZ ambassadors for #kickTheSTIGMA and #LetsTalkPERIOD Inonge Kaloustian, Fatma Haxhialiu and Keki Adhikari, BMZ Ambassador for fair trade Sara Nuru and moderator Katie Gallus (f.l.t.r) after the BMZ session "Breaking Taboos, Flowing Forward" at the re:publica. Watch the session recording: > www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj8aj-7fa8A

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