



ANNUAL REPORT

2024

#MenstruationMatters
#ItsTimeForAction



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FOREWORD FROM THE NATIONAL CONVENER



The Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance (MHMPA) is an informal network of over 100 institutional members working in the field of menstruation in Nepal since 2017. Originally starting with 20 members, MHMPA has grown significantly with 100+ members by the end of 2023/2024. The MHMPA's vision is a country where menstruation is embraced as a normal, natural part of life and practiced safely by everyone, every day. Members include UN, bilateral agencies, I/NGOs, civil societies, media, private sector, researchers, academicians, national celebrities and other individuals interested and active in the field of menstruation. MHMPA positions itself as an advisory network for the Government of Nepal at various tiers for policy, plan and programme related with MHH.

Since 2018, MHMPA has taken a leading role in coordinating stakeholders to celebrate Menstrual Hygiene Day at the national level each year. It aligns actions of all the MHH related stakeholders around strategic thematic areas. The network also nominates and mobilizes Goodwill Ambassadors annually to raise awareness about menstruation. In partnership with media and celebrities, MHMPA creates mass awareness campaigns centered on Menstruation Health and Hygiene (MHH). It is also putting efforts to establish provincial level MHMPA as to scale up its interventions across the country. In Karnali, Karnali Alliance for Dignified Menstruation (KADMM) is active since 2022.

As of now, below are some of the key achievements by MHMPA in collaboration with the government

- The 16th Five-Year Plan includes two menstrual health indicators: a) Schools with the availability of necessary menstrual hygiene products and clean toilet facilities during menstruation. b) Women who were absent from school or the workplace due to menstruation in the past 12 months.
- The school curricula includes MHH contents from grade 4 to 12 since 2020.
- National program has been implemented to provide free pads to girls in public school across countries since 2020.

MHMPA aims to continue its endeavors to achieve milestones over the next five years as per strategic thematic areas of MHMPA (2025-2030)

MHMPA AT A GLANCE

Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance (MHMPA) Nepal is a membership-based Alliance with membership of UN, bilateral agencies, I/NGOs, civil societies, media, private sector, researchers, academicians, national celebrities and other individuals interested and active in the field of menstruation. MHMPA works on Menstruation Policy Advocacy, Education, Awareness, and Behavior Change, Menstrual Materials, Research and Knowledge Management, Menstruation-Friendly Facilities and Services and Menopause.

It also positions itself as an advisory network for the Government of Nepal and helps in facilitating knowledge management for decision-making at national and sub national levels. The Alliance is an informal, loose network with no membership charges. Anyone working in menstruation and related area is eligible to become a member.



Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategy Objectives of MHMPA

MHMPA has been working in the field of menstruation since its establishment. As a national alliance, it became important to design the vision, mission and goals for the alliance.

Vision

A country where menstruation is embraced as a normal, natural part of life and practiced safely by everyone, every day.

Mission

MHMPA is determined to extend collaboration with government stakeholders, non-government organisations and private partners through evidence-based policy advocacy, by providing learning resources and technical assistance to create an enabling environment for safe menstruation practices.

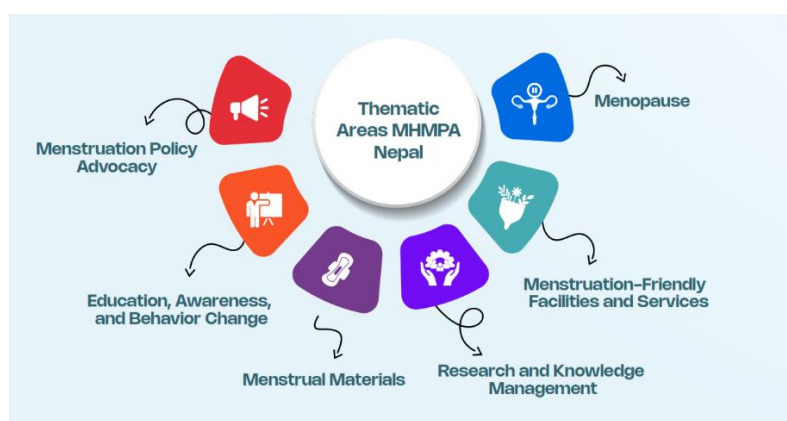
Goals

- Strengthen coordination mechanism among various sectors- education, health, gender, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and human rights to effectively address issues/agenda of life-cycle menstruation.
- Empower communities (duty bearers and right holders) to promote safer and environment friendly menstruation practices.
- Improve overall knowledge on various aspects of menstruation.
- National and sub-national level menstruation in place.
- Establish a sustainable knowledge sharing platform.
- Include menstruation topics in school curriculum/textbook/education materials.

Strategic Objectives

- Leadership and Coordination:
 - Build and strengthen national institutions and mechanism at national and sub-national levels for safer and environment friendly menstruation.
 - Advocate for menstruation to become a national agenda for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for ensuring human rights.
- Action: Accelerate and sustain the implementation of coordinated and integrated menstruation initiatives
- Learning: Facilitate learning, share knowledge and generate evidence on MHM/MHH.

Thematic areas of MHMPA (2025-2030)



MHMPA STEERING COMMITTEE

The steering committee plays an important role in MHMPA's planning activities and overall functioning. The steering committee also ensures governance for transparency and accountability. Currently, there are 10 steering committee members from March 2023 to March 2025. They are as follows:

- Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC)
- Days for Girls Nepal (DfG)
- GIZ
- Good Neighbors International (GNI)
- Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Center (KIRDARC)
- Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH)
- Plan International Nepal
- Sustainable WASH for All (SUSWA)
- Visible Impact (VI)
- WaterAid Nepal (WAN)

Previously, there were five steering committee members from 2020-2022 as below

- Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC)
- GIZ
- Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Center (KIRDARC)
- CARE Nepal
- Community Development Forum (CODEF)

Guna Raj Shrestha, who is the founder of MHMPA, works as the National Convener. Since August 2022, the BBC has served as the host of the secretariat office, operating under a rotational system where member organizations take turns managing the secretariat.

PROGRAM & PROJECTS



Pre- Event Press Meet

Menstrual Hygiene Day

Media Coverage Report

**TA Support to National Planning
Commission**

**Consultation Workshop on Menstruation Issues:
LGBTQIA+, Persons with Disabilities, and Youth**

Consultation on Policy Brief on MHM in Nepal

Boosting Songs

Illustrative Post

**Leveraging Social Media through
Reel**

**Research-Effectiveness of Social Media Advocacy
Campaign on MHM led by Keki Adhikari**

Workshop/Meeting- MHH Singer Alliance

**Policy Dialogue-on Human Rights Approach
to MHH**

MHMPA Brochure

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Pre- Event Press Meet for Menstrual Hygiene Day 2024

The pre-event press meet was organized as a platform to engage media professionals, raise widespread awareness, and generate extensive coverage about Menstrual Hygiene Day and its significance. By involving members of the media, MHMPA aimed to amplify the reach and impact of the campaign, challenging societal norms and breaking down barriers related to menstrual health and hygiene issues. Additionally, the program facilitated the establishment of a MHH Singer's Alliance. The newly formed MHH Singer's Alliance of 15 members aims to raise awareness and advocate for menstrual health through music.

Key presentations included:

- An overview of the Right Here Right Now (RHRN) initiative and its efforts towards sexual and reproductive health rights.
- A detailed presentation on Menstrual Health and Hygiene, discussing challenges such as inadequate WASH facilities, limited access to quality menstrual products, and persistent stigmas. It also highlighted achievements in the past decade, like increased access to disposable pads and emphasized areas needing improvement, such as media coverage and inclusivity.

Suggestions from participants included providing free sanitary pads in both public and private schools, increasing female toilets, and ensuring the quality of menstrual products. The discussion also touched on laws against menstrual discrimination and the need to expand awareness programs across Nepal. The event concluded with emphasis on the natural and positive aspects of menstruation. The event garnered widespread media attention, paving the way for future government collaborations and initiatives aimed at eliminating harmful menstrual practices.



National Convener presenting during the event

MH Day Celebration 2024

In 2024, Menstrual Hygiene Day was celebrated in Nepal with the theme “**Together for a #PeriodFriendlyWorld**”- **महिनावारीमैत्री विश्वव्यापी हातेमालो**. It successfully brought together various stakeholders to address critical issues surrounding menstrual health and hygiene. The event highlighted progress made in recent years while also emphasizing the work that remains to be done. Through a combination of policy dialogue, artistic performances, and interactive discussions, the celebration aimed to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for menstrual health in Nepal. The involvement of high-level officials, international representatives, and diverse participants underscored the importance of the issue and the commitment to creating a #PeriodFriendlyWorld.



महिनावारीमैत्री विश्वव्यापी हातेमालो

Program Highlights:

- 1. Opening Session:** The event began with the National Anthem, followed by welcoming remarks from Mr. Jagdish Kharel. Her Excellency Riina Rikka, Ambassador of Finland to Nepal, emphasized the importance of menstrual health and hygiene management (MHM) in national development and public health. She continued, emphasizing the far-reaching consequences of inadequate menstrual hygiene practices. "Poor menstrual hygiene can lead to infections, absenteeism from school and work, and even social stigma," she said, her voice carrying a sense of urgency. "By addressing this issue, we not only promote gender equality but also contribute to the overall development of our societies." Ambassador Rikka concluded, emphasizing on collaboration in breaking taboos and empowering women and girls through improved menstrual health and hygiene management.



2. Release of Digital Profile

Video: Her Excellency Riina Rikka launched the digital profile video of the National Goodwill Ambassador, Rekha Joshi which was created through a joint collaboration between the Finnish Embassy and MHMPA. Through powerful lyrics, the video highlighted how society is transforming, slowly dissipating discrimination and superstitions surrounding menstruation. However, Joshi acknowledged the long road ahead and urged collective action from the government, donors, organizations, and individuals to openly discuss menstruation and commit to this cause. The video culminated with Joshi's resonating call to action: "Let's join hands together for a period-friendly world!" Her message echoed the campaign's goal – creating an environment where menstruation is embraced as a natural and dignified process, free from stigma and discrimination.



To watch the digital profile video please click [here](#)

- 3. Policy Dialogue:** Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha, National Convener of MHMPA, presented a policy dialogue on 'Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management in Nepal.

The discussion covers the following key points:

a) Menstruation Issues:

- Taboos and stigma persist.
- Inadequate MHM facilities in schools, homes, and workplaces.
- Limited access to safe, affordable, and biodegradable menstrual products.
- Poor disposal practices.
- Health concerns related to menstrual disorders and menopause.

b) Impacts of Poor MHM:

- Health risks such as infections, cancer, and stress.
- Educational impacts like increased absenteeism among girls.
- Social effects including loss of dignity and isolation.
- Economic disadvantages and environmental hazards.
- Gender-based violence and human rights violations.

c) Menstrual Health in Nepal:

- 61% of women manage menstruation privately.
- Low awareness of the menstrual cycle's fertile period.
- Persistent Chhaupadi (menstrual seclusion) practices.
- 27% of girls missed school due to menstruation.

d) Achievements (2005-2024):

- Progress includes eliminating Chhaupadi, MHM curriculum development, free pad distribution, tax exemptions, and setting up MHM alliances.
- Policy advancements like Dignified Menstruation Directives and MHM inclusion in sanitation guidelines.

e) Gaps and Challenges:

- Policies lack comprehensiveness and are poorly implemented.
- Socio-cultural stigma and inadequate disposal options persist.
- Lack of research and data on menstrual health.

f) Government and NGO Initiatives:

- Efforts include awareness campaigns, free pad distribution, and dismantling menstrual huts.
- Policy formulation and MHM integration in health and sanitation plans.

g) MHM Practitioners' Priorities:

- Push for comprehensive MHH policies, awareness, and ending harmful practices.
- Improve facilities for women, disabled, and minor and gender minorities' communities.
- Promote safe, affordable, and eco-friendly menstrual products.
- Invest in research and safe disposal solutions.

h) Recommendations:

- Develop a national MHH policy.
- Increase awareness, education, and product availability.
- Improve MHM facilities and disposal mechanisms.
- Strengthen policy implementation and invest in MHH programs.

4. Dance Performance: Eight dancers performed the dance in two popular songs (*Bujhina Maile and Kura Bujna Parcha*).



Dancers during their performance

5. Video Bites Release: Ms. Julie Gurung, PQI Director at Plan International Nepal, launched a video highlighting a consultation workshop with LGBTQIA+, disabled, and youth participants discussing menstruation challenges.

To watch the video bites please click [here](#)



6. Launch of MHH Singer Alliance:

The MHH Singer Alliance was launched, aiming to unite influential voices from the music industry and artistic community thus creating a ripple effect of awareness and action towards dignified menstruation. Approximately 15 singers were welcomed into the alliance. Following the launch, Singer Ibsal Sanjyal, Rekha Joshi and Sunita Buda Chhetri (Karnali MHM Good will Ambassador) sang song related to menstruation. The musical performances highlighted the importance of menstrual health and hygiene, using the power of art to raise awareness and break stigmas surrounding menstruation.



7) Panel Discussion: The panel discussion addressed various aspects of menstrual health and hygiene in Nepal, featuring insights from five experts:

- a. **Prof. Dr. Sangeeta Singh** highlighted initiatives under Nepal's 16th Five-Year Plan aimed at improving menstrual health by providing gender-friendly infrastructure and resources. The goal is to create a supportive environment that empowers women and girls to manage menstruation without discrimination.
- b. **Ms. Ram Kumari Jhakri** noted that while Nepal has made progress, menstruation remains a cross-cutting issue requiring attention at both policy and individual levels. She emphasized the need to enhance existing policies and ensure consistent implementation, like providing quality sanitary pads in schools.
- c. **Dr. Laxmi Tamang** focused on cultural restrictions and stigmas as major challenges. She emphasized the psychological stress young girls experience due to societal taboos and restrictions during menstruation.
- d. **Ms. Evana Manandhar** shared her positive experience with menstruation within the Newar community, where cultural practices helped normalize the process. She underscored the importance of family support and education in managing menstruation confidently and healthily.
- e. **Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha** pointed out over 40 restrictions faced by women during menstruation, including the lack of quality menstrual products and adequate facilities especially in government

offices. He highlighted the need of national policy focused on not only menstrual health, but also menopause.

The overall discussion highlighted the need for policy improvements, cultural change, and resource allocation to ensure dignified menstrual health management across Nepal.

To watch the full panel discussion video please click [here](#)

8. Declaring Awards and Prize Distribution

Before the main MH day event, Days for Girls Nepal organized an art, poetry, and storytelling competition among school students. The competition was themed around MH Day. Students from both senior and junior levels participated, submitting their artistic expressions in the form of stories, poems, and artworks.

During the main event, the winners of the competition were announced and celebrated. The chief guest and special guests (Prof. Dr. Sangeeta Singh and Laxmi Pandey) took the stage to honor the talented students. Prize and certificate were distributed to recognize the winning entries in the story/poem and art categories for both senior and junior levels.



9) Closing Remarks: Ms. Rita Oli from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens in Karnali Province emphasized menstruation as a natural process tied to reproductive health rights, advocating for its normalization and the elimination of stigma. She called for active involvement of local groups in raising awareness and dispelling myths while ensuring proper menstrual facilities. Ms. Laxmi Pandey from the National Association of Rural Municipalities encouraged youth to adopt a positive mindset, collaborate, and bring fresh ideas for meaningful local change. Lastly, Ms. Krishna Kumari Waiba of the Beyond Beijing Committee celebrated the progress in menstrual health, inspired by the event's energy and commitment, also highlighted the need for ongoing efforts to ensure menstrual dignity for all.

Sideline Events:

1) Cycle Rally

On May 28th, 2024, X-Pose Nepal organized a Cycle Rally with the theme "Together for a #PeriodFriendlyWorld" to raise awareness about menstrual hygiene. The rally commenced from two locations, Kathmandu Durbar Square and Bhaktapur Durbar Square, and culminated at Patan Durbar Square. The closing ceremony was graced by Hon'ble Minister Bhagwati Chaudhary, Deputy Mayor Manjali Shakya, and UNICEF Nepal's Deputy OIC Representative Jee Hyun Rah,



who collectively emphasized the importance of safe and hygienic menstruation practices, advocated for free pad distribution in public toilets, and called for implementing national policies to promote menstrual health. The event highlighted the need for eco-friendly and affordable menstrual products, as well as the role of men in supporting menstrual hygiene management.

2) Exhibition

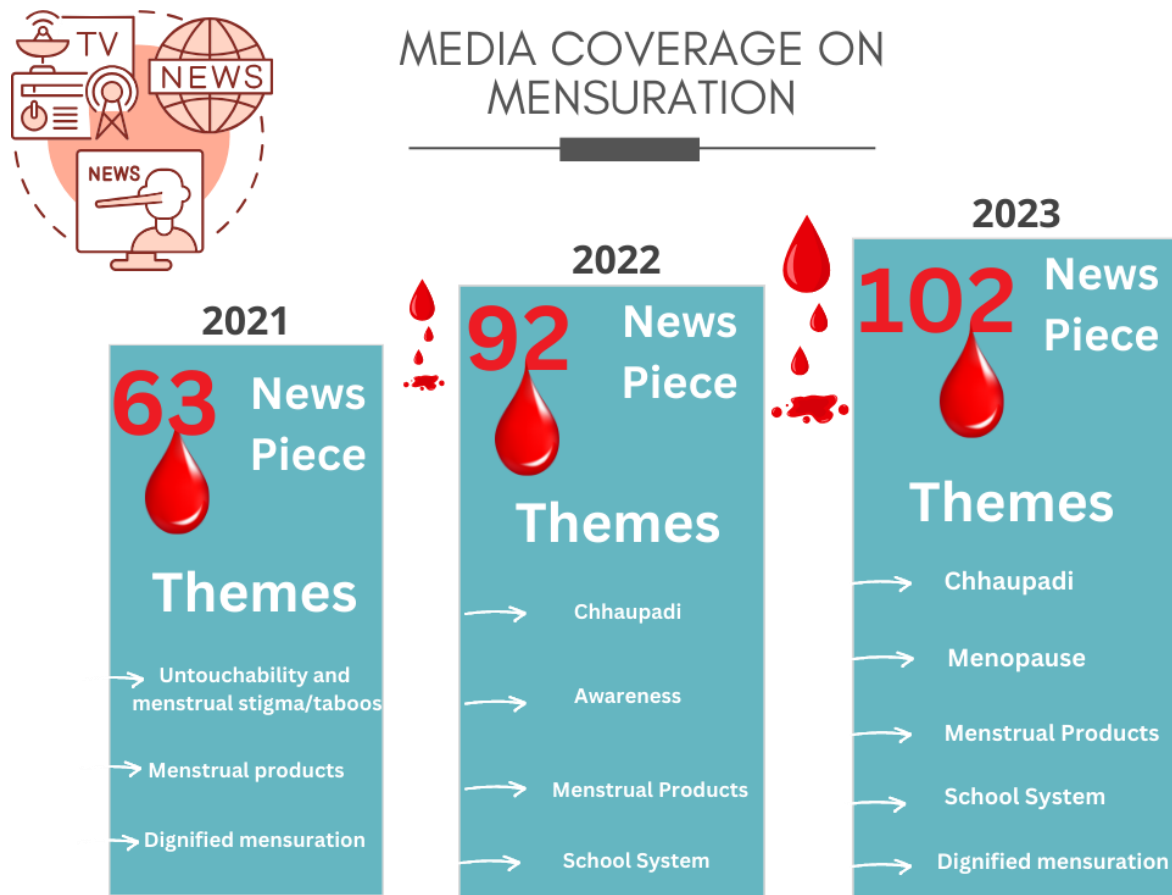
As part of the celebration, member organizations showcased products and services related to menstruation through an exhibition. The exhibition featured stalls from various organizations showcasing bio-degradable menstrual products, menstrual hygiene kits, and different recycled materials. To engage attendees, interactive elements such as quizzes and bracelet-making activities were incorporated, aligning with the overarching theme "Together for a #PeriodFriendlyWorld".



Through educational displays and participatory experiences, the exhibition aimed to normalize and destigmatize menstruation.

Media Coverage on Menstruation Report

MHMPA has developed a new report titled "Media Coverage on Menstruation 2024" as a continuation of the media coverage report since 2021.



The media coverage on menstruation has witnessed a significant surge from 2021 to 2023, with the total number of news pieces rising from 63 to 102. This increase is marked by a growing number of print newspapers, in addition to online portals, reporting on this crucial issue. Notably, certain topics like menstrual products and education have gained more prominence in the discourse. However, issues surrounding diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions (SOGIESC) remain largely overlooked.

Both Nepali and English media outlets have expanded their coverage by employing diverse formats beyond traditional news articles, such as feature stories, opinion pieces, and multimedia content. This diversification in storytelling has contributed to a more robust and multifaceted exploration of menstruation-related topics in 2023. Nevertheless, there remains ample scope for improvement to make the coverage more holistic, inclusive, and representative of the diverse experiences and perspectives surrounding menstruation.

Sustained advocacy efforts are crucial to further engage media stakeholders in eliminating the persistent taboos and stigma associated with menstruation. By fostering open and nuanced conversations, the media can play a pivotal role in normalizing menstruation and promoting greater awareness, understanding, and empathy toward this natural biological process.

The analysis of media coverage on menstruation in Nepal for the year 2023 has shed light on both the progress made and the areas that still require significant attention. While the Nepali media landscape has witnessed a surge in the number of news pieces dedicated to this crucial issue, there remains ample scope for improvement to ensure comprehensive, inclusive, and impactful reporting.

The thematic analysis revealed that topics such as Chhaupadi, dignified menstruation, menstrual products, and the school system have received relatively more coverage compared to previous years. However, the subject of menopause continues to be largely overlooked, with only a handful of articles and opinion pieces attempting to shed light on this natural biological process and the societal attitudes surrounding it. Moreover, the media has yet to fully embrace the representation of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions (SOGIESC) in its coverage of menstruation. The experiences and perspectives of transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals, person with disability remain largely absent from the discourse, perpetuating a lack of inclusivity and understanding. While commendable efforts have been made to explore the intersections of menstruation-related issues with broader social and economic factors, such as gender inequality, poverty, and lack of education, there is a need for deeper and more nuanced exploration of this intersectionality.

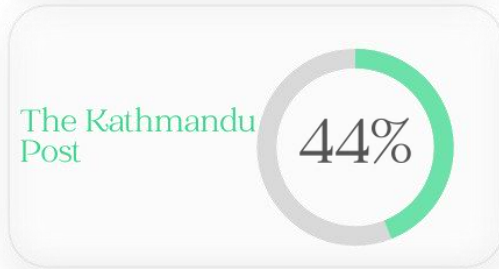
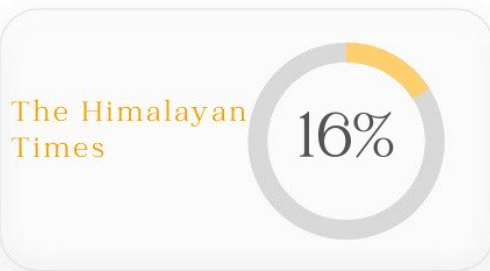
Furthermore, the document highlights the need for consistent and sustained media coverage to drive substantial change and challenge the deeply ingrained attitudes and practices surrounding menstruation in the country. While the increase in coverage from 2021 to 2023 is a positive development, maintaining this momentum and ensuring regularity is crucial to keep the conversation alive and effect lasting change. Additionally, the Nepali media could benefit from exploring diverse storytelling formats beyond traditional news articles, feature stories, and opinion pieces.

By embracing more innovative techniques and platforms, such as multimedia content, immersive storytelling, and interactive digital experiences, the media can engage audiences in a more impactful and immersive manner, fostering greater empathy and understanding. To bridge the gaps in coverage, media should prioritize areas such as policy analysis, national initiatives by individuals and organizations, menstrual issues faced by persons with disabilities, policy advocacy at all levels of government. By addressing these overlooked aspects, the media can contribute to a more comprehensive and inclusive discourse on menstruation.

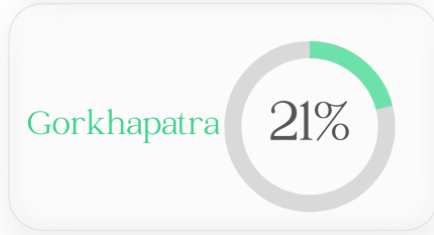
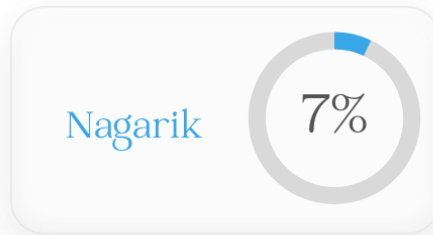
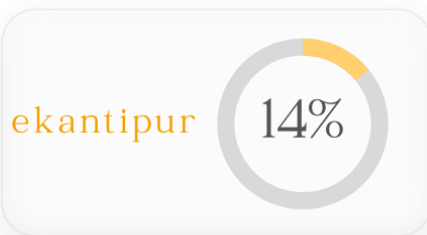
In conclusion, while the Nepali media has made commendable strides in addressing the long-standing taboos and stigma surrounding menstruation, there is a pressing need for continued efforts to ensure holistic, inclusive, and impactful coverage. By embracing diversity, exploring intersectionality, maintaining consistent coverage, and employing innovative storytelling techniques, the media can play a pivotal role in normalizing menstruation, promoting greater awareness, and driving policy changes that prioritize menstrual health and dignity for all individuals in Nepal.

Overview of the News Coverage in 2023

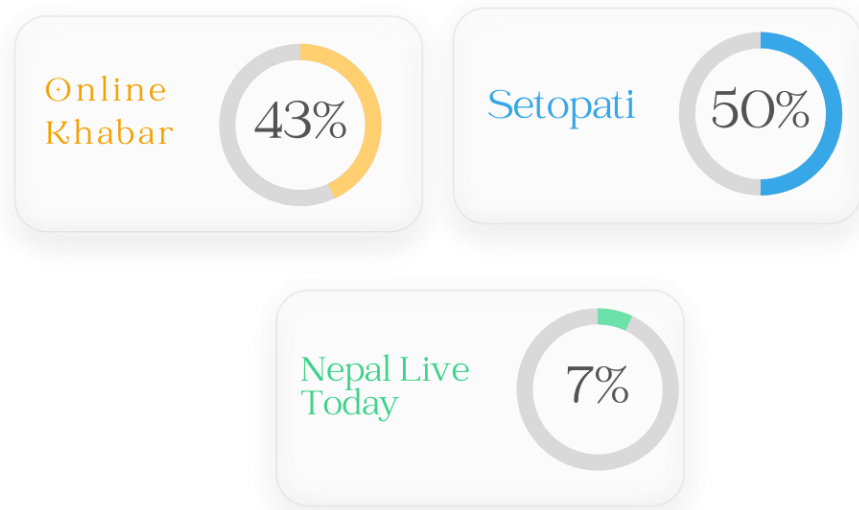
English Newspaper	Number of News Coverage
The Himalayan Times	7
myRepublica	6
The Kathmandu Post	20
The Rising Nepal	12
Total	45



Nepali Newspaper	Number of News Coverage
eKantipur	4
Nagarik	2
Gorkhapatra	6
NayaPatrika	17
Total	29



Online News Portals	Number of News Coverage
Online Khabar	12
Setopati	14
Nepal Live Today	2
Total	28



Thematic Areas

A thematic analysis was conducted from all the articles from the above-mentioned newspapers and online news portals. After a thorough analysis, four major themes have been identified. They are as follows:

- **Menopause:** Stigma, Taboos, Post-Menopause Healthcare, Education, Awareness.
- **Chhaupadi:** Stigma, Untouchability, Social Norms/ Societal Pressure, Snake Bite
- **Dignified Menstruation:** Government Initiative, Doctor's Perspectives, Equality, Celebration, Real-life experience, Education, Awareness.
- **Menstrual Products:** Menstrual Cups, Pads
- **School System:** Sanitation facilities, women friendly toilets

A brief description of all the themes have been given below:

Menopause:

Menopause as a topic has received scant attention in the Nepali media landscape. Only a handful of articles and opinion pieces have attempted to shed light on this natural biological process and the societal attitudes surrounding it. A couple of blogs and opinion writers have aimed to destigmatize menopause and raise awareness about the challenges women face during this transitional phase. These limited pieces have discussed the cultural taboos and misconceptions associated with menopause in Nepal. The authors have emphasized the need to normalize conversations around menopause and provide better support systems for menopausal women. They have stressed that menopause is a natural process and should not be treated as a source of shame or embarrassment.

With only a few articles available, the coverage of menopause in Nepali media has been extremely sparse compared to other health topics. The existing pieces have played a minor role in initiating conversations and raising awareness about this important aspect of women's health and well-being, but there is a significant lack of in-depth and comprehensive coverage on the subject.

Chhaupadi

Despite being outlawed, the persistent media coverage of Chhaupadi exposes the deep-rooted cultural beliefs that continue to endanger women and girls across certain regions of Nepal. Annual reports of tragic deaths within Chhaupadi serve as grim reminders of the challenges in eradicating this harmful tradition. The media has delved into the complexities surrounding Chhaupadi, shedding light on the societal norms, stigma, and untouchability that perpetuate this practice.

Notably, the coverage has evolved to explore the intersections of Chhaupadi with broader issues of gender inequality, lack of education, and poverty. Through investigative journalism and human-centric storytelling, the media has amplified the voices of survivors, activists, and experts, sparking crucial conversations and inspiring collective action. This coverage has served as a catalyst for grassroots

movements, policy reforms, and community-led initiatives aimed at breaking the cycle of oppression and empowering women.

Dignified menstruation

In Nepal, where menstrual stigma and untouchability practices persist in many communities, the pursuit of dignified menstruation remains a distant reality. To disseminate the idea of menstrual dignity to a wider audience, the media has utilized articles, blogs, and opinion pieces.

The media in Nepal has started publishing articles on dignified menstruation, addressing challenges like lack of sanitation facilities, stigma, and economic barriers. While commendable, these initial efforts need to be bolstered with increased, consistent coverage across platforms. By amplifying diverse voices, sharing stories, and providing accurate information, the media can play a key role in dismantling stigma, empowering women and girls, and fostering an environment where menstruation is celebrated as natural and dignified.

Menstrual Products

The media in Nepal has broadened its coverage of menstrual products, educating menstruators about sustainable choices like menstrual cups and reusable sanitary pads through insightful articles and features. Through powerful visuals and in-depth reporting, the media galvanized public discourse, challenging the notion of menstruation as a luxury. This widespread coverage sparked crucial conversations around menstrual equity and policy reforms.

School System

The absenteeism of young girls from schools during menstruation in Nepal is a complex issue rooted in social, cultural, and traditional barriers that extend beyond the lack of WASH facilities. The media has highlighted the psychological burdens faced by menstruators, such as the fear of staining clothes and facing humiliation, leading to withdrawal from classrooms and workplaces. Additionally, the pervasive silence surrounding menstruation has perpetuated stigma and misinformation across generations. Through powerful storytelling, the media has amplified voices challenging these barriers, advocating for menstrual education, accessible products, and open dialogue to break the cycle of stigma and ensure girls' full participation in education and workplaces.

What new Nepali Media has included in 2023 compared to past?

In 2023, the Nepali media landscape has taken strides to broaden its coverage on issues related to menstruation and women's health. While still limited, new topics such as menopause, post-menopause, menstruation in the workplace, and menstruation during emergencies have found their way into articles and discussions. Notably, the online portal Setopati launched the "Periods Talks (महिनावारीका कुरा)" program, featuring interviews with transmen, celebrities, and emphasizing the importance of men's involvement in raising awareness and challenging the stigma and taboos surrounding menstruation.

Additionally, the media has ventured into exploring PCOD/PCOS, digital innovations and technology related to menstrual health, articles on dysmenorrhea, and depicting menstrual-related issues through art forms. This diversification of content not only educates and informs but also provides platforms for

open dialogue and creative expression, paving the way for a more inclusive and empowering discourse on women's health and menstrual experiences in Nepal.

What Nepali Media is still missing?

- **Gaps in policies and plans related to menstruation**
There are several policies and plans that are in place. However, analysis and gaps are never analyzed. Analysis of gaps in policies, plans and programs will not only create a buzz among policymakers, it will help the general people understand that policy gaps exist and that there needs to be a certain level of intervention to acknowledge it.
- **Policy advocacy to authorities from all three levels of the government**
Media has the ability to advocate for several issues through their write-ups and networking. In this regard, the Nepali media can work in advocating for policies and plans relevant to menstruation.
- **Coverage on PMS/PMDD (Premenstrual Syndrome and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder)**
There are sensitive areas like Premenstrual syndrome and Premenstrual dysphoric disorder which need to be highlighted and the media needs to provide space for the same. It has been estimated that 80% of the menstruators have one or another form of PMS or PMDD. Therefore, this is also an important area that needs to be covered.
- **Inclusivity and representation of diverse experiences:** While the media has started covering some new topics like menopause and menstruation in the workplace, the coverage still seems to lack representation of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions (SOGIESC) and person with disability. The experiences and perspectives of transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming individuals, people with disability in relation to menstruation appear to be largely overlooked.
- **In-depth and comprehensive coverage:** Despite an increase in the number of articles, the coverage of menopause in particular remains "extremely sparse compared to other health topics" and lacks in-depth and comprehensive reporting on the subject.
- **Intersectionality:** Although the coverage has started exploring the intersections of issues like Chhaupadi with broader topics like gender inequality, poverty, and lack of education, there seems to be scope for further exploration of how menstruation intersects with other social and economic factors.
- **Diverse storytelling formats:** While diverse formats like feature stories, opinion pieces, and multimedia content are being employed, there could be further exploration of innovative storytelling techniques and platforms to engage audiences in a more immersive and impactful way.

In summary, the Nepali media still has room for improvement in terms of inclusivity, in-depth and nuanced reporting, exploring intersectionality, maintaining consistent coverage, and employing diverse storytelling formats to comprehensively address the multifaceted issues surrounding menstruation.

Recommendations

The following are few recommendations to the Nepali media fraternity from MHMPA Nepal:

1. Increase coverage and prioritize in-depth, comprehensive reporting on menopause and related topics like post-menopausal healthcare.
2. Ensure inclusive representation of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions (SOGIESC), person with disabilities in menstruation-related coverage.
3. Further explore the intersectionality of menstruation with other social and economic factors, such as gender inequality, poverty, education, and disability.
4. Maintain consistent and sustained media coverage on menstruation to drive substantial change and challenge deep-rooted attitudes and practices.
5. Employ diverse and innovative storytelling formats, such as multimedia content, immersive storytelling, and interactive digital experiences, to engage audiences more effectively.
6. Analyze gaps in existing policies, plans, and programs related to menstrual health and hygiene, and advocate for necessary changes.
7. Provide more coverage to national initiatives by individuals and organizations working towards menstrual health and hygiene awareness.
8. Advocate for policy changes and initiatives related to menstrual health and hygiene at all levels of government through media coverage.
9. Increase coverage on topics like Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) to raise awareness and understanding.
10. Collaborate with menstrual health experts, activists, and organizations to ensure accurate and well-informed reporting.
11. Foster open and nuanced conversations through media platforms to normalize discussions around menstruation and promote greater empathy and understanding.

Technical Assistance to National Planning Commission

Through continuous policy advocacy efforts of MHMPA since last several years, on 20th December 2022, the National Planning Commission (NPC) formed an Inter-ministerial Advisory Group (IAG) for Dignified Menstruation to mainstream sectoral policy, plan and program around dignified menstruation. The NPC accepted TA support from MHMPA with support provided by Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha, who is the founder and National Convener of the MHMPA. The establishment of an inter-ministerial advisory group aimed to address the menstruation issues with multi sectoral and comprehensive approach. It provides an integrated platform that would enhance efficiency and efficacy in combating menstruation related issues in Nepal. This advisory group works on intersectoral policies, planning, implementation, monitoring (WASH, education, health, gender and equality, human rights) and to establish menstruation as a dignity for menstruators.

The board has set three key objectives: developing a comprehensive National Policy on Dignified Menstruation, formulating Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) indicators for the 16th Five-Year Plan, and establishing an agreed definition of "Dignified Menstruation". Significant progress has already been made, with MHM indicators successfully included in the 16th Five-Year Plan. These indicators focus on two crucial aspects: 1) the availability of necessary menstrual hygiene products and clean toilet facilities in schools, and 2) the rate of absence from school or workplace due to menstruation in the past 12 months. Concurrently, work is underway on a policy brief, and a draft of national MHM guidelines has been prepared, though not yet formally approved. Moving forward, the Advisory Board aims to review these existing guidelines and explore the possibility of elevating them into a comprehensive national MHM policy, furthering the goal of dignified menstruation for all.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE



Issues

- Stigma
- Insecurity
- Exclusion
- Neglected
- Lack of awareness
- Misinformation
- Gap in policy
- Poor menstrual hygiene



Achievements

- Policies
- Standard Guideline
- Legal Framework
- Education and curriculum materials
- Teacher Training Materials
- Menopause toolkit
- Research in all seven provinces



Time for Intervention

- Coordinated approach
- Evidence based practices
- Inclusive intervention
- Age-specific programs
- Pad making training
- Menstrual friendly toilets
- Community health programs
- Focus on menopause

Consultation Workshop on “Menstruation Issues from LGBTQIA+ Community, Persons with Disabilities, and Youth”

On 18th April 2024, MHMPA Secretariat Office, BBC Nepal organized a consultation workshop on “Menstruation Issues from LGBTQIA+ Community, Persons with Disabilities, and Youth” with support of GIZ Nepal and Plan International Nepal.

The participants include organization working for Women’s Rights, Women with Disability, organizations working for the rights of LGBTQIA+ community, youth and activist. The consultation used a participatory approach to encourage the effective participation of participants. The consultation was conducted using appropriate adult learning tools and methodologies, i.e. icebreakers, group works, cases, ppt, pictures. Etc.

The overall objective is to comprehensively understand and address the menstrual needs, challenges, and support gaps for the LGBTQIA+ community, persons with disabilities, and youth to promote their menstrual dignity and well-being.

Specific Objectives

- Identify the specific challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community, persons with disabilities, and youths regarding menstruation.
- Understand their needs and preferences regarding menstrual hygiene products, health and hygiene practices and access to WASH facilities in the schools, public and workplaces.
- Explore the impact of menstruation on their daily lives, education, psychosocial health and wellbeing.
- Gather insights on existing support systems and identify gaps in service provision.

Key presentations:

1. Dev Kumari Parajuli from Nepal Disabled Women Association (NDWA) discussed the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities regarding menstrual health and hygiene management. She emphasized the need for a holistic approach to disability and highlighted the importance of accessibility, inclusivity, and empowerment.
2. Laxmi Ghalan from Mitini Nepal presented on LGBTQIA+ perspectives in menstrual health. The presentation challenged traditional assumptions about gender and menstruation, exploring ethical dilemmas and issues faced by the LGBTQIA+ community in accessing menstrual health resources and facilities.

Group work sessions:

1. LGBTQIA+ Community Identified:
 - Challenges: Self-identity crisis, lack of knowledge, societal stigma, limited access to healthcare.
 - Needs: Gender-friendly toilets, inclusive menstrual products, gender-neutral healthcare services.
 - Impact: Mental stress, health risks, discrimination in daily life and education.

2. Adolescents and Youth Identified:
 - Challenges: Lack of comprehensive education, stigma, limited access to resources.
 - Needs: Age-appropriate education, affordable products, menstrual-friendly infrastructure.
 - Impact: Educational disruption, psychosocial health issues, overall well-being affected.
3. People with Disabilities Identified:
 - Challenges: Lack of accessible facilities, information barriers, societal perceptions.
 - Needs: Disability-friendly toilets, accessible menstrual products, tailored education.
 - Impact: Difficulties in daily life management, educational barriers, psychosocial health challenges.

All groups emphasized the need for comprehensive education, awareness campaigns, inclusive policies, and improved access to menstrual hygiene products and facilities. The workshop highlighted the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by these communities to ensure menstrual dignity and well-being for all.

Outputs & Recommendations:

- Compilation of participant feedback for advocacy.
- Use of video documentation from the workshop to raise awareness during Menstrual Hygiene Day on May 28, 2024.
- Proposed policy reforms for inclusive MHH initiatives, involving stakeholders from various sectors to address the challenges discussed.

Please click [here](#) to read the full document.



Figure: During group work session

Consultation on Policy Brief on Menstrual Health Management in Nepal

On March 18, 2024, a consultation workshop was held with the aim to develop a comprehensive policy brief as an outcome document based on the insightful discussions and valuable contributions from all the participants. The session began with welcoming remarks from Ms. Krishna Kumara Waiba, Chairperson of the Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC). After the welcome remarks, Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha, the National Convener of the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance (MHMPA), delivered a comprehensive thematic presentation titled "**Analysis of existing policy and strategy related to MHH**".

The presentation provided an in-depth analysis of the current state of MHH in Nepal, covering various aspects in a structured manner. Firstly, Mr. Shrestha defined key terms related to MHH, such as menstruation, menstrual health, and dignified menstruation, setting the foundation for the subsequent discussions. Then, he highlighted the various religious, cultural, and social restrictions and taboos associated with menstruation in Nepal, including restrictions on visiting temples, participating in religious activities, mobility, touching family members, water sources, plants, and food items, as well as practices like Chhaupadi (isolation during menstruation) and restrictions on participation in social events and sexual relations.

Next, the presentation focused on the lack of access to appropriate MHH materials and facilities in Nepal, such as female-friendly toilets, disposal facilities, informed choices, affordability, and availability of quality menstrual products, emphasizing the absence of health-friendly and environmentally friendly menstrual product options. Furthermore, it comprehensively covered the far-reaching impacts of poor MHH management, including health impacts (infections, cancer, emotional stress), educational impacts (absenteeism and presentism), social impacts (lack of dignity and support), economic impacts (loss of economic opportunities), environmental hazards (waste management issues), gender-based violence (isolation, abuse, untouchability), human rights violations (violations of various constitutional rights), and impacts on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Moving on, the presentation outlined various existing policies and strategies in Nepal that address MHH to varying degrees, such as the GESI strategy, Nepal Health Sector Strategic Plan, School Education Sector Plan, School WASH Procedures, Nepal WASH Policy, Nepal Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene Sector Development Plan, Total Sanitation Guidelines, and MICS/UNICEF Nepal. Additionally, Mr. Shrestha presented the indicators related to MHH from the JMP, WASH facilities, supporting environment, and MH impacts. Finally, the presentation outlined the composition, structure, and key functions of an Inter-Ministerial Advisory Board for Dignified Menstruation, which would include representatives from various ministries, commissions, development partners, and experts.

Following the comprehensive presentation, group discussions were done on topics such as menstrual materials, MHH initiatives (governmental/non-governmental), and sectoral policy recommendations. The overall group discussion was facilitated by Dr. Laxmi Tamang, Vice-Chairperson of the Beyond Beijing Committee. However, each group had its own facilitator to moderate the discussions. The following information emerged from these interactive sessions:

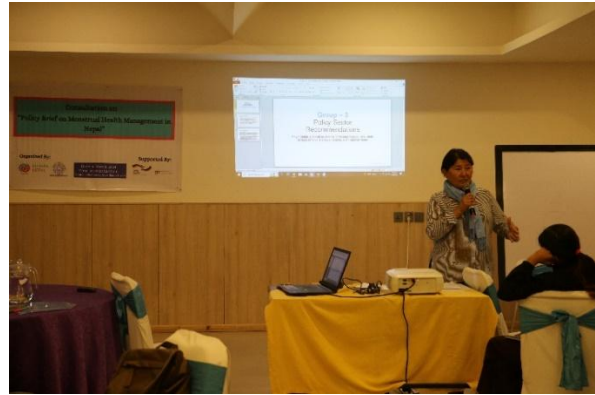
- Significant gaps and challenges limit the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality of menstrual materials, facilities, and education. Access to quality menstrual products is constrained by high costs and limited options, especially in remote areas where only basic items like pads or cloth are available. Government-distributed pads intended to address these needs often face

quality issues, such as low absorption and improper storage, leading to frequent rejection due to discomfort or ineffectiveness. Inadequate supplies, such as soap, water, and dustbins, are also common in schools and public places, and poor placement often compromises privacy. Sanitary facilities themselves frequently lack privacy and separate spaces for men and women, with limited disposal options—especially in rural areas—further compounding accessibility issues. Education on menstruation presents additional challenges, as teachers may avoid discussing it or provide inaccurate information, while current programs fall short of addressing biases, stigmas, or promoting positive behavioral change. Moreover, men are minimally involved in menstrual health education, and knowledge about the correct use of reusable pads is limited. Persistent socio-cultural stigma further intensifies these challenges, underscoring the need for comprehensive policy solutions to address these interconnected issues.

- In Nepal, a range of initiatives by the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders address menstrual health and hygiene management (MHM) across key areas. Efforts to enhance awareness include MHH training sessions by the National Health Training Center (NHTC) in schools and healthcare facilities, one-day orientations by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), inclusion of menstruation education in the school curriculum from Grade 6, and Menstrual Hygiene Day campaigns. To improve access to quality menstrual products, the government has initiated free pad distribution, trained communities in reusable pad-making, and assigned WASH/MHH focal persons to facilitate product accessibility, with support from School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). NGOs have also helped renovate schools to provide MHH-friendly toilets and washrooms, establish MHH corners, and assist with menstrual pain management and waste disposal. Supportive environments have been fostered through the appointment of WASH/MHH focal persons and the formation of child and Kishori clubs. On a policy level, WASH procedures govern MHH initiatives, pad procurement guidelines have been developed, and efforts to criminalize harmful practices like Chhaupadi have been enacted. Despite progress, challenges persist, including inadequate follow-up on training impact, lack of localized implementation guidelines, poor maintenance of facilities, non-functional incinerators, and limited inter-ministerial coordination and budget allocation. These initiatives and challenges underline the need for comprehensive policies to ensure sustainable improvements in MHM in Nepal.
- To enhance menstrual health and hygiene management (MHM) in Nepal, a multi-faceted approach is essential, addressing policy, capacity building, budgeting, infrastructure, awareness, and monitoring. First, ensuring the quality of menstrual products should be a priority, with proactive measures like setting stringent standards, conducting regular monitoring of manufacturers, and enforcing quality control to protect users' health. In addition, menstrual waste management must be improved by updating healthcare waste guidelines to include safe disposal practices for menstrual products, reducing environmental pollution and health risks. Integrating menstrual health education into public and private educational curricula is essential to dispel stigmas and instill healthy practices. This education should be comprehensive, age-appropriate, and mandatory, promoting accurate information on menstruation from an early age. Additionally, dedicated budget allocations are vital at all government levels to fund quality product provision, waste management, education, training, and policy monitoring. Offering diverse menstrual product options to suit individual preferences should also be a budgeted priority. Capacity-building initiatives should be conducted at federal, provincial, and local levels. At the federal level, policies, standards, and guidelines should be reviewed and updated with a "menstruation-friendly" perspective, and evidence-based research should guide future MHM decisions. Provincial governments should develop menstruation-related policies and monitoring mechanisms that align with national standards, while local governments should create specific indicators to assess MHM initiatives' progress and efficacy. These targeted recommendations address the quality, accessibility, education, and sustainable management of menstrual health,

establishing a solid foundation for policy improvements that prioritize well-being and dignity for all.

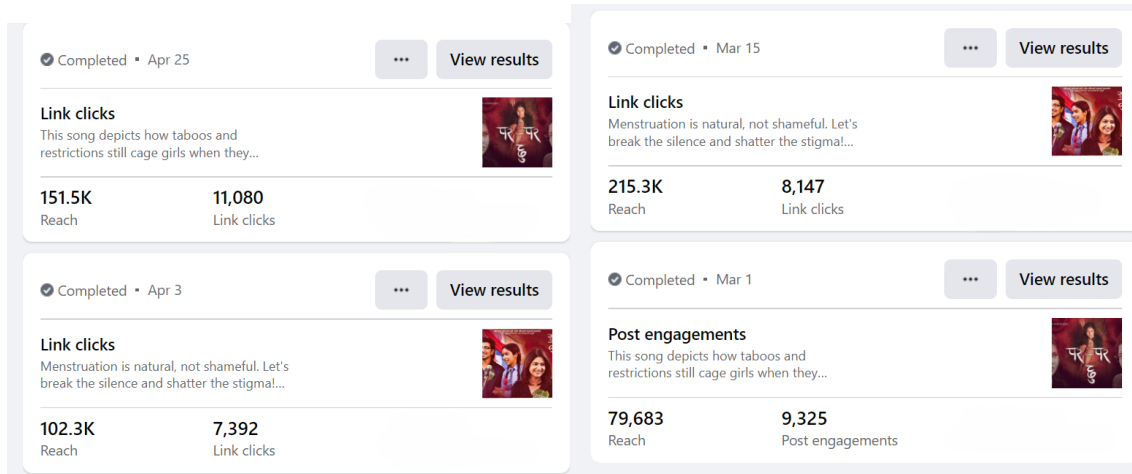
The event underscored the need for a multi-faceted approach involving policy reforms, infrastructure development, awareness generation, and robust monitoring mechanisms to promote menstrual health and hygiene in Nepal. The consultation resulted in a comprehensive policy brief as an outcome document. Please click [here](#) to read.



Some glimpses of the event

Boosting Songs

The songs "Para Para Chhu" and "Khulera Kura Garau" were actively promoted on social media platforms through two rounds of targeted boosting. As a result, both songs garnered over 90,000 views and reached a wide audience across Nepal, raising awareness about menstrual health and hygiene. Both song conveyed the important message that by openly discussing the problem, we can collectively find solutions and work towards eliminating harmful practices. It has served as a powerful advocacy tool, drawing attention to the need for change and sparking conversations about menstruation, gender equality, and human rights.



*Link for Para Para Chhu: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7JTQJxFnnc>

*Link for Khulera Kura Garau: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bR6B8RHpnMw>

Illustrative Post

To highlight the depth of menstruation-related issues and raise awareness about Menstrual Hygiene Day, five illustrative posts were shared across various social media platforms. These posts aimed to educate and engage the audience on important aspects of menstrual health. The campaign successfully reached over 800 people, spreading the message about menstrual hygiene and its significance.



Leveraging Social Media through Reel

Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management (MHM) is essential for women's health and well-being, yet remains surrounded by stigma and misinformation. Social media, particularly short-form content like reels, is a powerful tool for addressing these issues and promoting sustainable practices. With this in mind, MHM Advocacy Officer developed a plan to harness the influence of Goodwill Ambassador Ms. Rekha Joshi, creating an impactful awareness reel.

First reel educates viewers on menstrual health and hygiene and highlights the benefits of reusable sanitary pads as an eco-friendly alternative to disposables. The video has already garnered over 4,000+ engagements and 34+ shares.

To watch the reel please click [here](#)

Second reel was created for International Dignified Menstruation Day, with theme "Upholding Dignified Menstruation: Fundamental to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights". The reel resonated deeply with audiences, garnering over 1.1K+ views, 92+ comments, and 20+ shares on facebook. It sparked meaningful conversations about menstrual health, dignity, and rights, significantly advancing awareness and advocacy efforts.

To watch the reel please click [here](#).

Effectiveness of Social Media Advocacy Campaign on Menstrual Health and Hygiene led by Keki Adhikari

The research study titled "Effectiveness of Social Media Advocacy Campaign on Menstrual Health and Hygiene led by Keki Adhikari" assessed the impact of a digital advocacy campaign aimed at raising awareness and promoting positive behavioral changes regarding menstrual health in Nepal. Led by renowned actor Keki Adhikari, the campaign utilized social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter—to disseminate educational content on menstrual hygiene.

Key Findings:

1. Social Media Reach:

- The campaign had a significant reach, with Facebook posts reaching over 2 million people, making it the most effective platform. Instagram and Twitter had smaller yet notable impacts.
- The most popular content included videos addressing menstrual stigma and hygiene practices. The Facebook video "Nepal's Menstrual Movement: Part 1" reached 452,845 people.

2. Quantitative Insights:

- The study included 222 participants, consisting of 184 students and 38 teachers from eight public schools in the Sudurpaschim Province.
- Social media usage was prevalent among participants, with Facebook being the most commonly used platform. Most students accessed social media via family members' smartphones.
- About 198 respondents had prior knowledge of menstruation, mainly acquired through school education.

3. Qualitative Insights:

- Interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with teachers and students highlighted several themes
- Social media was effective in spreading information and breaking down menstrual taboos.
- Teachers noted challenges in addressing menstrual stigma due to entrenched cultural beliefs.
- Educational initiatives, like free sanitary pad distribution and inclusion of menstruation topics in the curriculum, had positive impacts.
- Family dynamics played a role, with female students more likely to discuss menstruation with mothers than male family members.

4. Barriers and Cultural Issues:

- The research found persistent cultural taboos, such as Chhaupadi (menstrual seclusion), which continued to affect students' experiences.
- There was hesitation among participants, especially boys, to discuss menstruation openly, indicating ongoing stigma.

5. Role of Celebrity Influence:

- Keki Adhikari's involvement as a celebrity helped draw attention to the issue, with her influence perceived as empowering for young women.
- Her offline presence was less impactful, as many students did not recognize her advocacy efforts, reflecting limitations in campaign dissemination.

Important Aspects:

- The mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative research) provided comprehensive insights into the campaign's effectiveness.
- The research emphasized the need for improved dissemination strategies, suggesting using short videos and local influencers for broader outreach.
- Social media's role in advocacy was reinforced as crucial for fostering dialogue and encouraging positive behavioral changes.

In conclusion, the campaign succeeded in raising awareness about menstrual health, but deeper cultural shifts require sustained efforts and targeted interventions.

MHH Singer Alliance First Workshop: 'Foundation Building and Orientation'

Theme: Understanding Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) and Establishing Baseline

First workshop objectives:

- Provide comprehensive orientation on menstrual health and hygiene.
- Identify effective methods and techniques for strategic content creation.
- Assess the current contributions and outline plans for the MHH Singer Alliance to enhance impact.
- Facilitate experience sharing and collaboration among alliance members.
- Review current social media engagement strategies to increase outreach and influence.

Outputs:

- Enhanced understanding of MHH among the singer alliance members
- Established baseline of social media presence
- Initial action plans for awareness campaigns

Session 1: Orientation on Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH)

Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha provided an insightful orientation that shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by menstruators in our society. His presentation revealed the deep-rooted social, cultural, religious, and systemic issues that continue to impact menstrual health and dignity.

Key points of the presentation:

a) Menstrual Health Challenges: A Comprehensive Analysis

The landscape of menstrual health is fraught with complex and deeply entrenched challenges that extend far beyond simple biological processes. Menstruators face a multitude of restrictions that permeate nearly every aspect of their daily lives, creating a systematic framework of discrimination and marginalization that impacts their fundamental human rights and social participation.

b) Religious and Cultural Constraints

Religious and cultural norms impose severe restrictions on menstruators, creating an environment of exclusion and stigmatization. These constraints manifest in multiple dimensions, systematically limiting women's participation in social and spiritual life. Menstruators are routinely excluded from religious activities, including prayers, worship, rituals, and festivals. They are prohibited from entering sacred spaces like temples and are forbidden from approaching holy trees. The cultural restrictions extend beyond religious spaces, imposing mobility limitations within homes, schools, and public spaces.

The social isolation during menstruation is particularly profound. Menstruators face extensive barriers that restrict their engagement with natural elements, including a bizarre prohibition against looking at celestial bodies. These restrictions are not merely symbolic but have tangible impacts on personal freedom, dignity, and social integration.

c) Social and Personal Challenges

The challenges faced by menstruators transcend religious and cultural domains, creating a comprehensive system of social exclusion. Women are frequently barred from participating in marriages, social events, and community gatherings. Extreme restrictions include prohibitions on touching male family members, accessing water sources, and interacting with various natural elements.

Personal hardships are equally severe. Many women are forced to sleep on floors or outside their home spaces, with the Chhaupadi practice being a stark example of such dehumanizing treatment. Household activities become restricted, with menstruators prohibited from cooking and facing dietary limitations that prevent them from consuming fruits, milk, and dairy products. These restrictions directly impact education and work participation, creating cycles of marginalization and economic disadvantage.

d) Evidence and Systemic Impact

The UNICEF/CBS MICS 2019 report provides stark evidence of the systemic challenges in menstrual health management. The report highlights significant gaps, including limited access to water and hygiene facilities, insufficient menstrual materials and education, and inadequate awareness program quality.

The comprehensive impact of these challenges spans multiple domains. Health consequences include elevated infection risks, reproductive health challenges, and significant psychological stress from persistent stigmatization. The broader societal implications are equally alarming, encompassing educational disruption, economic challenges, environmental concerns, and increased gender-based vulnerabilities.

Of particular concern are the human rights violations inherent in these practices. Menstruators experience infringements on fundamental rights, including dignity, freedom, equality, health, education, and housing. These violations directly contradict principles of human rights and social justice.

e) Sustainable Development and Strategic Challenges

The menstrual health challenges directly impede progress across multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty reduction, health and well-being, education, gender equality, and economic growth. Persistent challenges include deep-rooted taboos, policy limitations, harmful traditional practices, and infrastructural deficiencies.

f) Forward-Looking Recommendations

Addressing these complex challenges requires a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach. Recommended strategic actions include:

- Developing comprehensive menstrual health policies
- Strengthening local government initiatives
- Scaling up awareness and training programs
- Promoting affordable and eco-friendly menstrual products
- Enhancing monitoring mechanisms
- Improving inter-ministerial coordination
- Integrating Menstrual Health Management into workplace policies

Conclusion

Ultimately, addressing menstrual health challenges demands a holistic approach that challenges existing social norms, strengthens policy frameworks, and fundamentally promotes dignity and inclusivity. It requires sustained effort across social, cultural, economic, and policy domains to dismantle the systemic barriers that perpetuate discrimination and marginalization.

The path forward lies in recognizing menstruation not as a source of shame or limitation, but as a natural biological process deserving of respect, understanding, and full social support.

Session 2: Sharing Experiences, Current Contributions, and Future Action Plans

a) The Landscape of Menstrual Stigma and Transformation

The journey of addressing menstrual health challenges is deeply rooted in personal experiences, cultural complexities, and strategic interventions. Menstruation, a natural biological process, continues to be shrouded in misconceptions, taboos, and harmful practices that significantly impact women's dignity, health, and social participation.

b) Understanding Existing Stigmas and Cultural Barriers

Menstruation-related taboos permeate multiple aspects of social life, creating systematic barriers for women. Communities continue to perpetuate beliefs that restrict women's participation in religious and social activities. Women are often discouraged from visiting temples, flying in planes, or participating in festivals like Tihar and Dashain during menstruation. These practices transform a natural, biological process into a perceived misfortune, undermining women's fundamental rights and social dignity.

c) The Brutal Reality of Chhaupadi Practices

One of the most devastating manifestations of menstrual stigma is the Chhaupadi practice. Women are subjected to extreme isolation, forced to live in makeshift huts or outside their homes during menstruation. These practices expose women to severe physical and psychological risks, including potential animal attacks and sexual violence. Cultural and religious beliefs act as formidable barriers to challenging and eliminating these harmful traditions.

d) Personal Journeys of Transformation

i) Singer's Contribution to Social Change

The personal narrative of transformation begins with recognizing menstruation as a natural process. For many activists, including singers, the journey started with using their platforms to challenge existing narratives. By incorporating menstrual health issues into their artistic expressions, they have begun to shift societal perceptions.

Starting as early as 2011, some artists have strategically used their music and public platforms to highlight issues like Chhaupadi. Collaborations with NGOs and INGOs have contributed to gradual but significant attitudinal changes, demonstrating the power of creative advocacy.

ii) Challenges in Awareness and Education

The lack of comprehensive menstrual health education remains a critical issue. Many girls and women suffer from inadequate knowledge about their own bodies, leading to potential health complications. Initial reluctance to discuss menstruation has slowly transformed through persistent awareness campaigns, indicating a growing openness to dialogue.

e) Strategic Approach to Social Change

i) Leveraging Influence and Media

Artists and activists with substantial social media followings (ranging from 200,000 to 400,000 followers) recognize their potential to drive societal transformation. By using impactful communication strategies across platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and through traditional media, they aim to amplify their message.

ii) Innovative Awareness Strategies

The approach to challenging menstrual stigma involves multi-pronged strategies:

- Collaborating with local community leaders
- Organizing creative awareness programs combining music, dance, and theater
- Producing engaging educational content
- Targeting high-need regions like Achham and Surkhet
- Creating songs, videos, and educational materials that address menstrual myths

f) Future Action Plans and Vision

The collective vision extends beyond immediate awareness, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By 2030, the goal is to:

- Normalize conversations around menstruation
- Eliminate harmful practices like Chhaupadi
- Ensure comprehensive menstrual health education
- Promote women's dignity and rights

g) Observations and Progress

While cultural beliefs are gradually shifting, significant challenges persist. Menstruation-related restrictions continue to be prevalent in many communities. However, the persistent efforts of artists, activists, and community leaders provide hope for substantial social transformation.

Conclusion

The journey towards menstrual health awareness is a complex, multilayered process requiring sustained, creative, and compassionate interventions. By combining personal narratives, artistic expression, community engagement, and strategic advocacy, meaningful change becomes possible. The path forward demands collective effort, empathy, and an unwavering commitment to challenging deeply entrenched social norms that compromise women's dignity and well-being.



During MHH Singer Alliance Workshop

Policy Dialogue on Human Rights Approach to Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH)

Policy Dialogue Overview

The Policy Dialogue on Human Rights Approach to Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) aimed to explore MHH from a human rights perspective, emphasizing bodily autonomy, access to health services, and anti-discrimination efforts. The event focused on aligning MHH policies to uphold the dignity and well-being of menstruators while ensuring their rights are respected.

The dialogue brought together a diverse group of participants, including representatives from government, NGOs, civil society organizations, MHH activists and advocates, healthcare professionals, education sector representatives, menstruators, and community advocates.

Policy Dialogue Summary

Presentations by Key Speakers

Ms. Roshani Devi Karki, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health and Population, and Ms. Shristi Kafle, Co-creator of Period Kaa Kura, delivered insightful presentations. The key points of the presentation included:

Dignified Menstruation and Health

- Menstrual health and hygiene management requires an enabling environment that supports health and human rights.
- Menstruation is a natural biological process that should be addressed without discrimination, violence, or unequal treatment.
- Ensuring dignified menstruation is a collective societal responsibility.

Menstruation and Gender

- Menstrual health is no longer a concern limited to women but also includes gender and sexual minorities.

Menstrual Health and Hygiene

- Menstrual health and hygiene is directly linked to access to clean water and healthy practices.
- Awareness, preventive measures, and treatment should be integral to health services.

Menstrual Hygiene Data in Nepal

- While 98% of households have basic drinking water, access to safe water and sanitation remains uneven.
- Only 60% of women aged 15-49 have access to appropriate menstrual products.

Challenges Identified

- Persistent cultural taboos and harmful practices like "Chhaupadi."
- Inadequate policy frameworks, legal provisions, and awareness campaigns.
- Lack of privacy, dignity, and inclusivity in menstrual practices.
- Insufficient inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals and those with disabilities in policies and practices.
- Structural barriers such as inaccessible pad vending machines and limited educational resources.

Panelist Contributions

- **Ms. Smarika Pokhrel:** Highlighted challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, including lack of access to information, facilities, and awareness.
- **Ms. Roshani Devi Karki:** Discussed government policies aimed at promoting menstrual health and inclusion but acknowledged gaps in implementation.
- **Ms. Shristi Kafle:** Advocated for evidence-based, inclusive policies addressing diverse experiences, including those of marginalized communities and gender and sexual minorities individuals.

Recommendations and Path Forward

Policy and Implementation

- Develop unified, comprehensive policies addressing menstruation and gender equality.
- Enhance implementation and monitoring mechanisms for existing frameworks.
- Engage society in social transformation to complement policy measures.

Proposed Solutions

- Normalize menstruation through open discussions and awareness campaigns.
- Utilize inclusive communication strategies, leveraging digital and local platforms to reach diverse communities.
- Engage religious and community leaders to challenge harmful practices like "Chhaupadi."
- Improve accessibility of resources for marginalized groups, including individuals with disabilities and gender and sexual minorities individuals.

Youth and Community Engagement

- Encourage youth to advocate for underprivileged groups and take an active role in normalizing menstruation.
- Utilize digital platforms and community health mobilizers to disseminate information and challenge taboos.

Specific Recommendations

- Provide menstrual leave as an optional policy to respect individual needs and promote dignity.
- Highlight positive cultural practices related to menstruation to foster a balanced discourse.

Conclusion

The Policy Dialogue on Human Rights Approach to MHH underscored the importance of addressing menstruation as a personal and societal issue. By emphasizing dignity, inclusivity, and human rights, the dialogue set a foundation for collaborative action. Participants called for unified policies, enhanced awareness, and societal transformation to normalize menstruation and ensure dignified menstrual health for all. The discussions concluded with a shared commitment to advancing MHH as a priority within the human rights framework.



Glimpses of the Event

MHMPA Brochure

For the first time, Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance (MHMPA) has developed its own brochure with support from Plan International Nepal. It is designed to raise awareness and foster a deeper understanding of MHMPA's work among stakeholders and the general public. The brochure serves as a key communication tool, effectively highlighting the organization's objectives, vision, mission, and goals. By presenting this information in a concise and visually engaging format, it aims to inspire collaboration and support for advancing menstrual health and hygiene initiatives.

Digital version of the brochure can be explore [here](#).



COLLABORATIONS



MHMPA Members Meeting

Menopause Storytelling Workshop

Panel Discussion- Understanding and Promoting MHH

National Consultative Workshop for MHH

Pad Donation for Menstruators Affected by Flood and Landslide

COLLABORATIONS

MHMPA Members' Meeting 2024

There was a total of five MHMPA Members' Meeting in the year 2024. Every meeting had one particular agenda where members discussed emerging issues and discussed possible solutions. The agenda for last year's meetings are as follows:

28th Feb 2024, Agenda: Updates of MHMPA's accomplishment and other happenings, sharing new initiatives/innovations by member organizations, sharing engagement plan of Rekha Joshi- Goodwill Ambassador, sharing MHMPA annual plan for 2024, Preliminary planning for upcoming MH day on 28th May 2024.

A total of 26 participants participated in the meeting including Ms Rekha Joshi, MHM Goodwill Ambassador as a special guest, with 21 females and 5 males.

Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha, the National Convener of MHMPA welcomed everyone and introduced Prapti Gautam who recently joined the MHMPA's secretariat office as Advocacy Officer. He also introduced Dr. Sharmila Shrestha who recently joined BBC as Executive Director; BBC has been hosting the MHMPA's secretariat since 2022.

Key Discussion and Action Points

1. Technical Assistance to National Planning Commission/high level advisory board

- With the TA support of GIZ to National Planning Commission (NPC) through MHMPA, a concept paper of high level coordination mechanism was submitted to National Planning Commission in 2022 and an inter-ministerial advisory board on dignified menstruation was formed with the chairpersonship of NPC in early 2023.
- The TA support was followed by Water Aid Nepal for a period of six months from Dec 2023 to May 2024. The ongoing TA support includes recommending MHH indicators to include in the ongoing sixteenth five-year plan, MICS survey and national policy on dignified menstruation.
- The high level advisory board members are interested to visit remote communities of Karnali to understand at the ground level on menstruation taboos/restriction, endeavors of the development partners and local government in March 2024.

Action- Interested MHMPA members were requested to coordinate with Mr. Guna Raj to join and support the visit.

2. Annual Plan of MHM PA

Annual plan of MHMPA is available for the year 2024.

Action - Members were requested which activities could be supported. Also requested to make an annual plan to support to the MHMPA and its annual plan activities.

3. Annual Report of MHM PA

Prapti is drafting the MHMPA's Annual Report for the year 2023 and this will be uploaded in the MHMPA's website.

Action- all members were requested to share their key interventions/accomplishment in 2023 to include in the Annual Report in a given template by END OF MARCH 2024.

4. Website of MHM PA

Prapti is updating the website of MHM PA (www.mhmpa.org).

Action- MHMPA members were requested to share any research and publication, reports, IEC/BCC materials related with MHH to upload in the website.

5. Engagement plan of Rekha Joshi, MHH Goodwill Ambassador

The draft engagement plan was shared in the meeting. The engagement plan is attached. Most particularly, the below are the urgent ones:

- Two audio-visual songs planned to launch on 28th May 2024; funding for one song assured by SUSWA, the funding for other one is yet pending
- Rekha has accepted for fund raising for MHMPA, for this we need to develop a 1-2-minute video clip about Rekha and this will be posted widely for the fund raising. **Action-For developing the video clip, it is estimated that 1-2 lakh is required. All members were requested whether they could support for this.**
- She has also accepted to initiate an alliance of singers to promote MHH related musical campaign across the country.
- Following contents were suggested for Rekha:
 - Why menstruation is pride, dignity and rights
 - Breaking the silence
 - Informed choices of menstrual materials
 - Safe disposal practices of used menstrual materials

Action- Members were requested to support to one or more engagement plan of Rekha Joshi where relevant.

6. GIZ's support to MHMPA Secretariat

GIZ has confirmed the funding support for the following activities to accomplish by June 2024

- Salary and benefits of Prapti Gautam until June 2024.
- MHH policy brief preparation and its dialogue
- Assessment of effectiveness of social media campaign by former MHH goodwill Ambassador -Keki Adhikari. The outcomes will be helpful for MHMPA for engaging other MHH goodwill Ambassadors including Rekha Joshi.
- Boosting and promoting two audio-visuals songs produced by MHMPA through Prakash Saput
- Assess media coverage on MHH
- Digital archive on MHH
- Partial support to celebrate MH Day on 28th May

The financial support of GIZ to the MHMPA secretariat expires in June 2024, including salary of Prapti Gautam.

Action- Urged to all the members to explore funding for continuation of the service of Prapti from June 2024.

7. MH Day Celebration on 28th May 2028

Guna Raj informed that though no any international theme is available yet for celebrating MH Day in the year 2024, we can promote MHH policy theme in Nepal as lot of happening in policy stuff. Feedback was also received to celebrate in the entire May. Some of the activities suggested in the meeting to celebrate MH day on 28th May 2024 are:

- Policy dialogues/panel discussion
- School experiences- -voices from students
- Competitions/events in provinces, multimedia launches, journalism awards
- Song launches, leverage platforms like stage shows if singer alliances will be formed.
- Caller ringback tones, radio spots, social media highlights
- Bicycle rally from Bhaktapur, Kathmandu and Lalitpur to Patan Durbar Square, to led by Xpose Nepal.

Actions

- ***Other ideas are also welcomed***
- ***Requested to plan for funding to celebrate the event***
- ***MHM Secretariat is in need of interns/volunteers to prepare the MH day and other few studies, members were requested to provide interns/volunteers for six months***

8. Miscellaneous

- Water Aid present its near future initiation on menstrual waste management and took feedback from the members
- Some members informed that they could support initiatives related with disability in MHH
- Green Tara Nepal is interested in forming Sudurpaschim Province Alliance similar to Karnali Alliance on Dignified Menstruation Management (KADMM).

9. Vote of thanx

- Water Aid Nepal sponsored for the high tea and venue rental; thank you to WAN
- BBC supported for all the logistic, coordination and event management, thank you to BBC team

29th April 2024, Agenda: Planning for Menstrual Hygiene Day 2024 celebrations (Together for a #PeriodFriendlyWorld) and Discuss about Menstrual Leave in the workplace.

Opening

Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha, the National Convener of MHMPA, began the meeting with a brief introduction of himself and the agenda, after which the participants introduced themselves.

Key Discussions and Decisions:

Updates on MHH Indicators

Guna Raj Shrestha provided an update on the submission of three MHH indicators to the National Planning Commission (NPC) to include in the ongoing 16th five-year plan:

- Initially, the newly formed NPC members, due to a change in government, revisited the proposed indicators and agreed to include two indicators related with school MHH facilities and one indicators related with social issues at the community level. All these indicators can be measured through MICS survey.
- However, in the final meeting, they agreed to include two indicators – one school-level and one community-level indicator, as suggested by Guna Raj Shrestha.

He also mentioned an upcoming workshop planned for the first or second week of May, where:

- The NPC team and representatives from five different ministries will be invited.
- The main agenda is to discuss and assign responsibilities for each indicator among the relevant organizations.

Tentative Activities and Budget Discussion for Menstrual Hygiene Day 2024

- **Press Conference:** It was suggested to organize a press conference one week before Menstrual Hygiene Day to increase media sensitization about the importance of menstrual health and

hygiene. Collaboration with Sancharika Samuha was proposed for this event. YUWA can take the lead in coordinating with Sancharika Samuha for the press conference.

- **Venue:** A venue with more space, like a banquet or the courtyard of Patan Museum, was suggested to accommodate around 200 participants. Further exploration will be done by MHMPA.
- **Event Opening:** Guna Raj Shrestha suggested starting the event with a dance performance by school students, as it would be more entertaining and create an energetic atmosphere. However, participants also suggested a flash mob based on the Menstrual Hygiene Day theme.
- **Panel Discussion:** It was suggested to merge the policy dialogue and panel discussion to avoid a lengthy event. Proposed themes includes:
 - Policy gaps on MHH
 - Issues of the LGBTQIA+ community and people with disabilities

Potential panelists suggested: Sumana Shrestha (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology), Menuka Dhungana (Achham correspondent for Kantipur Publications), and other activists.

- **Common Activities:** KIRDARC suggested that all MHH PA member organizations could conduct common activities, such as printing common t-shirts for Menstrual Hygiene Day.
- **Singer Alliance Launch and Performance:** A singer alliance will be launched, including a singing performance by the MHH Goodwill Ambassador.
- **Digital Profile Video Launch:** A 60-second digital profile video of the MHH Goodwill Ambassador, Rekha Joshi, appealing for fundraising in the MHH sector, will be launched with the help of the Finnish Embassy.
- **Video Bites Release:** Video bites from the consultation workshop on menstruation issues with the LGBTQIA+, disability, and youth segments will be released during the event.
- **Declaring KMC as MHH Smart City:** Guna Raj Shrestha updated on plans to declare Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) as an MHH Smart City by involving Vice-Mayor of KMC, Sunita Dangol. However, participants suggested more ground work needs to be done before declaring KMC as an MHH Smart City, proposing to do it next year instead.
- **Felicitation:** KIRDARC suggested felicitating individuals or organizations who have done exemplary work in the MHH sector.

Other Activities

- **Art, Poem, and Storytelling Competition:** Days for Girls committed to organizing an art, poem, and storytelling competition.
- **Menstrual Bracelet Stall:** Days for Girls committed to creating a stall where people can choose how many white and red beads to include in their menstrual bracelet based on their period cycle.
- **Exhibition:** An exhibition of menstrual products, research posters, publications, IEC/BCC materials was proposed as a side event.
- **Cycle Rally:** Mr. Gyan Ratna Maharjan (Padman of Nepal) requested funding to conduct a cycle rally covering all three Durbar Squares in the Kathmandu Valley.

- **Inclusive Participation:** It was suggested to invite participants from Sudurpaschim and Karnali provinces to showcase MHH practices from different regions of Nepal.
- **Storytelling:** Continuous showcasing of videos capturing stories from different people and regions of Nepal on an LED screen. These stories would focus not only on problems but also on overcoming challenges related to MHH.
- **Social Media Promotion:** Collaboration with popular social media influencers like Routine of Nepal Banda to promote Menstrual Hygiene Day was proposed. YUWA agreed to take the lead in coordinating these collaborations. Additionally, MHMPA will regularly share illustrative posts targeting Menstrual Hygiene Day on social media platforms.
- Represent from Days for Girls, YUWA and Visible Impact agreed to provide necessary volunteers.

Evaluation Team

It was suggested to form an evaluation team of 4-5 voluntary participants to identify the best performers in MHH sector in 2023.

- Maya Khaitu –Days for Girls
- Phurba Moktan- Plan International
- Dilisha Shrestha-Flowy Venture
- Kamana Gurung-Embassy of Finland

Guna Raj will develop a TOR for the evaluation team. The selected works will be presented on the MH day event.

Brief opinion review on Menstrual Leave

Guna Raj Shrestha brought up the need to discuss the opinion on menstrual leave during the meeting. He informed that MHMPA had recently conducted a consultation workshop that reflected on menstrual issues faced by the LGBTQIA+, disability, and youth communities. A key finding from the workshop was that individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community often do not experience dignified menstruation and lack strategic positioning on the matter. While the discussion touched upon dignified menstruation, it was agreed that a separate and more in-depth discussion would be required to adequately address the topic.

Budget Shortfall

Guna Raj Shrestha informed that the total budget is estimated as Rs 1,000,000 Nepalese rupees for the event. There is commitment of about Rs 500,000 as of now from GIZ and Plan International with a shortfall of Rs 500,000. He requested all the members to make a commitment to contribute towards the shortfall, either as a lump sum or specific activities as soon as possible.

Vote of Thanks

Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha thanked Plan International Nepal for hosting the meeting and all the participants for their contributions. He mentioned that the proposed activities would be finalized in the upcoming steering committee meeting scheduled for May, and wished for continued cooperation from everyone.

27th June 2024, Agenda: Discussing the long-term sustainability of MHM PA and finalizing/endorsing the MHMPA Annual Plan for 2024-2025

Opening

Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha, the National Convener of MHMPA, welcomed all the participants followed by self-introduction of the participants. A total of 27 people participated in the meeting with 18 female and 9 males.

Key Discussions and Decisions:

Thematic Area 1: Policy Advocacy

- **Technical Assistance and Policy Formulation:**
 - WaterAid will continue to provide technical assistance (TA) support up to 2024/2025 to the advisory board for formulating the MHH national policy.
 - Menstruation indicators (two indicators) are included in the 16th 5-year plan for the first time in Chapter 8.
- **Inter-Ministerial Advisory Board Visit:**
 - To understand the ground reality, the Inter-Ministerial Advisory Board plans to visit Karnali, funded by SUSWA.
- **Sanitary Guideline Amendment:**
 - Guna Raj provided an update on a meeting with Hon'ble Sumana Shrestha regarding amendments to the sanitary guidelines. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology seeks TA support for this, and Days for Girls has committed support for the initiative.

Feedback on Policy Advocacy:

- The current textbook is concise and requires a more elaborate curriculum.
- The government must ratify dignified menstruation. Focus should not only be on Chaupadi but also on other aspects such as media mobilization, menstrual activism, and films to raise awareness.
- Experts from Karnali and Sudurpaschim Province should be utilized.
- Policy alone won't work at the local level; behavior change is crucial as people are often reluctant to change.
- Publishing in newspapers is more effective as fewer people read books.
- Proper coordination between provincial, central, and local levels is essential; a bottom-up approach should be practiced.
- A holistic approach is needed by honoring influential individuals and mobilizing local people.

- Policy advocacy should include ways to change the mindset of government entities.
- Local experiences should be incorporated during policy formation.
- Guna Raj explained that MHMPA is an alliance of only I/NGOs and bilateral organizations, whereas the government has a different alliance—the Inter-Ministerial Advisory Board. A mechanism to connect the government alliance and I/NGOs needs to be developed.
- SUSWA conducted 21 policy consultative workshops and aims to approve 21 policies this year.
- Policy is for people, so people's voices should be incorporated.
- Findings should be included in the national policy.
- Steps for national-level policy identification should be outlined.
- Policies' impact on SOGIESC, people living with disabilities, and other marginalized populations should be identified.
- Local information should be prioritized and incorporated into policy.
- Funding is necessary to incorporate local experiences.
- Learning evaluations can be conducted. A sample population can be chosen to identify the status and driving factors at the local level.
- Guna Raj addressed the queries, stating that the policy process is ongoing. Local experiences must feed into policy. With funding, studies can be conducted on the policies of Karnali and Sudurpachhim provinces, sampling and studying policies in various provinces where member organizations operate. This will identify local-level experiences of behavior change, barriers, and driving factors.
- Chaupadi Rape Incident: Guna Raj updated about a recent Chaupadi rape case. Gaupalika Mahasang and Hon'ble Sangeeta Singh plan to conduct workshops and meetings to address what can be done at federal and local levels, as policies seem ineffective.

Thematic Area 2: Education and Awareness

- Mass Education Initiatives: MHMPA is focusing on mass education through a singer alliance, reels, audio-visual songs, stage shows, etc.
- SUSWA updated that Tika Sanu (member of MHH Singer Alliance), has started Katha Maili regarding menstruation and is a member of the MHH Singer alliance.

Feedback on Education and Awareness:

- We must celebrate and showcase the successes and achievement at national level.
- When discussing informed choice, address both pros and cons (e.g., pros and cons of menstrual cups). Develop educational materials considering both aspects.
- Collaborate with the government when developing educational materials to increase accessibility.
- MHM-related graphics should be easily accessible without copyright issues, as some organizations may have limited budgets.
- IEC materials should be easily accessible. It would be easier if the government published IEC materials.

Thematic Area 3: Research and Knowledge Management

- GNI has published one research study, with another soon to be published by NHRC. The University of Liverpool and Pittsburgh have been conducting regular research. Important findings must be prioritized and communicated to the government.
- Guna Raj Sir suggested publishing a bi-annual newsletter to increase the transparency of MHM PA activities.

Thematic Area 4: Innovation and Technology

- A proposal for an MHH Smart City has been sent to the Deputy Mayor via email. MHMPA aims to declare KMC a Smart City, or alternatively, Lalitpur as a model MHH Smart City. The Smart City will feature vending machines and incinerators in jails and ward offices. Where incineration is not possible, menstrual products will be collected, autoclaved, disinfected, and biodegradable products will be composted.
- Guna Raj updated that Days for Girls has allocated a budget for collaborating with the Nepal Bureau of Standards & Metrology (NBSM) to develop standards for menstrual products, especially biodegradable and reusable ones. Nepal currently lacks standardization for menstrual pads.

Feedback on Innovation and Technology:

- Reusable and biodegradable pads should be validated while maintaining standard quality.

Thematic Area 5: Capacity Development

- MHMPA has a concept note for a 5-day package to develop human resources by providing MTOT. GNI plans to provide training this year in Madesh Pradesh.

Support to MHM PA Secretariat

- Plan International is seriously considering to support the secretariat office as GIZ's term ends in June. Plan International will decide mid July 2024. GNI might also support, with discussions starting in August during their budget planning for 2025. Guna Raj asked other organizations interested in funding MHMPA to consider contributing. The Annual Plan will be shared, and organizations can decide where to contribute financially.
- Participants suggested introducing a membership fee to generate some funding. A clear concept note should be developed, focusing on the benefits of membership and the rationale for the fee. The fee amount will be decided later after concept note development and discussed in the next meeting.
- Guna Raj mentioned that the secretariat office should be responsible for collecting basket funds from member organizations to avoid direct dealings with service providers and receivers.

Fund raising proposal

- Elizabeth, an intern at MHMPA (Thomas J. Watson Fellow), shared a fundraising proposal. The main goal is to create a sustainable, youth-led movement to improve menstrual health education and practices in Nepal while advocating for policy changes and infrastructure improvements.

Vote of Thanks

Dr. Sharmila Shrestha, ED of BBC thanked all participants for their contributions and RHRN for hosting the meeting.

30th October 2024, Agenda: Update on the MHMPA 6 month activities(October 2024- March 2025), Discussion on post-March funding opportunities and strategies for securing future resources, Contribution to Annual Plan as per activities and Restructuring steering committee

1. Opening and Introduction of Participants

- The meeting was chaired by Krishna Kumari Waiba, the Chairperson of BBC, the host of the MHMPA secretariat.
- Mr. Guna Raj Shrestha, the National Convener of MHMPA, welcomed all the participants followed by self-introduction of the participants. A total of 16 people participated in the meeting with 10 females and 6 males including Dr Laxmi Tamang (vice chairperson) and Dr. Sharmila Shrestha, ED of BBC.
- Guna Raj welcomed new member organizations, including SOCHAI, Birat Health Care Industries Pvt. Ltd., and a new representative from VSO.
- Prapti Gautam was congratulated for her re-nomination by BBC as MHM Advocacy Officer at the MHMPA secretariat.
- The Chairperson of BBC also welcomed the participants during the introductory session.

2. Discussion and Decisions

a. Guna Raj thanked Plan International for its technical and financial supports to the MHMPA Secretariat office for six months from October 2024 to March 2025. Phurba Sange Muktan of Plan International was hopeful for smooth functioning of the Secretariat and urged other MHMPA members to continue the support to MHMPA during this six month as well as beyond the six months time after March 2025.

b. Guna Raj requested the MHMPA members to start planning of support to the MHM PA well before March 2025 so that there would not be any gap.

c. Guna Raj also proposed to restructure the existing MHMPA steering committee comprised of the following clusters/themes

- i. Policy advocacy
- ii. Education, awareness and behavior change
- iii. Menstrual materials and quality assurance
- iv. Research, evidence generation and publications

- v. WASH and menstruation in emergency/disaster
- vi. Menstruation and cross cutting (LGBTIQ+, disabilities)
- vii. Menopause
- viii. Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health

d. Prapti highlighted some of the key activities planned to implement for next six months with funding support of Plan International

- **Policy dialogue:** Policy dialogue of stakeholders will be organized on "Human Rights Approach to MHH" and "Gender-Based Violence and MHH", in December 2024 and February 2024. Members were also urged to fund or collaborate on other policy dialogues. Guna Raj emphasized the importance of these dialogues, as they will inform the National Planning Commission's ongoing national policy on menstruation. The other themes identified and proposed are: Formulation of Dignified Menstruation Policy, Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) mainstreaming in MHH initiatives, Menopause awareness and support, MHH needs for people with disabilities.
- **Annual Country Status Report on MHH:** A country status report as of 2024 will be published; this will include data, statistics, progress, achievement on various sectors such as education, health, WASH, gender, human rights, research findings, etc. The MHMPA members were requested to contribute to this report by providing inputs.
- **MHH Annual Newsletter:** Planning to initiate a regular MHH newsletter, beginning with an annual edition. If funding permits, this will expand to bi-annual releases, ultimately progressing to monthly publications. This newsletter will provide ongoing updates, achievements, and insights into MHH activities, fostering stronger engagement with our community.
- **Steering meeting and members meeting:** A regular steering meeting will be held every month and members meeting every two month to enhance collaboration, coordination and decision-making.
- **Strengthening MHH Singer Alliance:** Workshop/meetings will be held to leverage the power of music and art to raise awareness and promote positive attitudes towards menstrual health and hygiene.
- **Brochure about MHM PA:** Brochure about the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance (MHMPA) will be printed to raise awareness and promote understanding among stakeholders and the general public.
- **Annual Report 2024 and Media Report 2024:** Both the Annual Report and Media Report for 2024 will be developed and published in the MHMPA Knowledge Hub, continuing the tradition established in previous years. These reports will serve as comprehensive resources, providing insights, achievements, and data to support our initiatives and foster transparency.

e. Suggestions and advices were received from the participants as below:

- Mahesh Nakarmi of HECAF 360 warned that the quality of pads is prone to severe health implication, even by reusable cottons. The assurance of quality standards and its compliance nationwide must be the key pivotal advocacy roles MHMPA. Therefore, MHMPA must form a

delegation and meet MOE, and Nepal Bureau of Standards and Metrology to ensure quality pads in the country.

- The MHMPA should also ensure quality assurance of pads in the ongoing MHH national policy
- The MHMPA membership must be expanded to other bilateral and multi lateral agencies such as KOICA, JICA, ADB, UNICEF
- The MHMPA should also expand its scope to Menstruation in emergency
- The name of MHMPA must be changed to encompass bigger scope, beyond hygiene.
- Create a WhatsApp group for all members to streamline communication and make it easier to share important information efficiently.

3. Vote of Thanks

Guna Raj Shrestha expressed his gratitude to all participants, including the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and the Executive Director of BBC. He extended special thanks to Plan International and Right Here Right Now for sponsoring the meeting and concluded by wishing everyone a joyful and prosperous Tihar.

The meeting was ended with closing remarks by Krishna Kumari Waiba, the session chair and BBC chair. She thanked all the participants for valuable remarks and suggestion. She also thanked Plan International for the technical as well financial supported to the MHMPA secretariat through BBC and hopeful for continuation of the supports by other MHMPA members.

19th December 2024, Agenda: Sharing and endorsing new strategic thematic areas of MHMPA for five years (2025-2030), Restructuring of the MHMPA Steering Committee (2025-2026), Fund commitment for Annual Plan Activities of MHMPA for the year 2025.

1. Opening and Introductions

- The meeting was chaired by Krishna Kumari Waiba, Chairperson of BBC.
- Guna Raj Shrestha, the National Convener of MHMPA, warmly welcomed all participants and opened the session with a round of self-introductions. The meeting had the participation of 41 attendees (31 female and 10 male), including new representatives and members, along with the esteemed presence of members from the MHH Singer Alliance, further enriching the diversity of voices in the discussion.

2. Key Discussions and Decisions

2.1 Overview of MHM PA Progress

- Guna Raj Shrestha introduced MHMPA to the new members and detailed its ongoing initiatives.
- He updated about the inclusion of two menstruation-related indicators in Nepal's current 16th Five-Year Plan- 1) menstruation friendly wash facilities for all in schools, public and work places and 2) reduction of restrictions due to menstruation. He also highlighted the ongoing process for formulation of a National Dignified Menstruation Policy.

2.2 Role of the MHH Singer Alliance

- Rekha Joshi, Goodwill Ambassador of MHMPA and Coordinator of the MHH Singer Alliance, committed for contribution to the menstruation endeavors through singing and social media and urged all members for supporting to sustain and activate the alliance’s initiatives. She stressed the importance of leveraging art and music for advocacy, emphasizing the role of prominent singers under the alliance.
- Raju Tirwa from SUSWA shared successful case studies from Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces, where artistic interventions, such as songs and music videos, has effectively reached the millions of people to raise the awareness about menstruation stigma.
 - He proposed activities including:
 - Dohori/songs focused on menstruation issues.
 - Production of a music video and social media campaigns using Facebook reels.
 - Serials or dialogues featuring prominent singers.
 - He informed members that the concept note for these activities is ready but requires financial support for implementation.
- A fund was established for the singer alliance. SUSWA and Guna Raj Shrestha declared to contribute to this fund with 20,000 each as start up. It was appealed to all the MHMPA members to contribute voluntarily to support to the fund so that artists/singers can be encouraged for developing/producing various songs, arts and performance in YouTube, Facebook reels, tiktok, etc.

New Strategic Thematic Areas (2025-2030)

- Guna Raj Shrestha shared the finalized thematic areas, which were reviewed and endorsed by the steering members. Further feedback was invited for refinement from members.
1. **Menstruation Policy Advocacy**
 - Working and collaborating with government for national policy formulation, policy dialogues, sectoral policies, plans and programme at federal, provincial and local government levels, follow up actions for menstruation indicators.
 2. **Education, Awareness, and Behavior Change**
 - School curriculum, campaign, engagement (media, youth, artists, and religious leaders), training, IEC/BCC tools/materials against taboos/stigma.
 3. **Menstrual Materials**
 - Informed choices of menstrual materials, standardization, and advocacy for quality assurance, affordability, and accessibility campaign, Safe Disposal, and Quality Assurance
 4. **Knowledge hub**
 - Facts and figures (authentic), research for evidence, publication, resource generation and compilation and management (knowledge hub).

5. Menstruation-Friendly WASH Facilities

- Menstruation friendly wash facilities in schools, public and work places, also considering the special needs of gender and sexual minorities and people with disabilities ; menstruation services, facilities and its standardization during emergencies/disasters as part of wash facilities.

6. Human rights

- Ensuring fundamental rights of including gender and sexual minorities towards wash facilities', menstrual materials, social dignity. GEDSI assurance in menstruation activities

7. Menopause

- Awareness and education managing health and psychological impact, research. Policy Dialogue/ workshop (including peri-menopause). Collaboration with Menopause Action Alliance (MAA).

8. Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health (CSRH)

- Advocacy for incorporating menstruation as part of CSRH.

4. Finalization and endorsement

- All the members present finalized and endorsed the main thematic areas. However, further work is needed to elaborate on the subgroups within each thematic area to ensure clarity and comprehensive implementation.

5. Follow-Up Actions

- Prepare and share the detailed activity plan aligned with the strategic thematic areas.
- Prepare and share a budget breakdown for each activity to facilitate financial contributions from members.
- Prioritize immediate funding for the MHH Singer Alliance, recognizing its pivotal role in advocacy.

Vote of Thanks

Krishna Kumari Waiba Chairperson of BBC, expressed heartfelt gratitude to all participants for their active involvement and valuable insights. The meeting concluded with a strong call to action, urging members to mobilize resources and ensure the effective implementation of the strategic plan for 2025-2030.

Menopause Storytelling Workshop

On October 1st, 2024, the GIZ-Support to the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy (S2GESI) project, in collaboration with the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners Alliance (MHMPA), hosted a Stakeholder Engagement Workshop focused on the "Menopause Toolkit in the Workplace." The event aimed to raise awareness, facilitate meaningful dialogue, and promote supportive workplace environments for women experiencing menopause. As a result of the workshop, a comprehensive "Menopause Toolkit for the Workplace" will be developed, with a digital version made available on the MHMPA website for future reference.



Stakeholder Engagement Workshop on Validating Menopause Toolkit for the Workplace

**Hotel Shangrila Blu, Bakhundole
15th Asoj 2081/ 1st October 2024**

Supported by:



Collaborator:



Understanding and Promoting Menstrual Health and Hygiene

On May 27th, 2024, the Youth Committee Members of BBC organized a panel discussion on "Understanding and Promoting Menstrual Health and Hygiene" to commemorate Menstrual Hygiene Day at Mahendra Ratna Campus. MHM Advocacy Officer, Prapti Gautam, participated as a panelist, providing insights into existing laws and policies related to menstrual health and hygiene. The event aimed to deepen understanding of menstrual health, promote effective hygiene practices, and foster an open environment for discussing menstruation. By bringing together experts, advocates, and students, the discussion sought to educate and empower participants, challenge stigmas around menstruation, and advocate for stronger menstrual health policies and practices.



UNDERSTANDING AND PROMOTING MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Menstrual Hygiene Day - 2024

Panel Discussion



Sudha Ghimire
Assistant professor, TU
Panelist



Khusbu Kayastha
Project Officer, BBC
Panelist



Hira Bohora
Youth Committee Member, BBC
Moderator



Manisha Lama
Youth SRHR champion, BBC
Panelist

Together for a
#PeriodFriendlyWorld



Prapti Gautam
Advocacy Officer, MHMPA Nepal
Panelist

Date : 27th May, 2024 Monday
Venue : Mahendra Ratna Campus
Tahachal Kathmandu

The National Consultative Workshop for Monitoring Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH)

The National Consultative Workshop for Monitoring Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) was held on 13 May 2024. It was convened by WaterAid Nepal in collaboration with the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the MHMPA. The workshop brought together MHH stakeholders from government, UN agencies, NGOs and academic institutions and across key sectors relevant to MHH including Education, Gender and Social Inclusion, Health and WASH.

Key Workshop Objectives:

1. Review the status and monitoring priorities of MHH in Nepal.
2. Share global MHH monitoring indicators and practices from other Asian countries.
3. Identify opportunities to strengthen Nepal's MHH monitoring for evidence-based actions.

Findings and Insights:

1. National MHH data in Nepal is limited, with the latest survey showing regional and socioeconomic disparities in access to MHH resources, knowledge, and participation during menstruation.
2. Policies addressing MHH exist but are fragmented, with a stalled draft Dignified Menstruation Policy.
3. The workshop contributed to a global initiative to harmonize MHH monitoring indicators, emphasizing the need for school-level data.
4. Notably, data on girls under 15 is missing, though their menarche age is dropping.

Stakeholder Discussions: Participants formed sector-specific groups (Education, GESI, Health, WASH) to discuss integrating and adapting priority indicators. Key suggestions included:

- Merging and adapting indicators to Nepal's context, such as gender-inclusive language and comprehensive WASH facility requirements.
- Incorporating indicators on MHH-related pain management, menstrual literacy, and social support.
- Expanding monitoring beyond schools to workplaces and public institutions.

Challenges:

- Lack of regular data updates and insufficient integration of existing data sources (NWASH, EMIS, HMIS).
- Coordination issues across government tiers and sectors, resource limitations, and underutilized private sector data.

Recommendations:

- Establish regular data monitoring mechanisms and align MHH indicators with national plans and policies.
- Engage traditional and religious leaders to address menstrual stigma and involve men in MHH discussions.

- Ensure government coordination to integrate MHH monitoring in WASH initiatives and education programs.

Next Steps: The Ministry of Water Supply, in collaboration with other ministries and the NPC, will work towards implementing the identified indicators in the national plan, with a focus on securing budget allocation and multi-sectoral coordination.



WaterAid / Mani Karmacharya

Save the Date - Monday 13 May, 2024
National Menstrual Health and Hygiene Monitoring Consultative Workshop

Convened by **WaterAid Nepal** in collaboration with the National Planning Commission and the Inter-ministerial Advisory Group (IAG) for Dignified Menstruation

8.00 AM – 1:00 PM
Hotel Himalaya, Kuponhole, Lalitpur
followed by lunch



Pad Donation for Menstruators Affected by Flood and Landslide

The MHMPA Secretariat Office- BBC donated 17 boxes, totaling 800 menstrual pads, to Hami Nepal and the Kathmandu Flood Relief Organization to support menstruators affected by recent floods and landslides. This initiative aimed to provide essential menstrual products to those impacted by the crisis, ensuring that their hygiene needs were met during this challenging time.



HOST ORGANIZATION

Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) has been hosting the secretariat since 2022



MHMPA MEMBER OF GLOBAL MENSTRUAL COLLECTIVE (GMC)

MHMPA is a member of Global Menstrual Collective (GMC).



You can learn more about them here: <https://www.globalmenstrualcollective.org/>

ANNEX: MHMPA MEMBER'S LIST 2024

BILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS

FINLAND EMBASSY
GIZ
PEACE CORPS
FCDO
SUSWA
USAID
WORLD BANK

UN AGENCIES

UNICEF
WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

INGOs

ACTION AGAINST HUNGER
CARE
CHILDFUND JAPAN
GOOD NEIGHBOURS INTERNATIONAL
KARUNA DEUTSCHLAND
MEDECINS DU MONDE
ODA FOUNDATION
PLAN INTERNATIONAL NEPAL
SNV
SWISS RED CROSS
VSO
WATERAID NEPAL
WELTHUNGERHILFE
WORLD VISION

NGOs

AASAMAN NEPAL
BEYOND BEIJING COMMITTEE
CENTER FOR INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT
CONNECTION NEPAL
DAYS FOR GIRLS
DIDI BAHINI
Emerge Nepal
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH ORGANIZATION
FORUM FOR WOMEN, LAW AND DEVELOPMENT
GLOBAL ACTION NEPAL
GREEN TARA NEPAL
GUTHI NEPAL

HAMI CHELLI
HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (HEADP -NEPAL)
HEAR NEPAL
HECAF 360
HOPE IS LIFE NEPAL
ICA
INITIATION FOR CHANGE
INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (IRDS)
KIRDARC
LUMANTI SUPPORT GROUP FOR SHELTER
MITINI
MITRA SAMAJ
NAWAPAILA
NEPAL RED CROSS SOCIETY
NEWAH
NFCC
NIDISI
PAHAL FOUNDATION
RADHA POUDEL FOUNDATION
SAATHI
SCORA (STANDING COMMITTEE ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS
INCLUDING HIV AND AIDS)
SEBAC NEPAL
SOCIAL CHAGEMAKERS AND INNOVATORS (SOCHAI)
THE COUNTRY THAT SHOOK
VISIBLE IMPACT
WOMEN FOUNDATION
XPOSE NEPAL
YUWA NEPAL
YUWALAYA
ZEST LABORATORY
NATIONAL HEALTH ACTION FORCE NEPAL
MAHULI COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTER
SOCIETY FOR HEALTH, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (SHEEP)

PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS

BIRAT HEALTHCARE INDUSTRIES
CRESCENZIA WELLNESS PVT LTD
ECO CONNECT PVT LTD
FLOWY VENTURE
HOMO HEALTH
LIFE CARE SANITARY AND NAPKIN UDHYOG & SUPPLIERS PVT. LTD
NEPAL CRS COMPANY
PAD2GO
PRAGYA CONSULTANCY
SAFEPAD NEPAL PVT. LTD.

ACADEMICS

AKASHA ACADEMY
ANALYCA POLICY INSTITUTE
LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY
MAHARAJGUNJ MEDICAL CAMPUS, NMSS
MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
RR SHREE SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY
THE BRITISH COLLEGE
TRIBHUWAN UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

HOSPITALS

CIVIL SERVICE HOSPITAL

MEDIA

UJYAALO ONLINE
ANNAPURNA MEDIA NETWORK
PERIOD KAA KURA
SEWASANCHAR GULMI

MHMPA MEMBERSHIP UPDATED LIST







Radha Paudel Foundation
राधा पौडेल फाउण्डेशन
ALL LIVES ARE PRECIOUS, NO ONE IS BORN BY CHOICE!



सेबक-नेपाल
SEBAC-NEPAL



EMERGE



Global Action Nepal



Aasaman Nepal



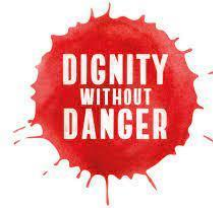
The Women's
Foundation Nepal



FWLD

अविभेद र समानताका लागि कार्यरत

THE COUNTRY THAT SHOOK



mitini DAYS FOR GIRLS
Breaking Taboos...  GIRLS



Mahidol University
Wisdom of the Land

