

Report of International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation

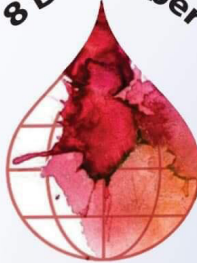
8th -10th December 2020

Kathmandu, Nepal

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International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation

8 December



Dignified Menstruation Day

8-10 December, 2020

Slogan: Menstrual Talk, Dignity First

Virtual from Nepal Tourism Board, BhrikutiMandap, Kathmandu Nepal

January 2021

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Authors:

Anupa Regmi

Radha Paudel

Swati Vyas

Reviewers:

Archana Patkar

Mili Adhikari

Samiksha Koirala, PhD

Correspondence: Anupa Regmi: regmianupa17@gmail.com

Press:

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Abbreviation

DM	Dignified Menstruation
GSCDM	Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation
MoCSC	Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen
MP	Member of Parliament
NHRC	National Human Right Commission
RPF	Radha Paudel Foundation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Right

Message from Secretariat Office

For Secretariat office, it was a delightful moment while accomplishing the sets of activities; three days **International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation, marked second International Dignified Menstruation Day and launched a book entitled 'Dignified Menstruation: A Practical Handbook'**. Together, we have already made a difference. We do not have words to express our sincere gratitude towards each of your unconditional dedications for the dignity of menstruators. We were amazed while seeing the friends were working around the clock from across the globe. Radha rang their phone numbers if she did not see them online just ten minutes before for their speaking engagements at mid night, 2.45 am, and 3.30 am and so on. We also expressed our heartfelt congratulations to each of you; Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Ministry of Health and Population, Ministry of Water Supply, Ministry of Education, National Human Rights Commission, National Women Commission, and Vice-Chair, CEDAW Committee, supporting partners; Global Action Nepal, Good Neighbour International, Men Engage Alliance (Global), Nepal Red Cross Society, PRO-SA (Ireland), Sarbodaya Nepal and World Link and 65 solidarity partners from around the globe who stand for **Menstrual Talk, Dignity First**.

These activities; workshop, day celebrations and launching book, have a single goal that re-examine our past and reimagine our future regarding development, feminism, and human rights globally. We are inspired and informed from the trauma-filled menstrual stories, pain, struggles, sacrifices etc. that are often unheard, ignored, misled, manipulated and deceived. Globally, actors spent decades of time, millions of dollars at the name of girls and women but the change yet to come. The home still not safe place globally. More importantly, the underlying cause of violence and focus of work is yet to understand and turn around for results. Because at any given time, at least half of the population of this planet is menstruating and menstruators' lived experiences range from feeling of disgust, shocked, dehumanized, deprived from participation, food, water, experience of themselves as inferior, survivors of sexual abuse, rape, killing and even death etc. no matter whether the menstruators from global south or north. The degrees of menstrual discrimination and oppression is wider, deeper and complex and more painful among the menstruators with disability, sexual minorities, refugees, migrant workers and other marginalized populations.

In one hand, due to COVID-19, pandemic, the physical workshop was not possible to organize. But, in other hand, it was an amazing opportunity to mobilize the people and organizations who have passion for dignified menstruation without disposal income. However, many stakeholders; NGOs and others, yet to accept the essence of dignified menstruation and holding accountability at their personal and organizational level in Nepal and beyond. The history would let us know how many organizations were working around menstrual activities, human rights, peace, empowerment and who were standing along with **Menstrual Talk, Dignity First**. The fire for justice would never die no matter whether crowd follow or not.

At last but not least, we urge hand in hand campaigns with all activists, academicians, governments, CSOs, politicians, media and all at all levels for menstrual talk dignity first in order to acknowledge the very critical essence of menstruation.

Radha Paudel, Founder and Secretariat Office



राष्ट्रिय मानव अधिकार आयोग National Human Rights Commission of Nepal



केन्द्रीय कार्यालय (Central Office)
हरिहर भवन, पुल्चोक, ललितपुर (Harihar Bhawan, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, Nepal)



Foreword

The National Human Rights Institutions across the world have a very huge and foremost responsibility to uphold the dignity of women by empowering them and assuring them the protection of their human rights. Since its inception, the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal has been playing an active role in the promotion and protection of women's rights and dignity. The NHRCN has been continuously engaging itself with various stakeholders to raise awareness for the elimination of all discriminatory acts against women. It believes that women are the creator of humanity and torchbearer for the entire civilization, thus they have the right to live in dignified manner by enjoying all the basic rights those guaranteed by the instrument of national and international law.

Menstruation, as we all know, is a natural process that every women come across for 4/5 days in a month, and considering such a biological process impure is a ludicrous concept often prevalent in various parts of the world. Regardless of education and economic status, the taboos and stigma associated with menstruation are still high in society. In the name of customs, culture and religion, ostracizing women during their menstrual period is tragically very common in society. People often forget that "they exist because women bleed". Considering the menstrual blood impure is a reminiscence of cultural malpractices generated from a patriarchal mindset which indeed hinders the entire progress of human civilization. The practice of untouchability during menstruation is absolutely a heinous and deplorable act against the principle of human rights, equality and justice. Such a menstrual practice is creating various forms of abuses, discrimination, domestic violence related to sexual, physical, political and economic and eventually violating the human rights of women. Thus, the eradication of inhuman menstrual practices is very crucial to upholding the dignity of women.

B.A.



राष्ट्रिय मानव अधिकार आयोग National Human Rights Commission of Nepal



केन्द्रीय कार्यालय (Central Office)
हरिहर भवन, पुल्चोक, ललितपुर (Harihar Bhawan, Pulchowk, Lalitpur, Nepal)

In this light, the Global South Coalition for Dignified menstruation (GSCDM) has made a history by organizing an international workshop on Dignified Menstruation with an aim to consolidate the collective efforts to eradicate and eliminate the taboos and stigma associated with menstrual process. The workshop has eloquently highlighted the concept that dignified menstruation is a means to ensure dignity, freedom and justice for women. The GSCDM has done such a commendable job by bringing the concept of dignity at center of discussion in the workshop, through which I believe, the creation of an equitable, fair and justice-driven society will get momentum in the days to come.

The National Human Rights Commission has enthusiastically expressed its solidarity with the "Dignified menstruation" campaign by participating in the workshop, as NHRCN also has the huge responsibility to eliminate the cruel practices like Chaupadi (an inhuman menstrual practice prevalent in the western part of the nation) by making people aware on that. The huge participation in the workshop, I think, has helped to formulate different strategies on various aspects of dignified menstruation at regional and global level. The GSCDM in this regard truly deserves some tumultuous applauses.

At the end, I would like to remind that the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal has so far conducted different research and monitoring and launched a national inquiry on the issues like "Chaupadi". It has made some recommendations to the government to take necessary steps on elimination of such inhuman and cruel practices and urged other stakeholders to make program on awareness raising. Therefore, the Commission always extends its hands to make a strong bond between NGOs, INGOs and Civil society for the creation of a better, equitable and human rights friendly nation.

Bed Bhattarai

Secretary

National Human Rights Commission, Nepal

मा. लिलानाथ श्रेष्ठ
मन्त्री
कानून, न्याय तथा संसदीय मामिला

Hon. Lilanath Shrestha
Minister
Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs

पत्र संख्या :

चलानी नं. :



फोन: ०१-४२११५७४
फ्याक्स नं. ५७७-१-४२११६८४
पोस्ट बक्स नं. ४६८१ काठमाडौं

सिंहदरबार, काठमाडौं, नेपाल
Email: lshrestha51@gmail.com


Message

I would like to thank The Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation for collaborating with the Government of Nepal to organize this historic event. We need actors worldwide to fight against this century-old problem that has been excluding women from many aspects of socio-cultural life.

During my short tenure at Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, I got an opportunity to understand gender-based discrimination at a deeper level. One of the important learnings was to know about discrimination and violence against women and girls caused by menstruation. The simple biological process of menstruation has become a barrier to gender equality.

Although I no longer belong to the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen, I would like to express my solidarity against all sorts of menstrual discriminations. In the capacity of Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, I am going to prioritize formulation of necessary plans and policies so that every woman can have a dignified life at par with her male counterpart. I urge all the stakeholders to focus on combating and eliminating all forms of abuse, discrimination, and violence against women through the dialogue on dignified menstruation.

28 February, 2021


.....
(Lilanath Shrestha)
Minister of Law, Justice and
parliamentary Affairs

Executive Summary

A three-day International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation was convened by the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Nepal, in association with the National Human Right Commission and Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation as well as Radha Paudel Foundation. This is the 2nd workshop on Dignified Menstruation, held between 8th to 10th December, 2020. The first was organized in 26th May virtually. The theme of the workshop was 'Menstrual Talk, Dignity first' and brought together around 1,000 participants from more than 30 countries.



The workshop covered the following 5 key themes:

1. Putting Dignity at the centre
2. Dignity is key for psychosomatic development
3. Menstrual dignity across the lifecycle: Puberty to menopause
4. Menstruation and multiple pandemics
5. Is Menstrual dignity of political interest?

The aim of this three-day workshop was to ensure the dignity of menstruators in all their diversity across the life-course as well as magnify the campaign of dignity during menstruation at all levels and across all sectors.

The workshop included speakers from a diverse range of several sectors, including academia, media, government, international organisations and civil society. During the inauguration, a lyrical video entitled 'dignity' and a book entitled 'Dignified Menstruation: A Practical Handbook' was also launched. The book features 40 contributors from 22 countries, an important contribution to the narrative on dignified menstruation at the individual, family, social and global level.

The workshop sessions involved passionate speeches and deep churning on a range of issues, ideas, solutions related to dignified menstruation. It called for an urgent need to view menstruation with a human rights lens, challenging the siloed approaches, breaking the silence and challenging gender stereotypes in day-to-day life. It has paved way for bringing a change in hearts and mindsets of communities and called for policy advocacy for inclusion of dignified menstruation as a human right. The Workshop ended on a high note, where organisers, keynote speakers and participants signed up to commit to achieving 12 action points to bring dignity to all menstruators, based on Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Social Justice underpinned by the voices, stories and pride of menstruators in all their diversity.

The 3-day international workshop on Dignified Menstruation, with the slogan 'Menstrual talk Dignity first' churned and discussed a range of issues, ideas, solutions related to dignified menstruation: dignity, discrimination, taboos and stigma, impact of life-cycle approach, involving

boys and men, role of media, policy advocacy, political interest and involvement of law makers as well as pandemics affecting menstruation.

Key learnings and points from the workshop are summarised below:

1. Dignified menstruation is missing from the global policy discourse, as it is not quantifiable. Policies are not addressing the root cause and just treating the symptoms. There is a need to develop a common language, framework and definition of dignity, accepted and owned by all stakeholders involved. An intersectional feminist approach needs to bring forth the human rights aspect of dignified menstruation, rather than just limiting to the biological aspect.
2. Now is the time to say goodbye to patriarchy and reclaim the human rights of all human beings, embracing differences, where everyone can make decisions of their lives and live with autonomy. There are paradoxes existing, where on the one hand positive cultural practices during menstruation and celebration of motherhood is observed in various cultures globally, but on the other hand gender-based violence and discrimination, shaming of menstruators, considering menstruation as dirty still exists.
3. Capitalism and patriarchal thinking further reinforce harmful practices which includes promotion of medical treatments that interfere with the natural process of menstruation. Medical advancements should not be used against menstruators and perpetuate the already existing discrimination during menstruation.
4. Challenging stereotypes and disseminating correct knowledge, body literacy is required. Although menstruation hygiene is a health issue, but it has cultural factors that impact its perception. So, all campaigns and education sessions should include interventions to include cultural factors, not just on sanitary pads.
5. Speakers called on challenging white supremacy and the saviour attitude, while designing policies and in national and international narratives as well as coverage of dignified menstruation in mainstream media. There is a need to delineate from colonial thinking and approach, to address the issue of discrimination of menstruators, just focussing on the Global South whereas the issue is global. Although the deliberations on the topic are being led by global south countries, the issue of lack of dignity during menstruation is global, irrespective of where menstruators reside. The levels and forms of discrimination may vary, but it is still existing across the globe.
6. Involving local communities is important if we want to bring sustainable change. There is a need to research, document and promote good and supportive practices, policies and laws that are already existing that support dignified menstruation.
7. There is an urgent need to move away from programmes and bringing change in minds and hearts of people if real change is to be achieved.
8. Bringing women on decision making tables at all levels is key to moving towards a more equal and balanced view of the world of dignity.
9. Adopting and promoting a life-course and a holistic approach instead of a siloed approach, from puberty, menarche, post-pregnancy, menopause and beyond.
10. Media to become responsible and involve individuals, communities and let them tell their stories in the way they want, rather than for sexier or sensational stories.

11. Involve men and boys in the discourses on dignified menstruation, educational resources to be made available and accessible for both menstruators and non-menstruators.
12. Discrimination during menstruation, has a life-long impact on the mental wellbeing as well as self-confidence of menstruators.
13. Politicians and law makers need to rise above the challenge in initiating the dialogue on dignified menstruation and translate law and policies into reality.
14. Policies and discourses around menstruation need to be inclusive, not leaving anyone behind when talking about dignity. There is a need to deconstruct heteronormativity in narratives and discussions.
15. Creating an environment where menstruators have freedom of choice, make informed decisions and have a basket of products to choose from based on the individual circumstances and needs of the menstruators.

Chapter I: Background

Dignified Menstruation

Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM) defines the dignified menstruation (DM) as, “A state of freedom, from all forms of stigma, restrictions, discrimination, abuses and violence associated with menstruation.”

GSCDM further describes the DM as, “It is the holistic approach to revisit ourselves for prevention of Sexual, Gender Based Violence, improving Sexual and Reproductive Health rights, leaving no one behind and promotion of human right.”

Menstruation is a normal process experienced by all menstruators from menarche to menopause. It is life blood that sustains humanity. The simple biological fact of menstruation shouldn't be a barrier to gender equality or hamper menstruators' realization of their human rights. However, their human rights are negatively impacted when menstruators cannot manage menstruation with dignity. International policies focus on menstruation management products and infrastructure, but dignity should also be at the heart of any solution to ensure dignified menstruation.



Human rights are rights that every human being has by virtue of his or her human dignity. Menstruation is intrinsically related to human dignity. Menstruation-related discrimination, exclusion and shame also undermine the principle of human dignity.

Gender inequality, extreme poverty, humanitarian crises and harmful traditions can all turn menstruation into a time of deprivation and stigma, which can undermine their enjoyment of fundamental human rights. This is true for women and girls, as well as for transgender men and nonbinary persons who menstruate. Article 1 of Universal Declaration of Human rights says, “all beings are born free and equal, in dignity and rights” however, unjust systems like patriarchy race, caste, class, have denied the dignity, rights and freedom to over half of the world population.

At the root of these taboos and stigma, is patriarchy. These taboos and restrictions on menstruators are maintained to preserve patriarchy. Menstrual taboos that deem women impure and polluting in their menstruation contribute to the belief system that women are inferior. This menstrual shaming of women's bodies into impure and inferior objects has allowed men to dominate and control women and their sexuality for several centuries. There is a need to challenge patriarchal mindsets and practices which are harmful for society at large, disempowering, leaving a lifetime blot on the self-image, self-confidence of menstruators.

Linked to the taboo around menstruation, many cultural and religious norms – often grounded in patriarchal assumptions – seek to prevent contact with menstruating women and girls in order to avoid ‘contamination’

or 'becoming impure'. To some extent, this perception of menstruation is a paradox, given that motherhood is glorified.

Absence of dignity during menstruation and beyond, socio-cultural taboos lead to infringement of universally agreed human rights of menstruators: right to: health, education, work, non-discrimination and gender equality, water, sanitation and so on.

Human rights provisions and guarantees can be found in many constitutions, laws and policies. However, the real test is whether in everyday life people can enjoy their human rights or not.

Most policymakers, educators, decision makers, health service providers, and everyone have missed out on the life-cycle approach, from pregnancy, childbirth, post-partum changes and menopause as well as after death (in some cultures) and the wide plethora of inequality and discrimination faced by all menstruators in their diversity.

Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation

The Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM) is a global coalition, based on Kathmandu, Nepal. It was formally initiated in 2018 by Radha Paudel Foundation (RPF), however, the concept initiation was in 2013 and its mission is to dismantle institutional, structural, interpersonal, and social oppressive systems that affect individuals who menstruate, and their ability to access basic inalienable human rights, critical resources to lead happy, and healthy lives, and obtain dignity.

The Coalition aims to unite organizations, and individuals who share their vision of reclaiming dignity for everyone during menstruation. The GSCDM was formed to change the narratives on menstruation, from hygiene to dignity, from impurity to purity, from hygiene to dignity and from five days bleeding to life cycle approach. It is steered of five members representing Indonesia, Uganda, Australia, USA, Nepal and members across the globe.

2nd International Dignified Menstruation Day:

Since 2019, GSCDM/RPF has started to mark the International Dignified Menstruation Day. The countries where the secretariat, national coordinators, and members belong, these countries started to mark the 8th December as International Dignified Menstruation day. This workshop was planned for marking this day as well.

Slogan 2020: Menstrual Talk Dignity First

The slogan chosen for this 2nd International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation is 'Menstrual talk Dignity First' as menstruation is not talked about openly and freely at home, community, society and policy levels, beyond the perspective of hygiene. Dignity during menstruation is not talked about as it is not tangible as an outcome measure. Women missing at key leadership positions and policy tables, means that menstruation is dealt with in a siloed approach rather than a life-cycle approach. Most discourses around menstruation across the globe are related to hygiene, water and sanitation, sexual and reproductive health, whereas dignity and human rights of menstruators are completely missed out.

Indeed, to change the narrative around menstruation, together with its members, government of Nepal, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen (MWCSC) and National Human Right Commission (NHRC), GSCDM proposed the slogan 'Menstrual Talk, Dignity First' for 2020.

Aim and Rationale of the workshop

The aim of this three-day workshop was to ensure the dignity of menstruators in all their diversity across the life-course as well as magnify the campaign of dignity during menstruation at all levels and across all sectors.

The rationale for this workshop was to bring to light various aspects of menstruation and its impact of menstruators in all their diversity. The current compartmentalised approach to menstruation doesn't fully acknowledge the deep-rooted socio-cultural aspects that has a huge, life-long physical, psychological impact on menstruators. As a result there has been a lack of holistic and life-course approach in addressing these issues in global and national policies and discourses on menstruation. It is kinds of first event at global level.

Methodology

A three-day International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation was convened by the MoWCSC, Nepal, in association with the NHRC and GSCDM/RPF. This is the 2nd workshop on Dignified Menstruation, held between 8th to 10th December, 2020. The first was organized in 26th May virtually. The theme of the workshop was 'Menstrual Talk, Dignity first' and brought together around 1,000 participants from more than 30 countries. The workshop covered the following five key themes:

1. Putting Dignity at the centre
2. Dignity is key for psychosomatic development
3. Menstrual dignity across the lifecycle: Puberty to menopause
4. Menstruation and multiple pandemics
5. Is Menstrual dignity of political interest?

The speakers represented several sectors, including academia, media, government, international organizations and civil society and brought in wealth of experience from across the globe. The deliberations of the workshop were carried out in a combination of face to face (socially distanced) in Nepal as well as virtual participation and presentations via video based application, from key-note speakers, panellists and participants. Sign language interpretation was made available to the participants throughout the workshop, ensuring inclusion of diverse participants and speakers. The participants allowed to forward their queries and questions if they have anything around dignified menstruation or specific theme. In order to get the broad sense of the urgency and importance of dignified menstruation at the era of 2030 agenda, there was an open interaction program by using online device; mentimeter.

The discussions went beyond the sector discussions around water and sanitation and sexual and reproductive rights, awareness raising and menstrual products - to reclaim a space to listen to and learn from menstruators' voices globally. The workshop featured discussions on the dignity of menstruators from various perspectives, including 'putting dignity at the centre,' 'psychosomatic development of dignity,' 'menstrual dignity across the life cycle, dignified menstruation and multiple pandemics and menstrual dignity as a political concern'. Over 70 partner organizations supported and participated in this second international workshop, from 18 countries including Nepal, India, Austria, United Kingdom, USA, Australia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Ireland, Brazil, Uganda, Africa, Peru, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines, Italy and Canada (See Appendix 3). The workshop was ended with 12 points declaration and call for action.

Key highlights from the workshop session proceedings

Putting the Dignity at Center:

The session covered why dignity needed the long-deserved centre-stage, and how in absence of dignity, talking about menstruation has been doing huge injustice to menstruators. Speakers called upon policy maker, practitioners, community and law makers to break the silence and start having open dialogue and discussions on menstruation and involving men and boys. The session reminded all participants about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and how lack of dignity of menstruators impacts on their self-esteem and self-confidence; lack of access to public spaces and opportunities; undermining the right to education, health, work, to non-discrimination and gender equality. The session speakers stressed on having a dialogue, empowering girls, education and training; providing a platform to share empowering stories and demystifying myths about menstruation, to remove the stigma and disempowering rituals. Striving for menstrual dignity is the most critical component to achieve equity as it ensures physical, psychological and social needs of the menstruators.

Dignity is key for psychosomatic development:

This session focussed on the fact that menstruation is called a biomarker in medicine and that it should be a source of pride for women. It is a combination of a neuro-endocrine cycle that allows the human race to continue. Speakers shed light on the psychological impact of discrimination during menstruation and a need to develop a common language and meaning of dignified menstruation. Speakers recommended talking about menstruation, connecting with others, giving and receiving empathy as crucial steps for removing this shame that is attached to menstruation. The session also included the connection between stress and immunity, self-image and exposure to trauma in early childhood having a life-long impact on self-esteem and self-confidence in one's abilities. Speakers emphasised on involving boys, men and called for action in active engagement of stakeholders on solutions and all layers of sociological model, system transformation, and at all stages of life cycle. They highlighted the need to deconstruct the power relations and suggested dignified menstruation to be made part and parcel of the human rights agenda.

Menstrual dignity across the lifecycle: Puberty to menopause:

Speakers of this session, spoke about the importance of embracing empowering menstruation rituals, not neglecting the menstruators. They called for a cradle to grave approach, in a dignified way and embracing the flow of life. Speakers shared about dehumanising experiences of menstruators, due to the ingrained misconceptions and taboo about impurity of menstruation. They strongly recommended connecting menstruators and non-menstruators with the correct knowledge about menstruation in mainstream education and developing a supportive environment where everyone can openly talk about menstruation. The session speakers also highlighted the need to embed dignity into WASH programmes and recommended actions to make toilets and infrastructure facilities menstruator friendly. They spoke about providing a bucket of choice with regards to menstrual hygiene management products, to suit the requirements of menstruators, so that they can make an informed decision. Thereby shifting the power of choice and decision making to the users, rather than non-menstruators. Menopause is often missing from the conversations and actions, and speakers stressed that dignified menstruation is difficult to achieve the goal of dignified menopause. The role of media was discussed in spreading positive and empowering stories as well as lack of enough research being done before including news stories on menstruation in mainstream media.

Menstruation and multiple pandemics:

This session involved speakers who shed light on how pandemics impact on dignity of menstruators while responding the health and wellbeing of menstruators and the lack of facilities, policies that consider the needs of

menstruators while designing personal protective equipment. Speakers highlighted how the current Covid-19 pandemic has brought forth huge disparities in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, place of residence, disability, menstruation etc. They talked about challenges in convincing policy makers to include menstruation as a human right and the fact that it has been missed out in most global policies. Speakers called for shifting the human rights discourse towards comprehensively addressing mental health and stigma and prioritising those who are usually left behind, free of judgement and constraints.

A good practice example from Nepal was shared, where it has developed and agreed a minimum service standard, for an enabling environment for dignified menstruation friendly facilities right from isolation centres (harm reduction), and health facilities. The role of media was included in this session and recommended putting the communities at the centre of storytelling, building trust, rather than going with a pre-conceived notion about the communities they are reporting. Speakers highlighted on the importance of decolonising development and how media professionals can become better in reporting and holding themselves accountable.

Is Menstrual dignity of political interest?:

This session called for a change in mindsets and included the reasons for paradoxes in the political discourse on dignified menstruation. Session speakers shared how policy discourses in the development sector have kept dignified menstruation in the periphery and it fails to connect it with economic issues, or equality, education. Speakers in this session reiterated that dignified menstruation is a human rights and child rights issue and called for stronger advocacy for influencing public policy. It included discussions on how menstruation is considered very private affair, thereby leaving it out of

the purview of law. The reason being that the law-making structure is traditionally led by white, middle aged men and called upon the need to bring in more diversity amongst law makers. They strongly urged politicians to become role models and start a dialogue on dignified menstruation from their own families.



Figure 1 Book Launched by-from left; Hon. Minister Parbat Gurung, MP Bimala Rai Paudyal, Hon. Minister Lilanath Shrestha, Radha Paudel

Book Launched: A book entitled '**Dignified Menstruation (Dignity of Menstruators throughout the life): A Practical Handbook**' launched during the workshop. It was launched physically and virtually by ministries, secretary of NHRC, MPs and founder of GSCDM who was chairing the inaugural session. This book is contributed by more than 40 contributors from more than 20 countries under various themes. This book could open an eye of all stakeholders who are working around peace, empowerment, human right, SDGs, SRHR and menstrual activism.

Conclusion:

The 2nd International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation, with the slogan 'Menstrual talk Dignity first' brought forth these key themes and involved deep churning on a range of issues, ideas, solutions related to dignified menstruation: dignity, discrimination, taboos and stigma, impact of life-cycle approach, involving



boys and men, role of media, policy advocacy, political interest and involvement of law makers as well as pandemics affecting menstruation. It called for an urgent need to view menstruation with a human rights lens, challenging the siloed approaches, breaking the silence and challenging gender stereotypes in day-to-day life, as well in discussions and called for policy advocacy for inclusion of dignified menstruation as a human right.

Chapter 2: Session Proceedings

Day 1: 8th December, 2020

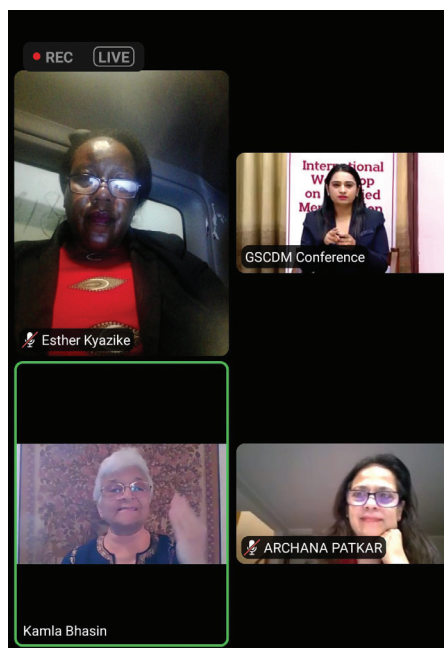
Session 1: Putting Dignity at the centre

Moderator: Archana Patkar

Keynote Speaker: Kamla Bhasin

Panellists: Nandar (Nandu Gywali), Myanmar; Mili Adhikari, USA; Man Maya Pangeni Bhattarai, Government of Nepal, Stephen Marwa, Tanzania

Keynote speech by Kamla Bhasin: Kamla a well renowned feminist, advocate, activist, author and poet. She started by saying, 'Long live the Universal Declaration of Human rights'. Kamla started her keynote speech by saluting Radha Paudel and her foundation for initiating this crucial discourse on dignified menstruation with a human rights lens. Ms Kamla also congratulated the Government of Nepal for joining the global feminist civil society. Article 1 of Universal declaration of Human rights all beings are born free and equal, in dignity and rights. Kamla rephrased it 'All beings, not just human being should have freedom, dignity and rights. However, unjust systems like patriarchy race, caste, class, have denied the dignity, rights and freedom to over half of the world population." Nature and feminine principles were worshipped before patriarchy, however, since the emergence of patriarchy false theories led by men, trying to prove that men are superior to women. Kamla said lack of dignity leads to feelings of inferiority, self-hatred, and lack of self-confidence. This leads to lack of access to public spaces and opportunities. Lack of dignity leads to undermining the right to education, health, work, to non-discrimination and gender equality. She called on menstruators to take back their dignity, dignity to menstruation, their bodies, their cycles and bring dignity at the centre.



Fight for gender equality is not between men and women, it is about two mindsets, one mindset says patriarchy is better and the other says equality is better.

Kamla Bhasin

Kamla congratulated the GSCDM, for restoring dignity to nature. She reiterated dignified menstruation as "A state of freedom, from all forms of stigma, restrictions, discrimination, abuses and violence associated with menstruation." She said that the biggest change we need is to change the patriarchal mindsets and patriarchal attitudes. 'Dignity should be at the centre-stage, dignity and gender equality are our rights.' Change has happened due to the women's movement and information given out by schools, that young girls are now

better informed and prepared for their first menstruation as compared to girls 30-40 years ago.

Kamla said that men need to be involved in the dialogue and that she is frustrated by how modern medicine is further flaring the already existing myths and disempowering taboos and traditions around menstruation, harming the physical, emotional and psychological health of menstruators.

She concluded her keynote by stating the need to change the 'Love of power' to 'power of love' and patriarchy will have to disappear. Ubuntu, which is an African concept meaning 'I am because you are' and to honour the global symposium on dignified menstruation.

Man Maya Bhattarai: Man Maya endorsed the movement on dignified menstruation in Nepal along with GSCDM while she worked with Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen as joint secretary. This is for human rights implementation, protect gender equality and for the next generation, at home, in the society and at the workplace. She gave an example of Nepal and how the government brought dignified menstruation in the centre of action and legal changes.

Nepal's legal system takes Chhaupadi as a serious violation of the rights of girls and women and has taken two-fold action: a) Regulatory action and b) participatory campaign. During the participatory campaign, over 9000 political leaders of Nepal participated, and over 8000 Chhaupadi huts were dismantled. Currently, as a Chief District Officer in Nepal, she has initiated lot of steps to bring dignified menstruation at the forefront in her district and make it a model that can be replicated elsewhere. She said, "Cohesion creates future, this moment creates positive vibes globally".

Nandar Gywali: Myanmar signed the UN treaty of forbidding any harmful cultural practices and traditions, however, it is not seen in day-to-day practice by her and other young women and girls in the country. Policy alone cannot resolve problems. Eradicate the stigma around menstruation, multi-pronged approach, have a dialogue and share a different story. Shared her painful experience of menstruating for the first time and said that her mission is to eradicate the menstrual taboos and practices and speaking up about the negative impact it has had on girls and women. Keep having a dialogue, empowering girls, training, platform to share stories and demystifying stories that are not true. She suggested involving men in the dialogue on dignified menstruation, if we want to realise our vision. Silence will not bring justice, men need to listen and menstruators need to tell their stories.

Nandar runs a campaign titled 'Menstruation is not shameful' and engaged over 150,000 people in Myanmar, using social media as a tool. Although some people did not support the campaign, Nandar is of the view that it is still important to have a dialogue on the subject as people have started thinking about it. Redefine what is normal and telling stories touches hearts and minds as compared to research and statistics.

Mili Adhikari: Mili started with saying that we are already doing the work, striving for menstrual dignity is the most critical component to achieve equity as it ensures physical, psychological and social needs of the menstruators. By addressing dignity, we are addressing the highest level of need in the Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. She focussed on the facts and statistics across the globe that involve gender-based violence, discrimination against menstruators, needs of menstruators not taken into consideration while designing PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) kits during the current pandemic, although over 70% of health care workers being menstruators. Despite large disparities in the GDP between high- and low-income countries, there is not much difference between the global north and the global south when it comes to intimate partner violence. She discussed how the gender power dynamic begins at home and attributes the menstruator as

weak and inferior, whereas the non-menstruator as superior. As a result, this feeling of being inferior is very ingrained and internalised amongst the menstruators, and this disempowers the menstruators. They do not have the resources or empowerment to resist against any form of gender- based violence. She ended her talk by saying that dignity should be brought back to where it belongs, at the centre.

"Patriarchy, heteronormativity, white supremacy and capitalism are all one family."

Mili Adhikari

Stephen Marwa: Stephen said that he was impressed by the discussions during this international workshop. He shared about the challenges Tanzania has been facing due to the Covid pandemic while working with schoolgirls. His organisation has been focussing on rescue efforts in interior parts of the country and rural areas. He shared about a pilot project in one of the villages, where they had delivered training of re-usable sanitary pads. This pilot had a huge positive impact on over 300 girls as it prevented them from leaving school due to availability of sanitary pads. Stephen plans to expand this project to the entire region in Tanzania. Stephen shared that East Africa has been facing financial challenges. In order to have a reach to interior parts of the region, there was a need to have access to technology.

Closing thoughts from panellists: Menstrual discrimination should be viewed as a human gender based violence and rights violation.

Session 2:

Formal Inauguration: Lead by Government, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen

Moderator: Dr Samiksha Koirala

Chair of the session: Radha Paudel, Founder, Global South Coalition for Dignified menstruation

Chief Guest: Hon. Minister LilaNath Shrestha, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen

The inaugural session started with national anthem and lighting the lamp by chief guest.

Key Activities:

Jhupri Bhandari, Singer, women with disability and survival of menstrual discrimination: A very inspiring song was shared during this session, by Jhupri Bhandari who is a survivor, singer, and woman with disability from West Nepal. In the film, she shared her experience and challenges faced as a woman affected by blindness.

Esther Kyazike, member of GSCDM, Uganda: Esther shared her experience of working in Uganda and shared that menstrual health is not taken into consideration within the sexual and reproductive health policies and programmes. She spoke about period poverty, lack of resources, lack of access to basic amenities like washing and toilets, lack of privacy, which is further exacerbated by stigma and isolation amongst young girls, resulting in girls missing out on school. Esther shared about an annual conference organised in Uganda on 14th August 2020, as well as the National Development plan to promote the retentions of girls and boys in schools. In 2015, the Ugandan government along with partner organisations signed a charter that includes their commitment to provide menstrual hygiene and management, involvement of CSOs in sanitary product

development. She shared about several actions taken for menstrual health management in the country. In 2017, there was an attempt to include menstrual hygiene as part of pre-primary and primary education votes. Esther stressed on the action needed to provide safe spaces for menstrual hygiene and education amongst girls, boys and schoolteachers, family members, school management and society at large. It is important that they have a good understanding of menstruation and the needs of girls, rather than just handing out sanitary products. Including men and boys in the conversation will reduce the stigma around menstruation.

Musical Video: Dignity: About five minute film showed that all about dignity during menstruation directed by the Laxman Rijal and lyrics wrote by Radha Paudel. This musical film urged to concerned stakeholders to think and act of dignity since childhood.

Diane Danzebrink: From UK, Diane Danzebrink who leads the Menopausal support campaign hashtag make menopause matter campaign in the UK shared her experience. Her work focussed on better care and support of all women facing menopause. She shared her personal experience with surgical menopause and had a very poor experience of care, as she wasn't provided any pre and post-surgery information and advice as well as the potential challenges of surgical menopause. Although she had support from her family, she did not want the same experience for all women who might be going through menopause. Main aims of her campaign are: 1) mandatory menopause education for all doctors; 2) menopause support at the workplace and 3) inclusion of menopause in the new RSE (relationship and sex education) curriculum in secondary schools. Since its initiation, the campaign has achieved its aim from September 2020. Some progress made, but huge mountain to be achieved.

Anna Soetomo, member of GSCDM, Indonesia: Anna was inspired to start the Indonesia chapter of GSCDM after her interactions with Radha Paudel. Anna shared about the cultural and religious practices and taboos surrounding menstruation in her country. For over a year, the Indonesia chapter has led a campaign on dignified menstruation, through social media. She congratulated all the participants and panellists as well as Radha for organising this workshop.

Book Launch – ‘Dignified Menstruation – A Practical Handbook’

The Book features 45 contributors from 22 countries, an important contribution to the narrative on dignified menstruation at the individual, family, social and global level and has been edited by Radha Paudel. This book was formally launched by various dignitaries from Government of Nepal including Ministers from the Government of Nepal including Lilanath Shrestha from the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Parbat Gurung from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Giriraj Mani Pokhrel from Ministry of Education; parliamentarians Binda Pandey, Bimla Rai Paudyal, and Anita Devkota, Parliamentarian, National Assembly, Bed Bhattarai, Secretary of National Human Rights Commission, Bandana Rana, Vice-Chair of CEDAW Committee.

Book review by Dr. Binda Pandey: Dr Pandey started her view that book attempted to cover social cultural norms and practices around menstruation across the globe. It highlights the social and economic discrimination against menstruators which impacting menstruators psychologically and mentally. The book highlights the discrimination at workplace, at home and family limited their socio-economic participation of menstruators. The book reminds of the era of 1990s when women workers were not allowed to work in factories when they were menstruating. Although later, this issue was raised by the trade union, and regulations were introduced in favour of women workers, by including a provision of paid leave during the 4 days of menstruation. This book will become a tool for connecting the global movement for cause of removing the barriers by patriarchy, society free of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Remarks: Dr Bimala Rai Paudyal: Dr. Paudyal, congratulate the organisers as well as all the contributors towards the book. She applauded Radha Paudel for being an inspiration and a strong voice for achieving the vision of dignified menstruation. She shared her own experience of first menstruation and barriers faced in early adolescent period. The mindsets are now changing in the current times, where girls are supported by their families when they start menarche. People have started talking about it, but there is a need to translate the vision of dignified menstruation into action and called on politicians to take a lead in taking action.

Remarks, Hon. Minister Parbat Gurung, Minister of Communications and Information technology, Nepal: he recalled the celebration the first international workshop on dignified menstruation, organised under his leadership in May 26, 2020 as well the other activities including the day of 8 December 2019 as a first international dignified menstruation day celebration. He congratulate to GSCDM for conducting such a huge and historical event. He promised to continue his support through his portfolio of ministry has already changed.

Remarks, Nirvana Chaudhary, Chaudhary Foundation: talked about the role of the private sector in contributing towards dignified menstruation and the actions taken by their Foundation in promoting gender-equality and reducing discrimination during menstruation: i) helped government of Nepal, with the brand YY advertisement against the taboo of menstruation and had millions of views, ii) training of women in low-cost sanitary napkins production, iii) supported in development of a multi-lingual mobile application with information on menstruation and reproductive health, pre-loaded free of cost on different mobile phones across Nepal and iv) in partnership with UNFPA for livelihood and training, reproductive health. He reiterated his foundation's commitment towards achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5. He also shared about a new program on education of girl child, leveraging technology and embedding health into the program.

Bandana Rana, Vice chair CEDAW Committee: Bandana started her speech by defining the word dignity for a girl, which includes love, affection, able to play, speak, jump as her brother, to be confident in whatever she does. However, this dignity is trampled, due to traditions and cultural taboos related to menstruation. Bandana shared her own experience of menstruation and how it impacted her, inspite of being born in a liberal family. The 21 days of isolation in a dark room, women are made to feel inferior, and men are strong. She shared that the CEDAW committee's Article 5 addresses all forms of restrictions and taboos related to menstruation and menstrual hygiene. All member states of CEDAW are requested to check these harmful rituals. CEDAW alongwith CRC came up with recommendation 31 in 2014 which addresses all the harmful traditional practices related to menstruation. In 2011, there was a dialogue and involvement of different stakeholders about the criminalizing harmful practices like Chhaupadi and in 2018 Nepal passed a law criminalizing it. CEDAW has recommended the government of Nepal to raise awareness about the law, but also monitor its implementation. CEDAW has also recommended to build toilets and provision of infrastructure facilities to ensure that the vision of dignified menstruation is achieved, calling all government as well as private sector and civil society partners to join hands.

Shanta Bhattarai, Secretary, National Women's Commission Nepal: We need to look at the issue of menstruation beyond hygiene and highlighted the government has done a remarkable job in terms of making legal reforms and dismantling the menstrual sheds and the next step is to mainstream dignified menstruation in partnership with all stakeholders.

Anita Devkota, Parliamentarian, Nepal: Anita reiterated her and her political party's (Nepali Congress) commitment for dignified menstruation. She said that although there are enough laws and policies to achieve discrimination free menstruation, Nepal needs to do more in implementing the provisions of the law as

this is an area which is lagging behind. She shared about her efforts as a parliamentarian and member of the opposition Congress party, in reducing the discrimination against menstruators and promoting gender equality. She highlighted the role of the local government; departments of education and health have an important role to promote women's empowerment.

Speech by Chief Guest, Minister Lilanath Shrestha: Mr Lilanath's speech included the fact that Nepal has signed numerous international treaties to end gender-based violence. The Nepal government has proposed United Nations to celebrate December 8th as Day for dignified menstruation. The government is in the final stage of the development of the Gender equality policy and has also drafted bylaws that will help institutionalise dignified menstruation. He applauded the hard work and efforts of Radha and extended full cooperation to her from the government of Nepal. He stressed on the fact that government alone cannot do enough to end discrimination during menstruation and promote gender equality, it will need to work in partnership with NGOs and all other stakeholders.

Closing remarks by Radha Paudel: Radha congratulated everyone attending this global workshop and said that together we have already made the difference. She expressed her sincere gratitude and thanks to all contributors of the book who represented from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chili, Fiji, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Morocco, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Peru, Portugal, Philippines, PNG, UK, and USA.

Radha shared her sad experience during early puberty, of attempting suicide due to the fear of extreme discrimination during menstruation, shame and taboo. Radha highlighted that at any point, over half of the world's population would be menstruating, and menstruators lived experiences spans from killing, feeling of disgust, shock, dehumanised, deprivation from participation, having food, water, experience of themselves as inferior, surviving rape, sexual assault, and sometimes even death. She said that the degree of discrimination and oppression is wider, deeper and complex and more painful for the menstruators with disabilities, sexual minorities, refugees, migrant workers, and other marginalised populations.

Radha said that it was high time to explore the underlying factors for construction of power and agencies in gender-based violence, reproductive health disempowerment.

She further highlighted the so many similar stories every day from all corners of the globe that wrenched her heart including the loss of 14 years Kenyan daughter Jackline Chepogeno, due to menstrual shame at school last year. I am still terrified imagining the everyday situation for daughters and granddaughters in Nepal and globally, she shared.

Therefore, she claimed that this a very high time to explore the underlying factor for construction of power and agency which has a significant role for gender based violence, reproductive health, empowerment and human rights. She mentioned that the launching of the book and workshops have a single goal that reexamine our past and reimagine our future regarding development, feminism, and human rights. GSCDM inspired and informed from the trauma filled menstrual stories, pain, struggles, sacrifices etc. that are often unheard, ignored, misled and mis-interpreted, she said.

We have also heard the promises from global leaders at all levels that they are committed to address the 'shadow pandemic'. If so, why and how does the dignity of menstruators miss systematically from about more than half a century of human rights? Menstrual discrimination is the primary and invisible factor to construct power since early age and play vital role in gender norms and unequal power relationship.

More importantly, she firmly put the questions of unity for agreeing the 'menstrual discrimination is a global pandemic' because the taboos, stigma, abuses, discrimination associated with menstruation irrespective to class, caste, region, religion and so on all around the world with the difference in name, forms and degrees from person to person, place to place and so on.

She highlighted the complexity of menstrual discrimination and multifaceted natural phenomena that required holistic approach to address all impacts that raised at immediate and long term regards to economic, politics, peace, human right and overarching goal of gender equality. Finally, she called for hand in hand campaigns with all activists, academicians, governments, CSOs, politicians, media and all at all levels for menstrual talk dignity first in order to acknowledge the very critical essence of menstruation. She thanked all the government officials, panellists, participants present at the workshop in person or virtually.

Day 2: 9th December, 2020

Session 1: Dignity is key for psychosomatic development

Moderator: Mili Adhikari

Keynote Speaker: David Baron, USA

Panellists: Prabha Shankar Narayan, USA, Jane Bennett, Australia; Laxman Belbase, USA.

The session started with a song on menstruation.

David Baron: David started his speech with the common definition of dignity, "the quality or state of being worthy, honoured, or esteemed." He said that menstruation is called a biomarker in medicine and that it should be a source of pride for women. It is a combination of a neuro-endocrine cycle that allows the human race to continue. He emphasised on the need for education amongst girls, women, politicians, men, everyone in society. He said that there was a need to make a commitment, make people understand about the menstrual cycle. Education should start very early, but should not be limited to the education system but should be included in all spheres of life. He said that stress and anxiety had a direct impact on our immune system, and it is well documented and researched.

He suggested the following strategies to tackle the issue: titled 'CURE'

C - Culture – cultural issues related to menstruation and the importance of wellness in health. Leadership from people of different walks of life should come forward to make a change.

U - Unity – supporting each other, celebrating womanhood, stigma needs to be addressed at a global level.

R - Resilience – building resilience in the community.

E - Efficacy – do more than just talk about it gender-based discrimination as that would be just a beginning of a global effort.

David Baron 'If we consider menses to be impure, then human life itself is impure'

Jane Bennett: Jane is a menstrual educator and shared that menstrual discrimination does exist in Australia in one form or other. She gave an example about unequal emphasis and government health spending on long term conditions like diabetes compared to endometriosis. She quoted that there were equal number of people affected by Diabetes and those affected to endometriosis in Australia. However, healthcare investment in Diabetes in Australia is over \$4000 and but \$0 for endometriosis.

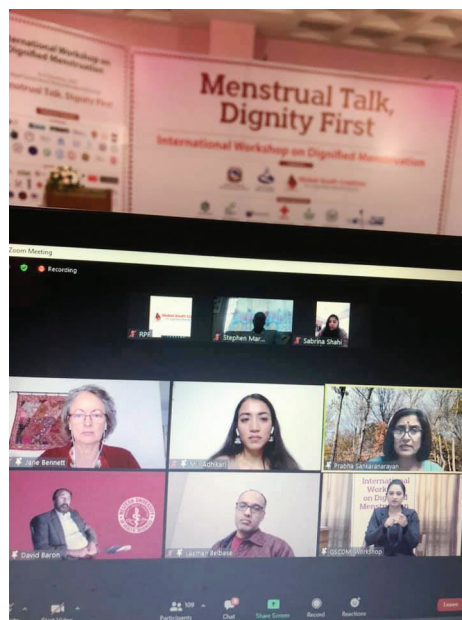
"There is a lack of common language and comfort in talking about menstruation, due to menstrual taboo and lack of comprehensive education across the board. There is a lack of emotional support, lack of supportive environment at workplace, which doesn't allow open discussions about menstruation and impacts a woman's ability to work effectively."

Jane Bennett

There was a lack of definition of menstrual wellbeing and it was not a pillar of Australian healthcare system. There was a lack of holistic education on menstruation in schools in her country, very basic education is provided as part of school curriculum.

Jane suggested, "Think and feel about menstruation at a personal level. How we feel about it, be aware, only then will we be able to speak about it with others." Jane conducts workshops with fathers of girls, their experience and knowledge about menstruation, while growing up was minimal. She emphasized the need to normalise it, have knowledge, and be supportive.

Not supporting women as described in technical terms but creating a space so that women and girls can freely enjoy their human rights. There has to be clear goal, why men and boys should be engaged in the dialogue, it's not an end in itself but it's a means to achieve gender equality and spaces they occupy. Girls have a positive experience of menarche, if they have good information and the social support from family. It has a positive impact on their self-esteem, mental, sexual experiences and birth decisions in adult life.



"It was important to involve men and boys; it's not about men remaining in the position of power but utilize the space and relinquishing the power dynamics. Power with, not power over, as in the feminist movement. It is about changing the culture through education, dialogue, telling a story, and about the biocycle, social, spiritual aspects of menstruation."

Jane Bennett

She explained the difference between shame and guilt and about the power of menstrual shame. Shame means I am essentially wrong. It is very unconscious, not irrevocable. Whereas guilt is I have done something wrong and it can be changed. She recommended talking about menstruation, connect with others, to be able give and receive empathy as crucial steps for removing this shame.

Prabha Sankaranarayan: Prabha introduced herself and her work on child development, emotional intelligence and peace building. She shared about her work with the local tribal communities in Australia and the impact of menstrual discrimination on mental peace of the menstruators. She quoted the definition of Dignity given by Donna Hicks as, "glue that holds all of our relationships together, mutual recognition of the desire to be seen, heard, listened to, and treated fairly, to be recognized, understood and feel safe in the world."

"Dignity is not something we have to earn, respect is, and it is something we afford inherently because people have value. Allowance of plurality in discourses is important; it's not about one giving up power to another."

Prabha Shankaranarayan

She focussed on the need to having women on the decision-making tables, being really crucial to bring change. Some of the actions suggested by her to bring the vision of dignified menstruation to fruition was to include dignified menstruation on policy and community dialogues, involve women in the processes ensures that their needs are addressed. She suggested that young people should have the knowledge on menstruation early on. "Peace begins and change begins from within. Creating shared narratives, break the silence."The discussion also included the connection between stress and immunity, self-image and exposure to trauma in early childhood having a life-long impact on self-esteem and self-confidence in one's abilities.

Laxman Belbase: Laxman started his talk by sharing about the roots of stigma and discrimination and that it goes back 2000 years ago, when patriarchal society started. However, before that it was a matrilineal society, which was more equal. The patriarchal system is characterised by men controlling the sexuality and reproduction of women and is at the root of discrimination and power relations. He called for action in active engagement of stakeholders on solutions and all layers of sociological model, system transformation, and at all stages of life cycle. Boys and men need to be engaged and reminded the participants that man and boys are not a homogenous group. He said that not all men are involved in violence, but a lot of them stay silent when it comes to violence. He urged everyone to break the silence, challenge things that are unjust at various levels. He said that non menstruators want equality and talked about the need to deconstruct the power relations.

"Pushback the pushback." Dignified menstruation cannot be a development project, it has to be a movement building approach."

Laxman Belbase

He suggested adding the intersectional feminist approach needs to bring in forth the human rights aspect of dignified menstruation, rather than just limiting to the biological aspect. As it will limit the interventions to provision of sanitary products and miss the human rights perspective of the issue. He called for dignified menstruation to be made part and parcel of the human rights agenda. Session participants discussed about the importance of psycho-social and behavioural impact of menstrual discrimination, role of different stakeholders to ensure dignity during menstruation. The session ended with a film on a research project by Dignity without danger, funded by an Italian organisation 'Unraggioluce' meaning 'Ray of hope.'

Session 2: Menstrual dignity across the lifecycle: Puberty to menopause

Moderator: Merina Ranjit, Nepal

Keynote Speaker: Inge Patsch, Austria

Panellists: Pasang Tamang, Nepal; Rajan Raj Pandey, Nepal; Jaydeep Mandal, India, Helen Kemp, UK.

Inge Patsch: Inge started her keynote speech with sharing about the importance of embracing empowering menstruation rituals, not neglecting the menstruators. She called for a cradle to grave approach, in a dignified

way and embracing the flow of life. Inge highlighted the important role of education in achieving the aim of dignified menstruation for all. She reminded about the important role of midwives and the need to revive it, as midwives not only provide practical support, they also provide emotional support to women with regards to post pregnancy menstruation.

Pasang Tamang: Pasang introduced herself as someone from North Nepal Tamang community. She grew up in a family and community where there were no restrictions placed on girls and women during menstruation. However, there was no platform for menstruators to share about issues faced during menstruation. She shared an experience of an auxiliary nurse midwife who had a dehumanising experience, due to the ingrained misconceptions and taboo about impurity of menstruation. She urged for connecting menstruators and non-menstruators with the correct knowledge and supportive environment. She talked about the role of schools in achieving dignified menstruation. Although school curriculum includes lessons on anatomy and reproductive health, teachers are not comfortable teaching on the subject due to the taboo. There is a lack of safe space to discuss about menstruation, let alone dignity. To prevent girls missing on school during menstruation, there should be menstruation friendly toilets in schools, access to menstrual products in schools. She also emphasised on having a platform where girls, as well as boys, teachers can freely talk about menstruation.

Rajan Raj Pandey: Rajan has been working on WASH for several years and shared about how dignity during menstruation should be embedded into his work area. He highlighted on key issues that disallows dignity during menstruation, these include: distance between toilet and homes, and workplaces as well as distance between men's and women's toilets too close to each other. This makes menstruators vulnerable against social crimes and accidents. He also shared other infrastructure related issues like lack of proper lighting, access to water in toilets and shower rooms, ventilation, porous walls, graffiti, vectors and reptiles, lack of doors or locks, lack of proper waste disposal system for public toilets. All these barriers force girls and women to choose more outdoor spaces which are not safe. Rajan also highlighted that public toilets are not disabled or child friendly. He suggested ways of incorporating dignified toilets in schools at policy level. Although there is a policy in Nepal and some schools have dignified menstruation friendly toilets in schools. However, there was a need for more investment by the government to cover all schools in the country.



Policy recommendations for including dignified menstruation in WASH:

Rajan Pandey suggested the following policy recommendations:

- 1) awareness amongst elderly;
- 2) girls and women shouldn't be separated during menstruation;
- 3) men and boys can play imp role in removing the taboo;
- 4) involve local communities in West Nepal before dismantling menstrual huts;
- 5) changes in law by making more stricter punishment for perpetrators of gender-based violence and crime;
- 6) design and number of toilets available should be changed to make them menstruator friendly.
- 7) mobilise faith leaders and traditional healers to raise awareness;
- 8) better waste disposal facilities.

Jaydeep Mandal: Jaydeep is a social innovator; he focussed on 3 main components to ensure dignified menstruation for menstruators in the sanitary products sector.

- *Bucket of products:* cloth sanitary pads, disposable pads, tampons, menstrual cup, and menstrual undergarments.
- *Informed choice:* The use should have the correct, unbiased, scientific information about the products. As all products have their merits and demerits and these need to be explained to the service users for them to take an informed decision.
- *Freedom of choice:* Service users should have freedom of choice, rather than being told which product will be better for them. Menstruators should have freedom of choice between different menstrual hygiene management products, based on their personal need, social and economic situation. A single service user can choose to use multiple products during the single menstrual period.

Jaydeep highlighted some key challenges with regards to menstrual product baskets in schools:

- 1) Safe and hygienic disposal of menstrual products is a challenge. Currently the cost of disposal is higher than the cost of the actual product, particularly those products made from plastic. There is a need for eco-friendly ways of disposal of menstrual products.
- 2) Vending machines of menstrual napkins in schools might face an issue with maintenance and keeping the stock availability.

He suggested education of girls about what is available, and developing affordable and accessible solutions for dignified menstruation, and these need to be shared with menstruators.

Helen Kemp: Helen is the founder of Menopause Café, a charity based in Scotland. It works across the globe, provides a platform to talk on menopause. Helen highlighted the impact of menopause on women's mental and emotional health; however this is not talked about enough. She said that without dignified menstruation it is difficult to achieve the goal of dignified menopause. She recommended open discussions on menopause. In the UK, during the last 5 years, there has been a significant shift in the discourses around menopause. This has been possible due to high-profile personalities speaking up about it, like Michelle Obama and Oprah Winfrey. She shared that body period positivity is being talked about by young people by using social media. The menopause cafes have well received in rural areas as compared to the inner cities.

“Resist the urge to remain silent and urge to shout. There is a need for consistent, calm, persistent, powerful and compassionate voices.”

Helen Kemp

Panellists also discussed about the role of media and highlighted the need for media to be brought on the same page as in the activists. Media is very important, to spread the message, particularly in the current digital age. However, panellists highlighted the challenge of lack of enough research being done by media platforms before publishing anything, as it has an impact on the readers/viewers.

Session 2: Menstruation and multiple pandemics

Moderator: Archana Patkar

Panellists: Inga Winkler (Keynote Speaker), USA; Sophie Cousins, Reporter South Asia; Sneha Rooh, India; Roshani Tuiti, Nepal; Ramnaresh Yadav, Nepal

Inga Winkler: Inga started her keynote speech by saying how the current Covid-19 pandemic has brought forth huge disparities in terms of age, gender, race, ethnicity, place of residence etc.

"Most policies focus on menstrual products, hygiene and some education, but hardly anything is included with a human rights lens. It is mainly pad and the plumbing, with a very narrow and sanitised understanding of human rights and menstruation."

Inga Winkler

She talked about challenges in convincing policy makers to include menstruation as a human rights and the fact that it has been mentioned in the policy documents at the Security Council only on two occasions. She stressed on how dignified menstruation as a human rights issue is much broader than the current limited understanding. Further elaborating, she said that it includes human right to education, work, safe and healthy working conditions, and freedom of religious and cultural rights, freedom to take part in public life. She recommended combating myths and misinformation, with non-judgemental, accurate and accessible information. Inga further discussed how menstrual discrimination and stigma intersects with other forms of discrimination and stigma. It overlaps with migratory communities, homeless, heavy focus on school going girls, but missing out on those out of school. Menstrual health of marginalised populations, acknowledgement of women who do not menstruate, needs Trans, non-binary, gender non-confirming is ignored. She emphasised on a participatory approach, where menstruators take a decision of their own health and life, enabling menstruators to deal with menstruation the way they like, and not to be negatively impacted in their daily lives. Not just choosing menstrual hygiene products, but to make decisions about which cultural activities to follow and which ones not to follow. Inga focussed on the need for: 1) Autonomy – voice, dignity, self-worth; and 2) Accountability – states have a range of obligations including creating enabling environment, menstrual literacy, period friendly workplaces, tackling gender stereotypes. She called for shifting the human rights discourse towards comprehensively addressing mental health and stigma and prioritising those who are usually left behind, free of judgement and constraints.



Roshani Tuiti: Roshani, who is the Chief Nursing Administrator, with ministry of Health, Nepal, shared experiences of delivering nursing services on the ground during the current pandemic. She said that nurses have found it difficult using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during pandemic, particularly when they are in their menses. Nurses find it exceedingly difficult to change menstrual pads and using the toilets as they need

to have adequate of fluids. Nurses have reported using triple sanitary napkins or use menstrual cups. Taking these issues into account, Roshani has developed new way of working, introducing 4-hour shift work with direct contact with patients and the remaining 4 hours for administrative work. This gives them the required respite and rest and do not have to continuously wear PPE for long work hours. Roshani highlighted the issue of PPE kit designs during emergencies as well as non-emergency situations, not considering needs of men and women as well as the climatic conditions of different countries. She shared a good practice example from Nepal where it has developed and agreed a minimum service standard, for an enabling environment for menstrual hygiene, right from isolation centres (harm reduction) availability of water. Throughout the health system in Nepal, these minimum service standards for menstrual hygiene are included in health services from health posts, to hospitals.

Ramnaresh Yadav: Ramnaresh shared about the work carried out by Good Neighbours International in Nepal, working with children. He shared about their work of distributing MHM (Menstrual Hygiene Management) and dignity kits in schools during the pandemic. He highlighted the need for family support to school going adolescents during menstruation, impact of COVID-19 Pandemic, on pregnant women and lactating mothers. He shared how his organisation adapted their strategy of reaching out to adolescents during the pandemic by using online awareness raising, via mobiles, radio, quizzes, pictorial resources as well as organising online discussions.

Sneha Rooh: Sneha is a palliative physician and somatic psychologist and runs an organisation named Orikalankini. Her organisation's aim is to change the narrative around menstruation and stigma through art, theatre and dialogue. They focus on:

1. Ethno cultural perspective of menstruation – how it has changed with time and space.
2. Earth centric practices, earth honouring practices.
3. Inclusion – non-binary

Sneha's organisation has been able to achieve two things during the current pandemic: 1) online training of washable cloth pad making, 2) fund raising and developing an application that brings manufacturers of washable cloth pads and donors on a single platform. These were not possible before the pandemic, it made the community think and respond in a different way.

"Feminism is a practice, adaptability is crucial... we are not in nature but we are nature and these situations call us for us to step up and adapt."

Sneha Rooh

During the pandemic, they delivered training on making washable cloth pads, through their campaign 'Pads that last'.

Sophie Cousins: Sophie shared about her work and experiences on media's coverage on menstruation. She said that menstruation has been reported a lot in past few years, and there is a shift in the coverage. Ending period poverty is covered in media, as it affects everyone. But currently it has been difficult to cover issues that are not related to COVID-19, pandemic or gender-based violence during pandemic. Media is no longer interested in covering news that is not sensational or sexy. She highlighted some of the issues facing media coverage on the human rights discourse, saying that more attention is paid on the global south and issues that have tangible solutions like period poverty, rather than policy attention on the shadow epidemic of gender-

based violence. Given this current scenario, the Human rights conventions, and Universal declaration around personal freedom, dignity and human rights are far away from fruition.

The feminist and the queer movement have been working hand in hand for a very long time to fight against patriarchy. The feminist struggle is about plurality and embracing diversity.

For putting dignified menstruation at the centre, Sophie recommended putting the communities at the centre of storytelling in media, building trust, rather than going with a pre-conceived notion about the communities they are reporting. It is very important to decolonise development and become better in reporting and hold themselves accountable.

Day 3: 10th December, 2020

Session 1: Is Menstrual dignity of political interest?

Moderator: Madhusudan Subedi

Panellists: Gagan Thapa, MP Nepal; Bimla Rai Paudyal, MP Nepal; Commissioner Helen Connolly, Australia.

Gagan Thapa: Gagan called for a change in mindsets and spoke about the reasons for paradoxes in the political discourse on dignified menstruation. He gave an example of two categories of politicians: 1) those who lead a different public life than their personal life. Their public life statements are different from their personal beliefs and their family practices around dignified menstruation. 2) second category of politicians are those who do not want to come out of their comfort zone. They accept the norm and do not want to challenge the inhuman cultural practices and taboo on menstruation. With regards to parliamentarians' involvement in discussions on dignified menstruation, Gagan's experience as a parliamentarian and ex-minister of health showed that very few members of parliament took active interest in these discussions. He said that there have been some positive steps already been taken by the Ministry of health, this includes making menstrual pads available for free and its inclusion in the essential drugs/items list as well as embedding health messages amongst girls and boys within the role of the community nurse. Policy discourses in the development sector have kept dignified menstruation in the periphery and it fails to connect it with economic issues, or equality, education.

Helen Connolly: Helen started her talk by highlighting that dignified menstruation is a human rights and child rights issue. She called for stronger advocacy or influencing public policy. She shared some key findings from two surveys conducted in South Australia on menstruation. The survey found that period poverty was a huge issue amongst school going girls, many girls were missing school and there was a lack of information available to them on menstruation in schools. Discrimination, taboo, no conversation on a personal, family, community and school life made it even more difficult for the young girls. The survey showed that menstruation was considered a peripheral issue compared to economic development. She said that currently, menstruation is considered a very private affair in her country and there no law yet that bring discrimination during menstruation under the purview of law. The reason being that the law-making structure is traditionally led by white male middle aged and called upon the need to bring in more diversity amongst law makers. She gave examples of countries like New Zealand and Scotland that have taken lead in addressing period poverty. Multi-pronged pressure and initiatives from law makers, education institutions, and private businesses have started in Australia and will become a ground for progress in addressing this issue.

“Quote ‘All public policy is a paradox, always a compromise.’

Helen Connolly

Dr. Bimla Rai Paudyal: Bimala shared her personal experience of isolation during menstruation and its impact on her psychological wellbeing and the feeling of disempowerment as a girl, leaving a lifetime imprint. She called for urgently bringing dignified menstruation as part of the political discourses. She strongly urged politicians to become role models and start from their own families. She questioned the status quo, ‘how can this be a personal issue, when so many girls, women are being disempowered?’ Although the government of Nepal has criminalised discrimination during menstruation, she said that to bring real change, people need to start from their own homes. Bimala called upon the State to be proactive in bringing a change, it can’t wait anymore, and raise awareness on how discrimination during menstruation is hampering country’s economy, family life and the country’s image in the world.

Session 2: An old Call – New Actions? What should we stop? Do differently? Do better?

Moderator: Archana Patkar

Archana asked the participants and panellists present, to share their 3 key takeaways from this 3-day workshop.

Sheel Belbase: A young person from USA said that menstruation is a natural process and there is no reason for shame and stigma. He said, “The role of boys is to stop the stigma and discrimination, let’s start right now to change the world for a better future for all girls and women.”

Sudha from UK said that together we can change and urged everyone to break the silence. She congratulated Radha Paudel and all the speakers.

Mili said that there was a lot of learning from all the speakers, evolution must happen now. Time will come and time will change. Menstrual discrimination is a human rights violation.

Esther said that including religious and traditional leaders in the conversations and raising awareness; collaborations with other stakeholders; government policies to be benchmarked and learn from other policy changes made by different countries to achieve dignified menstruation.

Following this, all participants and panellists were invited to take part in a live survey on ‘Mentimeter’ and 63 participants completed the survey.

The survey results had interesting findings, some of key words in included below list:



◆ What do you think will end the stigma against menstruation/menopause?

- ✓ Empowering menstruators, while engaging non-menstruators, education at all levels – home, community
- ✓ Holistic approach while designing interventions
- ✓ Having an open dialogue
- ✓ Change in structural, cultural discrimination
- ✓ Intersectoral coordination

◆ What should we stop doing to ensure dignity for all menstruators?

- ✓ Whispering
- ✓ Fearing
- ✓ Shaming
- ✓ Silence
- ✓ Judging
- ✓ Blind faith
- ✓ Being a flag bearer of patriarchy
- ✓ Making it a big deal, it is normal is breathing
- ✓ Respect, love and speak up against discriminatory practices
- ✓ Question yourself

◆ What should we start doing to ensure dignity for all menstruators?

- ✓ Normalise it
- ✓ Empowerment through education
- ✓ Start having a dialogue, from home and then at community, national and international levels
- ✓ Respect, support and break the silence
- ✓ Provide resources
- ✓ There is no life without menstruation
- ✓ Bring changes at interpersonal, intrapersonal and structural levels

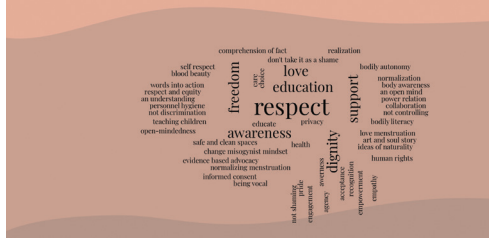
◆ What should we continue or, do more of for dignified menstruation/menopause?

- ✓ Continuous engagement, dialogue, education, research good practices
- ✓ Deconstruct heteronormativity and white saviour mentality
- ✓ Spreading positive messages on menstruation

◆ What is essential for dignified menstruation?

- ✓ Love
- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Education – body literacy
- ✓ Awareness
- ✓ Human rights
- ✓ Change in misogynistic mindsets
- ✓ Body autonomy

What is essential for dignified menstruation?



- ✓ Dignity
- ✓ Normalising menstruation
- ✓ Evidence-based advocacy

Archana Patkar, in her closing remarks asked everyone to not forget those who started the journey of equality before us and every voice is important. She urged everyone not to have the north south divide and include the diverse needs of communities. Human dignity and respect for diversity is essential and all stakeholders should be open about it, it will take centre stage and not limited to celebrities but listening to rural and people living in remote places, with different identities. She requested all to shun the silos, and come together and not through the projects, but through love respect and dignity.

Final session: Closing ceremony, lead by National Human Right Commission

Moderator: Manju Khatiwada, NHRC, Nepal

Session Chair: Laxman Belbase

Manju started the closing ceremony by wishing everyone National Human Rights Day. She invited Samiksha Koirala to summarise the key discussions that took place during the 3-day international workshop.

Samiksha Koirala: Samiksha summarised the following key points discussed during the last 3 days:

- 1) Breaking the silence;
- 2) Menstrual dignity across the lifecycle, and as a political concern.
- 3) Menstrual inequalities and north v/s south discourse;
- 4) Experiences of panellists on menstruation, launch of the book;
- 5) Menstrual discrimination is common across all the countries; the degree of stigma might vary;
- 6) Inequalities from intersectional perspectives, from the eyes of colonial feminism, black feminism, sexual and gender minorities, people with disabilities, ethnicity, race, religion, caste, but this all needs to be brought under one umbrella, that is dignified menstruation. And accept that menstrual discrimination, taboo and guilt exist.

All the panellists and participants were invited to endorse a 12-point Declaration and call for action for reframing the menstrual movement with Dignity at its centre. The declaration was read out by Samiksha and supported by all with a round of applause. (Appendix 2)

Laxmi Ghalan: Laxmi, a LGBTQI activist passionately shared about the lack of inclusion of the LGBTQI communities in the 16-day campaign, which focuses only on men and women. Laxmi drew the attention of participants about the various forms of discrimination against the LGBTQI community and called for more inclusive policies.

Najbul Khan: Najbul, a Muslim women activist from Udaypur district of Nepal, called for the government to develop gender friendly budgets and take action to empower women to take leadership positions. She demanded free sanitary pads to be made available to all menstruators and actions to focus on education for girls in rural areas.

Pratima Gurung: Pratima is an academic activist for Indigenous women with disabilities. She could not join at last moment due to health issue.

Gobinda Shahi: Gobinda highlighted that the menstruation discrimination in Western part of Nepal was exacerbated by the lack of investment in the area by the government. He drew the participants and the government of Nepal about the drawback of the budget allocation system in the country, which is based on population rather than basing it on remoteness of the area and every human being should be supported.

Babukaji Shrestha: partner organisation – all countries have united to bring a stop to any form of discrimination around menstruation. Generated common understanding of dignified menstruation. Multi-pronged, holistic approach has been key outcome of this workshop. The reason

Sita Niroula: Sita from the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior citizens shared her views on discrimination during menstruation and commitment to support the global movement on bringing dignified menstruation to the forefront, on behalf of the Ministry. She reiterate the activities and commitment as Hon. Minister expressed during the inauguration session, 8th December 2021.

Kabindra Bikram Kargi: Kabindra from Ministry of Water supply congratulated everyone for organising and participating in this workshop. He highlighted the technological perspective, without of which the vision of dignified menstruation cannot be achieved. He highlighted the importance of Dignified Menstrual Hygiene Management (DMHM) friendly facilities at home, public places and workplace. The Ministry of water supply plans to organise a consultative workshop on MHM infrastructure facilities. The ministry has drafted a policy and plan of action, which has had good impact on WASH facilities in schools; they are the vanguards in the country. He asked participants and all stakeholders to review all the traditional practices before they are labelled as 'bad' and eradicating them, for example the traditional practice of 'Kora' meaning quarantine has become a norm in the current pandemic.

Gopinath Mainali: Gopinath Secretary, Ministry of Education Nepal and stressed on the fact that education is a powerful tool to reduce the superstitions and cultural taboos. The Education ministry has included dignified menstruation in school curriculum, made a provision of mandatory pad distribution in government schools, arranged for complaint boxes to improve the services and arranged for school nurses in all government schools. He suggested mainstreaming dignified menstruation as part of the of the National Planning commission so that it covers all the relevant ministries and departments to ensure that it is addressed in a multi-pronged way.

Mahendra Shrestha: Mahendra, the organiser of National Human Rights magna meet in his remarks congratulated everyone for this second international workshop on dignified menstruation. He paid a special vote of thanks for Radha Paudel and her dedication. Mahendra shared about his role in leading the process of mainstreaming dignified menstruation within the policies of Ministry of health and population. Jointly with the PM office, Ministry of Finance and the Planning Commission of Nepal, they were able to develop guidelines for quality standards, school health nurse curriculum and training. Since 2000 Nepal government has been working on promotion of reproductive and adolescent health. Alongwith the development partners, they have developed policies, after learning from the loss, of the country's mothers and girls during menstruation. He reiterated Ministry of Health and population's commitment to keeping dignified menstruation at the centre of sexual and reproductive health.

Gyanendra Kumar Yadav: Minister Gyanendra Kumar from Province 2 was the chief guest of this closing session of the workshop. His speech focussed on the constitutional provisions to respect the human rights

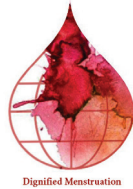
of women. He promised formulating women friendly laws and provision of involving women in 50% places in all sectors. He extended cooperation and collaboration from his ministry to achieve the aims of GSCDM.

The moderator Manju and Chair of this closing session Laxman thanked all the partner organisations, participants for their thoughtful insights to take to the agenda of Dignified menstruation forward and continue solidarity to make the vision a success.

Closing Remarks: Laxman Belbase thanked all the contributors, who have tirelessly worked to make this international workshop on dignified menstruation a reality. He is positive and confident about all the aims and recommendations included in the word cloud on Mentimeter to reach its fruition with the joint efforts of all participants. He saluted Radha Paudel for her vision, anchoring the conversation, giving space to the voices from the Global South, to ensure those voices are not lost.

Annexes

Annex I: Programme Schedule



”State of free from any forms of stigma, restrictions, discrimination, abuses and violence associated with menstruation”
Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation

Program Schedule
2nd International Dignified Menstruation Day (8 December 2020)
&
International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation 2020 (8-10 December 2020)
Pre-registration online available from 23rd November 2020
Registration Link for Zoom ID: <https://tinyurl.com/GSCDM2020>

Nepal Time	Activities	Remarks
First Day, Tuesday: 8 December 2020		
8.15-8.30	Coffee Online – Checking connection/Tech support Housekeeping Sign Language will be available for all sessions	Bring your coffee and check your connection
8.30-9.50	Putting dignity at the centre	
	Kamla Bhasin, India (keynote speaker) Nandar (Nandu Gywali), Myanmar Stephen Marwa, Tanzania Mili Adhikari, USA ManMaya Pangeni Bhattarai, Nepal	Archana Patkar, India
Break: 10 Minutes		
	Formal Inauguration: 2	

- 1 *She is institutional memory for drafting the dignified menstruation guideline while working in Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen*
- 2 *Protocol may change after finalization of the program*

10.00-10.05	Chair: GSCDM, Radha Paudel National Anthem	Moderation: Samiksha Koirala, Nepal
10.05-10.15	Welcome Speech	Bed Bhatrai, Secretary, NHRC
10.15-10.20	Inaugural Song: Singer, Women with disability, Rural, Survivor of menstrual Hut	Jhupri Bhandari, Nepal
10.20-10.35	Experience Sharing: Activist, Founding member of GSCDM	Esther, Uganda
10.35-10.40	Musical video Dignity	Laxman Rijal, Film Director
10.40-10.45	Experience Sharing: Activist, Founding member of GSCDM	Anna/Indonesia
10.45-10.50	Diane Danzebrink	UK
10.50-10.55	Book Launch: <i>Dignified Menstruation, A Practical Handbook</i> 1. Hon. Minister Giriraj Mani Pokharel, Ministry of Education 2. Hon. Minister Parbat Gurung, Ministry of Communication and Information 3. Hon. Minister Lilanath Shrestha, Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen 4. Hon. Niru Devi Pal, Chair Women and Social Development committee 5. Hon. MP. Binda Pandey 6. Hon. MP. Bimala Rai Paudyal 7. Bed Bhatrai, Secretary, National Human Right Commission 8. Bandana Rana, Vice-chair, CEDAW committee 9. Radha Paudel, Editor of the Book	
10.55-11.00	Remarks: Radha Paudel	
11.00-11.03	Remarks: Private Sectors role for Dignified Menstruation	Nirvana Chaudhary, M.D. Chaudhary Foundation
11.03-11.06	Remarks: Role of CEDAW for Dignified Menstruation	Bandana Rana, Vice-chair, CEDAW committee
11.06-11.09	Remarks: Role of National Women Commission	: Shanta Bhattarai, National Women Commission
11.09-11.12	Remarks: Role of Political Leaders	MP Anita Devkota, National Assembly
11.12-11.17	Review of the book:	Hon. MP. Binda Pandey
11.17-11.20	Remarks:	Hon. MP. Bimala Rai Paudyal

11.20-11.25	Remarks:	Hon. Minster Dala Rawal, Social Development, Karnali Province
11.25-11.28	Remarks:	Hon. Niru Devi Pal, Chair Women and Development committee
11.28-11.31	Remarks:	Hon. Minister Parbat Gurung, Ministry of Communication and Information
11.31-11.36	Remarks:	Hon. Minister Giriraj Mani Pokharel, Ministry of Education
11.36-11.46	Remarks: Chief Guest	Hon. Minister Lilanath Shrestha, Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen
11.46-11.50	Closing	
Second Day, Wednesday: 9 December 2020		
8.10-8.30	Videos of partners, supporters	
8.30-9.50	Dignity is key for psychosomatic development	Moderator: Mili Adhikari, USA
	David Baron, USA (keynote speaker) 1. Prabha, USA, Peace, Mediation, Emotional Intelligence 2. Jane Bennett, Australia 3. Laxman Belbase, USA	
Break: 10 minutes		
10.00-11.20	Menstrual dignity across the lifecycle: Puberty to menopause	Moderator : Merina Ranjit, Nepal
	Inge Pastch, Austria. Key Note Speaker 1. Helen Kump, UK 2. Jaydeep Mandal, India 3. Pasang D. Tamang, Nepal 4. Rajan Raj Pandey, Nepal 3	
Break: 10 minutes		
11.30-12.50	Menstruation and multiple pandemics	Moderator: Archana Patkar

³ Retired joint secretary who led the process of policy drafting of dignified menstruation, 2017, Ministry of Water Supply

	Inga Winkler, USA, Key Note Speaker 1. Sophie Cousin, Australia (reporter of South Asia) 2. Sneha Rooth, India 3. Roshani Tuiti, Nepal 4. Ram Naresh Yadav, Nepal	
12.50-1.00	Closing of the second day	
Nepal Time	Activities	Remarks
Third Day, Thursday: 10 December 2020		
8.15-8.30	Songs, Poems, documentaries focusing on dignified menstruation	
8.30-9.50	Is Menstrual dignity of political interest?	Moderator: Madhusudan Subedi
	1. Bimala Rai Paudyal, Nepal 2. Helen Connolly, Australia 3. Gagan Thapa, Nepal	
Break: 10 minutes		
10.00-11.00	An old Call – New Actions? What should we stop? Do differently? Do better?	Moderator: Archana Patkar
Break: 10 Minutes		
11.00-12.00	Closing- National Human Right Commission	
11.00-11.02	Charing of the session- GSCDM	Moderator Manju Khatiwada, NHRC
11.02-11.10	Presentation: Call for Action	Samiksha Koirala
11.10-11.12	Endorsement of the Declaration	All
11.12-11.17	Remarks: Mahendra Shrestha	Mahendra Shrestha Chief Specialist
11.17-11.20	Remarks: Indigenous, Disable Right Activist	Pratima Gurung , Activist, Chair of NIDWAN
11.20-11.23	Remarks: LGBTQI Activist	Laxmi Ghalan, Mitini Nepal
11.23-11.26	Remarks: Muslim Women Activist	Najbul Khan, Udayapur
11.26-11.30	Remarks : Solidarity Partner	Govinda Shahi, Chair, Magna Meet
11.30-11.33	Remarks : Supporting Partner: Representative	BabuKaji Shrestha
11.33-11.36	Remarks : NHRI- Representative	
12.36-11.40	Remarks: Women Ministry	Sita Niraula, Under Secretary

11.40-11.43	Remarks : Ministry of Water Supply	Kabindra Bikram Karki Chief of Training Department
11.43-11.47	Remarks : Ministry of Education,	Gopi Mainali, Secretary
11.47-11.52	Chief Guest: Province 2: Hon. Minister	Hon. Minister, Gyanendra Kumar Yadav, Social Development Ministry
11.52-11.55	Vote of thanks	NHRC
11.55-12.00	Closing Remarks: GSCDM	Laxman Belbase Secretariat, GSCDM
	Thank you Music	

Annex 2: Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

10 December 2020

KATHMANDU

With the objective of ensuring the dignity of menstruators in all their diversity across the life course, the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Nepal, in association with the National Human Right Commission and Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, convened the 2nd International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation. The three-day event focused on encouraging the menstrual movement globally, to listen to and amplify the unheard stories and experiences of menstruators in their own voices.

The theme of the workshop was 'Menstrual Talk, Dignity first'. The three-day workshop, which concluded on Thursday, brought together around 1,000 participants from more than 30 countries. The discussions went beyond the sector discussions around water and sanitation and sexual and reproductive rights, awareness raising and menstrual products - to reclaim a space to listen to and learn from menstruators' voices globally. The workshop featured discussions on the dignity of menstruators from various perspectives, including 'putting dignity at the center,' 'psychosomatic development of dignity,' 'menstrual dignity across the life cycle, dignified menstruation and multiple pandemics and menstrual dignity as a political concern'.

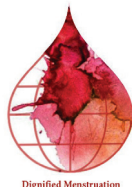
The speakers represented several sectors, including academia, media, government, international organisations and civil society. During the inauguration, a lyrical video entitled 'dignity' and a book entitled 'Dignified Menstruation: A Practical Handbook' was also launched. The book features 40 contributors from 22 countries, an important contribution to the narrative on dignified menstruation at the individual, family, social and global level.

The government of Nepal is committed to ensuring the dignity of menstruators. Honorable ministers from the Government of Nepal including Lilanath Shrestha from the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Parbat Gurung from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and Hon. Gyanendra Kumar Yadav, from Ministry of Law; Province 2, stated their commitment to achieving tangible results in policy and practice across all levels. Honorable parliamentarians Gagan Thapa, Binda Pandey, Anita Devkota and Bimala Rai Poudel issued an urgent call for political will to acknowledge menstrual discrimination as a form of gender-based violence and violation of human rights. Speaking at the event, the Founder of Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, Radha Paudel, said, "Each menstruator deserves dignity throughout their life-cycle and the workshop was successful in bringing various issues of menstruation under the umbrella of Dignified Menstruation."

The three days of discussion ended with a Call to Action (Annex 3).

Annex 3: Declaration and Call for Action

2nd International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation, Kathmandu, Nepal



Menstrual blood enables the circle of human life. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Simply by being human, all people deserve respect. Human rights naturally spring from that dignity. Across their life course, menstruators are discriminated against – and this stigmatization does not stop with menopause! This is a manifestation of a deeply unequal world order, determined by power inequalities and patriarchal value systems, denying us our basic freedoms manifested in deep rooted discrimination against menstruators in all their diversity.

The dignified menstruation movement proposes a foundational agenda based on Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Social Justice underpinned by the voices, stories and pride of menstruators in all their diversity. It particularly embraces plurality, gender diversity and disability and commits to respect, listening and learning across the human life course.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Nepal in association with the National Human Right Commission and Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation convened the 2nd International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation around the theme, of ‘Menstrual Talk, Dignity first’ from December 8-10, 2020. The discussions stayed away from sector silos – WASH, SRHR, Education, products and plumbing - to reclaim a space to listen to and learn from the voices of menstruators globally over three days. These conversations resulted in the following call to action.

We call on women, men and gender non-confirming individuals in all their diversity to collectively:

- **Redefine the narrative** on menstruation, from charity to human rights, hygiene to dignity, impure to life giving, from five days to a life course approach.
- **Protect one’s fundamental rights to human dignity, not allowing anyone to deny or stigmatize these** and thereby fully own and embrace the right to menstruate with dignity.
- **Delink dignity in menstruation from global efforts to colonize, own, direct or subvert the narrative** so that every menstruator has the fundamental right to menstruate freely and with pride in their choices during periods or when they stop having them.
- **Stitch together different sector silos:** Menstruators do not live their life in sector silos of health, education, livelihoods or water and sanitation but rather call for a holistic human-centred life cycle

approach.

- **Walk the talk of human dignity with and by men and boys:** Non-menstruators, take responsibility to dismantle the root causes of stigma, discrimination and violence experienced by menstruators at the hands of individuals, institutions and ideologies. Men and boys listen and learn with humility, respect and support the voices and choices of women and girls and gender diverse menstruators with humility, appreciation and commitment.
- **Don't be shy- menstrual indignity is a manifestation of patriarchy. Refuse it and fight it!** To transform patriarchal unequal power dynamics and realities, we must recognize the diversity of women's intersecting realities, challenges, and needs, and pass on the baton of leadership especially to young women and girls, in all their diversity.
- **Tell the story far and wide to redefine research as we know it:** By listening to menstruator's experiences and voices we can expand and rightfully ground an increasingly monetized evidence base that is inaccessible to many.
- **Turn media stereotypes on their head:** counter the oft reported images of helpless, weak, abused menstruators by offering a broader perspective and moving the spotlight to the silent, unsensational, centuries-old abuse and violence.
- **Seek intergenerational investment to change hearts and minds as opposed to short term project funding** as an investment in human dignity itself.
- **Democratize information and stories in myriad languages** to build the movement, political will and the demand for ensuring dignity in menstruation.
- **Recognize and fight menstrual discrimination and indignity as symptomatic of a widely tolerated, silent pandemic** of gender based violence and inequality that continues across the life course of women and girls and non-binary, gender diverse people denying them a full and free life.
- **Develop, where necessary, and implement, where already present, progressive legislative and policy frameworks** at national, regional and international levels, to end stigma, discrimination and abuse of menstruators in all their diversity in public and private settings. Allocate dedicated resources to ensure implementation of and accountability to these frameworks and the institutionalization of these principles in line with national and global commitment to human rights, gender equality and social justice.



Ministry of Women,
Children and Senior Citizen



National Human Right
Commission



Global South Coalition
For Dignified Menstruation

Appendix 4: List of Partner Organizations

1. AAI, AffRO-ASIATISCHES INSTITUT Salzburg, Austria
2. Aakar Innovation, India
3. Aawaj, Nepal
4. Africa Foundation for Community DEVT, Empowering communities (AFCOD), Uganda
5. African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management, Africa
6. AmplifyChange, UK
7. Asia Pacific Resources and Researches Center for Women, Malaysia
8. BHOORE, Nepal
9. Bignaharta Nepal
10. BL Nepali
11. C+Cognition, Philippines
12. Career Disha Nepal
13. Chalice Foundation, Australia
14. Chaudhary Group, Nepal
15. Chhauapdi, USA
16. Community Information Network, Nepal
17. Congress Event Management, Austria
18. Dignity Without Danger, UK
19. Everest Times, UK
20. Fire and Ice, Nepal
21. Feminist Alliance for Rights, Center for Global Women's Leadership, USA
22. Gift For Girls, Nepal
23. Girls NOT Brides, UK
24. Global Action Nepal
25. Good Neighbors International
26. Gurkha Media, UK
27. Hami Daju Bhai, Nepal
28. Hope Foundation Nepal
29. IYAFP International Youth Alliance for Family Planning, Nepal
30. Juri Nepal
31. Kawempe Youth Center, Uganda
32. KRDO, Pakistan
33. Magna Meet, Nepal
34. Manavta, Nepal/Canda
35. Mediators beyond the Borders, USA
36. MenEngage Alliance, Global



Note: few are missing in Photo.

37. Miles, Chile
38. MISSION SANSCAR, India
39. Miteri Jaibik Pad Utpadan Kendra, Nepal
40. Monon, Austria
41. Mukti Nepal
42. Mulbato Pratisthan, Nepal
43. Muldhar Mahila Seba Kendra, Nepal
44. Mutex Tech, Nepal
45. Nepal Redcross Society
46. NAFCA, USA
47. Nepalese Association of Florida, USA
48. Nyayako Lagi Sakriya Mahila Manch, Nepal
49. Orikalankini, India
50. Pahal Nepal
51. Periodska Kura, Nepal
52. PRO-SA, Ireland
53. Purple Feminist Group, Myanmar
54. RHEST Nepal
55. RISRDO, Pakistan
56. Rupantaran Nepal
57. Saaranagi News, Nepal
58. Samabaikash Nepal
59. Sangat, India
60. Sarbodaya Nepal
61. SoftNEP, Nepal
62. Social development Committee, Nepal
63. Social Service Center, Nepal
64. Somosmenstruantes, Peru
65. Sunaina Arta, Nepal
66. Unraggiodiluce, Italy
67. VHS, Bhaktapur, Nepal
68. VILUTHU, Sri Lanka
69. Women Security Pressure Group, Nepal
70. World link, Nepal
71. Yin Yan Yoga, Brazil