A Program completion report

of

World Social Forum 2024

"Dignified Menstruation: Decolonized the Menstrual movement and reimagining feminism"



February: 15-19, 2024





Radha Paudel Foundation/ Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DM	Dignified Menstruation
DMC Nepal	Dignified Menstruation Campaign Nepal
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
GSCDM	Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OBR	One Billion Rising
RPF	Radha Paudel Foundation
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Right
WSF	World Social Forum

Introduction

The World Social Forum is an annual meeting of civil society organizations, first held in Brazil in 2001 which offers a self-conscious effort to develop an alternative future through the championing of counter-hegemonic globalization. The WSF plays a crucial role as a key forum for fostering open and inclusive communication among various entities such as civil society organizations, social movements, trade unions, and individuals united against neoliberal globalization.

In 2024 World social Forum was held in Kathmandu, Nepal under the theme of "Another world is possible" from 15th-19th of February. In this particular iteration of the WSF, attention was directed towards a diverse range of urgent issues, spanning economic inequality, climate justice, labor, migration, caste discrimination, gender equality, peace, sustainable development, and more. The 16th edition of the WSF was begun with a solidarity march where the team of RPF/GSCDM has participated. The thematic assemblies and parallel sessions were held on 16th, 17th, and 18th February 2024. During the five-day event, over 50,000



Participated in solidarity march

participants from more than 1400 organizations spanning 98 countries marked their attendance virtually and in person at various concurrent events.

Background

Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation/<u>Radha Paudel Foundation</u> is working on Dignified Menstruation (DM) from the day of its establishment (2018) with the VISION of "Creating Regenerative Society where menstruators¹ and non-menstruators² live with the Dignity". It has been working on both national and global level. Globally, it has a global network <u>Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GCSDM</u>) and at national level, national network <u>Dignified Menstruation Campaign Nepal (DMC Nepal)</u>.

Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation/ Radha Paudel Foundation had also conducted a hybrid session on 16^{th} February 2024 at 11:30 AM – 1 PM on WSF entitled on **"Dignified Menstruation: Decolonized the Menstrual movement and reimagining feminism."** The session was hybrid parallel session where both physical and virtual participants were present.

¹ Menstruator are those who born with uterus and ovaries

² Non-menstruators are those who born without uterus and ovaries

Objectives

- 1. To start the dialogue on DM through the concept of Decolonization and feminism.
- 2. To highlight the importance of dignified menstruation in the sector of "Education."
- 3. To drive the attention of speakers and the audience towards the urgency of DM.
- 4. To enhance the connection with different international and national CSO.

Activities

Hybrid parallel session on Dignified Menstruation: Decolonized the Menstrual movement and reimagining feminism

Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation/ Radha Paudel Foundation had conducted Hybrid parallel session was at Nepal Law Campus on 16th on February from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm on the WSF. There were 66 total numbers of participants; among them 48 were physical participants and 18 joined through virtual platform.

The session was moderated by Mili Adhikari and featured five speakers from various parts of the globe: Harrison Mathews from Malawi (DM fellow 2023), Laura P from Colombia



Hybrid session on WSF

(Anthropologist and Historian), Dr. Radha Paudel from Nepal (Founder of GSCDM/RPF), Rewati Karki from Nepal (Disability rights activist), and Syda Samara Mortada from Bangladesh (DM fellow 2023). The session commenced with opening remarks³ from Dr. Radha Paudel, after which Mili Adhikari facilitated the discussion with the four panelists. The panel discussion consisted of four rounds, each addressing different questions.

- What is your motivation for speaking in this paeminism" mean to you?
- Tell us a little bit about the menstrual history innel today and what does "Decolonizing the Menstrual Movement and Reimagining Feminist your country and your local region.
- Have you seen any gaps in the current menstrual movement and the practice of feminism?

³ Mentioned in Annex

• So with those gaps in mind, are you ready to reimagine and recreate a new world? How do you see that happening and why do you think that is important for us to reimagine and recreate a new world?

Key messages

- Menstruation is considered as a disease or illness, which it is not, nor is it related to any hygiene practices.
- Different movements and campaigns have started from an early age, but there is no movement or campaign related to dignified menstruation. People are not discussing the dignity aspect; they are only addressing the surface level of menstruation. Menstrual discrimination is the root cause of all violence, patriarchy, and inequality.
- In Islam, "Napac" is used for menstruation, which means not being pure; you are not allowed to pray or read holy books.
- Many menstruators use pills to postpone menstruation, despite being aware of the side effects. Consequently, they do not allow their daughters to use these pills to stop or postpone menstruation.
- In Colombia, some cultures celebrate a girl's first menstruation, while others consider it risky and believe the girl is now eligible for marriage.
- The menstrual movement in Colombia has grown significantly, making menstruation more visible. The use of reusable menstrual products has helped break the taboos surrounding menstrual blood, along with the abolition of taxes on menstrual management and products. However, more changes are needed to eliminate the taboos and stigma associated with menstruation.
- Many disabled individuals have a hard time managing menstrual blood, and they also experience a lot of mental trauma each month in doing so, often receiving little support even from their own families.
- While there is significant work being done on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) issues and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), there has been little focus on menstruation. Menstrual discrimination is a major cause of SRHR issues, GBV, and violence, yet there is no allocation of budget for dignified menstruation. Therefore, government policies should be revisited to include menstruation and dignified menstruation.
- The media also plays an important role in advocating for menstruation and dignified menstruation.

Highlight the importance of dignified menstruation in the sector of "Education."

On 17th of February, behalf of GSCDM/RPF Dr. Radha Paudel took part in panel discussion⁴ in thematic event on Right to education is right to truth organized by Nepal Jesuit Social Institute- Fey Alegria Nepal in collaboration with forum of religious for justice and peace. It was took place in Ratna Rajya College at 3:45pm -5:15 pm. This⁵ discussion was more focused on bringing critical thinking through primary education in schools in order to enable them to find the truth before making decisions.



Dr. Radha Paudel as a speaker in Right to education is right to truth

Drive the attention of speakers and the audience towards the urgency of DM

RPF moderated the session on "Gender equality" in the series of workshops on toward universal social protection on 17th February at 2:30 pm in Yellow house organized by National Campaign for Women. It was a hybrid session in which Ms. Sapana Poudel, Program Coordinator of RPF moderated the session⁶ and there were five speakers: where Om Thapaliya cleared about the understanding of GE, Dr. Sundara Babu Nagappan (INHE) highlighted the impact of inequalities in the life of women, Dr, Isabel Otiz (Global Social Justice) addressed the current global



Moderated the session in Toward universal social protection

campaign for the right to social security and for social protection floor address the inequality issues of women, Ms. Dil Maya Bitalu (Dalit community.Nepal) shared her experienced on geographical inequality and Ms. Binda Thatal shared gender based violence case. At last way forward and linking gender equality with privatization of public services was given by Mabel Au, Hong Kong.

Connection with different NGOS/INGOS in WSF

The World Social Forum (WSF) serves as a platform for engaging with various organizations. Throughout the five days of the World Social Forum, our team actively interacted with diverse organizations from different



Participated in solidarity dinner meeting

⁴ Speech is mentioned in the Annex

⁵ Right to education is right to truth

⁶ Conclusion remark of moderation is shared in Annex

parts of the globe. The Radha Paudel Foundation (RPF) team also visited various stalls within the WSF venue. With this, as a part of building the connection and sharing of WSF, RPF participated in the exclusive Solidarity Dinner Meeting at Hotel Yellow Pagoda on February 16, 2024. The objectives of this meeting is to foster the deeper connections and to reenergize the spirits of the collective goals of Forum Asia in WSF

Furthermore, the RPF team actively participated in the One Billion Rising (OBR) event. During this initiative, they conducted sessions using various methods such as poems, music, dance, drama, human chains, and more.

Moreover, the RPF team joined a signature campaign facilitated by ActionAid Nepal and established connections with the Network of the Independent Commission for Human Rights in North Africa (CIDH Africa). They also engaged with the World Forum on Theology and Liberation, which focuses on the situation in Palestine under siege within the nexus of



Participated in OBR session

politics and religious rhetoric. We also get connect with Aashray Abhiyan an intiative of jan kalian gramin vikas samiti whose vision is to be voice for the voiceless and power of the powerless. They⁷ work for the right to shelter, right to food, right to livelihood sectors

In summary, the RPF team had a fruitful and enriching experience at the World Social Forum, actively participating in various discussions, events, and campaigns that align with our mission and values.

⁷ Aashray abhiyan

Annex

Photographs of WSF



Participation in opening of WSF



Hybrid parallel session Moderator and speakers



Participation in solidarity march



Physical participants in Dignified Menstruation session

Inaugural Remark of Dr. Radha Paudel in DM: Decolonizing menstrual movement and reimagining feminism

16th Feb 2024

Dear Friends,

Namaste, Salam Alaikum and good morning from the World Social Forum 2024 from Kathmandu Nepal.

As a founder and office of Secretariat of Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, it is my great honor and pleasure to welcome you here in Kathmandu for the session entitled

'Dignified Menstruation: decolonizing the menstrual movement and reimagining feminism'.

Firstly, on behalf of GSCDM, please accept my heartfelt congratulations, for having a session on dignified menstruation for thefirst time ever in 16 edition of the World Social Forum.

My Friends

Let me start by reminding you of the WSF's pledge 'Another World is Possible'. I repeat, 'Another World is Possible'.

How do you think the decolonized menstrual movement and a new form of feminism fit within our theme of `another world ispossible'?

(Pause...)

Many questions flooded my mind. You may call me crazy when you hear all the questions that came to my mind.

I ask you...

What kind of other world are we looking for? Why aren't you happy our current world and its perspectives of development or its incarnation of feminism?

Who will lead us into this other world? Or where will the margin of margin be in this other world?

What will the invisible destruction of peace look like in everyday life? And who will be the most affected in active wars like in Ukraine or Gaza or any pandemic or climate crisis and so on? Are you really working for another world?

If yes, do you think your current strategies and activities are aligned towards another world or reverse the effects of neo-liberalization, marginalization, climate crisis, and violence against girls, women and gender non-binary, inequality, food insecurity, war and so on.

You might say No.

(Pause....)

I do believe that you can.

That said, let's sow the seeds for the creation of another world now. The time is now. Let'snot waitfor another second.

1. Let's challenge our understanding of the word `gender'. Why you may ask, it is because the word gender includes equality and inclusion. If we use menstruation instead of gender, it categorizes people in two ways; menstruators and non-menstruators. Menstruators are people who are born with a uterus and ovaries and non-menstruators means peopleborn without them. This nomenclature expedites the inclusion either in ICU bed of pandemic or flood or earthquake or parliament or anywhere and allows space for menstruators with disabilities, indigenous people or Trans men or others who are born with a uterus and ovaries.

Because we can't imagine the place without the presence of menstruators.

- 2. Let's challenge the GESI or Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy. None of the GESI policies from UN to local level incorporate the discrimination associated with menstruation, menopause and its systemic and symptomatic impact throughout the life cycle of the menstruators in all diverse settings.
- 3. Let's challenge the definition of sexual and gender based violence. It does not acknowledged various forms of menstrual discrimination including taboos, stigma, shyness, abuses, violence, denial of resources and services due to menstruation.
- 4. Let's challenge the power and patriarchy. Often many of us blame to unequal power relationship and patriarchy for many things such as neo-liberalization or militarization, SGBV, climate crisis, human trafficking, lack of participation of women in peace and politics and so on. Here, do they acknowledge the underlying cause of unequal power relation and patriarchy that construct and reinforce menstrual discrimination since childhood.
- 5. Let's challenge caste discrimination. The abolition of the caste system is expedited if there is the incorporation of dialogue on dignified menstruation. Because the caste system embedded with religion and culture as like menstrual discrimination.
- 6. Let's also challenge the current Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights programs. Why is the global communitystruggling with stigma and violence when it comes to SRHR? Because they missed the menstrual dignity as apremise to it.
- 7. And, what about the Sustainable Development Goals? There are over 9 goals that couldn't achieve success without having menstrual dignity but who cares about it.
- 8. Let's challenge the current menstrual movement. Do the menstrual management, period poverty, menstrual health, tampon tax, or free distribution of menstrual pad programs address all forms of menstrual discrimination? Do they promote human rights or dignity of menstruators?

Menstrual dignity is an optimum and holistic approach that creates another world where all forms of people, especially marginalized individuals and communities, will be leading as we expected.

- 9. Do you think we can prevent hunger, malnutrition, or anemia without addressing menstrual dignity? No.
- 10. Could you assure climate justice without addressing the various forms of menstrual discrimination?
- 11. Last but not least, do you think the current democracy is inclusive? No because none of actors considermenstrual discrimination as a barrier for inclusive democracy.

Dear Friends, let's make our homes, schools, communities, workplaces, parliaments and everywhere dignified menstrual friendly in order to create the space for margin of the margin especially for menstruators in all diverse settings.

Before conclude, a last question – does this world Social Forum Dignified Menstruation friendly?

Let's deconstruct our understandings of power, menstrual movement and feminism. It's time to do so.

Thank you for your attention.

Right to Education is Right to Truth discussion of Dr. Radha Paudel

Feb 17, 2024 at 3.45 PM

Thank you so much Father Roy for having me here and for providing a comprehensive introduction. I amabsolutelyhonored andhumbled.

Namaste, Salam Alaikum and good evening from the World Social Forum 2024 being held in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Due to time constrains today, I will be short.

I am confident that you are all truly prepared to explore possibilities for a different world.We all agree with the theme of `Right to Education is Right to Truth'. It is one of the innovative concepts in the development and human rights discourse.

However, I am skeptical.

We all nod our heads yes at first, but most of us shy away from challenging ourselves when the opportunity presents itself. I say this because since 1948, we, the global community, have been talking about the right to education in both formal and informal ways across all sectors and levels. But we missed the Right to Education is Right to truth.

Therefore, our homes are not safe particularly for menstruators or people who are born with a uterus and ovaries. They experience various forms of menstrual discrimination and also experience other visible and invisible conflictsstruggling with masculinity, racism or caste discrimination, gender pay gap and so on. They may betrapped in human trafficking, unproductive social conditions andamplify degree of climate crisis through systemic and symptomatic impact of menstrual discrimination. Thus, menstrual discrimination is the cause of this worldwide phenomenon in every aspect of life.

We, the global community, blame patriarchy, poverty, politics, religion and culture and prioritize the strengthening of the educational institutions through construction of buildings and the provision of training by local to UN level and vice versa. Unfortunately, all have omitted to include the truth pertaining to their right to education again.

Do you agree with me? Perhaps 'NOT'.

Dear friends,

As a lifelong advocate for dignified menstruation, allow me to share my personal story.

When I was about 7, I was told by my mother that menstrual blood is a sin or a curse from God. It was a shocking and traumatic experience in my life. I even attempted suicide when I was about 9 years old because I did not like following the dozens of restrictions that were associated with menstruation. Neither my home nor my school taught me about the purity and cleanliness of menstrual blood, which is crucial for the planet to continue for more than 3 million years. Additionally, menstruating is not disease and not a state of weakness.

The problem extends beyond my family, country, illiteracy, or religion to include developed countries. In 2015, in the UK, I was given the chance to give a guest lecture at a school without any male studentspresent. It was stated by the authority that menstruation is not their business. Non-menstruators or people who are born without a uterus and ovaries, are still born from menstrual blood.

From that perspective, menstruation is their business too. They need to speak up if they see discrimination and they need to promote menstrual dignity. They should know that menstruators have special needsand priorities such as agency, safety, security, education etc. Therefore, they deserve additional rights such as rights to dignity, participation, food, health, education etc. Unfortunately, we global community do not acknowledge such truth. Menstruators all around the world, girls, women, queer, transmen, menstruators with disabilities, experience a full range of violence in wars such as those in Gaza and Ukraine, during pandemics (recall COVID 19 and Ebola) or natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquake and floods.

As a global educator and advocate for dignified menstruation, I do repeat that menstrual discrimination has been practiced across the globe with various names, forms and magnitude with over 5000 euphemisms. It is very complex, multifaceted and plays a significant role for construction and socialization of unequal power relationship and reinforcement of patriarchy since childhood.

Unfortunately, over 60 year's educational activism have not succeeded in dismantling the various forms of menstrual discrimination. In many cases, it promotes menstrual discrimination by coining it menstrual hygiene, period poverty, and menstrual health. These concepts do not dismantle many forms of menstrual discrimination and do not address the inequities of patriarchy.

Our educational mechanisms, even the UN do not account menstrual discrimination as a form of sexual gender-based violence. If it is, then the data on the prevalence of gender-based violence for 1 in 3 women is wrong. Totally wrong.

Current education practices also fail to tell truth for equality. The word equality is usually coined with gender. The word of gender itself is problematic. We need to search the margin of margin

within the word of gender. If we start looking atequality through the lens of menstruation or menstrual dignity, the category will be menstruators and non menstruators where the equality and social inclusiveness will be fast forward no matter where we are such as relief work of war or pandemic or anywhere.

I keep visiting schools in both the global north and global south where the common statement is 'Einstein is the father of science'. None of the schools mention that 'Einstein was born because ofmenstrual blood and he is the father of science'. Without being born, how could he become a scientist?

I have so many examples and lots of evidence that show how we not shared impartation of truth.

The global community would have equality, peace, and humanity if we taught the truth about menstruation. For instance, how can we save the children in Gaza or Ukraine if we teach global community that they are terrorist? How can we bring menstruators to the table of peace dialogues or parliaments if they are considered powerless or inferior? How can we assure climate justice if we miss the systemic and symptomatic impact of menstrual discrimination in our climate crisis? How can we mitigate malnutrition or anemia if we close our eyes whilemenstruators have no access to kitchens, water sources or food? It is high time to tell the truth while educating people.

Dear friends, remember that we should never ever imagine the place or sector without menstruators, wherever we go or whatever we do.

Thus, this is the high time to switch our minds and concentrate our efforts towards the right to education is right to truth.

Thank you.

Concluding Remarks of Moderator

As you all know, we are here for shedding light on the effect of the inequalities in the social, political, economic and cultural life of women in all diversities and explore the possible measures to promote gender equalities in the Asia region and beyond.

First, would like to extend sincere thanks to all participants who are joining virtually and physically. Without your active and attentive participation, this panel could be such energetic and fabulous.

Likewise, my sincere gratitude and thanks go to the diligent and intelligent speakers for delivering mind blowing thoughts for gender equality to assure the Universal Health Protection. The stories of Ms. Binda and Ms. Dil are touched us in many ways and we are here for making dignified them and they representatives indeed. Once again, thank you so much Binda and Dil.

Also like to thanks to all volunteers who are supporting for this workshop.

As our panelist highlighted the world' view of people whom are working longer hours, sacrifices security, income and so on. Unfortunately, they are living in less access to health care, quality education, civic services, housing, unemployment allowance, maternity benefit, child care and pensions for the elderly and more importantly experiencing dehumanized and undignified circumstances at home, workplace and everywhere due to discriminatory menstrual practices.

In this connection unequal power relation and patriarchy is everywhere with diverse forms, and magnitude at home, at school, community, workplace and everywhere. Thus, the gender equality should be in center in all elements of Universal Social Protection.

From this world social forum, we pledge for Gender Responsive Quality Public Services (GRQPS) in order to challenge - gender divisions of power, control and labour as well as traditionally defined norms and roles including menstrual discrimination.

We, who are from the margin of the margin and representation the margin of the margin deserve the equality and dignity regardless our identity, race, sex, gender, class, occupation, language, religion, geographic origin, culture, age, sexual orientation and physical condition including menstruation and menopause.

We urged for ensure visibility, recognition, resilient livelihood and social protection of informal sector workers especially women home based workers.

We shout out for decent human life with freedom, participation and representation in both private and public sphere along with menstrual dignity. Because we can't imagine any place or sector without the presence of menstruators. In fact, menstrual blood is the root of all of us and discriminatory menstrual practices played vital role for construct and reinforce the unequal power relation and patriarchy.

I humbly request to all participants to stay with us for another most vibrating and important session entitled Impact of privatization in Public Services.

Once again, thank you so much to everyone and have good afternoon.

Decleration of World Social Forum DIGNIFIED MENSTRUATION: Decolonized the Menstrual Movement and Reimagining Feminism

Menstruation is inevitable biological phenomena that experienced by more than half of the population of this planet. Simply, menstrual blood activate the circle of human life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Apart from this Universal Declaration, menstruators⁸ faced discrimination from womb (Sex selective abortion) to tomb (rituals perform after the death). Menstrual Discrimination refers to the stigma, taboos, shyness, restrictions, and abuses associated with menstruation throughout the lifecycle of menstruators. This is the indicator of a deeply unequal power relations that legitimize the discrimination and exclusion of women in patriarchal value systems, denying the basic freedoms revealed the deeply rooted discrimination against the menstruators in all diversities. Dignified Menstruation is for the reconstruction of the power that constructed and shape since childhood. Dignified Menstruation movement proposed a foundational agenda based on Human Rights, Gender Equality and Social Justice reinforced by the lived experience of the menstruates in all diversities. Thus, we commit to form "A regenerative society, where both menstruators and non-menstruators can live their life with Dignity".

The Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation/Radha Paudel Foundation under the theme of "Gender, Sexuality and Identities and Gender-Based Violence" led the Hybrid Session on "Dignified Menstruation: Decolonized the Menstrual Movement and Reimagining Feminism" on February 16, 2024. The discussion focused on the discriminatory practices associated with menstruations, menopause and its systematic & symptomatic impact through the life cycle of the menstruators in all diverse settings. Here, we call all the menstruators and non-menstruators⁹ in all diversities to collectively:

Redefine the narrative on menstruation, from aid to human rights, hygiene to dignity, impure to pure, dirty to clean, from five days of bleeding to life cycle approach.

⁸ Those who are born with uterus and ovaries

⁹ Those who are born without uterus and ovaries

- Reform the GESI or Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Policy, as none of the GESI policies integrate menstruation, menopause and its systematic and symptomatic impact on the life of the menstruators.
- Stich together to challenge the Power and Patriarchy that construct unequal power relations and reinforce menstrual discrimination since childhood.
- Abolished the caste discrimination that is embedded with the religion and culture correspond to menstrual discrimination by incorporating the dialogue on Dignified Menstruation.
- Integrate menstrual dignity as foundation to address the stigma and violence associated with Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.
- Dialogue on Dignified Menstruation, to achieve Sustainable Development Goals as of 11 SDGs are directly linked with menstrual discrimination and 2 goals are indirectly linked with it.
- Transference from menstrual management, period poverty, menstrual health to menstrual dignity from the lens of human rights. Menstrual Dignity is an optimum and holistic approach that creates another world where all forms of people, especially marginalized individuals and communities will lead.
- Recognize and fight for Menstrual Discrimination that has symptomatic relation with the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) for priotizing the needs of menstruators during pandemic.
- Talk with 3Ps Approach (Person, Planet and Pocket) which talking about menstrual products to address Climate Justice.
- Make a current democracy inclusive by considering menstrual discrimination as a barrier for inclusive democracy to build the movement and the demand for ensuring dignity in menstruation.
- Reform/develop and implement the progressive legislation and policy frameworks at national, regional and international levels to end the stigma, discrimination and abuse of menstruators in all diversity in public and private settings. Allot required resources to ensure the implementation of and accountability for institutionalization of this framework align with national and global commitment to human rights, gender equality and social justice.