2015 Highlight Report

Compiled by WASH United,
the Menstrual Hygiene Day Secretariat
August 2015
About Menstrual Hygiene Day (MH Day)

Initiated by WASH United in 2014, MH Day was established to help break the silence & build awareness about the fundamental role that good Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) plays in helping women & girls reach their full potential. Through a strong network of dedicated partners, the day enabled action & advocacy around MHM locally & globally.

On May 28, 2015

Organisations & individuals from all over the world came together to recognise the 2nd MH Day under the theme ‘Let’s end the hesitation around menstruation’.

Partners used MH Day as an opportunity to engage men & boys, link to other important womens & girls’ issues, advance policy advocacy & reach the marginalised.

On the MH Day website, partners announced 127 events in 33 countries.

This Highlight Report is a synthesis. Selected examples & quotes have been chosen to represent what happened on Menstrual Hygiene Day 2015. For details on all events, please check the full report.
“Attending the MH Day event in DC profoundly expanded my understanding of MHM issues & solutions. The event directly inspired me to further incorporate MHM into Winrock’s project designs.”

- Terrence Smith, Program Associate, Winrock International
The 2015 MH Day Highlight Report features events & activities that have been organised into the following areas:

• Events Around the World
• MH Day Partner Coalitions
• Putting the ‘Men’ in Menstruation
• Linking to other women & girls’ issues
• Menstrual Hygiene Policy Advocacy
• Reaching the Marginalized
• Celebrities & Influencers
• Campaigns Inspired by MH Day
• In Their Own Words
• #MenstruationMatters Signs
• Social Media
• Media Coverage
• Conclusion
• Contact
Events Around the World

127 events in 33 countries
119 reports received from 30 countries*

*94% response rate from partners!

Events can be found at:
www.menstrualhygieneday.org/events
Menstrual Hygiene Day
Partner Coalitions

To activate partners to recognise & celebrate May 28, Menstrual Hygiene Day, regional coordinators brought together partners across sectors & helped organise regional events & activities.

Coalitions formed in places such as Kenya, New York (US) Washington, D.C. (US), Odisha (India), Sheffield (UK) & Kampala (Uganda). They coordinated action, increased awareness / outreach & in many cases, strengthened policy initiatives, giving a powerful local voice to the issue.
Event was organised by the Kenyan Ministry of Health and coordination from the Menstrual Hygiene subcommittee.

- Singing, presentations, skits, dances and speeches dedicated to breaking the silence
- Ministry announced that there will be a national policy around MHM

Kwale, Kenya, Attendance: 2,500

Ministry of Health, County Government of Kwale & 15+ Partners of the Technical Working Group (TWG): WASH United, Zana Africa, WASH Alliance, PATH, I-Care, Plan International, BeGirl, Kenya Medical Research Institute, Nagasaki University Institute of Tropical Medicine, AMREF Health Africa, Kenya Red Cross Society, WSP of the World Bank, World Vision, Garden of Hope Foundation, BASE Titanium, among others
Main Objectives:

- Raise awareness of the importance of menstrual hygiene
- Dismantle the silence and taboos around menstruation
- Spark dialogue around menstrual health and access
- Support boys and men in becoming menstrual health allies
- Build partnerships with other sexual and reproductive health-oriented organizations in the NY area.

12 Partners:
Nepal Fertility Care Center (NFCC), HURU International, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Stand4Education, Girls Health Ed, Save the Children, Water Trust, Society for Menstrual Cycle Research (SMCR), Museum of Sex, BeGirl, THINX & Party With Consent
#MHDayDC was a multi-sector event that included speakers, voices of girls from around the world & a display of solutions. Linked poor MHM to WASH, human rights, education, gender equality & health. Participants engaged by using the exhibition toolkit and pledged to continue advocacy around the issue both in their own communities & their spheres of influence.
MH Day Partner Coalitions

India – Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Attendance: 250

- Stakeholder session with 250+ participants including high-level representatives from the government & large NGOs.
- 2 new studies (1. viability of menstrual absorbents for girls with disabilities & 2. Breaking free of menstrual myths) as well as WaterAid’s posters were released
- Other activities included a movie screening, panel discussion & the launch of toll-free MHM help number
- Partners included: AAINA, Unicef, WaterAid, National Health Mission, NAWO, Gram Vani, SWSM
UK – Sheffield, Attendance: 100

- Created a safe & inclusive environment & fostered inter-generational conversations about menstruation in the UK
- Activities included: sustainable product options, reproductive health quiz, dress-up as a MH Superhero, Q&A forum
- Partners include:d #PeriodPositive, Friends of Irise, Irise International, Sexpression, Around the Toilet
- Next steps: 1. Continue advocating for unbranded menstrual education at the national level, 2. Develop policy resources, such as a guide on early puberty.
MH Day Partner Coalitions

Uganda – Kampala
Attendance: 200

Ugandan Ministry of Education + 12 Partners: AFRIPads, Irise, NEWAS; SNV, Days for Girls, Fields of Life, Rotary Plus, Plan Uganda, Vinacef, IRC

- Organised advocacy walk to the Parliament
- Created a Menstrual Hygiene Charter that was signed by key politicians in the Ugandan Parliament, urging the government to make menstrual hygiene a priority, particularly in schools
- Organised event at the national theatre with exhibitions, performances, etc.
Putting the ‘Men’ in Menstruation

Girl Child Network: Freetown, Sierra Leone
Targeted school children, teachers, & male parents

Umande Trust: Nairobi, Kenya
Engaged over 200 fathers & 3,000 students to talk about menstruation

Auroville Village Action Group: Tamil Nadu, India
Raised awareness on the need to break the silence & include men in the conversation
On MH Day, Mr. Ikhtiar Khaskhelly, Executive Director of KRDO, actively engaged all NGOs working in the city of Khairpur about menstrual hygiene & the associated challenges /diseases. He emphasized the important role men play in the family & in society, encouraging men to be more supportive of his family members during menstruation.
“Men need to be well-educated about this biological cycle. It is important for all of us, as human beings, to understand the fundamentals of life & how we all began to exist. Without the support of men, females in today’s world will not have access to the proper care, facilities & primary rights that they are entitled to.”

– Kingbadantee Sabir, Treasurer, Public Health & Sciences Club North South University, Bangladesh
Promoting safe sex & the use of female condoms

Buea, Cameroon: African Women’s Education & Development Partnership (AWEDP) used MH Day as an opportunity to also promote female condoms, arguing that women have the right to decide if they want children each time they have sex.

Advocating against forced or early child marriage

Kwale, Kenya: WASH United and the Gov’t of Kenya’s Technical Working Group saw that in Kwale, menstruation is an indicator that girls are ready for marriage, giving girls yet another reason to be silent. MH Day was an opportunity to highlight some of the harmful cultural practices associated with menstruation.
Advocating against FGM

Kijiado, Kenya: Pillars of Women Network in Africa:

“One of the teachers shared with us how the cultural practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is a big threat in this region. After girls get the cut, they are put in grass thatched huts to heal. At this point, some men in the community know these girls are there and storm the huts at night and rape them. They eventually get many girls sitting for their final exams pregnant. This has contributed to the high rate of poverty in the region because the girls drop out of school. They expressed the need for us to talk about this issue of gender-based violence in the community with the government.”
The local MHM Steering Committee launched the Menstrual Hygiene Management Charter - Uganda to establish national MHM commitments in schools. The MHM charter was accepted by Rebecca Kadaga, the first female Speaker of Parliament in Uganda, as well as representatives from UN Women, the Ministry of Health & Education.
Following successful observation of MH Day 2014 and the continuous interest by stakeholders, the Ministry of Health (MOH) along with local MHM & WASH Partners have begun the process of establishing MHM Policy and Strategy in Kenya. The MOH, the county government & key stakeholders in MHM came together to celebrate the MH Day 2015 at Gulanze Primary School in Kwale County, where local officials committed to addressing issues around MHM & early marriages.
Menstrual Hygiene Policy Advocacy: India

• A national stakeholder workshop on MHM hosted by the Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation (MoDWS) & organised by WASH United & UNICEF was held on June 11, 2015.

• The objective of the workshop was to share & review the draft MHM guidelines soon to be released by the MoDWS. Participants included representatives from line ministries such as the MoDWS, the Women & Child Development, the Ministry of Human Resource Development & the Ministry of Health, state representatives from Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, as well NGOs & social businesses.

• Stakeholders shared the latest developments in MHM & provided feedback to the draft guidelines to ensure its applicability & feasibility.
MH Day 2015 reached the most disadvantaged:
• Women & girls in post-disaster areas of Nepal received comprehensive trainings & sanitary kits
• Disabled girls & their parents targeted in Malawi
• Women in prisons in Kakamega & Kisumu, Kenya were engaged on May 28
Reaching the Marginalised

“When having your period, there is no privacy since we all stay in an open dormitory and one is sometimes forced to change their pads in an open place”

– Woman, Kakamega Women’s Prison, Kenya during a WASH United & Soroptimist Kenya event
• **Freida Pinto** spoke about MH Day for Plan International
• Celebrities **Bahati & MC SMATTA from Ghetto Radio** (Kenya)
• **Sofie van de Enk** for Simavi, Women on Wings & Rutgers: Dutch radio & TV personality
• **Hon. Rebecca A. Kadega**, Speaker of Parliament (Uganda)
• **Mr. Buti Manamela**, Deputy Minister in the Office of the Presidency supported the launch of Dignity Dreams’ pads (South Africa)
• **Hon. Nana Oye**, Minister of Gender, Children & Social Protection (Ghana)
• **Venantius Gichuki**, Minister of Education, Quality Assurance Officer (Kenya)
• **Ashwath Narayan**, Member of the Legislative Assembly (India)
• **Kirishna Rahaman**, Political leader (Bangladesh)
Freida Pinto on Why Menstrual Hygiene Day is Important
• Official launch of ‘The Cup’s’ global campaign to reach thousands of girls in Kenya.
• Public event to raise awareness of MHM & issues surrounding puberty.
• Local ambassadors: celebrity singers MC SMATTA of Ghetto Radio & Bahati spoke about menstruation & performed.

Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya
Attendance: 3,000

Partners: The Cup, Umande Trust, Peepoople Kenya, Kewasnet, Ghetto Radio, Pamoja FM & MSF Kibera
The following campaigns were launched in response to MH Day:

- WASH United’s **May MENSTRAVAGANZA** 28-Day campaign
- Simavi & Women on Wings **1WeekExtra** MHM program in Bihar, India
- Irise’s **#PeriodsChangeLives** campaign, feat. Miriam the MHM Superhero
- Earth and Us & The Kachra Project’s **Period of Change** campaign: importance of waste disposal & environment
- WaterAid’s **If Men Had Periods** campaign
- Plan UK’s **Just A Tampon** campaign
- Transformation Textiles **Standing with the Girls** 260K bicycle race
- **#MenstrualMonday** by WoMena highlighted the importance of MHM each Monday during May.

More details about these campaigns can be found in the full report.
“I never thought people would stand and publicly talk about & even advocate for menstruation & menstrual hygiene.”

— Head Girl at Ishaka Adventist College at a Friends of Irise – Kampala Int’l University event
“We’re not talking about building spaceships here, we’re talking about pads. And yet they both will have the same impact on a human being: they allow us to go places.”

— Diana Sierra, Founder, BeGirl
“Now that I can make my own pads, I am never going to miss class again.”

– young girl at Health and Care Foundation’s pad-making workshop at Health and Care Foundation’s event in Luwero, Uganda
"When SPLASH came to this school to construct the washrooms & latrines, I did not understand the rationale behind it until today (MH Day) when I heard the cry of girls and their need for washrooms during menstruation. I now know that girls in this community will attain higher learner education because they will no longer miss school."

- Nsanjika village headman at a FHI360 / SPLASH event
“I am quite happy to see that there is a lot of work going on in MHM in different countries. Now if anyone asks about MHM we can quote these examples as well.”

– A girl from Muzaffargarh, Pakistan, after watching 2 short MHM documentaries about India & Bangladesh at AGAHE’s event
We received hundreds of #MenstruationMatters signs from all over the world!
THANK YOU FOR MAKING MENSTRUATION MATTER!
“Our participation in Menstrual Hygiene Day was an incredible experience. The events we planned were an amazing reminder of our goal to empower women by educating them about their bodies’ natural cycles. Thank you so much for uniting companies & organisations with the same mission to spread awareness about this very important matter!”

– Kindara Fertility Technology, USA
Social Media

Tweets per day: #MenstruationMatters, #MenstrualHygiene, and #menstruation
May 1st — May 31st

On May 28, 2015
• Nearly 4,000 tweets with the hashtag #MenstruationMatters
• Around 1,750 tweets with the hashtag #MenstrualHygiene

During May 2015:
• 8,341 #MenstruationMatters tweets
• 4,520 #MenstrualHygiene tweets
Media Coverage

MH Day appeared in 99 online newspapers, 4 TV channels & 2 radio stations. Here is a selection:
Conclusions

• Overall, there has been a noticeable increase in engagement, participation and awareness around MHM and MH Day from 2014 – 2015.

Next steps
• Awareness and recognition of MH Day should continue to grow around the world, especially in areas where we do not yet have many MH Day partners (such as in South America, Southeast Asia, Eurasia (China & Russia)
• MH Day Secretariat to support partners in their pursuits to influence, develop or strengthen policy advocacy around MHM.
• Partners are encouraged to participate in all MH Day webinars, votes and other opportunities for engagement

Get involved
⇒ Sign-up for the newsletter ‘Keeping the Flow Going’: http://buff.ly/1DfqmVx

⇒ Like the Menstrual Hygiene Day Global Facebook page: www.facebook.com/menstrualhygieneday

⇒ Join the MHM Momentum Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/MHDayMomentum
Thank You!

Special thanks to our MH Day Strategic Advisors & Regional Coordinators!
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