



Menstrual Hygiene in Schools in South Asia:

2018-2020 update

Key Observations

- A 'dignified menstrual movement' is taking place in Nepal that has led to growing policy awareness about the health, education, and social consequences of poor menstrual hygiene, harmful attitudes, and menstrual practices.
- The Government of Nepal (GoN) has allocated USD 15.2 million to provide free, compostable sanitary pads to 130,000 girls of menstruation age studying in public schools in 2020-2021.
- The formation of the MHM Partners' Alliance (MHM PA) in 2017 strengthened inter-sectoral coordination and advocacy for dignified menstruation; there are over 80 members (UN, I/NGOs, bilateral agencies, civil societies, media, activists, etc.).
- MH Goodwill Ambassadors include: in 2018, Ms Evana Manandhar (Miss Nepal 2015); in 2019, Ms Priyanka Karki (actor); and in 2020, Ms Keki Adhikari (actor).
- The GoN updated the school curriculum on MH education, practice, and taboos for Grade 5 and above.



WASH in Schools (WinS) overview:

(<https://washdata.org/monitoring/schools/dashboard>)

Drinking Water Availability

47% of schools have basic water supply

31% of schools have limited water supply

23% of schools have no water supply

Sanitation

82% of schools have limited sanitation facilities

18% of schools have no facilities

Hygiene

Data unavailable

Key Issues

- National standards recommend child, disability, and gender-friendly toilets in schools: such as MH-friendly features, including bins with lids. Some toilet blocks also have sanitary pad dispensing machines and incinerators. Some schools have changing rooms with a separate and dedicated toilet that can be used to change a pad and wash.
- There are 29,607 public schools in Nepal: approximately 1.3% schools are supported under the Three Star Approach.
- Government monitoring systems are not aligned with SDG indicators.
- A WASH in School Training Manual has been prepared and is being printed by the GoN.
- The WinS Procedure provides an institutional coordination mechanism, which is important given the federal structure of Nepal.

MH Overview

Policies Standards Guidelines Legal frameworks	<p>A national policy draft on Dignified Menstruation (2018) is awaiting endorsement.</p> <p>Four ministries (Education, Health, WASH, and Women and Children) issued a joint, seven-point declaration on MH on 28 May 2018.</p> <p>The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens issued a 12-point declaration on MH on 28 May 2020.</p> <p>24 local governments in Province 6 and 7 enforced 'Dignified Menstruation Management Directives' with technical assistance from the Rural Village Water Resource Management Project/Finnish Embassy. Since 2019, the MHM PA is collaborating with the National Association of Gaupalikas in Nepal for enforcing Dignified Menstruation Management Directives across the country.</p> <p>National indicators for sustaining post-ODF communities in Nepal include MH.</p> <p>The National WASH in Schools Procedure include the provision of MH education, MH awareness, and managing facilities.</p>
Education materials Curriculum materials Teacher training materials Additional resources	<p>An MH training package manual has been developed to accompany the roll out of the pad distribution programme with technical assistance from the Nepal Fertility Care Centre (NFCC). The Family Health Division of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) launched the 'Integrating Menstrual Hygiene Management into School Health Programs' Manual. A training package developed for teachers by the National Health Training Centre in 2019 (with the technical assistance of NFCC) is yet to be endorsed.</p> <p>The Government has allocated a budget for updating the national school curriculum and text books as well as for professional training with information now included on MH (in textbooks for Grades 4 to 12).</p> <p>MH has been promoted through development partner programmes such as the 100% Girls Scholarship Program and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative.</p> <p>A WinS training manual (including a section on MH) has been developed with technical and financial support from UNICEF, WaterAid and WFP (to be endorsed by government).</p> <p>WaterAid partnered with a cricket team in the Everest Premier League (the Lalitpur Patriots) for the campaign 'Period Power'. The cricketers were oriented on MH and promote MH through their public appearances, at cricket stadiums for their matches, as well as on social media.</p> <p>The National Health Education Information and Communication Centre (NHEICC) and the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS) developed an MH leaflet (2019).</p>
Is MH in Education Information System (EMIS)	<p>EMIS does not collect data on MH in schools.</p>
Current evidence – key findings	<p>The MICS (2019) found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 2.5% of women stayed in chhaupadi/chhapro due to their last menstruation in the last 12 months (the highest rate was 17.4% in Far Western Province). ■ 83% of women age 15 to 49 reporting menstruating in the last 12 months and using MH materials with a private place to wash and change while at home (the highest rate was 65.5.% in Far Western Province).

Current evidence – key findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 9.4% of women did not participate in social activities (excluding religious activities/temple visit), school, or work due to their last menstruation in the last 12 months (the highest rate was 40.7% in Far Western Province). <p>Limbu (2018) reported on an experiment where schoolgirls and their mothers were provided with reusable pads (AFRIPads) and/or informative health seminars in the Far Western Province of Nepal. The largest decline in school absence occurred for girls who were provided with both reusable pads and health seminars.</p> <p>A study by Neupane, et al. (2020) in Chitwan district found that adolescent girls' age, school grade, and the occupation status of their fathers were significantly associated with good MH practices. Mothers were identified as the main source of information (81.9%).</p> <p>A study (Mukherjee, et al., 2020) on the perception and practices of MH restrictions on mainly Hindu, urban, adolescent girls, and women found that nearly two-thirds of the participants were encouraged by their mothers to follow menstrual restrictions. Yet, more-educated participants were less likely to follow the restrictions. Menstrual practices and restrictions varied by participants' social classes; Brahmins were more likely to follow the menstrual restrictions compared to Janajati participants.</p> <p>The University of Pittsburgh and NFCC developed a tool called the Adolescent Boys and Young Men Menstrual Attitudes (ABYMMA) scale to measure the attitudes of adolescent boys and young men on menstruation.</p> <p>Researchers are using new methodologies to document the effects of menstruation on the lives of women and girls, including the University of Pittsburgh's filmmaking research with adolescent girls in Far West-Nepal as well as WaterAid's use of photo voice.</p>
Coordination platforms/ mechanisms at national/ sub-national levels	<p>The MHM PA is still operational and coordinating efforts between organisations. The Alliance now has more than 80 member organisations. GIZ funded a development advisor to support the secretariat and convene the alliance; inter-sectoral coordination; foster dignified menstruation-related advocacy; knowledge management and awareness.</p> <p>In order to change the conversation on menstruation from hygiene to dignity, the Radha Paudel Foundation initiated a global network called the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM).</p>
MH in schools practice ▶ Materials ▶ Disposal	<p>In 2019, the GoN announced a free, pad-distribution programme in all secondary-level schools in coordination with local governments. MOEST endorsed the Sanitary Pad Distribution and Management Procedure (2019). The pads are supposedly biodegradable; degrading within six months of disposal. Local governments can also produce the sanitary pads themselves but must use at least 95% cotton cloths. The GoN and its development partners are promoting skills to make pad from cloth, ensuring waste bins in girls' toilets and incinerators to burn the pads in schools. The Ministry of Health and Population prepared audio video materials about the use of such sanitary pads that should be shown to girls.</p> <p>GIZ, together with the Healthy Environment and Climate Action Foundation (HECAF), has conducted research on the different kinds of available sanitary pads in Nepal along with their composting ability.</p> <p>GIZ facilitated the procurement of two pad-making machines designed by Muruganantham Arunachalam. GIZ provided technical training to two women's cooperatives on producing and supplying raw materials for low-cost sanitary pads. GIZ has also supported research on pad availability and disposal options.</p> <p>The Radha Paudel Foundation and others are promoting sustainable and biodegradable sanitary products (Miteri) through their local entrepreneurs.</p>

	Mitini ('girl's best friend' in Nepali) is a social entrepreneurship initiative that offers a sanitary pad, disposal, collection service. Mitini places bins in offices and restaurants and charges NPR 2,000 (around EUR 15) per bin for a month. The cleaning staff empty the bins and dispose of the contents in an autoclave and then landfill.
Equity and inclusion	NFCC, in collaboration with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene-Resource Centre Network Nepal, conducted a study of ethnic groups from nine districts to understand MH knowledge, behaviour, attitude, and practices associated with MH. A study found that girls with hearing impairments did not face any specific challenges on MH related to their disability. They read about menstruation in books and were supported by friends and teachers. However, these participants attended a special school for children with hearing impairments and so this finding may not reflect the experiences of other girls who do not attend this type of school.

MH Journey in Nepal

Year	Key steps – Nepal WinS MH
2018	Nepal's law criminalising chhaupadi came into effect in 2018. It carries a three-month jail sentence, a fine of 3,000 rupees (USD 25), or both for anyone who forces a woman to follow the practice.
	MHM PA Nepal and The MenstruAction Summit in December 2018 hosted 500 participants, ranging from activists, governmental representatives, NGOs, CBOs, politicians, donors, social entrepreneurs and the private sector to media, adolescent girls, and other youth.
	The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens and MHM PA hosted a workshop on incorporating MH in the school curriculum.
	GoN endorsed the WinS procedure where two out of eight indicators are related to MHM.
2019	The first arrest in Nepal connected to the practice of chhaupadi. The chair of Purbichowki village municipality in Doti district rewards women who reject chhaupadi with a one-off payment of 5,000 Nepali rupees (USD 44).
	President announces policy and plans in parliament to distribute pads free of cost in all public schools.
	The MOEST introduced the 'Sanitary Pad Distribution and Management Procedure-2019'.
	The Curriculum Development Centre under the MOEST revised school curricula from Grade 4 to 12 to include menstruation.
	24 local governments in Province 6 and 7 enforced the 'Dignified Menstruation Management Directives'.
	NHEICC launched an MH animated video focusing on girls continuing their regular activities during menstruation including going to school.
	The Bishesta package was developed by WaterAid and LSHTM for girls with intellectual disabilities and their carers.
2020	The GoN launched a sanitary pad, distribution campaign targeting all girl students (from Grade 6 to 12) in community schools across the country.
	The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens announced a 12-point declaration on MH.
	MHM PA advocated to the GoN for sanitary pads to be considered essential goods during lockdown to ensure ongoing production.
	NHEICC released the 'MHM in Pandemics' video highlighting the use of home-made reusable sanitary pads and cloths.
	A WinS training manual was prepared by the government with support from UNICEF, WFP and WaterAid. Sessions include those on knowledge, awareness, advocacy and skills for managing MH.

What's coming up? Opportunities for MH in WinS

- Endorsing the Dignified Menstruation Policy.
- Rolling out the WinS Guidelines focusing on the Three Star Approach (which includes MH components) in all provinces as well as resources and information educating girls about menstruation before menarche.
- Endorsing the Dignified Menstruation Guidelines at the local level with reference to WinS.
- A new 'One School One Nurse' programme, where it is mandatory to have a nurse in public school. The Family Welfare Division is in the process of developing guidelines for nurses focusing on adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues including MH.

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