REPORT FOR DIGNIFIED MENSTRUAL MONTH 2019

Report written by Barina Ghale
Supervised by Radha Paudel
INTRODUCTION

Menstruation, a natural biological phenomenon is a crucial time for adolescent girls to learn about their body and health. The current state of attitude, behaviour and practices on menstruation restricts women in Nepal in more than physical ways. Menstrual blood is seen as being ‘impure’ or ‘dirty’ and a burden of shame that still hinders girls and women’s ability to fully express their rights to health, education, work and gender equality.

For menstrual month 2019, as a way to raise awareness, campaign materials have focused the need for action to change negative social norms and practices, ensure dignity for each to catalyse progress on menstrual education and to ensure everyone has access to products. Menstruation hygiene day observed each year on May 28 since 2014, serves as a reminder that women and girls around the world face poor hygiene during menstruation. The Radha Paudel foundation has advocated the need to move beyond infrastructure and hygiene, stressing the need to focus on health, education, human rights, empowerment and environment (see figure 1). Radha Paudel is a pioneer in opening the dialogue on dignified menstruation as a researcher, trainer, author and advocate. She has been engaging on the topic of dignified menstruation for over three decades.

Dignified menstruation refers each girls and women deserved the dignity during menstruation. It is reclaiming the rights as constitution guarantees as well as the rights mentioned in international covenants. As mentioned in Figure 1, dignified menstruation is beyond the dismantle menstrual huts or beautification of huts or free distribution of sanitary pads.

As, of 2018, Government of Nepal have also called for dignified menstrual day for the first time in Nepal, showcasing their commitment to policy and practice change around menstruation. The fight is still long, and in an effort to participate on a global platform that brings varied network of actors from different sectors, keeping in line with the 2019 theme #ItsTimeForAction, Radha Paudel foundation is further elaborating on the concept of dignified menstruation. Dialogue on dignified menstruation took place on local, national and global level. These have been conducted by all staff members on a voluntary basis. Below are some of the few activities that Radha Paudel Foundation undertook to celebrate menstrual month.
Areas of direct intervention in Nepal

Dialogue on Dignified Menstruation in Schools and Colleges

The Radha Paudel Foundation visited 11 schools in total- 10 schools and 1 college. The foundation had the opportunity to engage with 2,310 students on dignified menstruation. The program was coordinated by Sudha Gurung in Pokhara, Sitaram Thapa in Baglung, Indira Chapagain in Nawalpur, Sabitri Bhandari in Chitwan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>SCHOOLS</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd of May</td>
<td>Shirin Deaf School</td>
<td>Pokhara</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd of May</td>
<td>Kumudhini Home School</td>
<td>Pokhara</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vision impaired Students</td>
<td>Pokhara</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th of May</td>
<td>Annapurna Mount High school</td>
<td>Pokhara</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step by Step School</td>
<td>Pokhara</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th May</td>
<td>Girl’s School</td>
<td>Pokhara</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th May</td>
<td>Presidency College of Management Science</td>
<td>Chitwan</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd May</td>
<td>Shining Secondary School</td>
<td>Gaidakot</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th of May</td>
<td>Marigold English Boarding School</td>
<td>Chitwan</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shree Kankali Secondary School</td>
<td>Chitwan</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29th of May</td>
<td>SOS Hermann Gmeiner School</td>
<td>Chitwan</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2310</strong></td>
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The Radha Paudel Foundation also launched a community outreach program with CSO leaders in Baglung, Kaski, Sindhupalchowk, Kathmandu and Chitwan. The program was jointly organised by WHRD, Ama milan Kendra and Sarkarma Nepal. The program was attended by political representatives, law family, civil society, teachers, scholarship, women’s rights guard, women’s campaign, police, staff social campaign and local women.

RPF founder Anupa Regmi, in collaboration with Jay Nepal also led a 3-day training session on health, hygiene and sanitation in Bodgaun (Sindhupalchowk). In total 43 females participated and a further 7 were selected to complete training for 3 days on gender equality and women’s reproductive health in Kathmandu.
**Dignified Menstruation in Media**

Radha Paudel (founder of RPF) also spoke on various media outlets such as tv interviews, radio interviews, and newspaper. The Radha Paudel Foundation staff members have also actively advocated for dignified menstruation through social media platforms such as facebook, twitter and instagram to celebrate menstrual hygiene month. A total of 43,045 people were reached.

**Distribution of Publication**

Launch and distribution of ‘Apabitra Ragat’ (impure blood) written by Radha Paudel and distribution of dignified menstruation handbook.

**Number of books distributed**

- Dignified menstruation handbook: 150
- Apabitra Ragat: 100

**Number of people reached**

- TV: 32,500
- Radio: 1,900
- Social media: 885
- Newspaper: 7,800

Students reading book on dignified menstruation at MITERI bio-degradable pad factory.
Miteri Bio-Degradable Sanitary Pad

The Radha Paudel Foundation in collaboration with Active Women Forum for Justice launched Miteri eco sanitary pads on May 21, 2019. The venture was a collaboration with Akar innovation for the first time in Nepal. Significant support was provided by the local government. Two different types of eco sanitary pads are currently being produced:

1. Disposable eco sanitary pads
   - Uses 100 percent bio-degradable products (Tested by Health Care Foundation Nepal).
2. Reusable eco sanitary pads
   - Produced in the same factory- RPF also provides training in production and selling.

Essay Writing Competition

RPF held a national essay competition focused on dignified menstruation which was won by Namrata Shrestha from Kaski, Pema Chhoden Tamang from Humla and Achal Tiwari from Bhaktapur.

Cycle rally for dignified menstruation

The Radha Paudel Foundation also co-organised a cycle rally along with X pose Nepal to celebrate dignified menstruation day 2019. RPF also handed over the bio-degradable sanitary pad and book Apabitra ragat written by Radha Paudel. Radha Paudel foundation has been a mentor for Xpose Nepal on dignified menstruation since 2016.
Panel Discussion on Dignified Menstruation

Ministry of Water Supply and MHM PA jointly organised the panel discussion at hotel Pagoda on 28th May 2019 where RPF is a founding member and co-organiser.

Weekly Campaign on Dignified Menstruation in Social Media

RPF member Milli Adhikari (US) also launched a weekly campaign on dignified menstruation through social media platforms such as facebook and Instagram. Some of the campaign materials included information on menstrual cycle, menstrual products, discussion on discrimination against menstruation, impact of menstrual restriction on attitudes and behaviours and vice versa. The campaign reached a total of 5,052 people.
**RESULTS**

**Local level**
- Improved attitude, and knowledge on dignified menstruation.
- Deconstructed rumours and myths surrounding menstruation- participants contacted RPF stating they were already abolishing menstrual restriction.
- Increased demand of biodegradable and reusable cloth pad.
- Increased the number of boys and men on accountability for dignified menstruation.
- Increased the interest of the local and national government on accountability for dignified menstruation.

**National level**
- Engagement with national media on dignified menstruation.
- Engagement in functions advocating dignified menstruation.
- Distribution of book on dignified menstruation and Apabitra ragat.

**Global level**
- Engagement with members from all around the world through media platforms.

**CHALLENGES**

- Dignified mensuration is not a priority at all for government, and other stakeholders. Everyone’s focus is targeted on product, hygiene and sanitation, which are means but not the end.
- RPF has been conducting each activity without any funding- difficult to produce reports as work is being carried out.
- Although, the organisation is working on rural areas - due to limited resources, it is very difficult to reach out to remote areas.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In order to guarantee dignity of girls and women during mensuration, dignified mensuration should be at the centre of all activities conducted by stake holders.
- RPF would advocate more changes and reach out to marginalised communities- if it receives appropriate financial support.
- Menstrual restriction is a century based tradition and demands long term engagement.