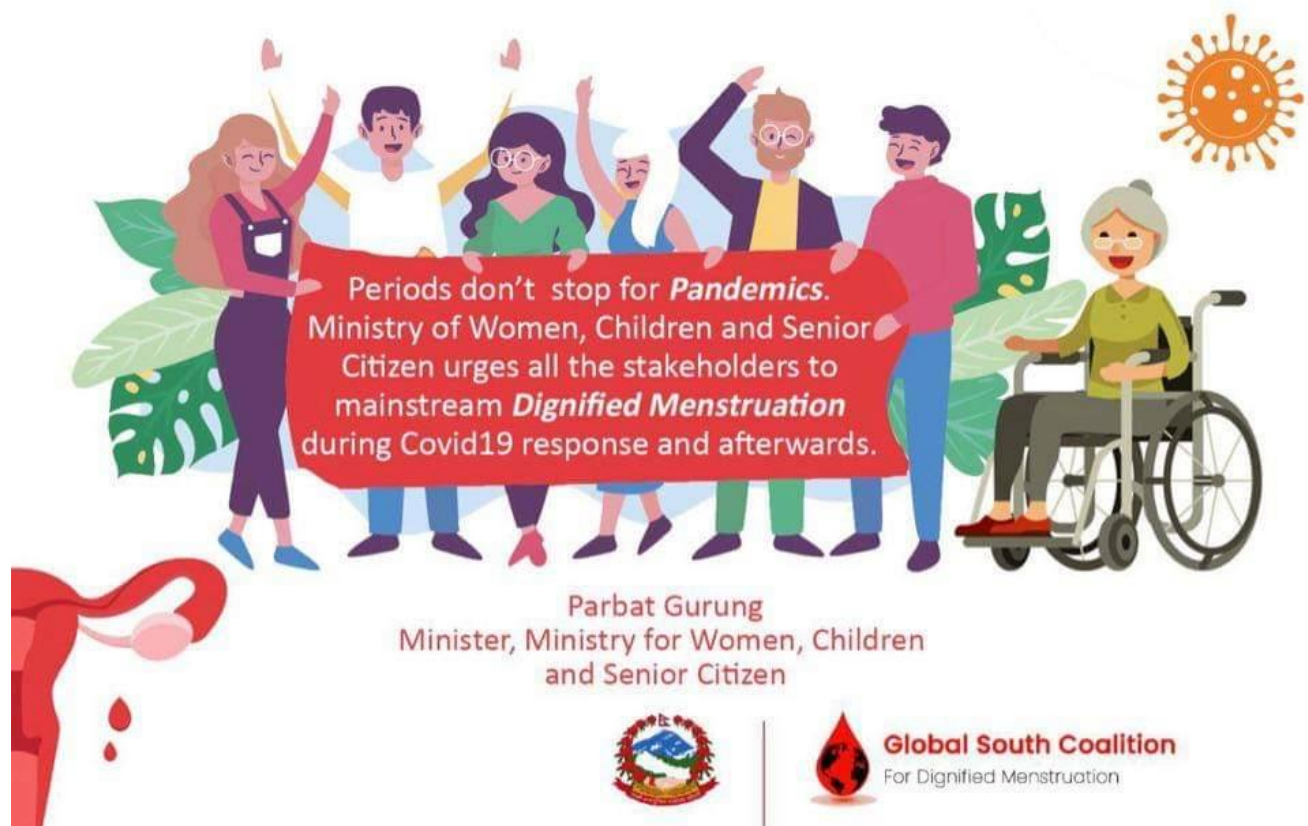


Dignified Menstruation amid COVID-19 Pandemic

(April-May 2020)



Parbat Gurung
Minister, Ministry for Women, Children
and Senior Citizen



Global South Coalition
For Dignified Menstruation



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Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GSCDM	Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation
MoWCSC	Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens
RPF	Radha Paudel Foundation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN	United Nations

Background

Nepal Government had announced a week-long nationwide lockdown to stop the coronavirus from spreading out of control on 24 March 2020 (Karki, 2020). To help daily wage labour cope up with the consequences of pandemic, Nepal GoN has set up Corona Virus testing centres in all the seven Provinces of Nepal introduced criteria for relief package, this includes 30 kgs rice, 3 kg pulse, 2 kgs salt, 2 ltrs cooking oil, 4 pcs soap and 2 kgs sugar (ReliefWeb, 2020). Albeit, Nepal Government failed to incorporate the menstrual products in their relief package as be it in hospitals, schools, health post, quarantines, home, menstruators are present everywhere.

Most of the activities and programs organized on menstruation are only limited to either production or distribution of sanitary napkins/ pads (Paudel, 2020). Menstrual blood is regarded as impure blood and menstruators are imposed with different types of restriction from mobility to eating certain food to bathing and touching plants/ animals. Discussion about menstruation is regarded as a taboo. Distributing sanitary products does help to increase self confidence among menstruators, however, it does not ensure their dignity during menstruation. To live a dignified life during menstruation, they should be allowed to live their life in a state of free from any forms of abuse, discrimination, violence associated with menstruation. There should be no difference between 25 and 5 days in regards to restriction implied on. To bridge this gap, RPF and GSCDM has been working to promote dignified menstruation locally, nationally and globally in coordination with government, I/NGOs, individuals etc. The mission is to dismantle institutional, structural, interpersonal, and social oppressive systems in place affecting menstruation, individuals who menstruate, and their ability to access basic inalienable human rights, critical resources to lead happy, and healthy lives, and obtain dignity. We strive to unite organizations, and individuals who share our vision of reclaiming dignity for each individual during menstruation and aim to transform the menstruation movement to center dignity.

This report includes activities and programs conducted amidst COVID-19 on the month of April and May to promote dignified menstruation at local, national, and global level.

Objectives

- To document the activities took place in course of COVID-19, Pandemic April-May 2020
- To develop the strategy towards dignified menstruation for RPF and Nepal

Methodology

This is a progress report of RPF and GSCDM Radha Paudel Foundation and Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation of the programs and activities conducted on the month of 1 April 2020 and 31 May 2020. The information was collected from 5 June 2020- 12 June 2020. To collect the data and program details, Facebook, YouTube, website, instagram of RPF, GSCDM, partner organizations, and interns were searched. Interview of RPF team members were also taken.



Major Highlights and Activities



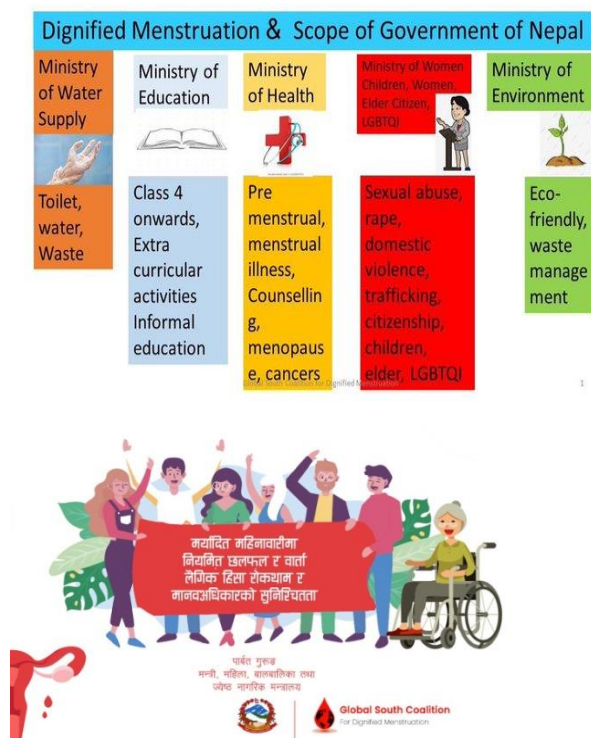
Webinar on Dignified Menstruation

Details: To change the narratives on menstruation from hygiene to dignity, MoWCSC in association with GSCDM organized a virtual conference on menstrual month and hygiene day. More importantly, it was planned to celebrate Second National Women's Right Day in Nepal. Discussion was made on issue on menstruation prevailing around the globe briefly at the era of COVID-19, pandemic and need and actions taken for dignified menstruation at local, regional and national level. The event was organized on 26 May 2020 from 11:00 am. The event took place for 2 hours.

Speakers: Ms. Archana Patkar- gender expert, Ms. Radha Paudel-Pioneer on Dignified Menstruation highlighted the practices and urgency of dignified menstruation amid COVID-19, Pandemic, Vice Chair, CEDAW Committee Ms. Banadana Rana delivered her remarks from the lenses of CEDAW. Mahes Nepali- journalist discussed about media and menstruation. Hon. Manju Yadav-Parliamentarian (Province 2) gave a brief insight on dignified menstruation in Madhesh. Hon. Niru Devi Pal, Chair of Parliamentarian Committee of Social Development discussed about Dignified Menstruation and role of Parliamentarian and Hon. Dr. Bimala Rai Paudyal-Federal Parliamentarian stressed on Why Dignified Menstruation Anupa Raj Sharma- Chairperson of Nepal Human Rights Commission highlighted the relevancy of dignified menstruation for promotion of human right. Hon. Minister, Mr. Parbat Gurung, MoWCSC shared about initiatives of Nepal Government on Dignified Menstruation. Vote of thanks delivered by Ms. Yamkumari Khatiwada, Secretary and concluding remarks delivered by Hon. Minister, Mr. Parbat Gurung, MoWCSC.

Participants: A total of 400 people attended from 20 different countries across the globe including (but not limited to): Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, France, Germany, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri-Lanka, UK and the US.

Please refer to this link for [media coverage](#).



Activities of by RPF and Members

Capacity Building

Activities: Information on concept of GBV and its component, prevailing social norms and discrimination, its effect on pandemic and ways to alleviate during pandemic, SRHR amidst COVID-19

Medium of communication: Zoom

To whom: Partner Members

District: Bara and Chitwan

Total Beneficiaries: 12

Counselling

Activities: Trained partner members from Bara and Chitwan mapped the problems related to GBV and menstruation aroused in their district and gave 1:1 counselling to the affected locals

Medium of Communication: In person meeting adopting social distancing

Total Beneficiaries: 21

Research and Articles:

[Missing the Menstruation Amidst COVID-19](#)

[Missing The Menstruation Amidst COVID-19, Pandemic](#)

Radio Jingle

Organizer: SOSEC Nepal, Dailekh

Times frame: Entire month of May 2020

Theme: Dignified Menstruation and COVID-19





Facebook group formation

To promote dignified menstruation globally Facebook group on name [Dignified Menstruation Indonesia](#) Chapter, [Dignified Menstruation UK](#) Chapter, and [Dignified Menstruation Sri Lanka Chapter](#) were formed

Amnesty International, Barahi Youth Network:

[Online discussion](#) on Dignified Menstruation:

[Role of Men in Dignifying Menstruation with Ashwin Karki](#)

किशोरी तथा महिलाका लागि प्रशिक्षण "

घर मै कसरी सेनेटरी पेड बनाउने"- Online training to Women and Teenagers to make sanitary napkins at Home

Playcard message and facebook campaign, flyers

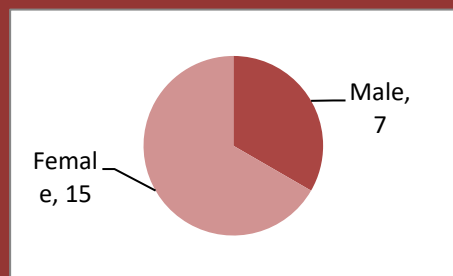
Kalo and Dignity without Danger

Online Art Exhibition: To mark Menstrual Hygiene Day with the theme "Destigmatize the NORMAL - body ,health and the process to help break silence and share experiences and move towards dignified menstruation

Space Simulation: To simulate an innovative art experience, open our house with a digital twist and offer playful exploration

Social Media Campaign

Poem



Content:

- Personal experience about menstruation
- Current situation and taboos prevailing
- Urgent need for dignified menstruation

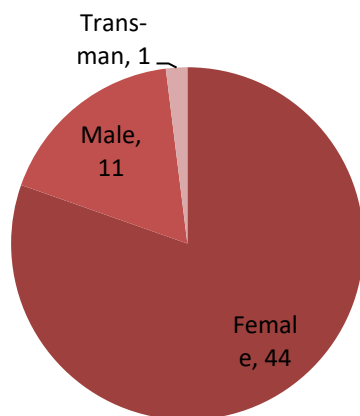
Total Poem Received: 23

Date: 13 May 2020- 21 May 2020

Total Views: 13685

Please refer to this [link](#) for more details

Video Message and Experience sharing



Video types: Pass the paper and pad challenge, personal experience sharing, and information sharing through complied videos

Content :

- Message on significance of marking May 28 as Menstrual Hygiene Day
- Sharing personal experience about how it feels like menstruating as a trans-man sharing and amidst crisis and individual actions towards dignified menstruation
- Information on menstrual products and prevailing law on menstruation.

Language: Nepali and English

Total videos received: 20

Date: 2 April 2020- 28 May 2020

Total Views: 14564

Please refer to this [link](#) for more details

Poster and Play Card Message

जिगू मासिप्यालं हि क्वहाँ
वःगु खः, जि थिइ मज्यू
जूगु मखु ।

Content: Messages about menstruation, importance of menstruation, appeal to end any form of violence and discrimination against menstruation, and urgency to endorse dignified menstruation

Language: Nepali, English and Newari



Art and Craft

Types: Painting, Embroidery, and Sketch

Content:

- Message about use of environment friendly menstrual products,
- Urgency to talk on menstruation
- Taboos and restrictions faced by menstruators



Facebook Profile Picture Challenge

Theme: Solidarity and unity among people who are intended to ensure dignified menstruation



Menstrual Bracelet



Details: Menstrual bracelets can be an important specimen that can be used for the observation of menstrual cycle. In total there are 28 beats, red represents number of days women bleed and remaining represents normal days.

Message: Menstruation should be discussed and is not a matter of silence and hide.

Since the whole world was under lockdown, participants made the bracelet using available resources such as papers, vegetables, clothes.



Virtual Conference and Course

<p>Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior</p> <p>Date and Venue: 29 May 2020, Zoom meeting</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Discussion on situation of gender based violence around Nepal, economic empowerment of women, entrepreneurship to mark National Women Rights Day was</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radha Paudel stressed on the urgency to endorsement of dignified menstruation in mainstream • RPF team members also participated in the conference
<p><u>Video Message- Adra Nepal</u></p> <p>Date: 31 May 2020</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Dignified Mnestruation amid COVID-19</p>	<p>Radha Paudel states</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pandemic does not stop menstruation. Menstruation be it hospital, ICU, quarantine are omnipresent • Because of prevailing restriction and repressing communication on menstruation has only increased violence against women • To ensure human rights, promote SRHR, and pacify GBV, discussion on dignified menstruation is imperative
<p><u>Everest Times</u></p> <p>Date and venue: 29 May 2020, Zoom</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme : To discuss on the progress and situation of activism on dignified menstruation, intervention of Nepal Government to alleviate discrimination during menstruation, importance of dignified menstruation, its indicators and way forward, and understanding of dignified menstruation in UK</p>	<p>Radha Paudel Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept and definition of Dignified Menstruation • Menstruation is related from birth to after death • Activities on menstruation should be carried out incorporating education, health, environment, women, and hygiene • Discrimination during menstruation leading to violence
<p><u>1000 Graduates Movement</u></p> <p>Date and Venue: 28 May 2020, Facebook Live</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Identifying and responding to complex</p>	<p>Radha Paudel talked about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of menstruation, policies, intervention of menstruation in global and national policies, agreements, restrictions and myths within Nepal and across globe

challenges using Dignified Menstruation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted about the physical and mental impact menstruators have. Informed about work of Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation
<p><u>Talk Series -Youth Lead SRHR Advocacy Nepal (YoSHAN)</u></p> <p>Date and Venue: 28 May 2020, Facebook Live</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Pandemic and Menstrual Health.</p>	<p>Radha Paudel highlighted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> concept and history of menstruation, pandemic, and then linked how restrictions have negative impact on menstruation during COVID-19
<p><u>UNFPA</u></p> <p>Date and Venue: 29 May 2020, ZOOM</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Issues faced by Menstruators and incorporation of Dignified Menstruation amidst COVID-19 to mark National Women's Right Day</p>	<p>Radha Paudel discussed about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept of dignified menstruation and about how restrictions and power structure at home lead to gender based violence. Highlighted about the challenges and opportunities on dignified menstruation
<p><u>Volunteer for a Prosperous Nepal</u></p> <p>Date and Venue: 29 May 2020, Facebook and zoom.</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: occasion of Menstrual Health Hygiene Management Day.</p>	<p>Radha Paudel discussed about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept of menstruation and dignified menstruation Initiation of dignified menstruation by Nepal Government. Current restrictions and practices prevailing in the Nepali society and about how these restrictions lead to power construction in home

<p><u>Sangsharsha -Nepal Television</u></p> <p>Date and venue: 27 May 2020, Nepal Television</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Discussion based on slogan” Menstrual Talk Dignity First”</p>	<p>Radha Paudel key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept and history of menstruation and dignified menstruation, • Relation between restrictions and power structure and leading to various forms of violence • Way forward to ensure dignified menstruation. • Shared her personal story about she started advocating against discrimination on menstruation and her struggles and journey
<p><u>Save girls, self-defence campaign of Karnali province Nepal</u></p> <p>Date and Venue: 25 May 2020, Facebook and Radio Broadcast</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: COVID-19 and Menstruation</p>	<p>Radha Paudel key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepal’s constitution is compatible with Dignified mensuration with ten articles • Discrimination and restrictions imposed during menstruation violates rights of menstruators • Information about GBV and menstrual laws • History of menstruation and pandemic, how on-going and tradition beliefs on menstruation violated human rights • Restrictions imposed on menstruators around the globe
<p><u>UNESCO Chair/IVR Webinar, UK</u></p> <p>Date: 30 April 2020</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Theme: Volunteer responses to COVID-19: what can we learn moving forward?</p>	<p>Radha Paudel briefed about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 context in Nepal • Marginalized people i.e. daily waged people/families, poor, pregnant, child rearing, disable, chronic illness, elders are more vulnerable • Delay in response from government, political parties • Difficult to understand for people at rural settings as most of the given information are on English • Necessary to reach out to people at rural setting through songs and radios and at urban setting through social media • Shared about her 12 learning points on

	strategies such as trusting the science and/or fact.
<p><u>Webinar- Project Butterfly (Nepal Health Corps)</u></p> <p>Date and venue: 24 May 2020</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Dignified Menstruation and Sustainable Behaviour</p>	<p>Radha Paudel Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regardless of class, caste, education, religion, taboo, stigma, and restrictions on menstruation is omnipresent. • In Nepal, there are more than 40 types of restriction imposed on menstruators • To ensure implementation SDGs, it is necessary to discuss about menstruation • Missing of sanitary products on relief packages has affected menstruators working as a health workers and amidst COVID-19, staying at quarantine, ICU, home, at road, etc. • Dignified menstruation ensure free from any form of discrimination, abuse, and restriction to every menstruators during their period
<p><u>Online Lecture by AAI Salzburg</u></p> <p>Date and Venue: 21 April 2020, AAI Online Room</p> <p>Language: English</p> <p>Theme: Dignified Menstruation in a Global Discourse: An Unseen Topic in Development and Human Rights</p>	<p>Radha Paudel key discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of restrictions practices and myths in different religions in Nepal and across the globe • Discrimination imposed during restrictions is omnipresent though severity and types may differ • Strong policies and organizations have undermined menstruation and how menstruation came into highlight in global discourse • Most of the global activities are focused on products i.e. use, accessibility, and waste management with no mention about menstruation with dignity • To ensure the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, it is vital to discuss about menstruation

<p><u>BFBS Gurkha Radio</u></p> <p>Date: 12 May 2020</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Dignified Menstruation and GBV amidst COVID-19 to mark International Nurses' Day</p>	<p>Radha Paudel key focuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept and history of menstruation • Restriction and discrimination imposed on menstruation is one of the prime reason for any form of violence including GBV • To end GBV and ensure SRHR, talk and discussion on menstruation is imperative
<p>BFBS Gurkha Live Radio program</p> <p>Date: 28 May 2020</p> <p>Language: Nepali</p> <p>Theme: Dignified amidst COVID-19 to mark Menstrual Hygiene Day</p>	<p>Anupa Regmi, Program Coordinator RPF discussed about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept of menstruation and dignified menstruation, difference between chaupadi and dignified menstruation • Government initiatives to bring dignified menstruation in mainstream • Restrictions imposed on other countries beside Nepal

Major Gaps and Challenges

- Multifaceted nature of menstruation is acknowledged by Nepal government in 2017 and developed a policy on Dignified Menstruation 2017/2018 (dignifiedmenstruation, 2019). Dignified menstruation is an umbrella term and relates health, education, water supply, food security, environment, women rights and human rights.¹ All these ministries should work collaboratively. In 28 May 2018, four ministers marked first Dignified Menstruation Day, however, since then no explicit conversation or programs on Dignified Menstruation have happened. ²The relief package of Nepal Government included for wage labour missed menstrual products and only included 30 Kgs rice, 3 Kgs pulse, 2 Kgs salt, 2 Litres cooking oil, 4 packed soap and 2 Kgs sugar (Paudel, 2020).
- As a result of ignorance and communication on menstruation, menstruators working as a frontline suffered the most. Around 70 % of women are working are frontline health workers for COVID-19. They lack getting proper menstrual products, rest, flexibility in working hours at the time of their period. In Wuhan China, doctors and nurses took birth

¹<https://www.facebook.com/UNFPANepal/videos/3036420503100977/>

²<https://www.facebook.com/1478663185707061/videos/182545013054162/>

control pills to avoid menstruation, used same diaper both for menstruation and urine, and in some cases some did not even use underwear (Li, 2020).

- Despite being initiative country for Dignified Menstruation, still programs conducted on the occasion of Dignified Menstrual Hygiene Day and in the month of May to mark there was no mention of dignified menstruation either in banner or in content. We observed lack of discussion on about the concept of dignified menstruation and role of government, I/NGOs, and bilateral organization to promote dignified menstruation. Ministry of Health, Ministry of We also observed incorporation of international slogan. Instead of concentrating the program around Nepal Government Slogan, there was usage of international slogan initiated by German based organization.
- Due to the COVID-19, the whole country was in lockdown, this limited our mobility to different remote areas of Nepal. RPF in collaboration with government, I/NGOs organized various webinar and social media campaign on dignified menstruation, however, we could not reach areas which lack access to internet services.

Way Forward

- Menstrual management supplies must be included in the list of essential supplies (like PPEs and other health supplies in COVID19) and other emergencies.
- Stakeholder should incorporate health, education, sanitation, gender equality, and environment in their program activities related to menstruation to ensure dignified menstruation.
- Stakeholders working on menstruation should be ready to change narrative from hygiene to dignity, women business to everyone business, impurity to purity.

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