

## **Second International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation concludes with 12-point declaration**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

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**KATHMANDU**

With the objective of ensuring the dignity of menstruators in all their diversity across the life course, the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Nepal, in association with the National Human Right Commission and Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, convened the 2nd International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation. The three-day event focused on encouraging the menstrual movement globally, to listen to and amplify the unheard stories and experiences of menstruators in their own voices.

The theme of the workshop was 'Menstrual Talk, Dignity first'. The three-day workshop, which concluded on Thursday, brought together around 1,000 participants from more than 30 countries. The discussions went beyond the sector discussions around water and sanitation and sexual and reproductive rights, awareness raising and menstrual products - to reclaim a space to listen to and learn from menstruators' voices globally. The workshop featured discussions on the dignity of menstruators from various perspectives, including 'putting dignity at the center,' 'psychosomatic development of dignity,' 'menstrual dignity across the life cycle, dignified menstruation and multiple pandemics and menstrual dignity as a political concern'.

The speakers represented several sectors, including academia, media, government, international organisations and civil society. During the inauguration, a lyrical video entitled 'dignity' and a book entitled 'Dignified Menstruation: A Practical Handbook' was also launched. The book features 40 contributors from 22 countries, an important contribution to the narrative on dignified menstruation at the individual, family, social and global level.

The government of Nepal is committed to ensuring the dignity of menstruators. Honorable ministers from the Government of Nepal including Leelanath Shrestha from the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Parbat Gurung from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and Hon. Gyanendra Kumar Yadav, from Ministry of Law; Province 2, stated their commitment to achieving tangible results in policy and practice across all levels.

Honorable parliamentarians Gagan Thapa, Binda Pandey, Anita Devkota and Bimala Rai Poudel issued an urgent call for political will to acknowledge menstrual discrimination as a form of gender-based violence and violation of human rights. Speaking at the event, the Founder of Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, Radha Paudel, said, "Each menstruator deserves dignity throughout their life-cycle and the workshop was successful in bringing various issues of menstruation under the umbrella of Dignified Menstruation."

The three days of discussion ended with a Call to Action attached below.

## **Declaration and Call for Action for reframing the menstrual movement with Dignity at its centre**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation, Kathmandu, Nepal**



Menstrual blood enables the circle of human life. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “***All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.***” Simply by being human, all people deserve respect. Human rights naturally spring from that dignity. Across their life course, menstruators are discriminated against – and this stigmatization does not stop with menopause! This is a manifestation of a deeply unequal world order, determined by power inequalities and patriarchal value systems, denying us our basic freedoms manifested in deep rooted discrimination against menstruators in all their diversity.

**The dignified menstruation movement proposes a foundational agenda based on Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Social Justice underpinned by the voices, stories and pride of menstruators in all their diversity. It particularly embraces plurality, gender diversity and disability and commits to respect, listening and learning across the human life course.**

The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Nepal in association with the National Human Right Commission and Global South Coalition for Dignified

Menstruation convened the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Workshop on Dignified Menstruation around the theme, of 'Menstrual Talk, Dignity first' from December 8-10, 2020. The discussions stayed away from sector silos – WASH, SRHR, Education, products and plumbing - to reclaim a space to listen to and learn from the voices of menstruators globally over three days. These conversations resulted in the following call to action.

**We call on women, men and gender non-confirming individuals in all their diversity to collectively:**

- ❖ **Redefine the narrative** on menstruation, from charity to human rights, hygiene to dignity, impure to life giving, from five days to a life course approach.
- ❖ **Protect one's fundamental rights to human dignity, not allowing anyone to deny or stigmatize these** and thereby fully own and embrace the right to menstruate with dignity.
- ❖ **Delink dignity in menstruation from global efforts to colonize, own, direct or subvert the narrative** so that every menstruator has the fundamental right to menstruate freely and with pride in their choices during periods or when they stop having them.
- ❖ **Stitch together different sector silos:** Menstruators do not live their life in sector silos of health, education, livelihoods or water and sanitation but rather call for a holistic human-centred life cycle approach.
- ❖ **Walk the talk of human dignity with and by men and boys:** Non-menstruators, take responsibility to dismantle the root causes of stigma, discrimination and violence experienced by menstruators at the hands of individuals, institutions and ideologies. Men and boys listen and learn with humility, respect and support the voices and choices of women and girls and gender diverse menstruators with humility, appreciation and commitment.
- ❖ **Don't be shy- menstrual indignity is a manifestation of patriarchy. Refuse it and fight it!** To transform patriarchal unequal power dynamics and realities, we must recognize the diversity of women's intersecting realities, challenges, and needs, and pass on the baton of leadership especially to young women and girls, in all their diversity.
- ❖ **Tell the story far and wide to redefine research as we know it:** By listening to menstruator's experiences and voices we can expand and rightfully ground an increasingly monetized evidence base that is inaccessible to many.
- ❖ **Turn media stereotypes on their head:** counter the oft reported images of helpless, weak, abused menstruators by offering a broader perspective and moving the spotlight to the silent, unsensational, centuries-old abuse and violence.

- ❖ **Seek intergenerational investment to change hearts and minds as opposed to short term project funding** as an investment in human dignity itself.
- ❖ **Democratize information and stories in myriad languages** to build the movement, political will and the demand for ensuring dignity in menstruation.
- ❖ **Recognize and fight menstrual discrimination and indignity as symptomatic of a widely tolerated, silent pandemic** of gender based violence and inequality that continues across the life course of women and girls and non-binary, gender diverse people denying them a full and free life.
- ❖ **Develop, where necessary, and implement, where already present, progressive legislative and policy frameworks** at national, regional and international levels, to end stigma, discrimination and abuse of menstruators in all their diversity in public and private settings. Allocate dedicated resources to ensure implementation of and accountability to these frameworks and the institutionalization of these principles in line with national and global commitment to human rights, gender equality and social justice.



Ministry of Women,  
Children and Senior Citizen



National Human Right  
Commission

