



28 May
**MENSTRUAL
HYGIENE DAY**

GRADUATE WOMEN INTERNATIONAL TOOLKIT

MORE ACTION AND INVESTMENT IN MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE NOW!

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY 2021





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FOREWORD

At any moment and anywhere, more than 800 million girls, adolescents or women are on their period¹. Although experiences will differ depending on social-economic and cultural contexts, too many women and girls today see their fundamental rights curtailed by the pervasive and considerable barriers to equal and safe access to menstrual health and hygiene (MHH). Among these issues is Menstrual Hygiene Insecurity (MHI), which concerningly prevents over 1.2 billion women and girls globally from managing their menstruation with normalcy and dignity³. When women and girls lack access to the basic sanitation rendered necessary by the natural process of menstruation, periods unjustly become a matter of shame and embarrassment and a major impediment to their successful completion of secondary and tertiary education and professional advancement.

As the leading graduate women's organisation globally, Graduate Women International (GWI) draws attention to the issue of MHI and period stigmatisation as severe barriers to girls' and women's safe access to education at the highest level. MHI often forces girls to miss class with the onset of their monthly period and, as absences increase so does the likelihood they will drop out of school entirely. This underscores the need to expand health education and ensure that all schools provide a period-friendly environment to all women and girls. Young girls and boys no matter where they live must know about their bodies, sexual and reproductive health and rights. All women and girls have the fundamental right to manage their menstruation safely and in dignity.

Therefore, GWI is pleased to collaborate, once again, with the Menstrual Hygiene Day (MHDAY) organisation in their efforts to raise awareness about MHH. The 2021 theme is "More action & investment in menstrual health & hygiene now!". This initiative by MHDAY catalyses advocacy, accountability and action on MHH and Menstrual Health Management (MHM), so that no girl is left behind because she menstruates, during and beyond the current pandemic.

"A failure to address the menstrual and health needs of women and girls has a detrimental impact on all areas of their lives and violates their fundamental right to equality as well as the right to participate in public, economic, social, and cultural life".

– United Nations Experts (Chairs and Special Rapporteurs) on the occasion of International Women's Day 2019²



The aim of the GWI 2021 MHDAY Advocacy Toolkit is to **raise awareness about and advocate for the elimination of MHI as a severe barrier to women's right to education and empowerment**, through a united global voice. MHI is not an emerging issue for GWI.

However, the context of the current global COVID-19 pandemic, with its far-reaching impact on women's health, finances, access to education, professional opportunities and MHH facilities and resources is raising the issue of MHI to an unprecedented level of criticality.

In every GWI member lies a powerful advocate. Now more than ever, each must see herself as an advocate for the elimination of MHI, locally and globally. Your commitment is critical to support the women and girls around the world who need our help and support in overcoming the barriers posed to their right to education and empowerment.

As a means to these goals, GWI offers this comprehensive and impactful advocacy toolkit with ready-to-use digital campaign materials, in partnership with MHDAY. We encourage the download and global sharing, on all platforms, of our ready-to-use social media graphics and messages.

We urge you to widely share this toolkit as a guide to eliminate MHI.

Together we will make a difference!

All women and girls have the fundamental right to manage their menstruation safely and in dignity. Now more than ever, we must act for the elimination of Menstrual Hygiene Insecurity (MHI) locally and globally.





MORE ACTION & INVESTMENT IN MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE NOW!

GWI urgently calls for more action and investments in schools to address the issue of MHI. There is evidence that ensuring good MHH directly contributes to gender equality and women and girls' health, well-being and empowerment. Yet, too many women around the world lack access to the knowledge, skills, facilities and resources to ensure their well-being during menstruation.

Due to socio-economic factors, the challenges posed by MHI are even more urgent for individuals who menstruate in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). These challenges include:

- Barriers in accessing knowledge and information about menstruation and MHH;
- Lack of access to safe and affordable options for menstrual products;
- Harmful socio-cultural and gender-norms, as well as pervasive stigma and taboo surrounding menstruation, which unjustly robs women and girls' of their right to full participation in public daily life and their right to health;
- Lack of access to safe and private WASH infrastructure at home, in school or at work.

While in many countries comprehensive strategies and action are put in place to eliminate MHI, ensuring safe and equal access to MHH for all women and girls is not a priority for many stakeholders, governments and donors. The funding levels are marginal and nowhere near what is required to address the challenges and needs of women and girls.

"There is a growing base of evidence that shows that investing in MHH can positively benefit several areas across women and girls' lives, such as economic benefits, participation in education, empowerment, health and mental health. MHH is central to advancing gender equality as a whole"⁴





WHY DOES INVESTMENT IN MHH MATTER?

MENSTRUATION IS A MATTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR HALF OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION

"MHI can negatively impact the extent to which women and girls enjoy their fundamental rights including those to education, work, and health. While MHH is not a human right in and of itself, it is intricately connected to people's ability to exercise their rights⁵.

Because it cuts across distinct sectors, MHH is a much more complex and difficult public issue than many realize. Overarching goals, commitments and monitoring tools interconnected with the SDGs, must be created and promoted worldwide as a means to harmonize communities, governments, nongovernmental organizations and other stakeholders into action. For further information about the interrelation between MHH and the realization of several of the SDGs, we invite you to read and share this noteworthy [MHDday infographic](#).

MHH IS CRITICAL FOR ACHIEVING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

MHH IS VITAL FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH EDUCATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

When women and girls are free from the barriers imposed by MHI, girls' and female teachers' school attendance increases. By increasing attendance and potentially decreasing or at least delaying drop-out, MHH interventions can have long-term effects on the well-being of people who menstruate. For example, one additional year of education in low income countries has in its turn been correlated with an average increase in income of 8-10% in the long term.

By donating to GWI, you contribute to GWI's effort to eliminate MHI as a severe barrier to women and girls' empowerment. Together we can make a difference!





WHAT WE DO: GWI'S WORK FOR THE ELIMINATION OF MHI

GWI is working to make the fight against MHI a global movement. Many of our National Federations and Associations (NFAs) are implementing innovative and inspiring projects with the aim of deconstructing preconceived notions about menstruation and fighting against MHI in their countries. Together, we can make a difference – join our global effort to eliminate MHI by donating to GWI and support our international membership's efforts to ensure all women and girls have access to adequate MHH.

RWANDA ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN (RAUW)

Many GWI NFAs started the fight against MHI several years ago. In this regard, GWI highlights the campaign launched as early as 2010 by RAUW members jointly with Sustainable Health Enterprises (SHE). This campaign played a crucial role in shedding light on the detrimental impact of MHI on women's fundamental rights and denouncing the period tax in Rwanda.





INDIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS (IFUWA)



GWl members in India are also leading a powerful fight against MHI. For making access to hygiene affordable, GWI highlights the inspiring efforts and leadership of IFUWA's president, Swati Bedekar, and her dedicated team, at the Vastala Foundation. Since 2014, they have been establishing low-cost, organic, sanitary pads manufacturing facilities, hence enabling economic advancement for women and improving adolescent girls' school attendance.

With this revolution in rural India through sanitary napkins, this project is transforming menstrual hygiene from a potential barrier to a powerful tool in women's empowerment. Their latest contents are available both on [Youtube](#) and [Instagram](#). Click on each video icon to learn more about how creative and dedicated women's empowerment champions in India are in ensuring that every women and girls can manage their menstruation adequately:

[Dignity, Hygiene made affordable worldwide](#)



[Sakhi ke saath 3 - season 2](#)



[Sakhi ke saath 1 - season 2](#)



[Sakhi ke saath 4 - season 2](#)



[Sakhi ke saath 2 - season 2](#)



[Sakhi ke saath 5 - season 2](#)





CONGO ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN (AFOFDU)

In August 2020, the Congo Association of University Women (AFOFDU) made the wise choice to address the essential access to WASH and MHH facilities and resources in schools. This programme, titled "Empowerment of school girls in Kinkole, rural area in Kinshasa through a mentorship programme" provided water stations, soap, masks, thermometers and organised hygiene sensitisation sessions in ten local secondary schools in the District of Kinkole, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).



In the face of growing inequalities in access to WASH services due to the sanitary crisis, GWI commends ACOFDU for contributing to the safe management of girls' menstruation in schools and ensuring the health and safety of all students, teachers and parents in the project's target schools.





TIME FOR ACTION!

GET INVOLVED WITH GWI

You can make a difference at the local, national and international level by joining in the efforts of GWI and our NFAs.

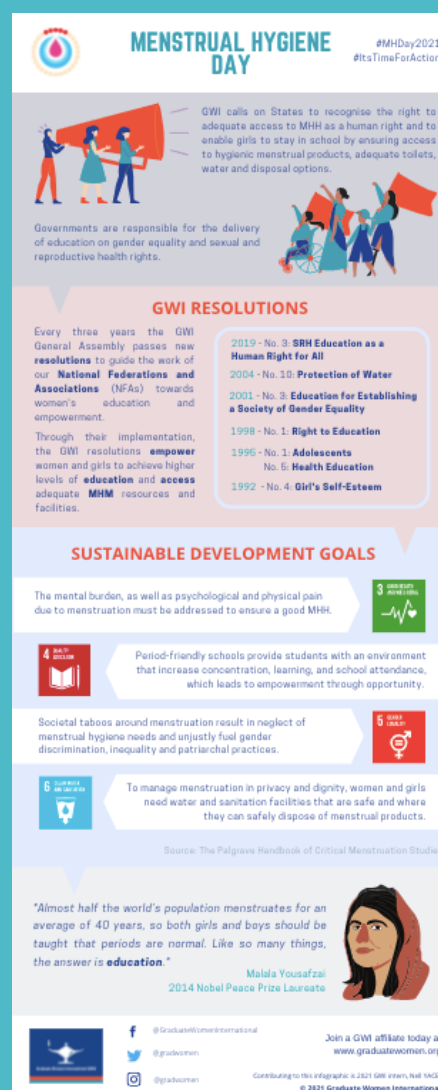
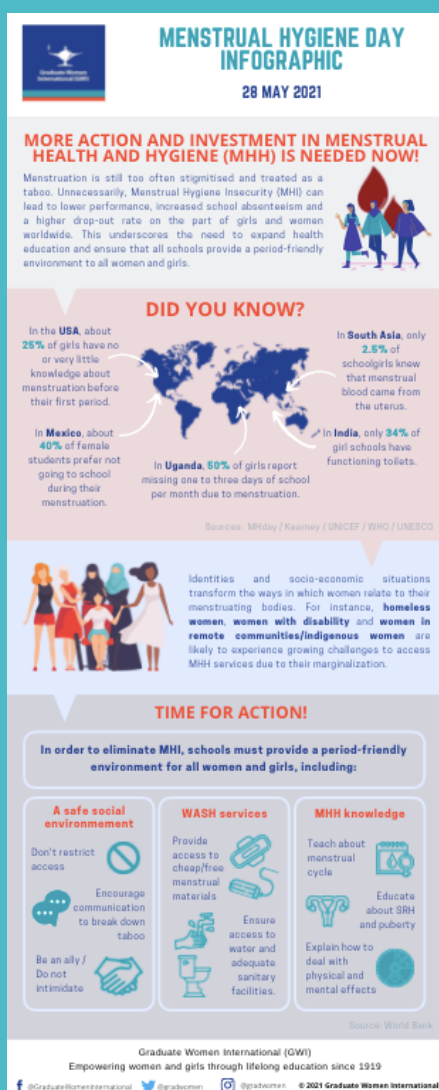
- **Advocate** for women's and girls' right to a life free of MHI and for their right to education at the highest level by joining forces with a GWI affiliate in your area. Click [HERE](#) to learn more about our membership and join us!
- **Subscribe** to the GWI Update Newsletter: Click [HERE](#)
- GWI encourages all our members, partners and friends to take part in this special day. We encourage you to **follow, comment, and share** the GWI social media campaign that will offer three daily posts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). This social media campaign will aim to provide key information about MHI but also advocacy ideas so that you can contribute, with us, to eliminate taboos and advance the status of women and girls around the world.
- In April 2021, The World Bank reported that 265 million people are going hungry and 140 million are in extreme poverty as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose unprecedented challenges to the global community. GWI continues working actively to coordinate and manage advocacy projects and initiatives on local, national and international levels that focus on building education back better. Together, we can make a difference – click [HERE](#) to give the gift of education to women and girls around the world by contributing to the [Girls' Education for Brighter Futures Post-COVID-19 Programme](#).





GO DIGITAL! GWI 2021 MHDAY ADVOCACY MATERIALS

GWI 2020 MHDAY Infographic

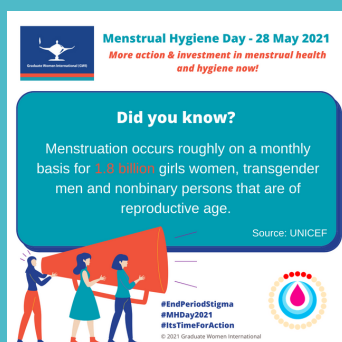
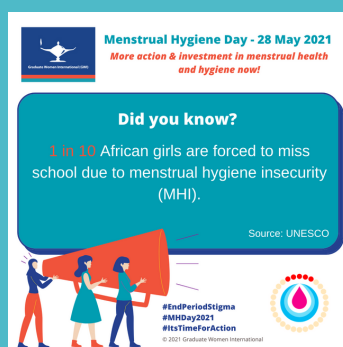
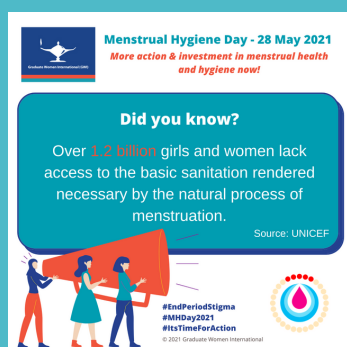


**Click [HERE](#) to download the full GWI
2021 MHDAY Infographic**



GWl 2021 MHDay Social Media Graphics

To download posts individually, click on the post of your choice



[Click HERE to download the full GWI MHDay Social Media Graphics pack](#)



GWJ 2021 Ready-to-use MHDav Social Media Advocacy Messages

Simply copy and paste the message(s) of your choice to all social media platforms

- There is not enough information that is easily accessible to teach girls to manage menstruation in a safe and hygienic manner. In Sri Lanka, for example, 66% of girls do not receive any information before menstruating. (WaterAid) #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- In the US, only 21% of elementary schools teach about puberty in required courses. (School Health Policies and Practices Study) #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- In South Asia, only 2.5% of schoolgirls knew that menstrual blood came from the uterus.
- In 2019, a survey of low-income women in a large U.S. city finds that nearly two-thirds couldn't afford menstrual hygiene (Obstetrics & Gynecology) The COVID-19 crisis is only making the situation worse. #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- More than half of adolescent girls in Ethiopia don't receive any education about menstruation before their first periods (UNICEF) #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- Did you know? Menstruation occurs roughly on a monthly basis for 1.8 billion girls women, transgender men and nonbinary persons that are of reproductive age. (UNICEF) #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- Did you know? 1 in 10 African girls are forced to miss school due to menstrual hygiene insecurity (MHI). #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- Did you know? Over 1.2 billion girls and women lack access to the basic sanitation rendered necessary by the natural process of menstruation. #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- Did you know? In India, only one out of two girls has knowledge about menstruation before their first period. #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- Advocacy idea: Reach out to your local representatives and call on your government to develop and fund programs aimed to break down taboos and build positive social norms and perception on menstruation. #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- Advocacy idea: Identify both male and female role models who will speak out positively about menstruation and help provide young men and women alike with adequate information on sexual health and menstrual hygiene management. #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction
- Advocacy idea: This Menstrual Hygiene Day reflects how lack of awareness and persistent social stigma around periods has affected you or the women in your life. Try to have a conversation today with a man or woman about the importance of periods and women's health. #EndPeriodStigma #MHDav2021 #ItsTimeForAction



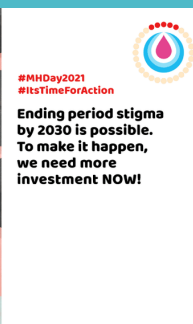
MHDay CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

Social Media Graphics

The MHDay materials are simpler and easier to use than ever. There are ready-to-use materials for on-the-ground activities and digital campaigning.

This year, the materials are available in [English](#), [French](#), [Hindi](#), [Spanish](#), [Arabic](#) and [German](#).

Click on the graphics below to view and download the available MHDay campaigning materials.



[Click HERE to access the full 2021 MHDay campaign materials pack](#)



MHDay Infographics

Click on the graphics below to view and download MHDay's latest infographic



It still is possible to create a world where no woman or girl is held back because she menstruates by 2030, but only if we step up investment in menstrual health and hygiene now.

That is the key message of the new MHDay infographic.

Please share widely with your friends and followers!

[To access MHDay's past infographics, click on the links below](#)

Period Friendly Toilets : [Infographic 1](#) – [Infographic 2](#)

Education about menstruation changes everything : [English](#) – [Portuguese](#) – [Hindi](#)

MHM and the SDGs: [English](#)

General MHM Infographic : [English](#) – [Portuguese](#) – [German](#)



About GWI

GWI is a membership-based international NGO located in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in some 60 countries with our NFAs and Independent Members. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI has been in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1947 and maintains official relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

GWI operates with a small yet dedicated staff consisting of an Executive Director, a Programme Officer, and a host of committed interns and volunteers. Additionally, our work is only possible with the support of our tireless Board of Directors: Terry Oudraad, President, GWI; Vice Presidents Veena Bathe (Legal and Governance), Eileen Focke-Bakker (Membership), Glenda Hecksher (Marketing), Louise McLeod (Advocacy and Education), Basak Ovacik (Fundraising) and Treasurer, Katharina Strub.



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SOURCES

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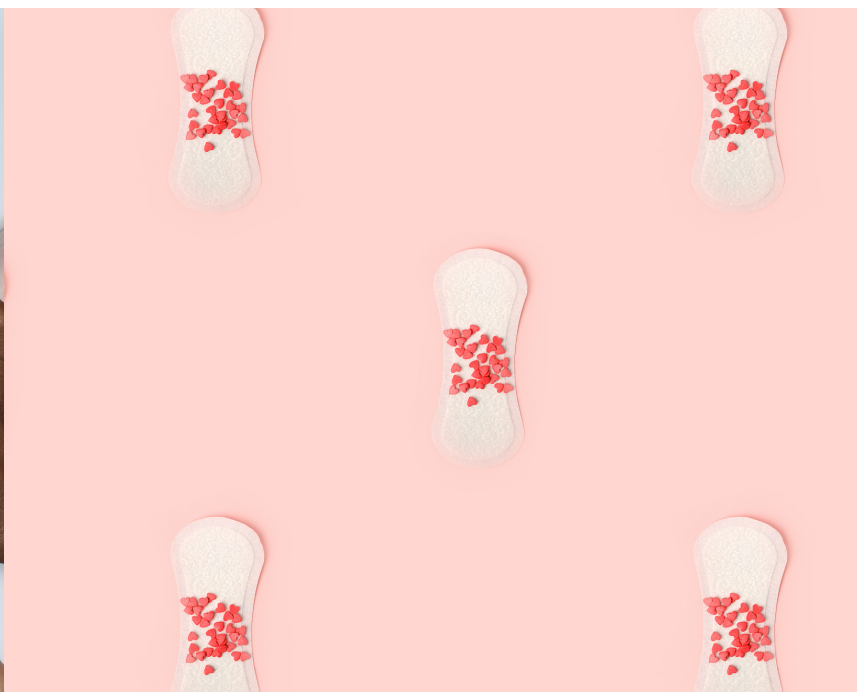
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Graduate Women International (GWI)

*Empowering women and girls
through lifelong education since
1919*

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