TABOOS AND STIGMAS SURROUNDING MENSTRUATION WORLDWIDE

In many Mexican households and communities, menstruation is considered taboo, resulting in limited open dialogue and education on menstrual health. Consequently, many girls grow up with little knowledge about menstruation and its biological processes.

In certain part of India, menstruating women are labelled as unclean, leading to their isolation and sometimes consequent absence from school for up to five days.

In some rural Nepal villages, menstruation stigma leads to practices like Chhaupadi, where women are isolated in makeshift shelters due to cultural beliefs, hindering their access to education.

Source: The Pad Project

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY 2024

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of Menstrual Hygiene Day on 28 May, Graduate Women International (GWI) spotlights the ongoing stigma and discrimination against millions of women and girls worldwide with the aim to raise awareness and normalize menstruation by 2030:

- By breaking taboos and stigmas surrounding menstruation.
- Raising awareness regarding the challenge in accessing menstrual hygiene products.

GWI is committed to achieving these goals as represented in our United Nations Human Rights Council written statement HERE.

#MHDay2024#PeriodFriendlyWorld

FAST FACTS

- 131 MILLION SCHOOLGIRLS worldwide miss school due to period poverty, lacking access to sanitary products and proper facilities for menstruation.
- High costs of sanitary products lead to school absenteeism
- 1 IN 10 GIRLS IN THE UK IS UNABLE TO AFFORD PERIOD PRODUCTS
- In Kenya, two-thirds of women and girls can’t afford menstruation products

Source: The Pad Project

GWI ADVOCACY

Menstruation affects half the world’s population and is tied to human rights. Insecurity about menstrual hygiene can restrict access to education, work, and health, impacting women and girls’ rights.

Menstrual hygiene is critical for the empowerment of women and girls through the highest level of education. Better menstrual hygiene boosts school attendance for girls and female teachers. This helps reduce dropouts and improves well-being. In low-income countries, each extra year of education can raise income by 8-10%.

Access our latest written statement for the 50th Human Rights Council on the role of Menstrual Hygiene Management in achieving the SDGs here.

Source: Graduate Women International

GWI ADVOCATES FOR

- Supportive environment
  - Encourage communication to end the stigmas.
  - Ensure unrestricted access to Menstrual Hygiene Management.

- Education
  - Teach boys and girls about the menstrual cycle.
  - Educate about sexual and reproductive health.

- WASH services
  - Provide access to cheap/free menstrual products.
  - Ensure access to water and adequate sanitary facilities.

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Source: The Pad Project

This year’s theme: “Together for a period friendly world”

#MHDay2024#PeriodFriendlyWorld

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WASH services

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Ensure access to water and adequate sanitary facilities.
FACTS AND STATS

A girl's first period should be a happy fact of life, a sign of coming of age with dignity, she should have access to everything necessary to understand and care for her body and attend school without stigma or shame.

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY RESOURCES

Contribute to education
Support projects providing menstrual education for both boys and girls, and improve school facilities for better menstrual health management.

Support your local NGO
Your support directly helps NGO like GWI with efforts in education, product distribution, and policy advocacy.

Break taboos
Start conversations to normalize menstruation, share personal experiences, and engage in social media activism to break the stigma surrounding menstrual health.

SUCCESS STORIES

On 29 May 2023, the Ghana Association of University Women (GALUW) organized a menstrual hygiene education seminar for 140 girls from seven public schools in Cape Coast.

The Association of University Women Uganda (AUWU) is launching a groundbreaking project to address menstrual health challenges in Uganda’s Luuka District. By training adolescents, parents, and teachers to produce reusable sanitary pads, this initiative seeks to:

- **BOOST GIRLS’ SCHOOL RETENTION, EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY THROUGH REUSABLE SANITARY PAD PRODUCTION FOR INCOME, REDUCE EARLY MARRIAGES, AND ENHANCE MENSTRUAL HEALTH AWARENESS.**

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY 2024

Natalia Kanem
United Nations Population Fund Executive Director

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MENSTRUAL TABOOS AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

Period-friendly schools empower students by improving concentration, learning, and attendance.

Access to clean water and sanitation facilities is crucial for managing menstruation with dignity and privacy.

Breaking menstruation taboos empowers women, facilitates gender equality and enables women full participation in society.

Menstrual health impacts women's overall well-being. Improving menstrual health enhances women's health and quality of life globally.

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