

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY

28TH MAY 2021

BACKGROUND

Gender equity becomes an issue when women and girls lack access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities and appropriate hygiene education, affecting a girl's education, sexual and reproductive health, and dignity.

Lack of adequate facilities and materials for menstrual hygiene has been linked to absenteeism of girls from school during their periods. Many may permanently drop out of school with the onset of puberty if the toilet facilities are not clean or do not provide privacy to girls while they are menstruating.

Menstruation is a taboo subject in many cultures and can create stigma, shame, and silence among young girls, which often continues into adulthood and perpetuates the cycle of gender inequality.

Around the world, girls try to keep their menstruation a secret while they are in school. Without adequate sanitation facilities, girls are unable to manage their menstruation safely, hygienically, and with dignity and will be unlikely to use the facilities if there is no guarantee to privacy.

Due to social and WASH-related issues, many girls choose to stay home during their menstruation instead of having to manage their period at school. Other times, girls do attend school but face challenges such as leakage, odor, discomfort, or difficulty concentrating.

Access to these facilities at home and at health clinics is also important to allow women and girls a safe means to manage their menstruation at all times. MHM is a multi-sectoral issue. Integrating efforts between WASH, education, gender equality, and reproductive health sectors will contribute to improving MHM.

SOURCE: [WASH AND MHM RESOURCE GUIDE](#)

WEBINAR TOPICS AND SPEAKERS

On May 29th 2021, Youngistaan Foundation organized a webinar with over 300 participants who gathered together on Zoom to learn and interact on a variety of topics during sessions that were taken by the following well-established speakers:



INTRODUCTORY SESSION

S. R. NALLI

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) IN INSTITUTION SPECIALIST, UNICEF HYDERABAD FIELD OFFICE FOR ANDHRA PRADESH, KARNATAKA AND TELANGANA

S. R. Nalli of UNICEF India spoke to the participants about the initial changes that boys and girls go through at puberty, and asked people to notice the differences. "Around age twelve, boys and girls start to change. But while boys are proud to start showing off their moustaches, girls shy away and have rules, restrictions and prohibitions placed upon them."



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MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

DR. P. MANIKANTA

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH) IN INSTITUTION CONSULTANT, UNICEF HYDERABAD FIELD OFFICE FOR ANDHRA PRADESH, KARNATAKA AND TELANGANA

Much alarm and concern has been expressed at how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting menstrual health and Dr. Manikanta took the participants through the various ways that the pandemic is changing menstrual health followed up by the practical steps that individuals, hospitals, stores, organizations, etc. can adopt to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 upon menstrual health. His 5-step action plan included: access to information, access to sanitary hygiene products, access to facilities and services, assessment of the situation and special interventions, and special attention for girls and women with disabilities.



SCALING EDUCATION ON MENSTRUAL HEALTH HYGIENE

DR. MANJULA ANAGANI

PADMASHREE AWARDEE, CHIEF GYNECOLOGIST AND OBSTETRICIAN, LAPAROSCOPIC SURGEON AND TEDX SPEAKER

A robust question-and-answer session with Dr. Manjula Anagani addressed questions from the mostly young participants about the pros and cons of different menstrual products and the environmental impact of each of these upon menstrual health. “Normalizing menstruation is the first step to addressing menstrual hygiene” was the common thread in the answers Dr. Manjula Anagani provided on the questions that ranged from premature menopause to the changes that women’s menstrual cycles undergo post-COVID-recovery.





IMPROVING ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

MAYA VISHWAKARMA
FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF SUKARMA FOUNDATION

Maya Vishwakarma described her inspiring journey from her village in Madhya Pradesh to the United States where she noticed the stark differences between the approaches of young women to menstruation and the availability of menstrual products. On her own, Maya Vishwakarma decided to break the taboo on menstruation through her organization which focuses on providing education, access to free sanitation material, eradicating taboos and reducing period poverty.



PUTTING THE MEN IN MENSTRUATION

ARUN DANIEL YELLAMATY
FOUNDER AND CEO OF YOUNGISTAAN FOUNDATION

Youngistaan Foundation's founder Arun Daniel Yellamaty closed the session by talking about his personal experience during a time when menstruation was not discussed in schools, and compared this experience with schools nowadays that have begun to encourage children to discuss and ask questions about menstruation. He encouraged more boys and men to educate themselves about menstruation to fight the myths and taboos surrounding periods, and address their curiosity about menstruation by asking questions to elders and/or teachers.





The webinar also included a live music session with singer Anusha Mondol and a slam poetry segment with slam poet Shruthika Chowdary on the importance of shattering period taboos.

PARTICIPANTS

The Menstrual Hygiene Day webinar brought together the following 300+ young participants online:

- adolescent girls from orphanages
- adolescent girls from urban slums
- college students
- corporate employees
- and other audiences

The recording of the session was live-streamed for 22,000+ people on our YouTube, Facebook and Twitter platforms and shared with the internal and external stakeholders of Youngistaan Foundation.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“ I have learnt a lot from today's session. Most importantly to stay healthy, use a menstruation cup, follow a good diet and exercise to stay fit.

Kandula Geetha Sri (College Student)

The event was very nicely organized and provided valuable information to me. After listening to the topic of sustainable menstruation, I am inspired to give menstrual cups as a gift to the women in my life. ”

Vimal (Storyteller)

NEWS COVERAGE



Men, women educated about menstruation

In observance of Menstrual Hygiene Day, Youngistaan Foundation's Gender Program hosted a virtual session to educate young men and women about periods, myths and taboos, to discuss the Action and Investment in Menstrual Hygiene and Health. The session brought together 300 participants while the event was streamed live reaching over 20,000 participants through

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OUR PAST MHM INITIATIVES

2019 | ON-GROUND MHM AWARENESS PROGRAM

In the year 2019, we conducted an exclusive awareness session on MHM that focused on breaking taboos and myths around periods, child sexual abuse and general and environmental hygiene for 300 adolescent girls in Hyderabad. At the end of the session, we presented the children with menstrual hygiene kits consisting of a pack of sanitary napkins, soap, sanitizer, chocolate, safety pins and a small note on the instructions.



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OUR PAST MHM INITIATIVES

2019 | AWARENESS OF MHM ON SOCIAL MEDIA

We conducted an online quiz competition on our Instagram page as a platform for digital media audiences to express their views on menstrual hygiene management. More than 2,000 people participated in this quiz which received resoundingly positive feedback due to the fact that they could take back the meaningful information from the quiz to their homes, classrooms and offices.

2018 | "PERIOD" A CREATIVE EVENT

On the occasion of World Menstrual Hygiene Day, we brought together city-based standup comedians, slam poets who used their creative content to spread awareness about menarche, taboos around menstruation, the period scenario in India, and more topics by engaging a packed audience hall, most of whom, were men.



ABOUT YOUNGISTAAN FOUNDATION'S GENDER PROGRAM






The gender awareness program aims to build safe spaces of dialogue, and engage and empower adolescent girls and boys in government schools, slums and orphanages. It sparks and sustains crucial conversations on safe touch / unsafe touch, and safety rights.

It discusses menstrual hygiene and taboos and myths around menstruation. So far, we have reached 14,000 girls with awareness education and distributed sanitary napkins. In order to end period poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic, the team also distributed 10,000+ sanitary napkins to families of migrant and daily wage workers.

SNAPSHOTS

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