

IMPROVING MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT (MHM) IN THE WORKPLACE

PROJECT AIM

To determine if adequate workplace MHM improves business and social outcomes, including women's economic empowerment.



Thika Cloth Mills

WORKPLACES IN KENYA



Shona EPZ

INTERVENTION

The workplace MHM intervention components:



Product

Intervention



BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS PRODUCED FOR THE MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE ACTIVITY IN KENYA

Behavior change communication (BCC) approaches that focus on menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) in the workplace have the potential to positively influence corporate culture and improve MHH. This resource packet describes the BCC approach of an action research initiative that sought to improve menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in two Kenyan workplaces. The packet provides links to the designed BCC materials, information about how they were developed and applied, and ways in which future implementers may adapt these materials for their own use. It also includes a list of topics for facilitated sensitization sessions that correspond to the BCC tools, as well as key learning points for consideration.

TIPS FOR CUSTOMIZING THESE BCC MATERIALS

- ✓ Conduct formative research to understand the target audience(s) and context
- ✓ Assess your team's BCC capacity and engage external expertise where needed (e.g., a BCC advisor to guide the design process)
- ✓ Engage local designers who understand MHH and the contextual characteristics of the target audience(s)
- ✓ Pilot all BCC materials with target audience(s) and revise as necessary prior to dissemination

DOCUMENT GUIDE

This resource packet includes four chapters:

- 1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- 2 BCC PRODUCTS
- 3 SENSITIZATION SESSIONS
- 4 KEY LEARNING POINTS

Pages that discuss BCC products for this activity include the following components:

WOMEN EMPLOYEES

MENSTRUAL PRODUCT DISPOSAL POSTER:

The research and design teams created large posters to illustrate how women employees could properly dispose of used menstrual products in their workplaces' toilet facilities. These posters prioritized illustrations that visually depicted processes – such as throwing a used disposable pad in the menstrual waste bin – instead of using text-heavy instructions. Swahili versions of these posters were framed and placed in all women's toilet facilities at the beginning of the intervention period. This poster is available in English and Swahili at [this link](#).

MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS DISPOSAL & SAFETY PRACTICES
Everyone must practice good menstrual hygiene to stay healthy.

KUTUPA BIDHAA ZA HEDHI KWA USAHIHI
Ni muhimu kita mremia alihusisha na vitendo vinyerodumisha utafii wa hedhi iliwa na alga salama.

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ✓ Update graphics to accurately depict visuals of toilet facilities, menstrual waste bins, and handwashing stations, based on the workplace.
- ✓ Include disposal, reuse, or washing instructions for menstrual products that are most commonly used in each workplace, instead of only focusing on disposable pads.
- ✓ Present guidance in a way that reflects the literacy levels of employees; for instance, use less text-heavy and more self-explanatory illustrations for workplaces where employees have lower literacy levels.

→ Target audience for BCC product(s)

→ Name of BCC product

→ Brief description of BCC product, considerations during development, and links for the complete product

→ Preview of or excerpts from the BCC product in English and/or Swahili

→ Insight on ways to customize and adapt the BCC product, depending on users' goals

BACKGROUND

Globally, women workers face daunting challenges managing their periods where workplaces rarely support menstrual health and hygiene (MHH). The USAID *Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in the Workplace* activity partnered with two private sector manufacturing companies in Kenya to implement customized workplace interventions that improved menstrual wellbeing. MHM is a subset of USAID's holistic approach to MHH, which includes reproductive health, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, and social and behavior change. Partner companies differed in size and gender composition: Workplace A employed approximately 700 employees who were mostly men, while Workplace B employed approximately 400 employees who were mostly women. One of the core components of these interventions was influencing workplace culture through BCC. The interventions' BCC approach aimed to 1) improve employees' awareness of and knowledge about menstruation in the workplace, 2) address myths, misconceptions, and social stigma that affected menstruating employees, and 3) promote improved MHH-related behaviors in the workplace, thereby contributing to a more supportive work environment for menstruating employees and overall improved MHH in the workplace. An overview of the activity can be found in a [brief here](#).

DEVELOPING THE BCC APPROACH

Based on formative research findings, the BCC approach was designed to address key MHH behaviors, social norms, beliefs, attitudes and practices at both workplaces. These findings illustrated that:

- 1 There was a strong culture of silence, secrecy, and forbearance around menstruation in the workplace.
- 2 Menstrual stigma and inadequate knowledge contributed to employees' limited understanding of menstruation and its impacts on women's workplace experiences.
- 3 Inadequate MHH in the workplace negatively affected menstruating employees, especially their performance in the workplace and their relationship with their supervisors.

The research team collaborated with a Kenyan design team, [Tatsuo](#), to produce a creative brief that identified the theory of change, target behaviors, desired changes and outcomes by audience, behavioral objectives, core messages, communication channels used by target audiences, and creative considerations, all based on formative research findings. The research and design teams participated in an iterative copywriting and editing process to fine tune the rhetoric, content, and design of print and digital BCC products. Simultaneously, the research team developed audience-specific sensitization sessions, repurposing content from publicly available educational modules about menstrual health and hygiene and core messages prepared for this activity's BCC products. Session facilitators from the research team iteratively edited sensitization session facilitation guides prior to implementation. Facilitators conducted brief "light touch" sensitization sessions with key workplace influencers, sometimes collaboratively with content experts (e.g., medical professionals).

Formative assessments for the *MHM in the Workplace* action research in Kenya identified the following key audiences who might improve conditions for menstruating employees in the workplace:



Women employees



Senior management & leadership



Worker relations & union representatives



On-site health care providers



Cleaning staff



Guards



MHM Champions



Men employees & supervisors

WHAT IS A "LIGHT TOUCH" INTERVENTION?

The research team designed both Kenyan *MHM in the Workplace* interventions with the goal of minimizing time and cost burdens on private sector partner companies. To do so, the interventions engaged employees for up to one hour per month of face-to-face interactions.

FROM FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS TO A BCC PRODUCT

In formative assessments, women employees at one workplace reported that their supervisors, senior managers, and leaders – many of whom were men – did not seem to understand the effects of menstruation on women’s physical and emotional health at work. Additionally, management seemed to consider menstruating women to be moody, lazy, uncooperative, and insubordinate. Women reported feeling that this perceived bias against menstruating employees negatively affected their advancement opportunities. To change these perceptions and practices, the Senior Management and Leadership Booklet:

- ✓ Included information about the effects of menstruation on women
- ✓ Reframed menstruating employees as valuable, hardworking, and productive assets
- ✓ Dispelled stigma against menstruating employees
- ✓ Provided guidance on normalizing menstruation in the workplace

Anything that influences employees' productivity, performance, and ability to reach their full potential in the workplace affects the company's overall business outcomes.

Investing in women's menstrual health, hygiene, and wellbeing can create a supportive environment for all employees, which contributes to the company's success.



Excerpt from the Senior Management & Leadership booklet



BCC PRODUCTS



WOMEN EMPLOYEES

MENSTRUAL PRODUCT DISPOSAL POSTER:

The research and design teams created large posters to illustrate how women employees could properly dispose of used menstrual products in their workplaces' toilet facilities. These posters prioritized illustrations that visually depicted processes – such as throwing a used disposable pad in the menstrual waste bin – instead of using text-heavy instructions. Swahili versions of these posters were framed and placed in all women's toilet facilities at the beginning of the intervention period. This poster is available in English and Swahili [here](#).

MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS DISPOSAL & SAFETY PRACTICES

Everyone must practice good menstrual hygiene to stay healthy.

1. WASH YOUR HANDS WITH WATER & SOAP BEFORE / AFTER CHANGING MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS
2. REMOVE THE USED DISPOSABLE PAD FROM YOUR UNDERWEAR AND ROLL INWARD
3. IF CHANGING DISPOSABLE PADS, REUSE USED PAD IN PACKAGING FROM A FRESH PAD
4. THROW USED DISPOSABLE PRODUCTS IN A MENSTRUAL BIN AND CLOSE THE LID
5. DO NOT LEAVE USED DISPOSABLE PRODUCTS ON THE FLOOR
6. INFORM CLEANERS/MANAGEMENT IF BIN IS FULL, OVERFLOWING, OR HAS A BAD ODOR
7. DO NOT FLUSH USED MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IN THE TOILET
8. DO NOT REUSE OR WASH DISPOSABLE PADS

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KUTUPA BIDHAA ZA HEDHI KWA USAHIHI

Ni muhimu kila mmoja ajihusishe na vitendo vinvayodumisha usafi wa hedhi ilikuwa na afya salama.

1. NAWA MIKONO KWA KUTUMIA MAJI MASAFI NA SABUNI KABLA NA BAADA YA KUBADILISHA BIDHAA YA HEDHI
2. TOA PAD KWENYE SURUALLI, IKUNJE KWA UPAKAGE WA HEDHI
3. KAMA UNABADILISHA PAD ZA KUTUPA, FUNGA PAD ILIYOTUMIKA KWA KUTUMIA KUPAKAGE YA BIDHAA MIAJI
4. TUPA PAD ILIYOTUMIKA KWENYE PIPA LA TAKA ZA HEDHI NA HAKIKISHA UMEFURIKA PIPA NILO
5. USIWACHE PAD ZILIZOTUMIKA KWA SAKAFU
6. PIPA LAKAJA NA KUENZA KUPURIKA AU KWA LAMETA WATUFO MBAYA, JIUSHA WASAFISHAJI NA/AU WASIMAMZI
7. USIRUSHE AU KUPILASHI PAD AU BIDHAA ZINGINE ZA HEDHI NDANI YA BAKULI LA CHODI CHA KUSUKUMA UCHAFU KWA KUTUMIA MAJI
8. USIRUSHE AU KUPILASHI PAD AU BIDHAA ZINGINE ZA HEDHI NDANI YA BAKULI LA CHODI CHA KUSUKUMA UCHAFU KWA KUTUMIA MAJI

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POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ✓ Update graphics to accurately depict visuals of toilet facilities, menstrual waste bins, and handwashing stations, based on the workplace.
- ✓ Include disposal, reuse, or washing instructions for menstrual products that are most commonly used in each workplace, instead of only focusing on disposable pads.
- ✓ Present guidance in a way that reflects the literacy levels of employees; for instance, use less text-heavy and more self-explanatory illustrations for workplaces where employees have lower literacy levels.



WHATSAPP DIGITAL POSTERS:

Many women employees at one workplace used WhatsApp to consume social media and communicate with people; therefore, the research team created a WhatsApp group with all women employees at the workplace (including the Managing Director) and distributed 17 informative digital graphics to them over the course of the intervention. The research team also disseminated these informative graphics to a WhatsApp group for women employees at the second workplace, though its reach was limited, given employees' lower levels of literacy and smartphone ownership at this workplace.

These 17 WhatsApp digital graphics conveyed information about menstrual products, menstrual health and hygiene, pain management, and elements of menstruation-friendly infrastructure. In addition, they sought to normalize and break the silence around menstruation in the workplace, address menstrual stigma and shame, and help employees understand the effects of inadequate MHH in the workplace. Information was presented in both English and Swahili. When producing each graphic, research and design teams:

- Ensured that illustrations accurately depicted Kenyan employees in their workplace, down to the style of their outfits;
- Prioritized a period-positive rhetoric: language that encourages individuals to embrace menstruation with pride;
- Addressed the unintended harm of focusing too much on the negative impacts of menstruation on employees in the workplace; and
- Respected employees' need for privacy at work.

After sharing each graphic on both WhatsApp groups, a research team member followed up with a reflective prompt, allowing employees to share their thoughts about the content. Some employees used the WhatsApp group to ask clarifying questions elicited by graphics and to discuss their own experiences. A compilation of all WhatsApp digital graphics is available in English and Swahili [here](#).

I AM ON MY PERIOD!

We learned about menstruation in school, but why don't we talk about it at work?

I would feel so uncomfortable and distracted if my colleagues found out that I'm on my period.

Menstruation is not something only talked about in school. Many adults menstruate while working.

Menstruation doesn't stop after puberty or when you enter the workplace. We all should feel free to speak out if we want to.

What if a colleague says something that makes me feel bad about having my period?

It is not acceptable for colleagues to bully, harass, or dismiss you because you are menstruating.

Openly talking about menstruation at work would empower me to ask for lighter duties when I have period pain or get colleagues' advice about menstrual products.

Yes, workplaces can and should support employees in managing their menstruation safely and adequately when at work.

REASONS TO BE PERIOD PROUD!

- Menstruation can be an exciting reproductive health experience.
- Learning patterns in our period cycles and understanding our bodies' needs can be empowering.
- It can be a chance to give our bodies the rest, care, and comfort they need.
- Supporting menstruating colleagues can create a sisterhood and positive work environment.

JINSI YA KUDHIBITI MAUMIZI WAKATI WA HEDHI

- 1. KUMEZA DAWA ZA KAWAIDA ZA KUKABILIANA NA MAUMIVU**
Dawa za kawaida za kukabiliana na maumivu kama vile paracetamol, zaweza nunuliwa kwenye maduka maalum ya dawa au maduka ya kawaida ya dawa.
- 2. KUTUMIA JOTO**
Unaweza nunua chupa ya kutia maji moto ili kutia joto kwenye tumbo na sehemu ya nyuma ya mgongo. Pia waweza jundia kifaa hiki nyumbani kwa kutumia chupa iliyojawwa maji moto. Wakati wowote huu, chupa hii inapaswa kufungwa kwa kutumia kitambaa kizito (kama vile taulo) ili kuzuia ajali za kuungua.
- 3. KANDA KWA KUTUMIA LIHAMU (OINTMENT)**
Kupaka na kukanda mafuta maalum ya kutuliza maumivu (kama vile Robb au Kaluma) husaidia kutuliza maumivu ya sehemu ya chini ya tumbo, mgongo, na maumivu ya kichwa.
- 4. MAZOEZI**
Mazoezi mepesi kama vile kutembea yaweza saidia kutuliza maumivu wakati wa hedhi.
- 5. KUDUMISHA LISHE YENYE AFYA**
Kuepuka vyakula vilivyvo na mafuta, pombe, vinywaji vilivyvo na dioksidi ya kaboni, kafeini, na chumvi, kutakusaidia kupunguza tumbo kuvimba na kichefuchefu, sawa na kula vyakula vilivyvo na viwango vya juu vya unyuzi na kunywa maji kwa wingi.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT MENSTRUATION!

Myth: Menstrual blood is dirty!

Fact: Menstruation is not dirty. Some people worry that menstrual blood has an odor or is impure, but menstruation is a natural process.

Myth: Women must use secret names like *kurayeha*, *masheho*, or monthly visitors to talk about their period privately!

Fact: Employees should be able to talk openly about menstruation alone or in silence at the expense of their comfort, health, and wellbeing. Workplaces can take simple steps to support menstruating employees.

Myth: Men should never know when a woman is menstruating at work!

Fact: It is okay for women to be private about their period around men at work, but no one should pressure, shame, or bully women into hiding it.

Myth: Menstruation is something women should just persevere through!

Fact: It is not women's duty to bear their menstruation alone or in silence at the expense of their comfort, health, and wellbeing. Workplaces can take simple steps to support menstruating employees.

Did you know?

- You are allowed to be as private or open as you want about your menstruation at work.
- It is not appropriate for anyone to make you feel uncomfortable or humiliated because you're menstruating.
- Myths about menstruation at work can come from cultural taboos, social and religious beliefs, lack of information, and more.

MATATIZO YA KIAFYA YANAYOTOKANA NA HEDHI

Japo hedhi ni shughuli ya kawaida, kuna matatizo ya kiafya ambayo yaweza husishwa na hedhi, ambayo wanawake wanapaswa kufahamu.

Matatizo mengi ya kiafya yanayotokana na hedhi yaweza athiri aya, ustawi, na uzaliwaji wa wafanyakazi wanapaswahuia hedhi kazini.

Endometriosis **Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)**

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) **Uterine cysts**

Pre-Menstrual syndrome (PMS) **Kansa ya ovari**

Toxic shock syndrome

Ishara za kawaida zinazohusishwa na hali hizi:

- Maumivu makali ya kumbi
- Mabadiliko ya mzunguko wa hedhi
- Mabadiliko ya nguvu yaani changamoto ya kazi au uwezo wa kufanya kazi

JE WAJUA?

- Mzunguko wa hedhi huathiri mengi kuhusiana na aya ya mwili wa mwanamke.
- Baada ya mbinu za upangaji uzazi zina athiri ambazo zaweza sababishi kuwa damu, mabadiliko ya mzunguko wa hedhi, au kubadilisha maumivu ya hedhi.

IMPORTANT: Wanawake wanapaswa kufahama mzunguko yao ya hedhi, kuwawa miji yao na kumona daktari kwa mzunguko yao ya hedhi kutokana.

CHAGUO LA BIDHAA ZA HEDHI

KIDODO CHA KUTUMIA

- Weka kidodo vinyundua kwa kumbi chenye unywele wa kumbi ambayo huandaa kwenye kawaida za ndani ili kufanya damu ya hedhi.
- Vinyundua kwa safi na wazi kabla. Katika vinyundua kwa kumbi ya kazi ya mwanamke, kumbi ambayo huandaa damu ya hedhi ni kumbi ambayo huandaa damu ya hedhi.
- Mumaji dhidi anawe mikonzo kwa sababu na maji yanayotokana kabla ya kumbi, kubadilisha au kubadilisha kumbi.
- Meda wa matandali: Matandali mwa moja.

JINI YA KUTUMIA

- Uchafu kwenye chini cha kumbi unachafua maji.
- Funga kwenye kumbi.
- Ta ribani ya paka za hedhi.
- Funga paka.
- Mji mwanamke tanga kumbi kwa kutumia kumbi ya chini, paka ya kumbi ambayo huandaa damu ya hedhi yanayotokana na kumbi.

KIDODO KINACHOTUMIWA ZAIDI YA MASA MUDA

- Kidodo kinachotumia kwa kumbi chenye unywele wa kumbi ambayo huandaa kwenye kawaida za ndani ili kufanya damu.
- Kidodo kinachotumia kwa kumbi ambayo huandaa damu ya hedhi ni kumbi ambayo huandaa damu ya hedhi.
- Mumaji dhidi anawe mikonzo kwa sababu na maji yanayotokana kabla ya kumbi, kubadilisha au kubadilisha kumbi.
- Chawaza kumbi, kufika na kubadilisha mwa moja.
- Meda wa matandali: Chawaza tumia kumbi moja.

JINI YA KUTUMIA

- Kidodo kinachotumia kwa kumbi ambayo huandaa kwenye kawaida za ndani ili kufanya damu.
- Kidodo kinachotumia kwa kumbi ambayo huandaa damu ya hedhi ni kumbi ambayo huandaa damu ya hedhi.
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KAZINI

- Kidodo kinachotumia kwa kumbi ambayo huandaa kwenye kawaida za ndani ili kufanya damu.
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- Chawaza kumbi, kufika na kubadilisha mwa moja.
- Meda wa matandali: Chawaza tumia kumbi moja.

FAHAMU KUWA: Ikiwa una mawali yoyote kuhusu kikombe cha hedhi, wafanyakazi na Eshy Wajima kupitia WhatsApp kwa namba ya 0711 234 400. Wote wafanyakazi wanapaswa kutokana kuhusu kikombe cha hedhi kwa stahoa.

KUDHIBITI MAUMIVU YA HEDHI

Nambesha maumivu maumivu ya hedhi lakini ni ngumu kufanya kazi nikawa na uchungu. Napaswa kutuma damu na kubadilisha na uchungu wakati wa aya.

Hudhiji kumoni! Maumivu ya kumbi yanatokana na hedhi ni kawaida kwa baadhi ya wanawake lakini ni wakati wa hedhi. Damu za kubadilisha na uchungu hupendelewa wakati ambapo maumivu ya hedhi yanatokuwa kawaida na kazi yako kama kawaida.

Napaswa kumasa tembe ngapi za kubadilisha na maumivu kwa sikizi?

Dooi katemba na tembe hizi. Futa mzunguko kwenye paki au mapendekezo ya mbinu wakati wa aya.

Je kuna mbinu za kupunguza maumivu mbihi na kumasa damu?

Ndizi! Unapaswa oga kwa maji mimi, kutumia chupa za maji mudi, au kupika malicha maalum ya kubadilisha na maumivu, tarbuni.

Unahitaji kumuona daktari ikiwa:

- Tembe zitipendelekeza na daktari/labubu au mbinu zingine zizizo za kinamatibabu, hazifanyi kazi.
- Maumivu ya hedhi kila mara huathiri ratiba yako ya kile siku.
- Unawaja damu nyingi kwani hii yaweza ashiria matatizo ya kiafya.

SEHEMU YA KAZI INAYOHIMILI MHM NI GANI?

Sehemu ya kazi inayohimili MHM hupokea maoni ya wafanyakazi yanayohusika na hedhi kwa huruma na heshima. Aina hiyo ya sehemu ya kazi hufanya yafuatayo:

Kufanya hedhi ilive jambo la kawaida

Hedhi yaweza kuwa tobo la maumivu na hali na starehe, hasa ikiwa sehemu yako ya kazi sio tegemei. Kufanya hedhi kuwa jambo la kawaida kazini kunamamisha kuunda maingira ambapo kila mmoja anaweza zungumza kuhusu anayokumbwa na hedhi kwa hedhi bila ubagaji.

Huhimili ufahamu kuhusu MHM

Il kumamamisha ufahamu kuhusu MHM, sehemu ya kazi yoyote wapa wafanyakazi taarifa ya sweli kuhusu hedhi na kukatiba furumu na taarifa potovu.

Huhakikisha kwamba usimamizi unakubaliana na MHM

Wasimamizi na wafanyakazi wanapaswa milano mizima na kuzoteleza taba ambayo inaingatia wawazi wa wanawake na kuwawazidhi kubidhi hedhi zao bila woga. Aidha, usimamizi unakubaliana na MHM hutambua kwamba hedhi yaweza athiri wanawake khusa na kimwi, na hivyo kuwawazidhi kuhudumia na taba ili kugokea usaidizi wa kiafya unohusiana na hedhi, kuwapa majukumu mepesi ya mudi, na kukumbatia wazo la mahitaji ya mapumziko wanawake wanapokumbwa na maumivu makali ya hedhi.

Huangalia wastawi wa wafanyakazi

Wafanyakazi wote wanapaswa kuwa na uwezo wa kuwasiliana kuhusu aya yao ya hedhi na wasimamizi, wafanyakazi, idara ya kujaji wafanyakazi na wafanyakazi wa MHM, kwa uwazi na kilele. Kufanya hivyo kuratuzia maridha shughuli zinazomshika MHM, kuongeza wawazi yao hali njema miongoni mwa wanawake, na hivyo kuamirisha uzalishaji.

UDUMISHAJI WA USAFI WAKATI WA HEDHI

Ni muhimu sana kudumisha usafi ukiwa katika hedhi.

Kutuzingitia usafi wakati wa hedhi kweza sababishi maridha kama vile bacterial vaginosis, maambukizi ya mifumo wa mji (urinary tract infections), maambukizi ya mifumo wa uzazi, mwasho, au hata toxic shock syndrome.

Usafi duni wakati wa hedhi haumaanishi kwamba mtu ni mchafu. Wakati mwingine wanawake hawawezi kowa na uwezo wa kupata bidhaa salama za hedhi au hawawezi kupata vyojo vilivyo na maji ya mfereni na sabuni. Kuna wakati ambapo wanawake hawawezi fika taarifa kuhusu jinsi ya kudumisha usafi kwa mfanano kwa kumamika mikonzo, vile vile kukosa wakati wa kubadilisha bidhaa za hedhi baada ya damu kulowa.

Vidokezi vya kudumisha usafi binafsi wakati wa hedhi:

- Badilisha bidhaa za hedhi kila mara iliyopendekewa.**
- Hakikisha unawaka mikonzo kwa kutumia sabuni na maji kabla na baada ya kubadilisha bidhaa zako za hedhi.**
- Kila mara pangaza kuanzia mbele (tupu ya mbele) kuokoa nyuma (tupu ya nyuma). Ukuanzia nyuma unapunguza uwezekano wa kuambua maambukizi.**
- Usioho ndani ya uke kwa kutuma sabuni au kupaka bidhaa zote zote yanayofuika uke ni sehemu inayojafisha yoyote na sabuni na kemikali zingine zawa athiri usawa wa kemikali asili.**
- Tumia bidhaa safi na kavu za hedhi.**

FAHAMU KUWA: Mara kwa mara, huenda ikawa ngumu kufika vyojo, maji safi na karatasi za shahi (toilet paper), ikiwa kuna kizingiti cha udumishaji usafi kazini, mifumisha mvunguzi, mena wa idara ya usafi na maji ya wafanyakazi, au mwanakazi mwingine wa MHM yaani MHM Champion.

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- Use illustrations that visually reflect the relevant workplace setting, employee demographic (including age and gender), and realistic interactions between employees.
- For audiences with lower literacy levels, reduce the amount of text, and develop more visually engaging and self-explanatory graphics.
- Amend messages in each graphic per the audience and BCC goals, and determine how best to communicate these messages (e.g., comic-style panels, text lists, infographics).



MENSTRUAL EDUCATION POSTERS:

The design team adapted two illustrated menstrual education posters – originally created by Ruby Cup® to help adolescent girls understand their body and their menstrual cycle – for adult women employees. The research team identified the need for posters about the physiology of menstruation (depicting adult women instead of just adolescent girls) to use as a visual aid during sensitization sessions with various employees. Both posters are available in English [here](#).

UNDERSTANDING MY BODY

EVERYONE'S BODY IS DIFFERENT

UNDERSTANDING MY CYCLE!

1 Follicular Phase
Developing Egg

3 Luteal Phase
Egg gets released

2 Ovulation Phase
Thickening of the Endometrium

4 Menstrual Phase
Endometrium Sheds

Did you know that the menstrual cycle can last between 21 and 35 days?

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ✓ Use illustrations that visually reflect the relevant workplace setting, employee demographic (including age, gender, and ethnicity), etc.
- ✓ Include more instructional text depending on the target population's literacy levels and whether posters are displayed as part of in-person sessions.



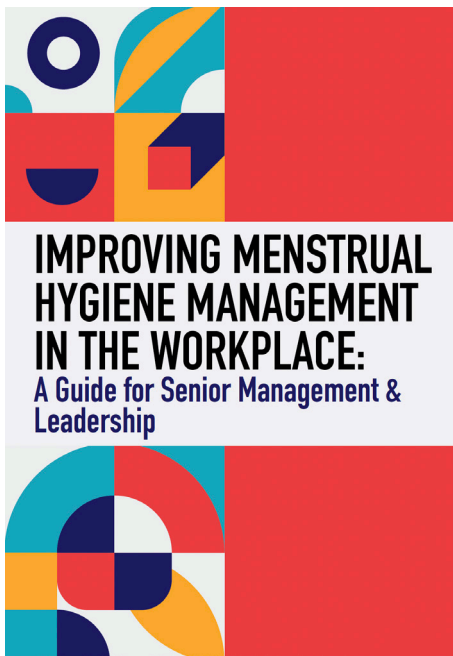
SENIOR MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

GUIDANCE BOOKLET:

Senior managers and leaders emerged as people who strongly influenced women employees' menstrual experiences in the workplace. Additionally, senior managers and leaders had direct power to create a more supportive environment for menstruating employees. The research and design teams created a half-page folded booklet to sensitize senior managers and leadership to employees' menstrual experiences and provide guidance on how they could improve MHH in their workplaces. The booklet includes the following:

- Basic information about menstruation, reproductive health conditions linked with MHH, and employees' menstrual needs;
- Content that highlights the importance of MHH in the workplace and linkages to Kenya's national MHM policy; and
- Guidance for managers and leaders on how to create a more MHH-friendly workplace.

The booklet frames this cadre's commitment to the health and wellbeing of menstruating employees as emblematic of good leadership, showcasing how creating an MHH-friendly workplace fits into their mandate as leaders. The booklet is available at [here](#).



I. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD LEADER

- Listens**
...without judgement or bias and respects and protects employees' privacy.
- Effectively Communicates**
...helpful information to employees about support systems, resources, and targets so that employees are motivated and operations are more efficient.
- Addresses employees' needs**
...by removing barriers that impede employees' success and by understanding what influences employee behavior.
- Demonstrates empathy**
...by creating an environment where all employees feel empowered and supported to do their jobs.
- Elevates Employees**
...by motivating them to achieve their full potential and by seeking to understand and reduce workplace conflict.
- Respects employees**
...by leading with compassion and ensuring that employees know that they're valuable and that their wellbeing is important to the company's success.

V. PROMOTING AN MHM-FRIENDLY CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

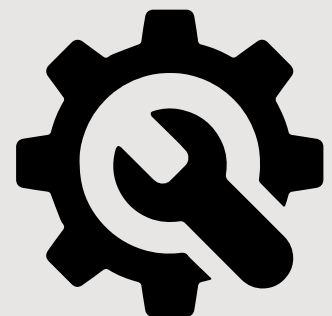
To create a positive workplace experience for menstruating employees, management should ensure that MHM-related concerns are handled like any other health issue and addressed with compassion and respect.

- Pay attention to how inadequate MHM support can negatively affect employee productivity.**
 - Avoid workplace procedures that limit the number of times employees can access toilet facilities.
 - Consider temporary adjustments to tasks or workload for employees experiencing menstrual pain and discomfort.
- Prioritize an environment that acknowledges and discusses employees' menstrual needs in the workplace.**
 - Normalize the needs of menstruating employees as part of occupational health and safety.
 - Train managers and supervisors to not discriminate against menstruating employees.
 - Address MHM-related concerns that are raised by employees.
- Identify ways to accommodate employees' needs and ensure that they can continue to be productive while menstruating.**
 - Do not tolerate acts of bullying or teasing related to menstruation.
 - Advocate for and support employees when they feel pressure to meet production targets at the risk of their own health and wellbeing.
- Model good leadership by listening to all employees, including those who menstruate, and address any barriers that prevent them from reaching their full potential at work.**
 - Trust women's menstrual experiences when they raise a concern.
 - Identify which menstruation-related concerns impact employees' productivity and find helpful solutions for business continuity.
 - Avoid generalizing menstrual experiences.
- Create a respectful and welcoming environment for employees to openly and comfortably discuss their menstrual needs if they want to.**
 - Do not penalize menstruating employees for experiencing a natural process.
 - Do not hold menstruation-related adjustments to work duties or schedules against an employee during evaluations for supervisory roles.

27

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ✓ Create tailored guidance for specific types of managers and leaders, such as human resources managers or Chief Executive Officers, so that guidance aligns with their unique roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ To gain buy-in from managers and leadership, use rhetoric and guidance tailored to each workplace's management style and philosophy.
- ✓ Include information about relevant policies, such as health and occupational safety mandates or national menstruation-related policies, to strengthen the case for MHH-friendly workplaces.



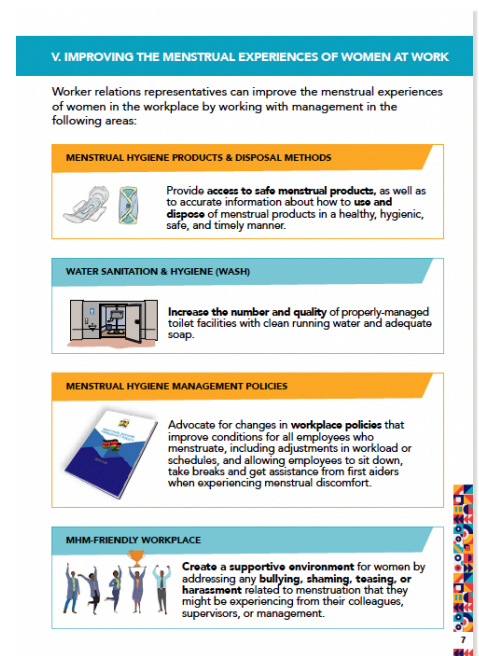
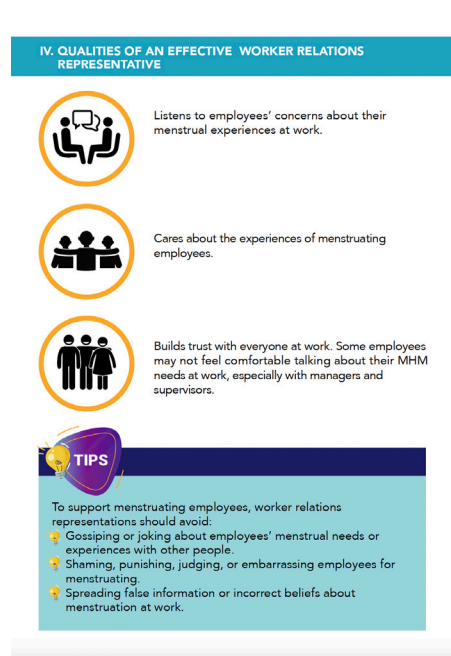
WORKER RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVES AND UNION REPRESENTATIVES

GUIDANCE BOOKLET

Women employees identified worker relations and union representatives as people who influenced women employees' menstrual experiences in the workplace. These cadres served as valuable intermediaries between employees and managers. Therefore, the research and design teams created a half-page folded booklet to do the following:

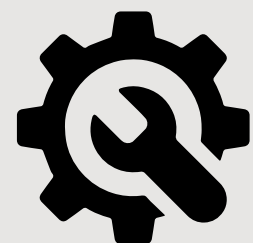
- Increase worker relations and union representatives' understanding of menstruation and its effects on employees;
- Mobilize worker relations and union representatives to foster a more supportive environment for employees who menstruate;
- Encourage worker relations and union representatives to counter menstrual stigma in the workplace;
- Highlight the importance and relevance of MHH in the workplace; and
- Assist worker relations and union representatives in understanding their role in improving MHH.

The booklet was intended to be used in conjunction with in-person sensitization sessions in order to reinforce lessons learned during these sessions with visually engaging materials that representatives could keep. The booklet is available in English and Swahili [here](#).



POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ☑ Consider the specific ways in which representatives can advocate for employees when developing messages.
- ☑ Include information about relevant policies (e.g., health and occupational safety mandates) to strengthen the case for MHH-friendly workplaces.





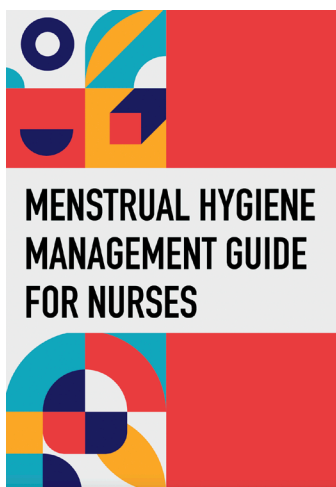
ON-SITE HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

GUIDANCE BOOKLET:

The nurse at Workplace A and a first aid provider at Workplace B supported menstruating employees with basic menstrual health care. Both the nurse and first aid provider requested more training around menstrual health and hygiene in order to better support women employees who sought their services. The nurse was a trained health professional (though, with minimal training related to menstrual health) who provided on-site healthcare services, and the first aid provider's role was limited to providing basic first aid. The nurse's guidance booklet was designed to provide information about the physiology of menstruation, pain management, and the importance of MHM in the workplace, as well as to promote dignified menstruation at work, address menstrual stigma, and provide patient-centered care. The research team collaborated with a physician and reproductive health specialist to facilitate a sensitization session with the nurse. The purpose of the booklet was to reinforce relevant messages and serve as an available resource for the nurse post-training.

The first aid provider's booklet addressed her limited training and included concrete suggestions on how to support menstruating workers. It covered the same topics as the nurse's booklet, but simplified technical content. The research team collaborated with a pharmacist and menstrual health specialist to facilitate in-person sensitization sessions with the first aid provider.

Both booklets included information about mitigating gender-based violence (GBV) and supporting survivors in the workplace, as health professionals are often the first point of contact for GBV survivors and are uniquely positioned to detect cases. The nurse and first aid provider's booklets are available in English and Swahili [here](#).



POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ✓ Account for the extent to which on-site health care providers are trained, how much autonomy they have to provide skilled health care, how many resources are at their disposal while crafting messages.
- ✓ Consider the quality and capacity of local referral networks, and customize referral names and numbers in the booklet accordingly.
- ✓ Collaborate with content experts, like physicians or other licensed health care professionals, to facilitate in-person sensitization and education sessions.
- ✓ Include content about sexual and reproductive health, especially when women employees request more information about linkages between menstruation and hormonal contraception.





CLEANING STAFF

CLEANERS' CHECKLIST POSTER

The research and design teams created a “checklist” poster for cleaners at both workplaces who cleaned and maintained toilet facilities. Rather than a literal checklist, this poster presents a list of tasks the cleaner should perform, or considerations they should take into account, while tending to toilets on site. The poster, which was placed in a clearly visible location in each toilet facility, aimed to make cleaners aware of what they could do to support female-friendly toilets. It also reminded women employees what they could reasonably expect in terms of the cleanliness of toilets in their workplace. Designers ensured that the checklist used simple, minimal text and detailed illustrations to accommodate cleaners and workers with low literacy levels. Cleaners also participated in in-person sensitization sessions with the research team about their role in improving workplace MHH and how to maintain female-friendly toilets. The checklist is available in English and Swahili [here](#).

CLEANERS CHECKLIST

Cleaners should make sure that:

<p>Menstrual bins are available in toilets for employees to dispose used menstrual products. Menstrual bins are covered with lids at all times</p>	<p>Taps and sources of clean water are functional with adequate pressure for washing. Sinks have a functioning drainage system</p>
<p>Menstrual waste bins are emptied routinely to avoid overflow of waste</p>	<p>All basins are equipped with functional soap dispensers or clean bar soap</p>
<p>Toilets and floors are clean of all bodily fluids and trash</p>	<p>Soap dispensers are kept adequately full and regularly resupplied with non-diluted soap</p>
<p>Toilets have a functional source of water for flushing and are not blocked by waste or other materials</p>	<p>Each toilet facility has a clean, undamaged mirror</p>
<p>Access to toilets, stalls, and bins is not obstructed or blocked</p>	

NOTE: Kindly report any complaints about this toilet facility to an MHM Champion or the HR Manager.

ORODHA YA USAFISHAJI

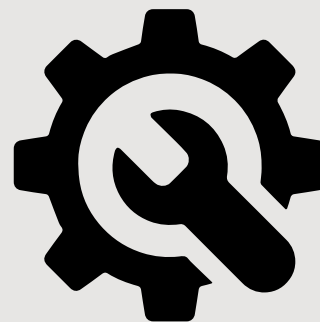
Wasafishaji wanafaa kuhakikisha kwamba:

<p>Vyoo vina mapipa ya kutupa taka za hedhi ili wafanyakazi watupe bidhaa za hedhi zilizotunika. Mapipa ya kutupa taka za hedhi hufunika na vituniko wakati wote</p>	<p>Mifereji inatoa maji safi na ya kutosha kufanya usafi na iwe na mifumo wa kuondoa maji</p>
<p>Mapipa ya taka za hedhi yanamwagwa kila wakati ili kuakia hayafuriki kwa uchafu wa bidhaa za hedhi</p>	<p>Vyoo vina vifaa vya sabuni au sabuni - yaweza kuwa dispensa au sabuni ya kipande kwa kila beseni isiyokuwa na uchafu</p>
<p>Sakafu za vyoo ni safi na zimekuka kila mara bila unyevu wowote au takataka</p>	<p>Vifaa vya sabuni vina sabuni ya kutosha kila mara. Dispensa ya sabuni inafanya kazi na vinajazwa na sabuni kila mara</p>
<p>Vyoo vina maji ya kutosha na sehemu za kusambaza maji ambazo hazijaziba kwa uchafu, takataka au vitu vingine</p>	<p>Kila choo kina kioo safi ambacho hakijapasuka</p>
<p>Hakuna vifaa vinavyozuia milango ya kuingia chooni au kufikia mapipa, sabuni, maji au beseni ya kunawa mikono</p>	

FAHAMU: Ikiwa bidhaa yoyote kati ya hizi haipo au hayajitimizwa, tafadhali fahamisha kamati ya MHM/Meneja wa idara ya kuajiri na maslahi ya wafanyakazi yaani, HR.

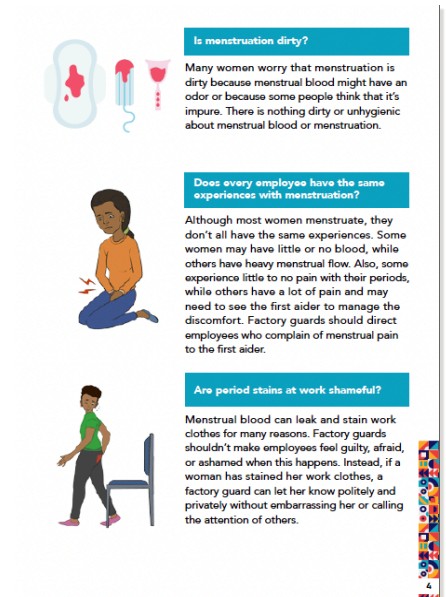
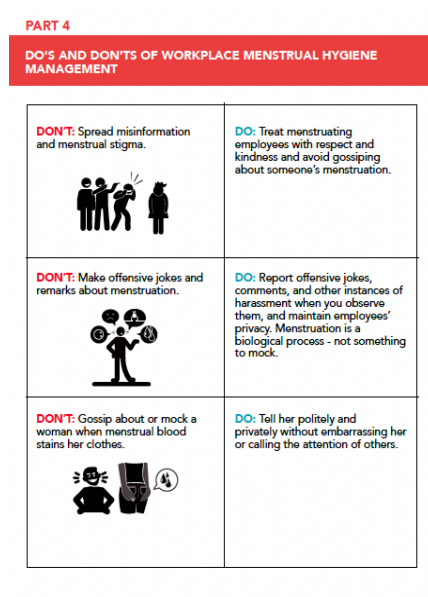
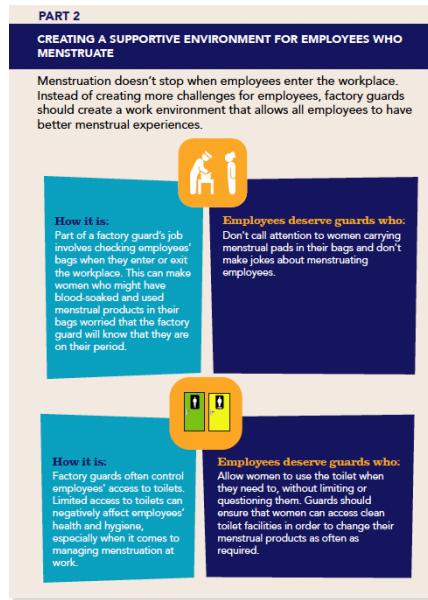
POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ✓ Ensure posters include relevant points of contact for employees and cleaners to reach out to when toilet facilities do not meet standards as established by the checklist, especially standards beyond the scope of a cleaner’s role (e.g., functional source of water for flushing or adequate quantity of soap for soap dispensers).
- ✓ Design illustrations of toilet facilities that look like a workplace’s actual facilities, instead of using generic or idealized graphics.



GUIDANCE BROCHURE

Women employees shared during formative assessments that guards checked employees' personal belongings any time employees would leave their work stations, whether for toilet breaks or to exit the workplace. Women would carry menstrual products in their handbags, including soiled reusable pads, thereby forcing them to reveal their menstrual status to the guards. To address this discomfort, the research and design teams created a brochure that provided guards with basic information about menstruation, including how to create a supportive environment for menstruating employees, how to address menstrual stigma, and general guidance tailored to guards' unique roles and responsibilities. The brochure accommodated guards' lower levels of literacy by using minimal text and presenting key messages in a pithy but visually engaging manner. The research team disseminated the brochure to guards during the intervention after facilitated sensitization sessions. The brochure is available in English and Swahili [here](#).



POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ✓ Use illustrations that visually reflect the demographic characteristics of guards at the relevant workplace setting (including age and gender).





GUIDANCE BROCHURE

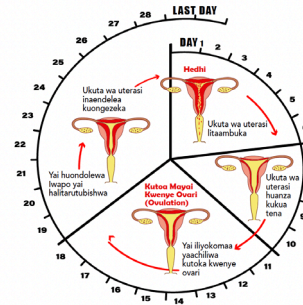
The *MHM in the Workplace* action research recruited employees to implement certain components of the intervention and become sustainable champions for improving MHH in their workplaces. They became integral to the intervention and visible leaders in their workplaces throughout the intervention. The research and design teams developed a small pocket-size brochure that MHM Champions could easily carry, covering: physiology of menstruation, elements of adequate MHH, types of menstrual products, how champions could promote dignified menstruation in the workplace, and pithy content to reinforce the importance of improving MHH in the workplace. The research team trained MHM Champions at the beginning of the intervention and shared this brochure with them at the end of the intervention to reinforce core guidance. The brochure is available in English and Swahili [here](#).



Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Guide for MHM Champions in the Workplace



I. MZUNGUKO WA HEDHI



Urefu wastani wa muda wa mzunguko wa hedhi ni siku 28, lakini waweza kuwa tofauti kutoka kwa mtu mmoja hadi mwingine. Kwa kawaida, mzunguko wa hedhi waweza kuwa siku 21 had 35. Hedhi yaweza dumu kwa kati ya siku 2 na 7 yaani siku ambazo utona damu.

III. MBIDHAA ZA HEDHI

Bidhaa salama na safi ya hedhi, kama ifuatayo, inaweza kusaidia wafanyakazi kudhibiti hedhi yao mahali pa kazi:



- Wahimize wafanyakazi wanaoshuhudia hedhi ku:
- Fuatilia tarehe ya kuanza na muda wa mzunguko wao wa hedhi.
 - Chagua bidhaa za hedhi kuambatana na mtririko wa hedhi.
 - Beba bidhaa za ziada za hedhi, dawa za kukabiliana na maumivu, suruali, nguo na karatasi ya shashi (toilet paper).
 - Epuka kutumia bidhaa zisizo na usafi kama vipande vya vitambaa.
 - Osha na kausha kabisa kisodo kinachotumiwa zaidi ya mara moja.
 - Nawa mikonzo kwa kutumia maji na sabuni kabla na baada ya kushika bidhaa za hedhi.

V. PROMOTING DIGNIFIED MENSTRUATION

How can MHM Champions promote dignified menstruation in the workplace?

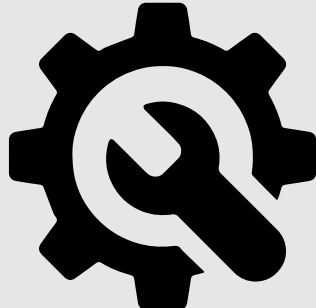
- Provide accurate information about menstruation to reduce harmful and inaccurate beliefs.
- Encourage people to talk about menstruation (as they feel comfortable) and discourage menstruation-related bullying or teasing.
- Counsel new employees on how to maintain adequate menstrual health and hygiene.
- Pay attention to how inadequate MHM affects employees and suggest improvements to management.
- Listen to employees and identify ways to meet their menstrual needs at work; share these with management.
- Support employees' access to menstrual products, menstrual education, pain management, and MHM-friendly infrastructure in the workplace.
- Refer employees to health professionals and other MHM resources when needed.

did you KNOW

- 2 billion people around the world menstruate. Many of them also menstruate while at work.
- Menstruation and menstrual blood are not dirty, unhygienic, or shameful.
- No employee should be silent about her experience with menstruation because of embarrassment or fear.
- It is not right for any employee to target, demean, or make others feel uncomfortable because they are menstruating.
- Everyone can play a role in normalizing menstruation.

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

- ✓ Use illustrations that visually reflect the demographic characteristics of employees at the relevant workplace setting.
- ✓ Include content that aligns with the intervention's predetermined role for the MHM Champion.
- ✓ Adjust the images and content for information on menstrual products based on the intervention's specific suite of products.



KEY LEARNING POINTS

1 FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS ARE CRITICAL FOR DEVELOPING TARGETED MESSAGES.

At the time of the intervention, most existing BCC products about MHH focused on adolescents, making it difficult to apply existing materials to workplace settings and among adult women. Findings from formative assessments in both intervention workplaces illustrated the unique experiences that menstruating employees faced, as well as highlighting key workplace influencers who might foster a more supportive environment for menstruating employees. Therefore, the research and design teams were able to create customized, targeted, and unique products that directly addressed menstruating employees' nuanced menstrual experiences.

2 SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS FOR A BCC APPROACH THAT ALIGNS WITH THE INTERVENTION'S TIME FRAME.

The *MHM in the Workplace* interventions, which spanned across approximately nine months, were designed to be "light touch" in order to minimize cost and time burdens on private sector partners. In addition to providing menstrual products, improving toilet infrastructure, and guiding workplace policies, the interventions sought to improve workplace culture through behavior change. However, it is difficult to transform social norms that perpetuate menstrual stigma and negatively impact menstruating employees in such a short period, especially in a "light touch" way without significantly engaging employees and key workplace influencers. The research team recognized that behavior change takes time - longer than these time-bound interventions allowed - and accepted that change might not be observed during their brief engagement. The team designed BCC products that would continue to affect change long after the interventions.

3 CONSIDER EMPLOYEE TIME AVAILABILITY AND COMPANY BUSINESS GOALS WHEN PLANNING THE BCC APPROACH

At one Kenyan workplace, the level of effort required to implement in-person menstrual education sessions for women and men employees would have required a significant time contribution from both employees and the research team; employees were already discouraged from spending time away from production lines, and taking additional time away from work stations for education sessions would have negatively affected targets. Though in-person sessions might have meaningfully contributed to improved MHH in the workplace, the negative impact of these sessions on the companies' business goals could potentially counter their benefits. Instead of facilitating sessions with all employees (and subsequently disseminating accompanying BCC products to all employees), the research team pivoted to hold sensitization sessions with specific employee groups, including on-site health professionals and other key workplace influencers. This approach allowed for information and support to trickle down to all employees, with an intent to foster a supportive working environment for menstruating employees indirectly. BCC efforts engaged participant groups according to the employee time granted by company leadership, specifically aligning intervention efforts with business goals.

4 ENGAGE AND MOBILIZE KEY WORKPLACE INFLUENCERS THROUGH CUSTOMIZED BCC MESSAGES AND TOOLS.

Formative assessments revealed that a wide variety of personnel influenced menstruating employees' experiences. For example, men employees often reinforced menstrual stigma in both workplaces. On the other hand, the first aid provider supported menstruating employees with pain killers. Supervisors and managers represented another influential group since they held power to change policies, systems, and workplace culture to be more MHH-friendly. Finally, menstruating employees' interactions with guards and cleaners impacted their menstruation-related experiences in small but notable ways. Only educating and sensitizing women employees would have been insufficient; therefore, the activity intentionally focused specific BCC products and messages on key workplace influencers who had power to create a supportive environment for menstruating employees.

The listed BCC products are available on the [Global Waters website](#) and the [Iris Group website](#). For more information about how to adapt this BCC approach, please email irisgroup@irisgroupinternational.com.



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