DIGNITY. AGENCY. POWER.
Exploring the linkages between women’s economic empowerment and workplace MHM
USAID/WASHPaLS

• Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene Partnerships for Learning and Sustainability. 5-year (2016–2021) research and technical assistance project

• **Goal:** Enhance global learning and adoption of the evidence-based programmatic foundations needed to achieve the SDGs and strengthen USAID’s WASH programming at the country level
WEBINAR OUTLINE

1. FINDINGS FROM THE DESK REVIEW
2. PROJECT BACKGROUND
3. NEPAL: A CASE STUDY
4. QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
Adequate MHM

- Awareness, Information, and Self-confidence
- Products and Supplies
- Safe and Clean Facilities
- Supportive Environment
FINDINGS FROM THE DESK REVIEW
Literature Review Methodology

- Grey literature review
- Systematic review
- Key informant interviews

DESK REVIEW REPORT
Women experience poor WASH/ MHM conditions in the home and workplace.

- Challenges in changing menstrual products
- Preference to stay at home or go home early
- Worse conditions for women working in certain sectors e.g. construction or seasonal migrant workers or for women working in informal workplaces (e.g. marketplaces)
- In formal workplaces, the toilets may be of mixed gender, unclean or unsafe, lack access to water, or be generally unsuitable for managing menstruation
- Other concerns include: Needing permission to use toilets, fear of gender-based violence, and proper disposal
## Implications of Poor MHM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lost wages</td>
<td>Lower dignity, confidence, and mobility for girls</td>
<td>Nothing specific to working women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supervisors’ disapproval</td>
<td></td>
<td>Greater risk of gender-based violence, reproductive and urinary tract infections, and increased psychosocial stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Menstrual Leave Laws and Policies

- Few laws do exist and where they do, implementation and enforcement are **challenging**
- **Financial incentives to NOT take leave**
- **Fear of taking leave**
- **Menstrual leave laws/policies do not address the intersectional nature of MHM**
Ongoing Initiatives

1. Business for Social Responsibility's HERproject
2. SNV's Working with Women II program
3. Gap Inc.'s Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement (PACE) program

RESULTS FROM HERPROJECT*

In Pakistan:

- 33% of women using sanitary napkins
- 28% lower absenteeism
- 25% reduction in poor concentration
- 33% less difficulty in meeting production targets

*attributable to the MHM component only
Gaps in the Evidence

- Little descriptive evidence linking MHM to economic or economic empowerment related outcomes
- Few interventions or programs addressing MHM in the workplace
  - Menstrual leave legislation or policies
  - Private-sector or NGO initiatives
PROJECT BACKGROUND
Conceptual Framework

**IMPACTS ON WOMEN**
- Health
- Stigma
- Psychosocial stress
- Comfort
- Earnings
- Advancement opportunities

**SHARED IMPACTS**
- Absenteeism and presenteeism
- Productivity and performance
- Job satisfaction
- Job retention and security
- Relationships with supervisor

**BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE IMPACTS**
- Turnover and errors
- Recruitment
- Corporate reputation and corporate social responsibility

**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**

**FUTURE REVENUE STREAM**

---

**MEDIUM TERM**

**LONG TERM**
Workplace MHM Action Research

**Objective:** Determine if providing adequate MHM in the workplace contributes to improved business and social outcomes, including women’s economic empowerment.

- What are the social and economic costs and benefits of providing adequate MHM in the workplace?
- What are the internal and external factors influencing implementation of MHM interventions in the workplace and why?
- What indicators are appropriate for measuring adequate MHM in the workplace, generating more evidence about women’s experiences and the implications of MHM conditions?
Locations Under Study

NEPAL: Carpet Factory
KENYA: Textile Manufacturing Factory
ETHIOPIA: Flower Farm
NIGERIA: To be determined
Possible Components of a Workplace Intervention

The **basic intervention** will provide free menstrual hygiene products and improved disposal methods in workplace toilets.

**Additional elements** would be chosen from the three categories below:

- **Products/Infrastructure**
- **Social and Behavior Change**
- **Workplace Policies and Guidance**
Financial and Social Cost-Benefit Analysis

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS:

An analytical tool for assessing the economic advantages or disadvantages of an investment decision by assessing its costs and benefits in order to assess the welfare change attributable to it.
Where are we now?

Country & Partnership Selections

Formative Research

Baseline & Intervention Launch

12-month Intervention & Process Monitoring

Endline & Learning Dissemination

Workplace MHM Action Research Timeline

Nepal

Ethiopia

Kenya

Nigeria
Intervention Workplace

Family-owned business located in Jorpati, Nepal

Produces high-end, hand-made luxury carpets for export

Employs approximately 50 women and 80 men
Formative Research Objectives

1. To understand and document women’s experiences with and practices of MHM in each workplace setting

2. To understand social norms related to MHM in each workplace setting

3. To understand availability and access to MHM products as related to MHM in each workplace setting

4. To understand the policy framework related to MHM in each workplace setting
Formative Research Findings

MHM INFRASTRUCTURE AND USAGE

MHM PRODUCTS

MHM PRODUCT DISPOSAL
Formative Research Findings II

GOVERNMENT POLICY LANDSCAPE AND RELEVANCE OF MHM

NEW ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

WORKPLACE POLICY LANDSCAPE AND RELEVANCE OF MHM
Formative Research Findings III

Benefits of providing MHM products to women in the workplace

MHM-related health and hygiene
Period blood is impure; menstruating women are unclean and impure

Bathing reduces flow of impure blood during menstruation

Period pain is communicable

Deep level of fear and ignorance about menstruation

God will punish those who wear underwear

Menstruation is a woman’s issue

Women on their period pollute what they touch

Husbands of menstruating women are impure

The culture of silence around menstruation
THE FINDINGS ADDRESS

DIGNITY

AGENCY

POWER
PRODUCTS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SOCIAL NORMS AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE

WORKPLACE POLICIES AND GUIDANCE
DESIGN ELEMENT 1: Products & Infrastructure

- Provision of free disposable and reusable sanitary pads
- Infrastructure assessments
DESIGN ELEMENT 2: Social Norms & Behavior Change

- Menstrual Health Playing Cards
- Dignified Menstruation Snakes and Ladders Game
- Information Education Communication (IEC) Materials
- Edutainment Video
DESIGN ELEMENT 3: Workplace Policies & Guidance

MHM-friendly Policies

Period Inclusion Guide
Leveraging Influences

- CO-WORKERS AND SUPERVISORS
- RELIGIOUS LEADERS
- FAMILY
- WOMAN EMPLOYEE
Sustainability Considerations

Sustainability Partners

Private Sector Influence
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research Participants
WASHPaLS Team
USAID
Iris Group Team
QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION
CLOSING REMARKS