

Summary Report
Regional Training Workshop on Menstrual Dignity and SRHR for Girls Act
Leaders, AHF Asia

August 4–6, 2025
Bali, Indonesia



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Table of Contents

1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING:	3
2. METHODOLOGY:	3
3. KEY FINDINGS:	4
3.1. MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION LEARNED SINCE CHILDHOOD	4
3.3. USING EUPHEMISM AND MYTHS ARE COMMON ON MENSTRUAL CONVERSATION	5
3.4. MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION IS PRACTICING ACROSS THE AHF ASIA COUNTRIES.....	5
3.4.1. Practices within Person.....	5
3.4.2. Menstrual perceptions and practices in community	7
3.4.3. Menstrual Discrimination is practicing within their school	7
3.4.4. Menstrual discrimination is practicing within their home or family.....	7
3.5. MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION IS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.....	8
3.6. MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION IS SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	8
3.7. MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION IS UNDERLYING BARRIER FOR SRHR INCLUDING CSE	8
3.8. MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS NEED TO ALIGN WITH PRINCIPLES OF DIGNIFIED MENSTRUATION	9
3.9. VISIONING, LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY SKILLS NEEDED TO ENHANCE AMONG GA LEADERS	9
3.10. WAYS TO ADDRESS THE MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION IN AHF, ASIA BY PARTICIPANTS	10
3.10.1. Key activities to address discriminatory menstrual practices in Girls Act in Asia	10
3.10.2. Key activities to address discriminatory menstrual practices in GA leader's communities	11
3.10.3. Key activities to address discrimination menstrual practices in girls act in school.....	12
3.10.4. Key activities to address discrimination menstrual practices in GA Leader's home	12
3.10.5. Key activities to address discrimination menstrual practices at individual level of GA leader ...	13
4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	13
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:	14

1. Background and Objectives of the Training:

The AHF Asia Bureau Office organized a three-day training workshop on Dignified Menstruation (DM) for Girls Act (GA) leaders from August 4–6, 2025, at the 101 Bali Fontana Seminyak, Bali, Indonesia.

The workshop aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of GA leaders around DM, positioning it as an entry point for advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in their respective countries and across the Asia. In addition, this workshop planned for strengthened the skills around leadership and advocacy in relation to the key roles of GA leaders.

Participants included GA leaders, GA coordinators and partner from AHF Asia country offices in China, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Their experience ranged from a few months to several years. Importantly, most of the GA leaders represented marginalized communities, including those affected by HIV/AIDS and gender and sexual minority groups. Each GA leader was also accompanied by their respective country GA focal person.

2. Methodology:

The entire training workshop was grounded in the lived experiences of participants from diverse backgrounds, with **menstrual dignity** placed at the center of all discussions aimed at transforming discriminatory menstrual norms. A variety of interactive methods were used throughout the workshop, including individual reflections, small group and pair discussions, Q&A sessions, singing, dancing, role-plays, presentations, lectures, and quizzes.

Each participant had the opportunity to share their personal stories, including challenges, failures, and successes, in plenary sessions. They explored deeply embedded perceptions and practices surrounding menstruation — within themselves, their families, schools, and communities. Key topics included the concepts of menstruation, menstrual discrimination, and dignified menstruation, along with the construction of power relations and patriarchy.

Participants also examined menstrual myths and facts from their respective countries and analyzed how menstrual discrimination constitutes a violation of human rights, a form of gender-based violence, and a barrier to SRHR and CSE. Additionally, they applied indicators developed by the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM) to assess how to make schools more menstruation-friendly.

Discussions also covered menstrual euphemisms, Menstrual Health Day, Dignified Menstruation Day, leadership, and advocacy strategies. A pre- and post-test was conducted to measure knowledge and skill gains which was remarkable (100 % by 80% participants).

The training workshop was inaugurated and concluded with remarks by Dr. Sarath Chhim, Chief of AHF Asia Bureau. AHF Indonesia facilitated the logistics and hospitality throughout the event.

3. Key Findings:

3.1. Menstrual discrimination learned since childhood

Participants went through the guided meditation to delve their experiences regarding knowing, learning, or seeing or hearing something related with menstruation such as menstrual blood in bathroom, menstrual pad in grocery shops or advertisement in TV etc. Regardless their identity; menstruator and non-menstruator participants learned something about menstrual practices or menstrual norms since childhood. 8.3 years is an average age of participants of learning menstrual norms at first in their life where the minimum age of knowing was 4 years and the maximum age was 12 years.

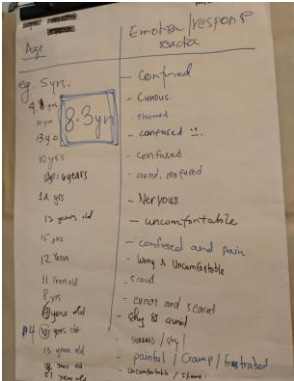
When I was 6 years old, my mother asked me help her to go to the store to buy the sanitary pads, Shy and refuse to buy. I requested with my sis to help. (Menstruator_Vietnam).

When I was 6 years old, I saw my mom menstruating. At first, I was scared because of the blood coming out from her underwear. I was sad for my mom because I did not want her to experience pain (Menstruator_Philippines).

I was 4 years old, I learned menstruation where I was curious and sacred because I did not know anything and I thought menstruation would happen every day (Non menstruator_Vietnam).

3.2. Menstrual Discrimination make scratch on emotional health and construct power relationship and patriarchy

Participants expressed their first reactions or feelings while knowing or learning or seeing or hearing something related with menstruation. Regardless of their identities, they were confused, curious, shamed, scared, nervous, worry, uncomfortable, shy, avoid, painful, frustrated, misery through observation. This is departure point to make the menstruators and non-menstruators understand about power relationship and patriarchy. Menstruators learned that they would have menstruation about 5-7 years later. They also absorbed the discriminatory menstrual norms as an obligation of menstruators. Likewise, non-menstruators learned that they would never menstruate. This is how they consider themselves and society as privileged or superior than the menstruators. The more they grow, the more they learn menstrual norms and eventually menstruators are considered as inferior, disadvantaged,



Age	Emotion/Response
eg. 5 yrs.	- Confused
9 yrs.	- Curious
10 yrs.	- Shamed
11 yrs.	- Confused
12 yrs.	- Confused
13 yrs.	- Nervous
14 yrs.	- Uncomfortable
15 yrs.	- Confused and pain
16 yrs.	- Very uncomfortable
17 yrs.	- Shy
18 yrs.	- Curious and scared
19 yrs.	- Shy and avoid
20 yrs.	- Nervous / shy
21 yrs.	- Painful / Cramp / Frustrated
22 yrs.	- Uncomfortable / Shy

The first age and first reactions while knowing something about menstruation

powerless whereas menstruators are considered as superior, privileged and powerful.

3.3. Using euphemism and myths are common on menstrual conversation

Participants were often using the euphemism for menstruation such as strawberry week (Vietnam), aunt coming (China), *nachhune* (state of untouchability) for menstruation. They also used sanitary napkin for menstrual pad or menstrual products. Likewise, they called menstrual blood as dirty, unclean blood instead of clean and pure blood. They were not aware about the factual information on menstruation, menstrual cycle and pre-menstrual symptoms.

3.4. Menstrual Discrimination is practicing across the AHF Asia countries.

Menstrual Discrimination is defined as the ranges of practices that includes *Silence, Taboos, Shyness, Stigma, Restrictions, Abuses, Violence, and Deprivation from resources and services throughout the life cycle of menstruators in all diverse setting (GSCDM, 2019)*. In this vein, regardless of their socio-cultural and political context, and engagement with AHF, they have been practicing various forms of menstrual discrimination within themselves, at home, school and community with or without intention.

3.4.1. Practices within Person

Here, this report highlights the few perceptions and practices from their lived stories, extracted through guided meditation and menstrual river exercise in limited dedicated timeframe. Their perceptions and practices are kept as it is (as like verbatims) as they shared in training workshop. Except for few moments, many have learned and experienced discriminatory menstrual norms as their family and friends suggested to follow.

3.4.1.1. Vietnam

I did not go to buy the menstrual pad while mother asked to do it due to ignorance and some extent of shyness about it, and asked to my sister to make it. I saw my friend has menstruation. It made us confused, and scared, and don't know about this. I was curious and scare because I don't know how it is and I'm scared to know that there will blood. I didn't understand at that time and I thought menstruation would happen every day (non-menstruator).

3.4.1.2. Philippines

At the age of 6 years, I saw that my mom menstruating. At first, I was scared because of the blood coming out from her underwear. I was sad for my mom because I did not want her to experience pain. I kind of felt discriminated because boys would laugh when talking about menstruation and using sanitary pads. When I had first menstruation at the age of 10 years, my family made me do certain taboos e.g., wipe off menses blood in face to reduce acne, jump three steps of stairs to reduce days of menses etc. Even now, getting discriminated and shamed for having menses by men. I still feel sad because more of responsibility for buying sanitary products, taking pills to pain. It's hard being a woman because you have to double your safety to fight and prevent violence and discrimination.

3.4.1.3. Cambodia

Feeling sad and bad from knowing menstruation. My menstruation appeared with uncomfortable and pain. I felt inferior and unfair because men do not have to experience the same thing. Body disposes dirty blood. After dispose dirty blood, my feeling is better. Concealed talks of blood that comes once a month for adult women. Unfamiliarity with the concept of shedding blood. Fear of cramps and pain from menstruation as told by other children. Painful, cramps, frustrated, No pad, shame. Even now, I don't want to have period.

3.4.1.4. Laos

I was worried to getting the period. I felt uncomfortable and don't want to go to school. My first feel pain during the period. I knew about menstrual from my mom. I was surprised while I saw sanitary pad at first. I had first menstruation at age 12.

3.4.1.5. Thailand

I didn't understand way she was bleeding. I felt scared and confused. My friend was teased by classmates because she stained on her school uniform. At home, I was told not to talk openly about my period (Non menstruator's observation).

3.4.1.6. China

Don't like pads/tampon, cramps, headache, sleepy, no appetite, pimples, wash sheets. Am I woman now? No PE anymore!! I can rest for a day.

3.4.1.7. Nepal

My society saying we don't go anyway. Discriminates by family and others. Feeling sad. Uncomfortable. I don't know what is menstrual period. We know little bit any person. Then, I know my mother was saying any person. We don't go any like, kitchen, bathroom.

3.4.1.8. Indonesia

I knew menstruation at the age of 6 years from my mom and confused. Curious about the ads on TV about menstruation. Till the age of 11, I got curious why all of my friends got menstruation. I started to feel sad and worried due to no menstruation till 16 years. I felt different, discriminated for not get it yet. Now feels limit access to menstrual product in public space like schools & university. Feel sick every time I get my menstruation. I saw my friend got her first menstruation and some of our boyfriend made fun or her. My friend noticed some blood stains on my skirt when I was at school. First time I had pain during my period menstruation. I had a severe pall, during my period and needed to take a lot of pain killer.

3.4.1.9. Myanmar

At the age of 8, I felt uncomfortable, confused. The more I get older, I felt shamed, less confidence, taboo, fear, hate, sad. Experienced of discriminated by other and always school

absent. More get pained & feeling tired absent work or daily activities. My friend is crying on that day at school due to menstruation.

3.4.1.10. India

Had separate rooms, sitting alone, no participation in events/functions, no proper medication. Wearing clothes; rashes/infections/pain. Need to wash and can't put in open sunny places to dry. Not allowed to touch pickle/food for guest. Not know menopause. Leaving school/college felt good.

3.4.2. Menstrual perceptions and practices in community

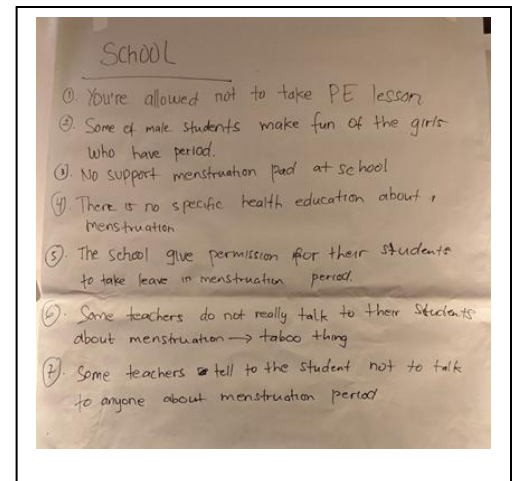
Participants also explored the menstrual discrimination in their respective community through small group discussion as follows;

- We are not allowed to go to the temple (Indonesia, Vietnam, India, Laos, Nepal).
- We can't touch or prepare the food (India).
- We can't say anything about the menstruation (girls and boys) (India).
- Buying sanitary pads only for girls considering only for girls x women responsibility not boys or men (Vietnam).
- We don't have laws about free days for menstruators (Indonesia, Laos, India).

3.4.3. Menstrual Discrimination is practicing within their school

As like for menstrual discrimination at home, participants worked for menstrual practices in their school as a mixed group. They identified the following menstrual practices at their school.

- You're allowed not to take Physical Education lesson.
- Some of male students make fun of the girls who have period.
- No support menstruation pad at school.
- There is no specific health education about menstruation.
- The school give permission for their students to take leave.
- Some teachers do not really talk to their students about menstruation
- Some teachers tell to the student not to talk to anyone about menstruation



3.4.4. Menstrual discrimination is practicing within their home or family

Participants worked in mixed group and they identified the following menstrual discriminatory practices at their families. The family does not allow to do following things while having menstruation.

- Strenuous Exercise.

- Sweet drinks, carbonated, w/ ice (e.g., coconut water).
- No sour food.
- No medication.
- No washing hair for 3 days.
- No shower at all for 1st period.
- No sharing of the same bathroom w/ other family members + kitchen (5 days).
- No temple (other sacred places).
- Leave pad on for more than 4-5 hours.

3.5. Menstrual Discrimination is violation of human rights

Participants discussed about the basic principles of human rights as defined by International Human rights Declaration (1948) and assessed their practices through the lenses of human rights. They worked with their respective groups of home, school and community and identified the number of menstrual practices as violation of human rights by using the framework of human rights such as right to dignity, right to freedom, right to equality, right to non-discrimination, right to shelter, right to food, right to health, right to education, and right to child. They identified that menstrual discrimination is violating sets of human rights at least 23, 17, 33 times at home, school and community.

3.6. Menstrual Discrimination is sexual and gender-based violence

Likewise, participants discussed about the sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as defined by UN in 1993. Based on its definition and categories; physical, sexual, emotional and deprivation from services and resources. They identified the sets of SGBV at their home, school and community while practicing menstrual discrimination at the name of culture, tradition, or elders or religion or any. They confirmed the menstrual practices are mostly discriminatory and they fell under at least more than two category of SGBV no matter whether it is at home or school or community.

3.7. Menstrual discrimination is underlying barrier for SRHR including CSE

Participants also briefly discussed about the elements of SRHR and components of CSE and assessed the menstrual discrimination through role play. They concluded that menstrual discrimination is an underlying barrier for making decision making and utilizing the SRHR including CSE. The dialogue on dignified menstruation at home, school, and community allowed to build self-esteem and bodily autonomy among menstruators and non-menstruators. Eventually, they could make an appropriate decision for safe sex or seeking health support for safe abortion or HIV prevention and testing counselling etc.

3.8. Menstrual products need to align with principles of dignified menstruation

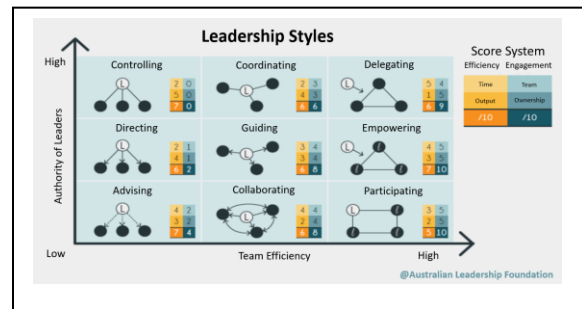
Participants learned the merit and demerits of various menstrual products; traditional cloth pad, reusable cloth, bio degradable menstrual pad, non-bio degradable menstrual pad, menstrual panty, menstrual cup, menstrual tampon and menstrual disc. They also discussed about the three 'P' approach (P-Person, P-Planet, P-Pocket) to make their menstrual products dignified. Eventually, they shared their conclusion that they have to change their attitude and behavior for practicing dignified menstruation.



Menstrual Products displaying by co-facilitator

3.9. Visioning, Leadership and Advocacy skills needed to enhance among GA leaders

The scope of GA leaders is growing since they are working for incorporating and advocating of dignified menstruation for SRHR including CSE, the skills around leadership, advocacy and visioning is important to incorporate in to this training. Participants brainstormed and shared their leadership styles; controlling, coordinating, delegating, directing, advising, guiding, collaborating, empowering, participating. They also discussed about the challenges and potential challenges while leading and advocating the cause. Along with Radha's lived leadership and advocacy work, they discussed about the visioning. For next three years, GA leaders expressed their vision in single word as follows; Speaking, Progressive, Commitment, Leadership, Capacity, Empowerment, Self-esteem, Cultivating, and Famous in the globe.



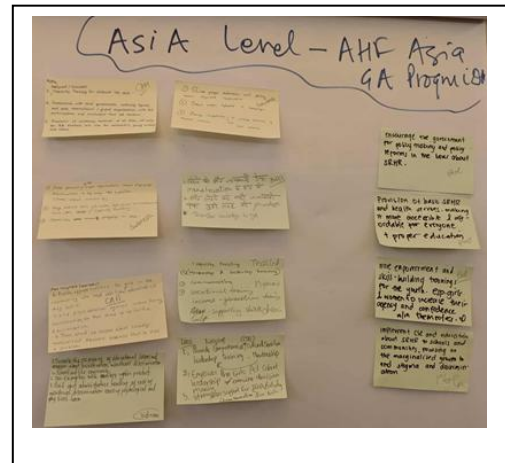
Discussion on Leadership styles with Jack

3.10. Ways to address the menstrual discrimination in AHF, Asia by participants

3.10.1. Key activities to address discriminatory menstrual practices in Girls Act in Asia

Participants worked in three groups and came up with ways to make Asia dignified menstruation friendly region through their efforts. Despite having diverse socio-cultural and political context, their ways to address complex and multifaceted menstrual discrimination are more or less same as follows.

- GA leaders want to change by making sure young people have the right information about dignified menstruation, breaking down myths
- They build their capacity on education and community engagement to amplify the importance of dignified menstruation including SRHR, CSE.
- Proposed life skills training as a fundamental step in youth empowerment
- Create a space for ensuring full participation and inclusion of GA members in global conferences
- Strengthen the peer education, youth representations in their communities and national level
- Other participants also added that menstruation-related information should be thoroughly provided in schools, including dignified menstruation campaigns.
- Linking dignified menstruation campaigns linked with income generating activities would be great.
- Strengthening national awareness campaigns on dignified menstruation, targeting both urban and rural communities, and advocating to end discriminatory traditional practices.
- Integrating dignified menstruation education into school curricula nationwide, ensuring equal access for both boys and girls.
- Partnering with health authorities, NGOs, and community groups to provide dignified menstruation friendly menstrual products or three 'P' (P-Person, P-Planet, P-Pocket)
- Mobilizing youth networks and peer educators to organize community workshops, role plays, and cultural events that challenge stigma.
- Advocating to policymakers for dignified menstruation friendly public facilities, including clean restrooms, disposal bins, soap, and reliable water access.
- Developing digital tools and social media campaigns to share accurate information and positive narratives about menstruation.
- Promoting leadership opportunities for young women in advocacy roles at local, national, and regional levels.



- Strengthening cross country collaboration through experience sharing, joint campaigns, and events such as International Dignified Menstruation Day.
- The community engagement programs need to extend in rural areas of the country.
- Girls need to receive correct information about menstruation so they can understand their bodies and transfer that knowledge to empower themselves.
- Proposed programs for counselling and leadership training, along with communication and vocational skills training to support the economic independence of young women.
- Emphasized the need for comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), paired with leadership training and mentorship.
- Urge the government to reform policies that support sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and dignified menstruation together. Together with the other participants, they proposed implementing dignified menstruation including CSE in schools and communities, with a focus on marginalized groups to eliminate stigma and menstrual discrimination.
- School-based education on safe sex, unwanted pregnancy, and menstruation; parental involvement
- Cooperating with initiatives such as INDG (International Network on Dignified Menstruation) and providing training-of-trainers (ToT) for school leaders.

3.10.2. Key activities to address discriminatory menstrual practices in GA leader's communities

Participants suggested following activities to address menstrual discrimination in their respective communities.

- We will strengthen the capacity of the community through collaboration with health workers, connecting adolescents and youth with accurate dignified menstruation including SRHR information and essential services.
- Raising awareness sessions will be organized for groups of adolescent girls, facilitated by young volunteer peer leaders, to foster open and respectful conversations that challenge menstrual taboos and discrimination.
- Organizing community activities such as role plays and drama to address menstrual stigma and discrimination.
- Conducting awareness campaigns involving boys/men engagement and creating safe spaces for open discussion around dignified menstruation including SRHR.
- Providing accurate and accessible dignified menstruation information for community members.
- Joining and supporting girls to organize events in their communities, encouraging active participation and leadership.
- Collaborating with the local community to advocate to the village head and local government for menstruation friendly facilities in public areas, including trash bins, clean

and well-maintained toilets for women, access to soap and water, and sanitary pads stocked in public restrooms.

- Engaging the community in advocacy to influence decision makers and challenge menstrual discriminatory practices.
- Promoting respectful and inclusive environments where dignified menstruation is openly discussed and supported.

3.10.3. Key activities to address discrimination menstrual practices in girls act in school

Participants also suggested key activities to make their schools dignified menstruation friendly school as follows;

- Dignified menstruation education should be delivered through workshops involving teachers, principals, and parent representatives. These sessions aim to raise awareness about the importance of support from people around adolescent girls, helping them manage menstruation dignified manner in each aspects of their life.
- Educating and empowering peers within the school environment.
- Providing school friendly facilities for menstrual dignity, including safe and clean toilets, access to water, and disposal facilities.
- Conducting sensitization campaigns to raise awareness among students and staff.
- Cooperating with initiatives such as INDG (International Network on Dignified Menstruation) and providing training-of-trainers (ToT) for school leaders.
- Including menstrual dignity in school curricula and ensuring both boys and girls participate in the learning process.
- Addressing bullying related to menstruation, especially in cases of leaks, to prevent shame, embarrassment, and absenteeism.
- Promoting gender equality in leadership roles within schools, ensuring girls can also hold positions like class president.
- Encouraging the involvement of boys in menstrual health education so they understand the realities of menstruation, challenge stigma, and become allies in creating a respectful school environment.

3.10.4. Key activities to address discrimination menstrual practices in GA Leader's home

Each participant came up with ideas to make their home friendly for dignified menstruation in order to make friendly for SRHR as follows;

- Create a safe space for open conversation in the family.
- Use media to spread positive messages about menstruation.
- Emphasize the importance of dignified menstruation.
- Identify peer leaders to support girls in dealing with family issues.
- Share messages about dignified menstruation with family members and use Q&A to initiate dialogue within families.

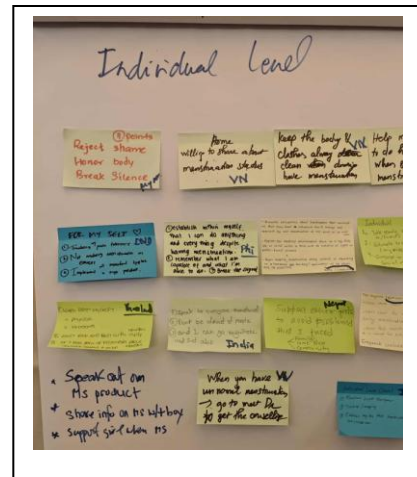
- Promote empowerment, respect, and open conversation as fundamental values.
- Participate in “Dignified Menstrual Day” activities at home.
- Distribute IEC (Information, Education, Communication) materials to parents.
- Organize small workshops to sensitize family members about menstruation.
- Start with self-awareness: be knowledgeable about all aspects of dignified menstruation, respect it, and be an agent of change.
- Act as an advocate by teaching family and neighbors so they can support menstruation with respect.
- Provide support for menstruators facing challenges, including emotional difficulties, through peer-to-peer support.

3.10.5. Key activities to address discrimination menstrual practices at individual level of GA leader

At the individual level, Girls Act leaders commit to demonstrating practices that aligned with dignified menstruation and challenging stigma through their own actions.

Key activities include:

- Promoting the mindset that menstruation is not a weakness, but a natural and healthy part of life.
- Using menstrual tracking applications or diary to monitor cycles, understand patterns, and manage menstruation effectively.
- Practicing three 'P' approach for menstrual products while using and teaching others
- Leading by example in maintaining menstrual dignity and speaking openly about menstruation to normalize conversations.
- Continuing self-education on dignified menstruation to strengthen personal knowledge and confidence through reaching out Radha via WhatsApp
- Encouraging peers to adopt healthy menstrual practices and offering guidance when needed.



4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The three days training workshop on menstrual dignity for SRHR including leadership and advocacy was effective to enhance the knowledge and skills around dignified menstruation and various aspects of it. This workshop allowed an avenue to not only GA leaders but also to AHF Asia and GSCDM/RPF at large to work in Asia and beyond. Menstrual discrimination ignored and neglected area of human rights and is form & outcome of gender-based violence. It is challenging itself therefore continuous coach,

mentoring and financial support required to robust the campaign around dignified menstruation for advancing SRHR including CSE.

Acknowledgements:

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On behalf of the GSCDM, I also extend our heartfelt gratitude to the GA Asia Leaders for their unwavering commitment and contagious energy in advancing Dignified Menstruation (DM). Last but not least, sincere thanks to AHF Indonesia for their excellent logistical support and warm hospitality.