

# CONFERENCE BOOKLET

## “Dignified Menstruation For Ending Child Marriage” 4th International Dignified Menstruation Day 2022

 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE 



8 DECEMBER 2022  
(COLOMBO) SRI LANKA

TIME: 10:30 AM-6:00PM, IST

### ORGANIZED BY



**Global South Coalition**  
For Dignified Menstruation

### PARTNERSHIP



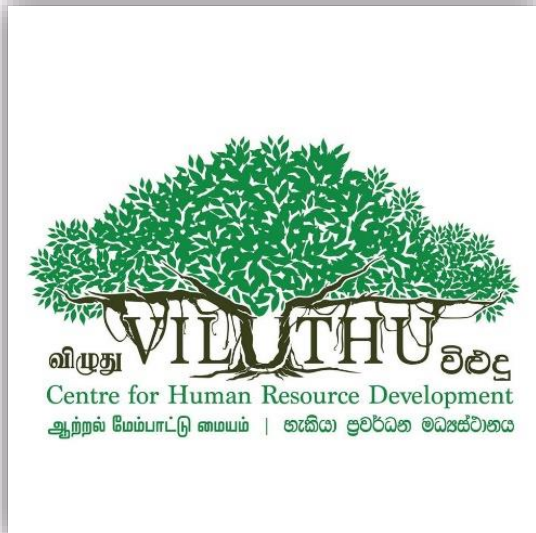
**IDA**  
International  
Disability Alliance



**SCOPE**  
Strengthening Local  
Conversations and Processes  
in Sri Lanka



## Main Organisers



## Key Solidarity Partners



**SCOPE**  
Strengthening Social  
Cohesion and Peace  
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## Presenting Partners



"Celebrating Masculinity"



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## **A Note from the Organisers...**

Greetings from Viluthu and the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation!

Welcome to the fourth International Dignified Menstruation Day. Leaving behind an arduous global pandemic and a challenging year for Sri Lanka, we are delighted to have you all be part of our initiative to promote dignified menstruation and to eliminate menstrual discrimination. As the conference theme suggests, we believe that Child Marriages share a direct nexus with menstrual discrimination, it is something we hope to explore during the proceedings of today's conference.

Much of what has happened globally since the start of this decade has put women in a place of difficulty, with the pandemic and economic crises reversing decades of gender gains that you and we have fought for. Today, we face new challenges that could side-track women's rights and equality. From climate change to disease and pandemics, women, children and all menstruators have all had their very presence in the society challenged with the entrenched patriarchy reigniting its archaic social values.

Dignified menstruation and eliminating menstrual discrimination forms a key element of this battle to regain gender equality and basic human rights for women and all menstruators. As you refer to this document and take part in the conference, we urge each and every one of you to think of how you could contribute to a world where menstruation is seen as an essential part of human life, a natural occurrence that does not lead to discrimination or in some cases, end with death of menstruators.

We hope the conference will contribute to our long march ahead to establish dignified menstruation, eliminating menstrual discrimination and battling child marriages as global priorities. We invite you to join our hand in this resolve.

With love, respect and in solidarity,

**Viluthu, Centre for Human Resource Development**

**Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM)**

## Agenda<sup>1</sup>

**10.05 AM** – Registration and Instructions for Online Participants via Zoom

**10.25 AM** – Introduction by the Host

### Opening Session

**10.30 AM** – Start of Conference, Welcome Speech by *S. Devapura*, Research Coordinator- Consultant, Viluthu

**10.35 AM** – “Say No” Song Rendition *Dr. Shikshita Malla*, Nepal

**10.40 AM** – Inaugural Speech by *Maithreyi Rajasingam*, Executive Director, Viluthu

**10.50 AM** - Rinku’s Story: A Tale of Strength from a Survivor of Child Marriage, by *Rinku Thakur*, GSCDM, Nepal

**11.05 AM** – Impact Video – Ending Child Marriage, *Yeanoh Rukoh Bai-Kamara*, Member of Youth Advisory Group, Sierra Leone

**11.10 AM** – Speech by the Chief Guest, *Prof. R. Surenthirakumaran MD (Com. Med.)*, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

**11.30 AM** – Key Note Speech by *Mili Adhikari*, Director GSCDM America Chapter, Founding Member of GSCDM, USA

**11.55 AM** – Five Minute Break

### Session One: Establishing Dignified Menstruation – From Problem Areas to Equal Rights

**12 Noon** – Start of Session One, Remarks by the Moderator - *Shradha Shreejaya*, Sustainable Menstruation Kerala Collective, India

**12.05 PM** – Dignified Menstruation among Adolescent Girls in Selected Schools, Jaffna Zonal Education. *Dr. Rajeev Gobalamoorthy*, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

**12.25 PM** – Dignifying Menstruation in Transgender Men. *Night Okindo*, Trans Empowerment Initiative, Kenya

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<sup>1</sup> All times given in Sri Lanka Standard Time

**12.45 PM** – Challenges faced by the Local Women Council Leaders on Period Poverty and the Lack of Menstruation Health facilities in Councils (Piradesa Sabhas) in the Jaffna Peninsula Post Covid and Economic Crisis Situation in Sri Lanka. *T. Kiruththiga*, Sri Lanka

**1.05 PM** – Speech by *Rose Achayo Obol*, National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda, Uganda (Representing International Disability Alliance)

**1.25 PM** – Q&A Session/ Discussion

**1.45 PM** – Lunch Break

### **Session Two: Making Menstruation Dignified – Global Perspectives on Awareness Building**

**2.15 PM** – Start of Session Two, Remarks by the Moderator - *Archana Patkar*, UNAIDS Geneva, Advisor to the GSCDM

**2.20 PM** – Menstrual Health of Kashmiri Women in Remote Areas and Their Aspirations. *Swati Bedekar*, Vatslaya Foundation, India

**2.40 PM** – Reaching Millions via Social Media – ‘Clicktivism’ As a Tool to Tackle Taboos around Menstruation and To Empower Young Women around the Globe. *Chiqui de Veyra*, *Sami Pande*, *Jan-Christoph Schlenk*, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Philippines, Nepal, Albania, Germany

**3.00 PM** – Live Your Menstrual Care: Access to Menstrual Health for Girls and Teenagers. *Francy Garcia Fajardo*, Oriéntame, Colombia

**3.20 PM** – Speech by *Anne Pakoa*, Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition, Vanuatu

**3.40 PM** – Q&A Session/ Discussion

**4.00 PM** – Five Minute Break

### **Session Three: Grassroots Level Change – Battling Menstrual Discrimination a Village at a Time**

**4.05 PM** – Start of Session Three, Remarks by the Moderator - *Dr. Richard Anthony*, Lecturer in Sociology and Academic Researcher, United Kingdom

**4.10 PM** – Dignified Menstruation amongst Girls, Boys & Youth. *Samir Pariyar*, National Coordinator, Dignified Menstruation Campaign, Nepal

**4.30 PM** – Teen marriages in Batticaloa: OrCED's View. *Puvanenthira K*, Organization for Community Empowerment & Development, Sri Lanka

**4.50 PM** – A sociological research about "Impact of Napkin Price Increase and Taxation on Menstrual Hygiene" Centred in Senaikudi Iruppu Village. *M. Divaincy Fernando*, Sri Lanka

**5.10 PM** – Rural Women's Challenges in Menstrual Related Issues and Impact of Increasing Prices of Sanitary Napkins: A Study From Sammanthurai Village In Ampara. *Palaniyandy Rishanthiny*, Sri Lanka

**5.30 PM** – Q&A Session/ Discussion

### **Closing Session**

**5.50 PM** – Concluding Remarks and Reflections - *Inthumathy Hariharathamotharan*, Head of Programmes, Viluthu, Steering Committee Member of GSCDM

**6 PM** – End of Conference



### 1. Background<sup>2</sup>

World over, menstruation has been treated through generations as an issue of taboo and inconvenience, bound by cultural, religious and economic implications. Despite menstruation being a natural part of every menstruating person's life, societal structures, which are, at most times patriarchal, have limited the individual's right to freedom through archaic notions relating to limits placed on safe and dignified menstruation. From the 'pink taxes' in the Western world to the menstruation huts in Africa and Asia, menstruating people have been often left disadvantaged with their safety and wellbeing being sacrificed to satisfy cultural norms and economic models that operate within a sphere of ignorance and indifference towards menstruating people of all ages. Being prevalent across the globe and with particular commonness in the global south, menstrual discrimination continues to disrupt the equality in the treatment of women and their human rights.

#### a. Menstrual Discrimination,<sup>3</sup> Power, and Patriarchy

Discrimination based on menstruation has become prevalent in all corners of the world. As an average menstruating person spends three to eight years menstruating,<sup>4</sup> this natural biological function has been exploited to provide grounds for patriarchal structures to discriminate against menstruators throughout their lifetime. Being excluded from physical activities, education, employment, and even household chores, menstruators are often victimised through gender inequality stemming from myths, stigmas, ignorance, and disinformation about menstruation.<sup>5</sup> Apart from this, menstruation also provides a valuable tool for patriarchal systems to exercise power on women and girls. Misrepresented as an indicator of adulthood, readiness to bear children and marriage, patriarchal power stemming out of menstruation and associated stigma is imposed on women to limit their intellectual growth, freedom of movement, right to practise religious beliefs and limit all freedoms, equality in treatment, and thus limiting their agency. Menstruators are often subject to patriarchal control through period shaming,<sup>6</sup> dependence of males to acquire hygiene products, lack of economic independence and controlled access to service providers.

#### b. Battling Child Marriages

Despite being prevalent in South Asia and Africa, addressing child marriages has become a global priority, as the phenomenon has been observed across countries and in specific communities that normalise such practises as part of their culture and beliefs.<sup>7</sup> While not receiving adequate intervention at both local and

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<sup>2</sup> More information can be found at [https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Tool-Kit-DM-day-2022\\_Final\\_27-09-2022-FINAL-1.pdf](https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Tool-Kit-DM-day-2022_Final_27-09-2022-FINAL-1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> **Menstrual Discrimination** refers to taboos, shyness, shame, stigma, restrictions, abuses, violence, deprivation from resources that are associated with menstruation throughout the life cycle of menstruators (girls, women trans men, queer) and all people born with an uterus and ovaries. Menstrual Discrimination has been practiced everywhere across the globe with different names, forms and magnitudes. It is a type of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and a violation of human rights. It is complex and multifaceted. (Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> UNFPA, <https://www.unfpa.org/menstruationfaq>

<sup>5</sup> Garg, S. Anand, T. Menstruation related myths in India: strategies for combating it, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4408698/>

<sup>6</sup> Lese, K. M. Padded assumptions: A critical discourse analysis of patriarchal menstruation discourse, <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1104&context=master201019>

<sup>7</sup> The global campaign to end child marriages globally is almost a century old. Initiatives in India resulted in the codifying of law under The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (also adopted as domestic law by Bangladesh and Pakistan, post-independence) has been a frontrunner in setting legal precedent to legislation banning child marriage in South Asia and across the world.



international levels, preventing child marriages require extensive outreach advocacy work in the form of training to multiple stakeholders, strengthening legislation and policy, the provision of resources and psychosocial interventions. Systematically, menstruating persons, in particular women and girls, are discriminated to convince of a feigned inferiority compared to men and symptomatically, menstruating persons limit their activities during menstruating days to avoid facing social stigma. Such systematic and symptomatic examples are both diverse and alarming in relation to the advancement of education, family life, labour force participation, and mobility amongst menstruating persons. Exclusionary perceptions and practices reinforcing menstrual discrimination at home, school, and community drive women and girls into early or child marriages<sup>8</sup> often to be left abused, victimised and discriminated in their lifetime. Such cycles of ill-treatment are passed down through generations and communities, unless disrupted through advocacy and efforts to prevent child marriages.

A research paper published by the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation in 2022, found that child marriage is a complex issue that warrants a holistic approach for its prevention, and such prevention is only possible by identifying and addressing menstruation as a key driver of child marriages. Dialogue and advocacy at multiple levels including at homes, schools and communities is needed to raise awareness of dignified menstruation and the prevention of child marriages so as to make the “concept of dignified menstruation becomes an integral part of socialization processes and community building.” The findings also highlighted the need to recognise and study menstrual discrimination as an integral part of the global discourse on human rights that is reflected on international human rights treaties and mechanisms.<sup>9</sup> Apart from such are the health implications that arise through poor menstruation care. The lack of hygienic products, the unawareness of hygienic practices and waste disposal have given rise to serious health implications for menstruating persons.<sup>10</sup> This has put the lives of many at risk and particularly the ones of young adults in the global south who do not have adequate access to healthcare facilities or advice. In relation to other menstruating persons apart from women and young girls, the stigma associated with their gender and sexuality acts as a double burden on top of the taboos associated with menstruating, as access to care products or sexual and reproductive health services are limited by means of difficulties in affirming gender identity.

Insufficient menstruation care has been a catalyst for child marriages, particularly in the global south. Coupled with period poverty, such inadequate care has disproportionately disadvantaged girls of school going age. While acting as an obstacle to receiving education sans distractions, due to the lack of sanitary products and facilities, poor access to them compels girls to not attend school during menstruation days even in developed countries.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, one in ten girls in sub-Saharan Africa misses school at some point during their period.<sup>12</sup> The reaching of menstruation age by girls compel parents to consider the marriage of young girls to manage household costs, prevent potential sexual predators approaching girls, amongst other reasons. Considered as an indication of reaching maturity, parents burden girls with additional gendered

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<sup>8</sup> GSCDM, Tool Kit: International Dignified Menstruation Day, [https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Tool-Kit-DM-day-2022\\_Final\\_27-09-2022-FINAL-1.pdf](https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Tool-Kit-DM-day-2022_Final_27-09-2022-FINAL-1.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> GSCDM, Isn't Menstrual Discrimination a Driver for Child Marriage? <https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Menstrual-Discrimination-Child-Marriage.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Majeed, J. et al. Menstrual hygiene practices and associated factors among Indian adolescent girls: a meta-analysis, <https://reproductive-health-journal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12978-022-01453-3>

<sup>11</sup> Kuhlmann, S.D. et al, Period Product Insecurity, School Absenteeism, and use of School Resources to Obtain Period Products among High School Students in St. Louis, Missouri, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10598405211069601>

<sup>12</sup> UNFPA, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/turning-point-girls-and-womens-menstrual-health-africa>

household responsibilities in preparation of marriage, with the start of menstruation. Withstanding such factors, parts of the global south such as South Asia account for some of the highest rates of child and teen marriages in the world with 45% of all women aged 20-24 years reporting being married before the age of 18.<sup>13</sup> As illiteracy and the lack of education enables manipulation, exposure to SGBV and reliance on males for survival, the provision of uninterrupted education, especially concerning sexual and reproductive health can be a key tool in battling child marriages. Instances as above are often influenced by menstruation, and education could empower young girls to continue to better their prospects, detaching themselves from traditional gendered roles and norms. Both period poverty and education affects the correlation between menstruation and child marriages in multifaceted ways. Societal constructs that discourage the intellectual development of menstruating persons, and limits to their access to sanitary products affects nearly 500 million people worldwide.<sup>14</sup> The implications of such have lasting impacts on generations of menstruating people whose hardships are normalised and sustained through taboos, patriarchal structures, and indifferences towards facilitating the provision of sexual and reproductive healthcare.

The diverse and crosscutting nature of menstrual discrimination and its impacts, the prevention of child marriages and the need for avenues to improve dignified menstruation are justified owing to such negative impact it has on the lives of menstruating people.

## **2. Rationale**

Recognising that menstrual discrimination presents an imminent threat to the growth and development of menstruating persons, their human rights and safety, the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation has spearheaded the Dignified Menstruation movement to free all menstruating persons from forms of discrimination, violence, and stigma stemming out of menstruation. The coalition strives to provide a common platform for all the beneficiaries and stakeholders to voice concern, emerging trends, ideas, and solutions on the subject matter through mediums such as this conference.

### **a. The Role of Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation**

Identifying that menstrual discrimination is a key driver in child marriages is essential to taking action on ending child marriages. Being an issue of concern particularly in the global south, ending menstrual discrimination and child marriages have been at the forefront of Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation's activities. The nexus between child marriages and menstrual practises in specific geographic areas have been highlighted frequently by the coalition,<sup>15</sup> including at multilateral forums such as the UN Commission on the Status of Women. It is with this enduring vision that Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation has collaborated with Viluthu – Centre for Human Resource Development, Sri Lanka, to host its fourth international conference on Dignified Menstruation. Drawing inspiration from previous discussions on timely topics such as the 2021 conference on Dignified Menopause,<sup>16</sup> both the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation and Viluthu hopes to continue the advocacy work to positively contribute to the discourse on dignified menstruation, menstrual discrimination, and ending child marriages. The international conference is hoped to set the foundation for future action of dignified menstruation and ending child

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<sup>13</sup> UNICEF, Child Marriages, <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/child-protection/child-marriage>

<sup>14</sup> World Bank, Menstrual Health and Hygiene, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/brief/menstrual-health-and-hygiene#countryexamples>

<sup>15</sup> GSCDM, Isn't Menstrual Discrimination a Driver for Child Marriage? <https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Menstrual-Discrimination-Child-Marriage.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> GSCDM, Dignified Menopause Conference, <https://www.dignifiedmenopause.org/>

marriages with renewed and new alliances between partners of the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation sharing experiences, expertise, lessons, and best practices with each other and participating stakeholders. The coalition's 12-point call for action and declaration adopted at the second International Workshop on Menstruation in Nepal acts as the guiding light for championing dignified menstruation in all future activities.

### **b. Viluthu's Journey to End Menstrual Discrimination and Child Marriages in Sri Lanka**

Being a founding member of the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation since its inception in 2019, Viluthu has a long record for fighting for gender equality, women's, and human rights in former conflict areas of Sri Lanka. For the purposes of effectively engaging with the youth, women and encouraging community action, Viluthu nurtures and maintain an extensive network of community led advocacy groups who also act as an important channel in identifying social issues at grassroots levels. Keeping dignified menstruation at heart, Viluthu has actively mobilised its grassroots level networks to engage in community led action to end menstrual discrimination and child marriages. Implemented in 2021, in 12 districts throughout the island, community led action to raise awareness on relevant subject matter was capped off with informative sessions involving Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation staff. Viluthu has also spearheaded the establishment of 'Youth Voice for Dignified Menstruation, Sri Lanka Chapter' with a large membership base comprising of members from all genders and communities. Viluthu also operates a trilingual social media accounts to support youth and contributors to showcases their efforts in promoting dignified menstruation in the island.<sup>17</sup> The increase in social acceptance to discuss dignified menstruation, especially amongst youth,<sup>18</sup> and positive responses by local governing bodies following successful lobbying by Viluthu has inspired the organisation to continue its ongoing action, some of which that will be reflected upon at the conference.

Post pandemic, social, economic, and political dilemma,<sup>19</sup> growing conservatism amongst some segments of the community have shown the potential to upset the gains made relating to dignified menstruation and ending child marriages. The surge in teenage pregnancies, teen marriages and sexual assault targeting women and girls<sup>20</sup> have all indicated the urgency for renewed action to tackle such calamities. Hence, Viluthu has increased its efforts to prevent child marriages taking place in the island, while identifying the role menstrual discrimination play in such phenomena.

### **3. Objectives**

- Establish and acknowledge the direct link between menstruation and child marriages for future action.
- Broaden the discourse on dignified menstruation and multi-level action needed to ensure such through networking, alliance building, and advocacy.
- Explore in depth, associated phenomena in terms of health and gender implications to account for a vast range of menstruating persons and their problems.

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<sup>17</sup>Dignified Menstruation Sri Lanka Chapter, <https://www.facebook.com/DignifiedMenstruationSriLankaChapter2020>

<sup>18</sup> Ceylonmirror.Net, <https://www.ceylonmirror.net/64049.html>

<sup>19</sup> Centre for Poverty Analysis, Gender and COVID 19 in Sri Lanka. Gendered Impact of Covid-19 Outbreak-From a Sri Lankan Perspective, <https://www.cepa.lk/blog/gendered-impact-of-covid-19-outbreak-from-a-sri-lankan-perspective/>

<sup>20</sup>UNFPA, Responding To The Needs Of Women And Girls During Covid-19, [https://srilanka.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/240521\\_unfpa\\_ar\\_2020\\_print\\_ready\\_0.pdf](https://srilanka.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/240521_unfpa_ar_2020_print_ready_0.pdf)

#### 4. Thematic Areas

- Dignified menstruation amongst young children, youth, and boys (including awareness and safe practises)
- Menstrual hygiene, including products and taxation, waste management and disposal practises, education, physical resources and climate justice<sup>21</sup>
- Menstrual discrimination, economic development and political participation
- Dignified menstruation and the law, domestic provisions and international instruments, FGM, child marriages, and discrimination
- Dignified menstruation at school, during pandemics, disasters and conflict (with special reference to refugees and migrants) and LGBTQI community.
- The role of activists, CSOs, media and academia in promoting dignified menstruation, the importance of problem identification, advocacy and urgent intervention

#### 5. Desired Thematic Outcomes<sup>22</sup>

- Establish dignified menstruation and eliminating menstrual discrimination as global priorities (acknowledging its cross cutting nature), to attain gender equality, ensure human rights of menstruators and attain sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- Build global momentum on dignified menstruation and related cross cutting themes.
- Utilise networking, alliance building, and advocacy to further dignified menstruation and eliminate menstrual discrimination.

#### 6. Participants, Beneficiaries, and Stakeholders

- Women, Children, LGBTQI and all Menstruating Persons
- Healthcare Professionals and Service Providers
- Young boys and Men, Relevant Government Ministries, Authorities, and Policymakers Champions and Promoters of Dignified Menstruation, Women's Rights Organisations, Academics and Undergraduate, Postgraduate Students of relevant Disciplines, International Organisations and Donors

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<sup>21</sup> **Climate Justice** and dignified menstruation are correlated in the context of how menstrual practices are affected due to water scarcity, environmental pollution (including the promotion of environmentally friendly products and practises), the systematic impact of environmental disasters on menstruators, the role of poverty caused by climate events and accessibility to menstrual services and products during such events.

<sup>22</sup> **Physical Outcomes:** conference papers, joint statement/policy brief, specific and focused targets and action plans, publication and dissemination of presented conference papers, keynote speech, outcome document and discussion points, media conferences, interviews, media appearances and conference promotion and outreach (prior to and after the conference).

## Organiser and Solidarity Partner Profiles

### **Viluthu – Centre for Human Resource Development (Organiser)**

Viluthu is a not for profit organisation operating in Sri Lanka since 2003 with the prime focus on working with war affected communities and vulnerable women from former conflict areas. Operating under the principles of creating an inclusive and socially cohesive society that practices participatory democracy and adheres to gender equality, economic, social justice and equitable development, Viluthu seeks to enhance women and youth participation in policy discourse and provide a platform to the marginalised groups for such purposes.

Viluthu has been an active contributor to the works of Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, implementing advocacy and outreach programmes relating to dignified menstruation in the island.

Read more at: <https://www.viluthu.org/>

### **Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation - GSCDM (Organiser)**

GSCDM operates with a mission to dismantle institutional, structural, interpersonal, and social oppressive systems in place affecting menstruation, individuals who menstruate, and their ability to access basic inalienable human rights, critical resources to lead happy, and healthy lives, and obtain dignity. Led by Radha Paudel Foundation, GSCDM carries out evidence based advocacy, training, and research at local, national, and global level in focusing on dignified menstruation for prevention of VAWG and VAC and the promotion of human rights.

In 2020, GSCDM conducted a three days international workshop on Dignified Menstruation concluding with a 12 points call for action to champion dignified menstruation. GSCDM has worked with a number of partners locally, regionally and internationally, with a particular presence in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and the Philippines, to promote dignified menstruation and to prevent menstrual discrimination. The coalition had made representations at a number of international forums on women's rights including at the UN Commission on the Status of Women and spearheaded the creation of the International Dignified Menstruation Day. Throughout the years, GSCDM has conducted conferences, seminars, and outreach work to promote dignified menstruation across the globe and has built an extensive network of likeminded organisations to support its endeavours.

Read more at: <https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/>

### **International Disability Alliance (Key Solidarity Partner)**

The International Disability Alliance is an Alliance of 14 global and regional organisations of persons with disabilities. IDA advocates at the United Nations for a more inclusive global environment for everyone, across sectors. IDA and its members adopt intersectional approaches to issues of advocacy and capacity building and strive to include all persons with disabilities, including those from underrepresented groups, in the development agenda.

Read more at: <https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/>

**SCOPE – Strengthening Social Cohesion and Peace in Sri Lanka Programme - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (Key Solidarity Partner)**

This initiative is supported by the programme, Strengthening Social Cohesion and Peace in Sri Lanka (SCOPE), co-financed by the European Union and German Federal Foreign Office. It is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in partnership with the Ministry of Justice.

ශ්‍රේණි සංගමය සහ ජර්මානු විදේශීය කාර්යාලය එක්ව මූල්‍ය අනුග්‍රහය දක්වන SCOPE වැඩසටහන, GIZ සහ අධිකරණ අමාත්‍යාංශය මගින් කේරයාත්මක කරනු ලබයි.

SCOPE நிகழ்ச்சித்திட்டமானது ஐரோப்பிய ஒன்றியம் மற்றும் ஜேர்மன் பெடரல் வெளிநாட்டு அலுவலகத்தினதும் இணைத்த நிதி உதவியுடன் நீதி அமைச்சின் கூட்டுமுயற்சியுடன் GIZ இனால் அமுல்படுத்தப்படுகின்றது.

Read more at: <https://www.facebook.com/SCOPEsriLanka>



## Panel Members

### Chief Guest

**Professor Rajendra Surenthirakumaran, MD (Com. Med.), Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka**



Professor Rajendra Surenthirakumaran is a Professor in Community Medicine and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. He is a public health researcher and non-communicable diseases epidemiologist interested in social determinants of health, health systems, ageing, and palliative care. He joined the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna, in 2004 as a lecturer and was promoted to senior lecturer in 2011. He was the Head of the Department of Community and Family Medicine at, University of Jaffna from 2012 to 2019.

Prof. Surenthirakumaran is the Country Lead for the Global Health Atrial Fibrillation Study Group, University of Birmingham UK, funded by the National Institute of Health Research UK, Coordinator of the AHEAD World Bank-funded project on Water Security in the Northern Province, Sri Lanka, and Principal Investigator of a collaborative study with SingHealth on premalignant oesophageal lesions among patients at the Teaching Hospital Jaffna. He is also a co-investigator and supervisor of many research activities which are regional interests. Prof. Surenthirakumaran has worked as a consultant for numerous Government and international agencies, including Save the Children and UNDP and is currently the Managerial Coordinator of the Jaffna Healthy City project supported by WHO Sri Lanka. He is working with the Minister of Health Northern Province, Sri Lanka, on developing and implementing Strategic Management Plan for the Northern Province and also helping with the implementation of a Cancer Control programme and palliative care services in the province with the support of Cancer Control Programme Sri Lanka, Cancer Care Manitoba Canada and Two World Cancer Collaboration.

Prof. Surenthirakumaran has delivered more than 30 guest lectures in regional, national and international forums and published over 30 academic articles. He has also authored and co-authored more than ten books in Tamil and English on Public health.

At present, Prof. Surenthirakumaran is the President of the Sri Lanka Public Health Education Institutions Network (LANKAPHEIN), executive committee member of the South-East Asian Public Health Education Institutions Network (SEAPHEIN) and advisory committee member of the Global Network of Academic Public Health (GNAPH). He holds the This is Public Health (TIPH) award for 2021. He is recently appointed as a member of the WHO SEAR Expert panel on Urban Health and Healthy City Network from Nov 2022.

In addition to his numerous academic commitments, Prof. Surenthirakumaran serves as the Honorary Medical Superintendent of the Cooperative Hospital Moolai, Chairman CANE Sri Lanka, President of Institute of Medical Sciences Trust, Manipay, President AHEAD Trust, Jaffna, and President, of Jaffna Social Action Centre (JSAC). He is also a member of several regional and national professional organisations and actively engages with and supports the activities of various community organisations in Jaffna.

## Key Note Speaker

**Mili Adhikari, Director GSCDM America Chapter, Founding Member of GSCDM, USA**



My name is Mili Adhikari (she/her) and I am a Public Health Practitioner based in California USA, currently I am also a 2nd year medical student. Outside the classroom I am a menstrual and sexual health awareness educator, and birth worker.

I am doing most of this work as the director for Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation North America chapter. My life's goal is working to achieve menstrual and gender equity through frameworks of Dignified Menstruation, reproductive justice, and Body Literacy utilizing education, awareness, activism and community organizing.

## Guest Speaker

**Rinku Thakur, GSCDM, Nepal**



My name is Rinku Kumari Thakur, a child marriage survivor from Madhesh Community, Nepal. At the age of 13 I raised my voice against child marriage and at that time I was able to save myself from child marriage. Again at the age of 17 I raised voice against child marriage but I failed to convince my parents, my relatives, my society, compelling me to leave home. Now I have completed my Bachelor's Degree and I work with Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation. I got the opportunity to participate in various webinars and trainings on Dignified Menstruation. I'm also providing training and interaction programs on the behalf of the Dignified Menstruation campaign Nepal.

## "Say No" Anthem Artist

**Dr. Shikshita Malla, Nepal**



Dr. Malla is a qualified Dentist currently working in Kathmandu, Nepal. With a passion for activism at heart, Dr. Malla explores her interests and raises awareness through the medium of music.

## Impact Video – Ending Child Marriage

### Yeanoh Rukoh Bai-Kamara, Member of Youth Advisory Group, Sierra Leone



I'm Yeanoh Rukoh Bai-Kamara, A second year student of the pure and applied science faculty, Fourah Bay College, physics department. I am a 17 year old member of the youth advisory group and a She Leads Youth rep. The group was one set up by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education with support from Plan International to include youth countywide in decision-making processes within the Ministry.

I appreciate the existence of children and I have been committed to protecting their rights and teaching their responsibilities for eight productive years. I love nature and I enjoy capturing thoughts and moments on paper. My friends would describe me as empathetic, easy going, funny and bold.

## Moderators

### Session One

**Shradha Shreejaya, Sustainable Menstruation Kerala Collective, India**



Shradha Shreejaya works as a consultant for global women's rights organisations and is a founding campaigner for Sustainable Menstruation Kerala Collective since 2017. She was a programme officer for climate justice outreach at Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Thailand. Shradha has filled the capacity of observer and delegation head for the Women & Gender constituency at COP, United Nations FCCC, in Bonn, Germany and Katowice, Poland. She was also the project grant fellow of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation-Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany.

### Session Two

**Archana Patkar, Advisor to the GSCDM, UNAIDS Geneva**



Archana Patkar is a gender and rights development practitioner deeply committed to the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights for all people. She has worked on gender, diversity, and rights for 28 years. She believes that every time we break the silence around menstruation and other unmentionables, we can use that space as a powerful entry point for addressing larger issues of patriarchy and gender inequality with powerful positive links to education, safety and dignity, skills and jobs, delayed age of marriage and healthier happier men and women.

After obtaining master's degrees from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New York University and the London School of Economics she founded Junction Social, a cross sectoral consulting firm working on policy, strategy, programming and monitoring on gender equality, health, education, WASH, natural resources. From 2010 until April 2018 she led the Policy Advocacy department at the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), United Nations in Geneva. Here, she developed a transformative programme on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Africa and Asia contributing to the national and sector-wide recognition of menstrual health and hygiene in policy and practice in India, Senegal, Niger, Cameroon, Nepal, Kenya and Tanzania, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

From 2018 onwards – Archana has worked on menstrual health, Universal Health Coverage, WHO and gender equality and inequalities in HIV with UNAIDS Geneva. Her key research interests during this period have included the evolution of menstrual health policy, links with the environment and the circular economy.

### Session Three

**Dr. Richard Anthony, Lecturer in Sociology and Academic Researcher, United Kingdom**



Richard has an extensive professional career experience, ranging from 10 years as a lecturer in Sociology to researcher with UNDP and other local NGOs in Sri Lanka. He was an Assistant Coordinator in the National Youth Study and as Convenor in the Peace Education Project. He has obtained PhD in Sociology and MSc in Social Research Methods from University of Surrey in the UK and also did his four years special degree course – BA (Hons) in Sociology in the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

Richard's research interests focus on ethnic and racial studies, Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora & media studies, youth in politics, identity, ethnicity and community, gang culture, including human rights issues, peace & reconciliation including resilience and comparative South Asian studies.

## Speakers

### 1. Rose Achayo Obol

Chairperson, Board of Directors, National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda, Uganda (Representing International Disability Alliance)



Achayo Rose Obol is a female Ugandan with physical disability, a member of Network of African Women with Disabilities, a Board member of Disabled Women in Africa, a member of East African Disability Forum, and the Chairperson Board of Directors of the National Union of women with disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU) and other African Disabled Peoples Organizations.

NUWODU is an umbrella organization of women and girls with disabilities in Uganda. It advocates for the promotion, protection and advancement of the rights of women and girls with disabilities for meaningful participation and inclusion in development process.

Rose has been an activist in the Ugandan disability movement for the last 20 years. Rose is active at all levels in mobilizing and empowering women with disabilities with information on their rights, advocating for their inclusion in women's rights movement; inclusion of and advancing equality for women and girls with disabilities in all social, economic, human rights and humanitarian aspects; influencing Ugandan and regional gender- and disability-related policies using the UNCPRD and SDG; and representing the voice of women with Disabilities at different forums

Rose is passionate about meaningful participation, recognition and visibility of women and girls with disabilities in all spheres of life.

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### 2. Anne Pakoa

Founder and Secretariat, Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition, Vanuatu



Anne Pakoa is an experienced Human Rights Defender, Education Policy Analyst, Registered Nurse and Nurse Educator driven by her passion to fight for social justice. She takes pride in providing equitable services to the people of Vanuatu, in particular, the poor and most vulnerable. As the Founder and CEO of the Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition, her goals include training and producing human rights defenders to assist in advocating for the rights of indigenous Ni – Vanuatu and to ensure that there is equitable access to social and economic goods by all.

In addition to her primary role, Anne has been recognized by the United States Secretary of State and the Common Wealth Fellow for her extraordinary commitment to fighting for social justice and was awarded the 2015 U.S Ambassador Women of Courage Award. She did her 3 years of diploma



studies at Vanuatu College of Nursing and later went to the University of PNG to do a Diploma in Teaching Health, majoring in Curriculum Development and Education Psychology. She also holds a post-graduate Diploma in Education Administration, majoring in Education Policy Processes and Human Resource Management obtained at Melbourne University.

Anne has worked in the Non – Government Organisation sector for 22 years, setting up a few NGOs such as the Anne's Christian Community Health School and Nursing Services, the Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition, the Vanuatu Young Women For Change, and Co-Founded the Vatu Mauri Consortium, an NGO that plays the Secretariat role of the four ( 4) National Councils i.e.: the Vanuatu National Council of Women, Vanuatu National Council of Churches, the Vanuatu National Youths Council and the Vanuatu Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs. Anne's key skills include; NGO Management, fundraising skills such as project proposal, training and facilitating, mentoring and facilitating, advocacy and campaigns for policy changes, negotiating skills, and generally, raising awareness to influence policy change for social and economic justice.

With her negotiation skills, Anne participates actively in the ACP/EU negotiations for the Post – Cotonou to ensure that the presence of Non-State Actors is reflected in the post-Cotonou final agreement. Recently, She contributed to the first-ever policy on the Global Compact for Migration which was launched in December 2018 at the ACP/EU meeting in Marrakesh and finally presented at the December UN Summit in New York. She recently resigned from the position of the Chair of the Pacific Island Multi-Country Coordinating Mechanism (PIRMCCM) an Institution that oversights the Global Fund grants for HIV/AIDS/TB and Malaria for 11 Pacific Island Countries which she held for 5 years, 2 years on the Oversight Committee, 2 years as the Vice-Chair and 2 years as the Chair basically due to a consultancy role which she has successfully sought from the Global Fund Grants.

At the Global level, she played a significant role in 2017 to the final endorsement of the Post Cotonou Negotiating themes as the Vice-Chair of the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) / EU/Non-State Actors Steering Committee on the Post Cotonou Partnership Agreement. She is also the Chairlady of the Napanga Pikninini Books and was Vice-Treasurer of VANGO including other local Boards. She is also the Administrator of the Women Voices Worldwide. Anne represents the Pacific region on the Commonwealth SDG 8.7 Network Management Committee that focuses on raising awareness of human trafficking and contemporary forms of slavery.

In Humanitarian work, she held a position as the Emergency and Disaster Response Manager then later covered the position of Country Manager for ActionAid Vanuatu for 5 months, and currently holds the position of the Technical Adviser for the Vanuatu Young Women and Climate Change at this National Humanitarian Hub. She was the Humanitarian and Emergency Manager for ActionAid Vanuatu a position she held for 2 years.

In her political walk, Anne was the first female candidate that contested the position of Head of State in 2004 and ran for the National Parliamentary seat in 2020 to no avail. Today, Anne still stands as one of the women leaders to represent the voices of CSOs in the Pacific region (Talking with Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition's Anne Pakoa: "A voice stronger than ever" – CONCORD ([concordeurope.org](http://concordeurope.org))).

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## Presenters and Research Abstracts

### 1. Dignified Menstruation among Adolescent Girls in Selected Schools, Jaffna Zonal Education

By Dr. Gopalamoorthy Rajeev, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka



Dr. Gopalamoorthy Rajeev is a Public Health professional from Sri Lanka with Ten years' experience in the field of Public health with postgraduate education and training in Community Medicine from the Post Graduate Institute of Colombo. He is a graduate of Faculty of Medicine Colombo and currently attached to the Department of Community Medicine and Family medicine, Medical Faculty of Jaffna.

He has special interested in Cancer Epidemiology and Adolescent Health. He has conducted and supervised many researches in related to community health activities. He had presented and published many research articles in the national and international forums. He is the recipient of numerous academic awards for his presentations.

In addition to his public health practice, he is actively in involving in professional forums and many community based organizations. He is the current board member of Cancer Care North and East and was the council member of College of Community Medicine. He was the ambassador of the Public Health project of Medical faculty of Jaffna last year.

#### Abstract

Dignified menstruation is a state of freedom from any forms of menstrual discrimination, including taboos, stigmas, shyness, shame, abuse, restrictions and violence. Even though Jaffna City Schools are comparatively better in most education-related achievements, period poverty exists and is untouched. A survey cum empowerment activity was carried out in three schools in Jaffna City to understand the actual menstruation-related status. The survey focuses on three main categories: facilities, awareness, and services. Under facilities, all three schools have separate toilets for girls, but only one school has sanitary pad removal systems in place and has soap for cleaning the toilets for dignified cleaning after toilet use. From an awareness perspective, all three school's male and female teachers received menstruation-related awareness. In contrast, only one school (both fathers and mothers) received menstruation-related understanding. Also the importance of pre-preparedness and related sensitizations is given to one school. Menstruation-related understanding (both boys and girls) were identified among two schools. From a services perspective, only one school has a mechanism to get sanitary pads at schools and a system established to remove menstrual waste. None of the schools has to get menstruation-related counseling when needed. To improve the situation, one school health teacher and two adolescent girls from each school were trained on menstruation and given guidance on enhancing menstruation-related facilities, services and supplies. A lack of confidence was identified among teachers to do awareness, supported by medical faculty, University of Jaffna. Three awareness videos were developed in three languages (English, Tamil and Sinhala) for longer-term sustainability. After five months of focused awareness of menstruation, a significant improvement was observed in these focused schools.

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## 2. Dignifying Menstruation On Transgender Men

By Night Okindo, Trans Empowerment Initiative, Kenya



My name is Night Okindo a transgender man, queer, photojournalist, social justice activist youth, and founder of Trans Empowerment Initiative (TEI). By circumstances of life (homeless, refugee, youthful, creative) I have found myself constantly trying to make the world know the challenges and thrills of the lives of transgender men, trans masculine and non-binary folk by echoing their needs through documenting and sharing on our platform @Maschart\_Nbo. As an avenue for pride, a tool for advocacy, I use photojournalism as a tool to elevate and honour Trans masculine Africans.

### Abstract

Menstruation has always been considered a “woman” thing. As a Trans man, this means I live in an environment where it's not okay for a man to enter a shop and buy pads without feeling shame.

Shame is what makes it difficult for us to live a healthy life and care for our bodies, just like anyone else born with a vagina. Because of this stigma, many Trans men who menstruate often use 1 pad for more than the recommended time, making us prone to reproductive health infections.

Shame around menstruation has us scared of using bathrooms with urinals, because we don't want anyone to hear us changing our pads. Lack of dignified menstruation and shame has led to suicidal thoughts and cases of depression in our community. There is an urgent need for centres offering sexual and reproductive health & rights resources that include our Trans masculine community without discrimination.

Menstruation should be considered something of dignity and not shame to anyone who is blessed to experience it. This should not be considered something that people lose their lives over. We should acknowledge that even men receive the monthly Flow and that does not make them any less of a man. Young girls in schools are getting into early depression and suicidal binges just because they start experiencing the Menstruation early in life and are made to think that they are dirty and unwelcomed in the society.

We urge all the possible avenues, organisations and allies to keep advocating against bullying and discrimination towards people who experience Menstrual Periods.

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### 3. Challenges Faced by Local Women Council Leaders on Period Poverty and the Lack of Menstruation Health Facilities in Councils (Piradesa Sabhas) in the Jaffna Peninsula Post Covid and Economic Crisis Situation in Sri Lanka

By T. Kiruththiga, Sri Lanka



Kiruththiga functions as an Independent gender and communication consultant and works with different NGOs and INGOs and Academic institutions on gender related matters including gender equality, gender mainstreaming, reproductive health, women empowerment, women and political participation, women and mass media. She produced and has published research papers on gender, women and media for the past 15 years.

She has been working as a Media trainer and Lecturer in government and Private Universities specialized gender and media also worked as a gender trainer with different entities for the past 10 years. She also worked with different organizations as a project co coordinator and Mentor on the prevention of GBV programmes.

Kiruththiga hold a Master degree in Communication and Media studies on Indian Council for Cultural Relation scholarship in India and Post graduate diploma in Communicative Studies. She is also an International Visitors Leadership Alumina on violent extremism and the role of media to prevent violent extremism (IVLP) and works with the American Corner on gender related issues.

#### Abstract

Period poverty is the lack of access to menstrual products, education, hygiene facilities, waste management, or a combination of these. It affects an estimated 500 million people worldwide. Period poverty causes physical, mental, and emotional challenges. It can make people feel shame for menstruating, and the stigma surrounding periods prevents individuals from talking about it. Period poverty refers to the social, economic, political, and cultural barriers to menstrual products, education, and sanitation. The Global Menstrual Collective defines menstrual health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle.” It notes that people should have access to information about menstruation, life changes, and hygiene practices the ability to care for themselves during menstruation access to water, sanitation, and hygiene service the ability to receive diagnosis for menstrual cycle disorders and access to healthcare, a positive, supportive environment in which to make informed decisions, the ability to participate in all aspects of life, such as going to work.

After the Local Authorities Elections (Amendment) Act, No. 1 of 2016 was introduced in Sri Lanka which required a 25% mandatory quota for women, allowing women to enter into politics in the local councils (Piradesa Sabhas.) But they have been facing various challenges including gender inequality and gender non sensitive environment and social stigma. They also face lack of proper sanitary facilities within the council. The Covid pandemic and the economic crisis situation in Sri Lanka led to the increase in prices of sanitary products which also triggered a worse situation including period poverty.

In this research, 42 respondents were gathered using purposive sampling techniques from the 17 Local councils (Women political leaders) who represent different political parties in the Jaffna peninsula. They have interviewed through sense making interviews techniques and structured questionnaires. The results stated that many women councillors also faced the issues related with their menstruation during the council proceedings and there are lack of facilities in their councils including proper wastage management. Also they faced challenges during their menstruation and period poverty has increased during post Covid period. The economic crisis and social stigma and social taboo plays an important role in this situation.

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#### 4. Menstrual Health of Kashmiri Women in Remote Areas and Their Aspirations

By Swati Bedekar, Vatslaya Foundation, India



Mrs Swati Bedekar started out as a passionate Science Educator, based in Vadodara. While working as a Science Communicator in the interior villages of Dahod, Gujarat, she observed that girls studying from sixth standard onwards would regularly remain absent from the schools. On further investigation, she found out the issue of mismanagement and ignorance of Menstrual Hygiene which was its root cause.

Swati Bedekar, in her systematic research, encountered similar conditions amongst women labourers, construction workers, housemaids, farm workers and women belonging to the lower income strata of the society. They had vaginal tract infections and were victims of discriminatory social practices. In order to address this difficult problem Mrs Swati Bedekar, under the aegis of Vatsalya Foundation, Vadodara, started the Sakhi (Friend) project. The objective was to help women and girls maintain their menstrual hygiene and also provide a source of income to these women. She has been relentlessly working to spread the message of Menstrual Hygiene in various places in India. With help from the government schemes for the poor, she set up her first Sakhi unit in Devgadhi Baria in 2010.

Mrs Swati Bedekar has worked extensively on providing end to end solutions for menstrual hygiene awareness among women and girls. She and her team have designed and manufactured drudgery free, low cost machines to produce sanitary napkins. Mrs Swati Bedekar has started such units in other developing countries like Cameroun, Zimbabwe, Bhutan and war torn regions like the Zadari refugee camp in Jordan. An eco-friendly terracotta incinerator "Ashudhhashak has also been developed by her team for the disposal of used sanitary napkins.

#### Abstract

We are a NGO in Vadodara, Gujarat working since year 2000. We started our work introducing quality science education in rural schools. We designed science curriculum along with GCERT under project AVISHIKA and curriculum for tribal schools under project Kanad. From 2010 our flagship project is Menstrual Hygiene management for women. Our program includes a total health solution during menstruation.

The theme of this work revolves around Awareness, Access and Affordability of hygienic products. The work starts from awareness program on menstruation. In this we try to educate women about what is menstruation. Why and how it happens, the changes taking place in the body its benefits. The taboos attached to it. We try to give reasoning to prove why the myths attached to it are wrong.

Unfortunately in villages girls are made to give up schools when menstruation starts. There are many reasons for this, right from no proper toilet facilities in schools and fear of sending young girls away from home. As Govt. School are up to 8th STD only and then the girls have to travel to nearby town for high school. The lack of knowledge about hygiene and shortage of cotton cloth leads to use of any available material which may or may not be hygienic. Sometimes lack of proper protection becomes a reason to give up school. The use of wrong methods leads to different infections. This may end up in cervical cancer. The study shows alarming increase in such cancer cases.

We tried to find a solution to this problem as whole. The use of cloth is not practical because there is not enough water to wash it and taboo does not allow outdoor hanging in sunshine to dry it, especially in cities. The answer to this is good quality Sanitary Napkins. But women still don't look at it as an appropriate option for the cost and lack of access. Even in cities women shy from going to a chemist to buy napkins. The solution is to make women manufacture them and save them. Make them easily assessable in cities and villages.

Keeping this in mind we started SAKHI a brand of cellulose based organic sanitary napkins manufactured by women in villages and Bastis in cities. These units are established in a small room with minimum requirement of electricity. Machines are simple, hand operated and drudgery free. Only women operate them, manufacture the napkins, and manage the units. A unit working with 6 to 8 women can make 30,000 to 40,000 napkins every month. As the units are established in one room of a house, the women can keep flexible hours and work as per their convenience. They are paid based on the quantity they manufacture. So more they produce, more they earn.

But the problem does not end by just manufacturing the napkins. The disposal of used napkins is a big problem as well. Vatsalya has found a solution to that also. We manufacture a low cost terracotta Incinerator which can be kept anywhere in a village or girls' toilets in schools. Used napkins are put in this and at the end if the days are safely burnt in this. This devise does not need electricity. This product called "Ashudhinashak" has been awarded the best grassroots innovation award by President of India. It is accepted as part of Swachh Bharat program. Our aim is to make this entire program popular in the country. We make sanitary panties which give protection to girls and women during the crucial time for 4 to 5 hours. We lovingly call it Sakhi suraksha! This has huge potential as it serves women in their time of need.

We have the test market ready for the product. We look forward to present this project. At Sakhi, we are committed to solve every problem a woman faces.

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## 5. Reaching Millions via Social Media – ‘Clicktivism’ As a Tool to Tackle Taboos around Menstruation and To Empower Young Women around the Globe

By Chiqui de Veyra, Sami Pande, Jan-Christoph Schlenk and Irida Haxhi, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Philippines, Albania, Nepal, Germany



Chiqui de Veyra currently works as Coordinator for WASH and Knowledge Management at the GIZ Regional Fit for School Programme in the Philippines. She oversees the MHM component and likewise serves as the gender focal point. Prior to joining GIZ, she worked with several groups in the Philippines such as the UP Manila National Institutes of Health and Alliance for Improving Health Outcomes in the areas of public health, health policy, financing, and research, among others.



Irida Haxhi is working as Communication, Awareness and PR advisor at the GIZ programme “Customer and Performance Oriented Drinking Water and Sanitation Services” in Albania and is also responsible for WASH and MHH in Schools. For 4 years, she has been working with municipalities regarding gender budgeting and social inclusion. She holds an MSc in Finance of the University of Tirana and is currently following an executive master at the University of Bocconi in Milan for “Management of International Organizations”.



Sami Pande ([sami.pande@giz.de](mailto:sami.pande@giz.de)) is working as Technical Advisor for the Adolescent Health and Development program, particularly MHM and WASH in School for 3 years with GIZ’s programme “Support to the Health Sector Strategy” in Nepal. She has more than 10 years of experience working in the public health field including Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health topic. She holds a Master’s in Public Health (MPH) degree from The University of Adelaide, Australia.



Jan-Christoph Schlenk works as a WASH Policy Advisor with GIZ’s Water Policy programme in Germany. He has more than 10 years of professional experience in working with GIZ in the governance and water sector with a focus on WASH in Institutions and Menstrual Health and Hygiene. He holds an MSc degree from the University of Cologne. He did graduate work in Geography, Regional Planning and Political Science at the University of Bonn and the School of Planning and Architecture New Delhi, India.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is a German federal enterprise working in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development – operating in many fields across around 120 countries. The GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development. GIZ offers demand-driven, tailor-made and effective services for sustainable development. GIZ operates in many fields: economic development and employment promotion, governance and democracy, security, reconstruction, peace-building and civil conflict transformation, food security, health and basic education, environmental protection, resource conservation, and climate change mitigation.

The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) is an informal network of more than 380 organisations and 15,000 members with a common vision on sustainable sanitation. SuSanA works as a think tank, coordination platform, and sounding board, contributor to the policy dialogue on sustainable sanitation and as a “catalyst”.

### **Abstract**

Approximately 1.9 billion women and adolescent girls menstruate each month. Especially in low- and middle-income countries it is difficult for girls and women to practice adequate menstrual hygiene because they are frequently either ill-informed about menstruation or lack access to appropriate infrastructure and menstrual management supplies as these are often not available or unaffordable. Considering the large number of adolescent girls and women affected by issues around Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH), the topic has received increasing attention at the global level from a variety of actors.

The challenge: How to advance education on MHH and increase awareness on a broader scale?

The solution: Engage media personalities as Goodwill Ambassador and use of social media to reach wider audience.

Starting in 2020, German-supported projects in Nepal, Albania, and the Philippines have involved local personalities and celebrities to advance education, raise awareness, and break down taboos around MHH.

There is no doubt that social media can be an instigator of social change. Successful social media campaigns can greatly contribute to increasing the visibility of initiatives. However, to make the campaign successful, it's essential to get the ingredients right. Choosing a public image that has a wide area of influence and can credibly represent the motivation and goals of the campaign has proven to be a success factor to spread the message, reach a broad audience and garner positive publicity.

To date, approximately 5 million people have been reached in the 3 countries with the #LetsTalkPERIOD approach in a culturally sensitive manner. The success of Nepal's campaign, and its adoption in Albania and the Philippines is in line with the new German coalition government's ambitious goals for gender equality and strengthening the rights, resources and representation of women and girls worldwide through its new emphasis on a 'feminist' foreign and development policy.

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## 6. Live Your Menstrual Care: Access to Menstrual Health for Girls and Teenagers

By Francy Garcia Fajardo, Oriéntame, Colombia



Francy García is the Communications and Fundraising Leader for Oriéntame, a Private and social benefit organization created in 1977, formulating a comprehensive model and a safe protocol that guarantees the care of women who require our services. The Foundation contemplates orientation by qualified personnel as one of the key points to accompany women at the time of deciding on reproductive matters with responsible and timely information.

Since 1990, the comprehensive care model for girls and women in sexual and reproductive health has been successfully transmitted to health professionals in 7 Latin American countries, making Oriéntame a pioneer and leader in the region.

### Abstract

The project is delivering 2500 menstrual cups to girls, women of Afro-Colombian women, migrants and adolescents in vulnerable conditions in Colombia. We want to relieve them of the economic burdens caused by having to take care of their menstrual hygiene care during the COVID-19 pandemic and to contribute to their autonomy, offering a more sustainable method. We would like also to help dispel myths and taboos about menstruation. We hope to present our initiative during the conference.

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## 7. Dignified Menstruation amongst Girls, Boys & Youth

By Samir Pariyar, National Coordinator, Dignified Menstruation Campaign, Nepal



Myself Samir Pariyar, a 22 years old male and a Dignified Menstruation Activist from Nepal. I belong to the marginalized Community of Nepal i.e. Dalit community which is regarded as the low community of the nation. I am the National Coordinator for Dignified Menstruation Campaign Nepal and Founder of Gift for Girls Campaign (campaign lead by youth).

I am currently Studying Bachelor of Public Health in Purbanchal University with Full Government Scholarship at Gothgau, Morang. I have worked in the area of Dignified Menstruation since from 2019. I believe Dignified Menstruation is the strongest tool for ending all form of gender based violence.

I have started an initiation of celebrating Menarche by cutting a cake for my own sister Menarche, gifted pads on various occasions to menstruators, initiated the Mothers Menstruation sharing Camp and connected Dignified Menstruation during various events and festivals.

I feel so glad to work in Dignified Menstruation for making my mom, sister and all menstruation dignified. I was awarded the Best CFLG and Dignified Menstruation activist award by Sunwal Municipality.

### **Abstract**

Menstruation is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon of this universe and a simple truth of human life. It is not simply the average 5 days of bleeding or approximately 7 years of bleeding. It is also not only one's reproductive years; it is the whole experience of human life. Simple definition for daily business is a 'state free from any forms of abuse, discrimination, violence associated with menstruation'. There is no difference between 25 days and 5 days in terms of discrimination.

Menstrual Discrimination develops patriarchy and creates violence from home. For ending menstrual discrimination and all form of gender based violence we have to work in dignified menstruation from the child to youth and male to female.

From the age of 6 to first Menstruation, girls know all about Menstruation and the practices at home as culture and tradition. The mind of the child capture it and after their own menstruation or family members' menstruation they practice taboos. So to break all form of Menstrual Discrimination, we have to focus Children, Youth.

Especially Boys have to know more about Menstruation to break down patriarchy thoughts and practices from the family and community.

We can create awareness from various mediums like social media and physical programs. Dignified Menstruation Campaign Nepal is making various posters, pamphlets for making Dignified Menstruation currently targeting children, youth and boys. DM with Dashain, DM with Tihar, Mother Menstruation Story Sharing Camp, and Mehendi with DM are some of the examples. Programs that are run for children, youth and boys to normalize menstruation with the help of social platform. Myself I started to celebrate Sister Menstruation yearly of first menstruation date.

Children are fast learners and the best way to spread the changes fast. Working on DM with children, youth and boys is best way to make a Dignified Menstruation Friendly Society.

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## 8. Teen marriages in Batticaloa: OrCED's View

By K. Puvanendran, Organization for Community Empowerment & Development, Sri Lanka



K. Puvanendran functions as a senior psychological counsellor (NISD) in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology (Special), Professional Diploma in Counselling, Master of Arts in Sociology Master of Social Work, NISD STEPS (Skill Through English for Public Servants) - British Council. Puvanendran has more than 20 years of professional experience in various capacities such as a drugs and alcohol prevention trainer, lecturer, and a counsellor.

### Abstract

Recent studies have shown an increase in teen marriages in Sri Lanka. The situation is critical especially in Trinomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara Districts in the Eastern Province of the country. Human Rights lawyers state that the rate of teen marriages in the above districts in a particular year had increased to 22% from 14% recorded the previous year.

Accordingly, teen marriages had also been in the rise after major tragedies, including the tsunami. However, studies suggest several reasons for the increasing rate in teen marriages in the current situation, of which, the main is said to be the prevalent economic crisis. In addition, studies indicate aspects such as low level of education in families, irrational thinking, and lack of unity, love/infatuation, lack of education or abandoning academic activities, neglect, and lack of advice for the increase in teen marriages in the country.

Studies indicate that teen marriages are most likely to occur in families which have no control over their children, and which force their children into marriage due to unavoidable situations. Furthermore, children who fall in love in schools, and those who wish to fulfil their needs by themselves also opt to marry at a young age.

However, studies have also identified avenues to protect children from getting married. The marriage law in Sri Lanka, which indicates the youngest age to marry as 18 years, helps prevent teen marriage to a certain extent. In addition, initiatives such as providing free books and uniform to school students, laws which ban employment of children under 18, and other child protection laws also help this cause. Studies have also stressed the importance of a child-centric education to educate the public on this matter.

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## 9. A sociological research about "Impact of Napkin Price Increase and Taxation on Menstrual Hygiene" Centred in Senaikudi Iruppu village.

By Marcus Divaincy Fernando, Sri Lanka



I am Miss Marcus Divaincy Fernando from Mannar, reading BA in Languages and Communication studies, in Trincomalee Campus, Eastern University of Sri Lanka. I have finished my schooling in Mn/St. Fatima MMV (national school). After my A/Ls I worked as a volunteer teacher in Mn/Thalaimannar GTMS School. I selected for a school leaver in BOC Pesalai.

In 2020 I started my social work. I worked with several NGOs such as Active citizen, Viluthu, MESIDO, AYEAC, Sarvodaya, SLU, VOICE, Centenary Moment, Valvohaya and CCT etc. In 2021 I was appointed as a District Director of YAN Sri Lanka. I really dedicated myself to the youth so I received a promotion to work with the management board in YAN Sri Lanka. I was then appointed as a national organizer of Youth Action Network (YAN Sri Lanka). In 2022, I received a "BEST DISTRICT DIRECTOR IN 2021 AWARD" organized by YAN Sri Lanka & was awarded as a gold medallist.

In 2022 I have published my first poem book named "PURATCHINI (NÉE)." It is a women motivational book. I received an international award for my book named as "EXEMPLARY WOMEN AUTHOR OF THE YEAR AWARD" organized by Women Icon powered by Times Women. Presently, I am following my degree as well as I am studying a diploma in Sinhala in IPSL campus & diploma in HRM in eastern university of Trincomalee campus. I also work as an announcer, short film actress, poetess, lyrics writer, motivational speaker & a social researcher.

### Abstract

The research was carried out with the aim of identifying menstrual-related issues and finding solutions for who are school going girls from rural villages, who faced challenges during the menstruation period due to increasing the prices of sanitary napkins at Illuppaikulam village under the Divisional secretariat division of Town & Gravets in Trincomalee District.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilized in the research. Especially questionnaires and interview methods have been used for 30 school-going girl students who are under the age of 16 to 19 years. Based on data collection, school girls avoid going to school during their menstruation period due to the higher prices of sanitary napkins. From the sample, 25 students' results show a decrease from the previous year in their attendance. The school girls who come from poverty line families face psycho-social issues and hygienic issues. Their personal hygiene is violated by the environment as well as their families. These issues should be considered by the proper stakeholders and free sanitary pads can be distributed to schoolgirls. Also, cost effective methods can be introduced in schools to easily access sanitary pads.

The dignified menstruation concept has to be introduced among the school community to protect girls from menstrual discrimination.

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## 10. Rural Women's Challenges in Menstrual Related Issues and Impact of Increasing Prices of Sanitary Napkins: A Study from Sammanthurai Village in Ampara

By Palaniyandy Rishanthiny, Sri Lanka



Rishanthiny holds a BA General Degree from the Eastern University of Sri Lanka. She contributes to youth initiatives in the region and is actively involved with awareness campaigns relating to poverty, sexual and reproductive health and capacity building programmes.

### Abstract

This research has been conducted to see the menstrual-related issues of rural women and the impacts of the increasing prices of sanitary napkins at the Sammanthurai village 12 in Ampara district in the Eastern province. Through the study, the findings and recommendations are submitted according to the research samples. A mixed method methodology (Qualitative & Quantitative) has been utilized to collect the data through Interviews and questionnaires. 70 Selected women including Girl Childs identified between ages 10 to 45 form the sample. From the data analysis it is derived that school dropouts have increased in the year 2022 in the village. Also, a number of psycho-social issues and reproductivity health-related issues were identified. Married women face personal hygienic issues and fertility issues in the area. The Covid pandemic created more menstruation-related issues in the country and due to the economic crisis, the purchasing capacity power of the people reduced to half. Especially rural women have failed to purchase their health-related items including necessary medicine. Hence, the Government should strategize policies and privileges to protect women from menstrual-related issues and save the country's next generation. Hygienic health clubs should be formed in schools to inform the girls and to distribute free napkins. CSOs can take a leading role to bring gender sensitization among males and females to ensure a rewarding future generation. The dignified menstruation concept will reach and be practiced everywhere by sharing and informing.

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