

REPORT
ON
INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FELLOWSHIP ON DIGNIFIED
MENSTRUATION 2025 (TRAINING)



Organized By:

Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM)

Kathmandu, Nepal

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Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM), I, Lal Sharan Chalaune, extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those whose invaluable contributions made the *International Media Fellowship on Dignified Menstruation 2025* a remarkable success.

My sincere thanks go to the entire team at the Radha Paudel Foundation (RPF) and the Steering Committee members of GSCDM for their tireless support and coordination throughout the process. I am especially grateful to Dr. Radha Paudel, who not only envisioned this fellowship but also gracefully facilitated the entire training with deep commitment and clarity of purpose.

Special appreciation goes to Sapna Poudel, Gobinda Khadka and Prayush Maharjan for their dynamic co-facilitation and seamless delivery of key sessions. I also wish to acknowledge our esteemed experts — Dr. Samiksha Koirala, Dila Datta Panta, Rajnesh Bhandari, and Pabitra Guragain — who led powerful sessions on cross-cutting themes, enriching the learning experience for all participants.

We are deeply honored by the presence of Hon. Garima Shah, National Assembly Member of Nepal, who graciously inaugurated the training and offered her strong support for the cause of Dignified Menstruation.

Lastly, I extend my warm appreciation to all the incredible fellows from Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Kenya. Your active participation, thoughtful reflections, and collective enthusiasm created a vibrant and transformative learning space. Your commitment to advancing the discourse on Dignified Menstruation through media is both inspiring and essential.

Together, let us continue to build a world where menstruation is dignified.

With deep gratitude,

Lal Sharan Chalaune, GSCDM

1. Acronyms

- **CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- **DM:** Dignified Menstruation
- **GBV:** Gender-Based Violence
- **GSCDM:** Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation
- **HR:** Human Rights
- **RPF:** Radha Paudel Foundation
- **SDGs:** Sustainable Development Goals
- **SGBV:** Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
- **SRHR:** Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- **ToT:** Training of Trainers
- **UN:** United Nations

2. Executive Summary

The Four-Day International Media Fellowship on Dignified Menstruation, held from April 16–19, 2025, in Kathmandu, Nepal, was a pivotal capacity-building initiative on Dignified Menstruation. Organized by the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM), the fellowship convened 15 journalists from Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Kenya. Its core objective was to train and empower media professionals with the knowledge and tools to report on Dignified Menstruation from a human rights-based perspective, transcending conventional narratives focused solely on hygiene.

The training provided a transformative and inclusive framework, addressing systemic policy gaps, pervasive menstrual discrimination, and the media's role in perpetuating menstrual discrimination. Key insights revealed the deeply entrenched nature of menstrual discrimination across participating countries, often overlooked in media coverage that predominantly focuses on products rather than broader human rights implications. Participants gained a comprehensive understanding of Dignified Menstruation as a rights-based framework, recognizing its intersectionality with gender-based violence, child marriage, SRHR, climate justice, education, and workplace.

Significant outcomes included a measurable increase in participants' knowledge, their commitment to ethical and inclusive reporting on Dignified Menstruation, and the development of actionable story ideas and reporting plans. The fellowship also successfully fostered new networks of solidarity and collaboration among media professionals, laying a foundation for sustained advocacy and campaign on Dignified Menstruation. This report details the program's purpose, methodology, key findings, and resulting recommendations, underscoring the media's critical role in advancing Dignified Menstruation globally.

3. Introduction

Dignified Menstruation is an innovative and holistic approach that seeks to transform narratives around menstruation from 5 days of bleeding to life cycle approach, recognizing its profound links to gender-based violence, human rights, SRHR, climate justice and feminism. Despite its critical importance, menstruation is often relegated to a private, non-priority issue by many stakeholders. This fellowship program was conceived to highlight the urgency and intersectionality of Dignified Menstruation through diverse media outlets.

Historically, media coverage of menstruation has been limited, often confining discussions to menstrual products or hygiene, without adequately examining menstrual discrimination through a human rights lens. This oversight perpetuates the understanding of menstrual discrimination as an underlying cause of systemic inequalities and unequal power relationship and patriarchy, cultivated from childhood and reinforced throughout life.

The Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM), an international network established by the Radha Paudel Foundation (RPF) in 2019, has been leading the global movement on Dignified Menstruation and Initiated and marked International Dignified Menstruation Day, 8th December. GSCDM aims to shift the global narrative 5 days of bleeding to life cycle approach. Through various initiatives, including research, training, fellowship, webinars, and publications, GSCDM engages individuals and communities worldwide in this survivor-led, Global South-driven movement. This fellowship represents a crucial step in GSCDM's ongoing efforts to empower media professionals to drive this transformative change on the campaign of Dignified Menstruation.

4. Rationale and Objectives

4.1. Rationale:

The concept of Dignified Menstruation has evolved from the Global South, rooted in survivor-led menstrual movements. A deep understanding of all facets of Dignified Menstruation is crucial for preventing gender-based violence, promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), accelerating climate justice, and upholding human rights. The media plays a critical role in shaping public discourse and has the potential to significantly influence policy and societal attitudes. This fellowship was designed to bridge the gap in media understanding and coverage, enabling journalists to effectively articulate the urgency and intersectionality of Dignified Menstruation.

4.2. Objectives:

The specific objectives of the International Media Fellowship on Dignified Menstruation 2025 were to:

- Equip journalists with a comprehensive understanding of Dignified Menstruation as a rights-based and dignity-focused framework.
- Analyze existing media trends and identify discriminatory practices and narratives surrounding menstruation.
- Build the capacity of journalists to report on Dignified Menstruation through a rights-based and dignity-focused lens.
- Challenge and transform menstrual discriminatory practices and narratives in mainstream and alternative media.
- Enable policymakers to recognize the urgency of Dignified Menstruation and incorporate it into relevant policies.

5. Methodology

This International Media Fellowship training was based on the principles of emotional intelligence, Miteri (the mutual love and respect beyond marriage and blood because we are all born, not by choice, and we are all human), and a transformational approach. It had sets of intensive individual and small group activities at various levels to challenge our own selves at first to unveil the menstrual discrimination and address it accordingly. The guided meditation, games, songs, storytelling, group work, brainstorming, lecture, presentation, expert-led sessions, question answering, and mini training (almost all participants presented various themes) are used as methodological activities. The entire training was designed, led, and facilitated by Dr. Radha Paudel, the person who coined the approach of Dignified Menstruation first ever globally. Likewise, Lal Sharan Chalaune, Gobinda Bahadur Khadka, and Prayush Maharjan co-facilitated various sessions. Experts Dr. Samiksha Koirala, Dila Datta Panta, Rajnesh Bahdari, and Pabitra Guragain led the session on Dignified Menstruation as a cross-cutting various themes. The training was formally inaugurated by Hon. Madan Kumari Shah (Garima), Member of the National Assembly of Nepal, in the formal training inaugural ceremony of the 1st day of training. Where GSCDM and its member organization, Viluthu Sri Lanka, successfully launched a book, Dignified Menstruation Local Views and Global Challenges, published by Viluthu Sri Lanka. The training started at 8.30 in the morning and closed at 5.00 in the evening every day.



The four-day fellowship utilized a systematic, participatory, and practice-based approach. It integrated critical reflection, expert-led sessions, and experiential media skill-building exercises. Each day was strategically designed to progressively deepen participants' knowledge and provide them with the necessary tools to report on Dignified Menstruation through a rights-based and dignity-centered lens. Activities included interactive discussions, group exercises, mapping exercises (e.g., the Menstrual River), role-playing, presentations, and brainstorming sessions for story ideas.



5.1. Key Sessions and Activities

The fellowship program was structured over four intensive days, each building upon the previous one to provide a comprehensive understanding of Dignified Menstruation and its media implications.

Day 1: Establishing the Foundation and Context

The fellowship commenced with icebreaker sessions and group activities to foster camaraderie and establish a safe, respectful learning environment through norms and consent protocols. Participants engaged in mapping exercises, such as the "Menstrual River," to explore personal, community, school, workplace, and media perspectives on menstrual practices. Fundamental concepts, including menstruation, menstrual discrimination, dignified menstruation, and related terminology, concept and definition were clarified through interactive group discussions. The day concluded with a formal book launch and an inaugural ceremony featuring speeches by distinguished guests and international participants.

Day 2: Deepening Analysis and Rights-Based Framing

Day two focused on a critical analysis of menstrual discrimination within the broader contexts of gender norms, power dynamics, Patriarchy, and gender-based violence (GBV). Participants examined the intersections of menstrual discrimination with issues like child marriage and engaged with international human rights frameworks such as CEDAW, CRC, and the SDGs through practical group exercises. Country-specific analyses allowed fellows to investigate constitutional provisions related to menstrual rights. An interactive quiz reinforced learning, and a discussion on menstrual products, framed by the Dignified Menstruation friendly product as "3Ps" (People, Planet, Pocket) model, enhanced their understanding of how the menstrual products are dignified menstruation friendly or not.

Day 3: Legal, Cultural, and Media Dimensions of Menstrual Discrimination

The third day delved into the legal, cultural, and media dimensions of dignified menstruation. Sessions explored constitutional rights and political participation, highlighting how cultural and legal norms contribute to menstrual discrimination. A presentation by Dila Datta Panta and Gobinda Khadka provided further insights into these dynamics. Discussions on Dignified Menstruation and SRHR, the participants involved in the role-playing activities that helped participants understand the challenges faced by menstruators in accessing SRHR services despite having facilities for SRHR in place. Rajneesh Bhandari facilitated a session on ethical journalism and storytelling, prompting participants to critically examine current Nepali media portrayals of dignified menstruation, identify gaps, and recognize opportunities for improvement.

Day 4: Media Practice, Certification and closing of Media Fellowship Training

The final day of the Media Fellowship Training focused on consolidating the knowledge gained throughout the program and translating it into practical media outputs. The session, facilitated by D. Samisha Koirala, highlighted the representation and status of dignified menstruation in international media. Fellows actively participated in brainstorming sessions to develop story ideas, set concrete timelines for their reporting assignments, and presented their chosen themes for constructive feedback. A post-training assessment was conducted to evaluate participants' knowledge acquisition. The fellowship concluded with a reflection session, feedback collection, and a formal closing ceremony. E-certificates were distributed, and closing remarks were delivered by Erfaan Hussein Babak, Steering Committee Member of GSCDM. During the session, participants reaffirmed their commitment to advancing the agenda of dignified menstruation through their respective media platforms

6. Findings

The International Media Fellowship on Dignified Menstruation 2025 yielded critical insights into the pervasive nature of menstrual discrimination and the current landscape of its media representation at national and global level.

Overview of Menstrual Discrimination

Menstrual discrimination remains deeply entrenched, manifesting as silence, taboos, shame, stigma, restrictions, abuse, violence, and deprivation from resources and services at home, workplaces, community and schools, and denial of health services. A significant gap identified was the narrow framing of menstruation in media coverage, often limited management, neglecting the broader context of systemic discrimination, gender-based violence, and human rights violations. Fellows recognized the urgent need for rights-based, evidence-driven narratives that confront discrimination against the realities of menstruators. The fellowship also highlighted journalists' increasing awareness and willingness to adopt ethical, inclusive reporting. Participants acknowledged the necessity for media coverage to extend beyond general health to encompass intersections with climate justice, disability rights, LGBTQI+ inclusion, child marriage, education,

and SRHR. The lack of connection between menstrual discrimination and international human rights frameworks (CEDAW, CRC, SDGs) in media was noted. Furthermore, shared experiences among fellows underscored the value of cross-country solidarity and collaboration for regional advocacy.

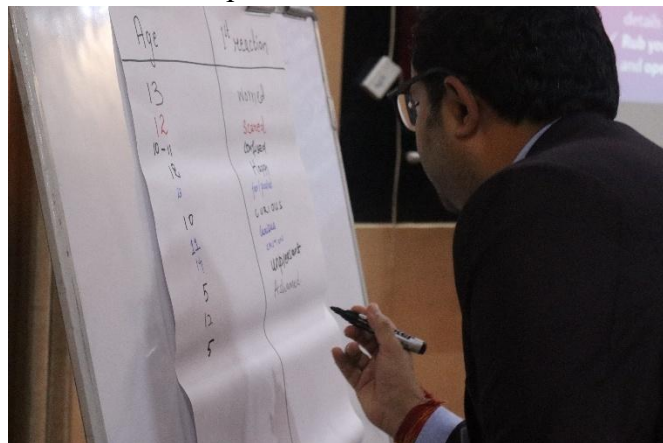
7. Participant Reflections on Menstruation (The Menstrual River)

The "Menstrual River" exercise provided profound personal insights into participants' lifelong experiences with menstruation.

7.1. First Experience and Emotions

The average age for participants' first experience or learning about menstruation was approximately 9 years. Initial emotions reported were a complex mix of:

- Confusion
- Curiosity
- Shame
- Fear
- Pain
- Discomfort
- Excitement
- Empowerment
- Pride



7.2. Happy Moments

Participants recalled positive experiences, including:

- Receiving rest, special meals, and exemptions from regular activities during menstruation.
- Participating in ceremonies and celebrations, such as puberty-related functions with gifts and familial attention.
- Experiencing unity and shared understanding among peers, with girls supporting each other.
- Gaining access to modern menstrual products (pads, cups, tampons), leading to ease and comfort.
- Opportunities for open discussion about menstruation in later years, breaking taboos.
- Moments of self-discovery and empowerment, viewing menstruation as a source of feminine strength.

7.3. Sad Moments

Conversely, participants shared challenging experiences:

- Physical pain, cramps, and discomfort.
- Facing shame, stigma, and discrimination from family, peers, and society.
- Exclusion from religious and cultural practices, and isolation from family events.
- Anxiety and embarrassment due to lack of knowledge, staining incidents, or handling products.
- Harsh realities of menstrual poverty, including reusing clothes or lack of access to products.
- Reports of extreme practices, such as living in isolated huts, leading to severe health risks and isolation.
- Emotional toll from societal norms, including reprimands for openly discussing menstruation.

8. How Participants Felt About Menstruation Through Their Lives

- Early Years: Mixed reactions of confusion, curiosity, and stigma. Social taboos made it difficult for participants to openly discuss or understand menstruation.
- Adolescence: Transition to shame, discomfort, and physical pain. Many felt unsupported during this time due to societal expectations and lack of access to proper resources.



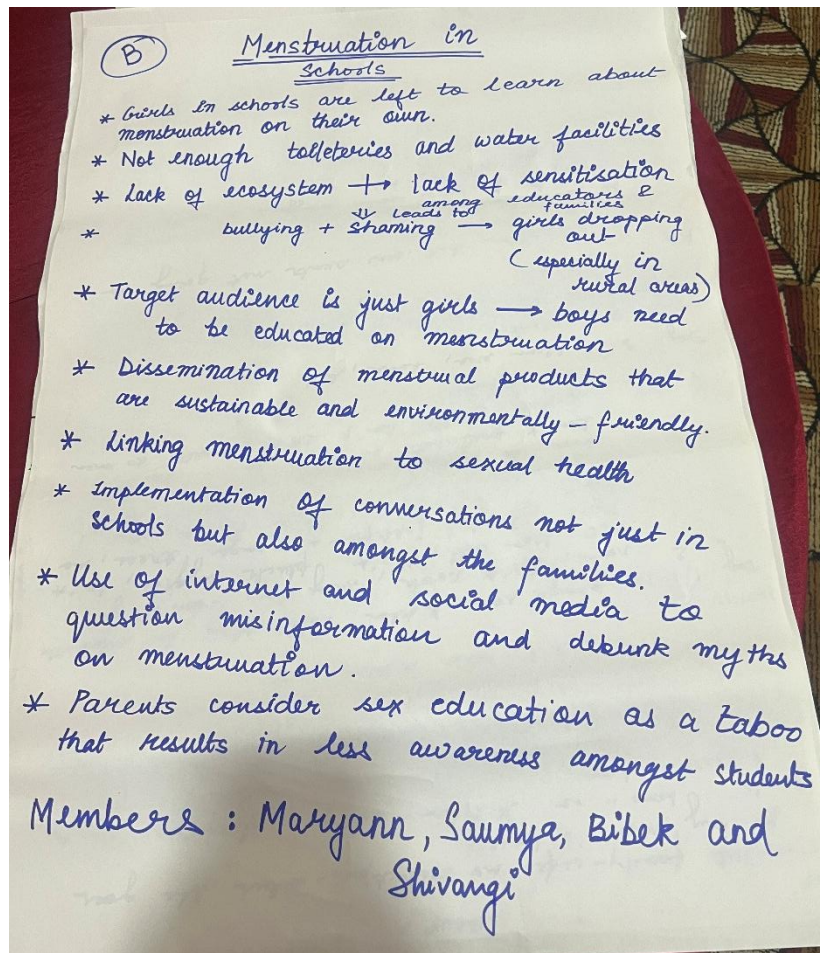
- Adulthood: Empowerment and openness increased as participants gained autonomy and knowledge. Many found ways to challenge discriminatory norms and felt pride in managing menstruation with dignity.

- Challenges Across Life: Persistent issues like menstrual poverty, stigma in workplaces, and cultural restrictions continued for some, while others found solace in shared experiences and advocacy efforts.

9. Menstrual Practices at Family, School, Workplace and Community

9.1. Menstrual Practices at Family

Menstrual practices vary across families and regions. Fellow (India) noted that while his immediate family imposes no restrictions, traditional rules at his mother's home require his wife to avoid the kitchen and sleep separately during menstruation, with village customs adding phases of impurity and cleansing over five days. Similarly, Inthu (Sri Lanka) described severe restrictions on the first two days, including isolation and prohibition from cooking, with subsequent days focusing on cleaning and gradually resuming normal activities, culminating in temple visits on day five. Ankita (India), on the other hand, observed no explicit restrictions in her immediate family but noted that some elders refrain from prayer and delay washing their hair until menstruation ends. These practices reflect varying degrees of cultural and traditional influences on menstrual norms.



9.2. Menstrual Practices at School

The following were the highlighted menstrual practices at school:

- Girls in schools are left to learn about menstruation on their own.
- Not enough toiletries and water facilities
- Lack of ecosystem + lack of sensitization among educators and families leads to bullying and shaming, ultimately girls dropping out (especially in rural areas)
- The target audience is just girls → boys need to be educated on menstruation
- Dissemination of menstrual products that are sustainable and environmentally friendly
- Linking menstruation to sexual health
- Implementation of conversations not just in schools but also amongst the families.
- Use of the internet and social media to question misinformation and debunk myths on menstruation.
- Parents consider sex education as a taboo that results in less awareness amongst students.

9.3. Menstrual Practices in the Workplace

The following were the highlighted menstrual practices in the workplace:

- No facility of menstrual pads
- No policy for Menstrual Management
- When you talk about menstrual “pain”, “mood swing”, you are dismissed
- No provisions for flexible working hours
- No break (consistent working hours at the call center).
- Scarcity of water while travelling in remote areas.
- Stigmatised of menstrual blood
- Men in white dresses don't touch women.

9.4. Menstrual Practices in Community

The following were the highlighted menstrual practices in the community:

- Stigma
- No accessibility of menstrual products (pads are a luxury)
- Casteism: upper class run the country
- Taboos on what should be done versus what shouldn't

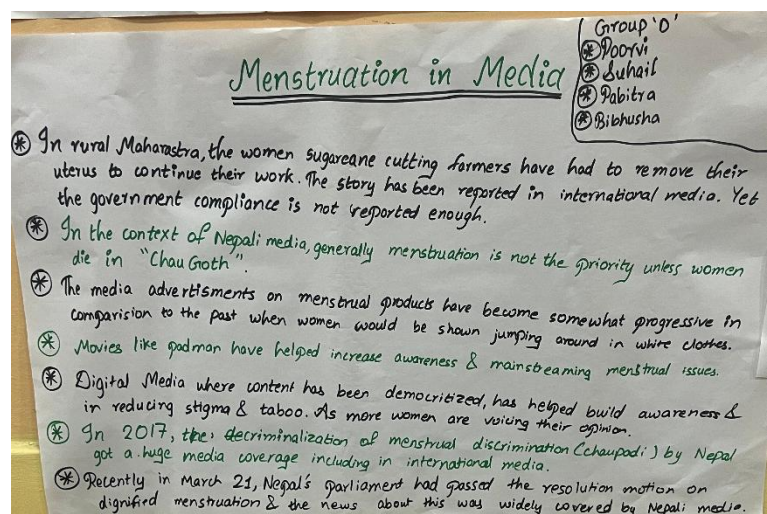
- Separate Space- Kailash Community
- Islamization of Indigenous tribes
- Puberty ceremony goddess, contrasting celebration, and shame ingrained in body
- Feeling of guilt/ suicidal tendency
- Classical Internalized network of misinformation as:
- Is menstruation an infection?
- Are women hysteric/illogical?

10. Menstruation in Media

The findings were categorized into:

10.1. Frequency

1. Menstruation appears very rarely in the media.
2. Coverage usually aligns with key international observance days such as:
 - a. International Women's Day (March)
 - b. Menstrual Hygiene Day (May)
 - c. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (November–December)
 - d. International Dignified Menstruation Day (December 8)
3. Media coverage is often reactionary, triggered by tragedies or shocking events (e.g., deaths in Chau Goth).
4. Coverage tends to follow a domino effect
5. Mainstream platforms like TV news and radio mostly ignore menstruation topics.
6. Occasionally gains attention when celebrities speak up or when international platforms highlight national stories.



10.2. Titles

1. Titles are often victim-centric and fail to highlight systemic or structural issues.
2. Examples of common headlines include:
 - a. Celebrating International Dignified Menstruation Day: Break the Taboo
 - b. Water Crisis in Nepal: Women Are Suffering
 - c. Girls Miss School Due to Their Period
 - d. Menstruation Matters: Is Nepal Breaking Myths and Embracing Change?
3. Headlines may include unethical practices like naming victims or targeting minorities.
4. Sensationalist titles are common, especially when aimed at rural communities or in clickbait-style journalism.
5. Films like Padman have contributed to normalizing menstruation as a mainstream topic through storytelling.

10.3. Location

1. Menstruation-related stories are often published in less visible parts of newspapers (e.g., middle pages on special days, or small news items on the third/last page).
2. In India, menstruation is often linked with cultural purity and doesn't make it to the front page unless tied to politics.
3. In Africa, menstruation is front-page news only if it aligns with political agendas.
4. In Nepal, menstruation is usually highlighted only when something shocking or tragic occurs, especially in rural areas.
5. Religious and cultural news is often prioritized over menstrual issues.
6. Digital media platforms have democratized content, allowing more visibility and voices, particularly from women, on menstruation-related issues.

10.4. Content

1. Most media content lacks in-depth analysis and often relies on expert interviews, with little inclusion of ordinary menstruators' voices.
2. Stories often miss key advocacy or evidence-based information that could support policy change.

3. There's a lack of intersectionality issues like menstruation in the context of climate change are rarely explored.
4. Trans and gender-diverse communities are often completely excluded from menstruation narratives.
5. Media frequently uses disempowering language, promotes stereotypes, and reinforces harmful traditions.
6. Corporate advertisements tend to glorify menstruation without addressing the real challenges, although some progress has been made in portrayal.
7. Content often rewards international platforms or actors for local efforts instead of uplifting local voices.
8. Legal and policy developments, like the 2017 criminalization of Chhaupadi and the 2024 resolution on dignified menstruation in Nepal, receive significant coverage when passed.

11. Outcomes

The International Media Fellowship on Dignified Menstruation 2025 achieved significant outcomes, enhancing the capacity and commitment of participating journalists to advocate for Dignified Menstruation.

- **Enhanced Knowledge and Critical Awareness:** Fellows deepened their understanding of Dignified Menstruation as a rights-based and dignity-centered framework, moving beyond the limited hygiene narrative. Pre- and post-training assessments demonstrated measurable knowledge gains, particularly in recognizing menstrual discrimination as a form of gender-based violence and its broader links to human rights concerns (child marriage, climate justice, SRHR, Dignified Menstruation friendly institutions).
- **Commitment to Ethical and Inclusive Reporting:** Participants committed to applying ethical and inclusive reporting practices, leveraging their platforms to challenge menstrual discrimination and amplify the voices of and campaign of Dignified Menstruation globally.
- **Strengthened Capacity for Narrative Reframing:** Through the training sessions and skill-building activities, fellows enhanced their ability to reframe narratives of menstruation in ways that uphold dignity, rights, and social justice.
- **Development of Actionable Story Ideas:** A crucial outcome was the generation of concrete story ideas and reporting plans by each participant. Journalists identified themes relevant to their local contexts and established timelines for publishing their stories, ensuring the fellowship's impact extended beyond the training period.

- **Fostered Networks of Solidarity and Collaboration:** The fellowship successfully cultivated new networks among media professionals, laying a vital foundation for sustained cross-border advocacy and mutual support in advancing Dignified Menstruation globally.
- **Generation of Policy and Practice Recommendations:** Fellows developed practical recommendations for policy change and institutional practice, including strategies for promoting Dignified Menstruation-friendly schools, workplaces, and other institutions.

Collectively, these outcomes represent a critical advancement in positioning the media as a powerful force for dismantling menstrual discrimination and promoting Dignified Menstruation globally.

13. Conclusion

The International Media Fellowship on Dignified Menstruation 2025 marked a significant stride in transforming the discourse on Dignified Menstruation. By empowering journalists with a human rights-based perspective on DM, the fellowship successfully illuminated the profound complexities of menstrual discrimination and its far-reaching implications on human rights, gender equality, and social justice.

The program's comprehensive methodology, combining critical analysis with practical skill-building, enabled participants to not only deepen their understanding of Dignified Menstruation but also to critically assess existing media narratives. The detailed findings underscore the urgent need for a paradigm shift in how menstruation is reported, moving beyond superficial discussions to address systemic inequalities and amplify voices on Dignified Menstruation.

The positive outcomes, including enhanced knowledge, commitment to ethical reporting, and the development of actionable media plans, demonstrate the immense potential of media as a powerful catalyst for Dignified Menstruation. The fostered networks of solidarity among journalists from diverse regions are invaluable, laying the groundwork for sustained cross-border advocacy on DM. Ultimately, this fellowship has reinforced the critical role of informed and responsible media in dismantling menstrual discrimination and promoting Dignified Menstruation globally. Continued investment in such a campaign is paramount to achieving Dignified Menstruation and fostering a truly equitable society.