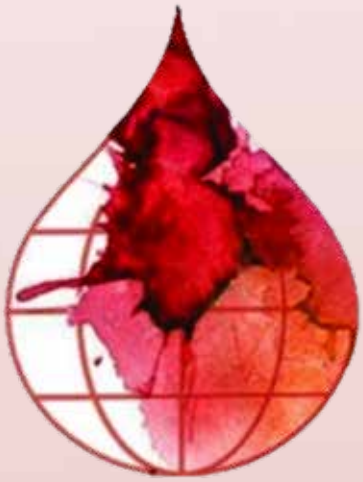
MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION

AMONG TRANSMEN IN NEPAL



Dignified Menstruation

Radha Paudel Foundation

Global South Coalition
For Dignified Menstruation

UNITY FOR CHANGE

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Dignified Menstruation

Foreword

Unity for Change is pleased to present this pioneering study on Menstrual Discrimination among Transmen in Nepal, developed in collaboration with the Radha Paudel Foundation/Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation.

Menstrual dignity discourse in Nepal has historically centered on girls and women, with little to no recognition of the lived realities of transmen. This invisibility reflects broader systemic discrimination and has resulted in significant gaps in research, policy, and service delivery. This report addresses that gap by documenting the voices and experiences of transmen and highlighting the multiple layers of menstrual discrimination they face, within families, schools, workplaces, communities, and across policy frameworks.

The findings underscore that menstrual discrimination is not an isolated concern, but a structural issue with profound implications for human rights. They also demonstrate the urgency of adopting a more inclusive and rights-based approach to menstrual dignity, one that acknowledges the needs and identities of all menstruators.

Unity for Change remains committed to advancing the rights of transmen and ensuring that dignified menstruation is recognized as a fundamental human rights agenda. We extend our sincere appreciation to the Radha Paudel Foundation/Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation specially to Dr. Radha Paudel for their technical leadership and to the transmen who shared their experiences with openness and courage. Their contributions are central to this report and to the change it seeks to inspire.

We hope that this study serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, civil society, and development partners, and that it contributes to building an environment where every menstruator can live with dignity, free from menstrual discrimination.

Sudeep Gautam

Chair
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Preface

The study entitled “Exploring Menstrual Discrimination Among Transmen” represents a long-standing aspiration of the Radha Paudel Foundation (RPF). Menstruators, those born with a uterus and ovaries, include transmen, who are often excluded from public discourse and policy considerations. As menstruators, transmen can be found in all walks of life; whether facing pandemics, climate disasters, attending educational institutions, participating in parliaments, or even in space.

Menstrual discrimination constructs and reinforces power hierarchies and patriarchal structures that shape attitudes and behaviors toward both menstruators and non-menstruators throughout the life course. Despite the pressing need, menstrual discrimination remains a low priority among many stakeholders, and for transmen, it is even further marginalized. They exist at the "margins of the marginalized."
In light of this reality, the Radha Paudel Foundation has been working to promote dignified menstruation among transmen since its inception, advocating through campaigns, publications, training sessions, conferences, arts, and media. In this context, RPF is proud to collaborate with Unity for Change (UFC) in amplifying the call for dignified menstruation among transmen since 2023.

On behalf of RPF, I extend heartfelt congratulations to UFC for their remarkable work and unwavering support in conducting this study. Despite the absence of financial resources, their consistent participation in consultation meetings, contributions to study design and data collection (both virtual and in-person), and trust in RPF are truly commendable. We also express our deep gratitude to all the transmen who openly and honestly shared their menstrual experiences. Your voices are at the heart of this work.

We believe that this is one of the first studies of its kind in Nepal and possibly beyond, which calls on all stakeholders to address dignified menstruation for transmen at local, national, regional, and global levels. I would like to particularly acknowledge Dr. Radha Paudel, who provided technical and administrative leadership throughout this study. Her unwavering passion and commitment to the cause of dignified menstruation and transmen's rights are deeply inspiring.

We hope that this report serves as a landmark contribution to the discourse on dignified menstruation for transmen and proves relevant to a wide array of

stakeholders, including policymakers, NGO leaders, academics, the LGBTQIA+ community, and others interested in menstrual dignity.

This report may not cover all dimensions of dignified menstruation, particularly in relation to lesbian, bisexual, queer women, menstruators with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Therefore, we encourage you to explore our additional publications for a more comprehensive understanding.

Happy reading!
Sapna Poudel
Program Coordinator,
Radha Paudel Foundation
October 2025

Dignified Menstruation

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Abbreviation:

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DM	Dignified Menstruation
DMC-Nepal	Dignified Menstruation Campaign - Nepal
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GoN	Government of Nepal
GSCDM	Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation
GM	Group Meeting
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoWCSC	Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens
NGO	Non-Government Organization
RPF	Radha Paudel Foundation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

This study, Menstrual Discrimination among Transmen in Nepal, was conducted by the Radha Paudel Foundation and the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, in collaboration with Unity for Change. It explores how transmen in Nepal experience menstruation and identifies key gaps in existing policies and practices that shape their lives.

The study draws on insights from four focus group discussions (two virtual and two in-person) with 30 transmen, and an online survey with 52 respondents. The findings reveal that transmen, like other menstruators, are socialized to perceive menstruation as a source of fear from early childhood. These feelings deepen at menarche and continue throughout life, as they face both visible and invisible forms of menstrual discrimination that often go unspoken.

For many, identifying as transmen or navigating dual identities means experiencing layers of discrimination within families, schools, communities, and institutions systemically. Their needs and identities are routinely ignored or misunderstood, leaving them excluded from social conversations, health services, and policymaking spaces. Some transmen pursue gender affirming medical interventions to avoid menstruation, though these options are costly and carry serious health risks. Participants described living within complex emotional, socio-economic, and political dynamics, where menstrual discrimination intersects with broader experiences of dehumanization and marginalization.

To address these challenges, the study calls for placing the concept of Dignified Menstruation (DM) at the center of policy and programs. It recommends:

Educating communities on dignified menstruation: The concept of menstruators and non-menstruators challenges the conventional gender identity, which is heavily confined to girls and women, where transmen are missing in all socio-economic and political conversations, including human rights. Once everyone is disaggregated as human beings, every door would open for transmen in a systemic manner.

Endorsing the DM values across sectors: Sectors such as education, health, WASH, and other has to endorse the DM policies and programming to build the understanding of DM and robust the agency among transmen. The current policies, including gender

equality and social inclusion, do not recognize and address the menstrual discrimination and its gravity for constructing unequal power relations and patriarchy. The values of DM also need to be demonstrated through safeguarding, finance, and human resource policies.

Engaging Media: Menstrual discrimination has been overlooked for decades, where human rights and constitutional rights of transmen are violated systemically. Media can play a transformative role in raising awareness, challenging stigma, and holding institutions accountable for the rights of transmen. Public conversations and storytelling can humanize the experiences of transmen and shift deeply rooted social attitudes.

Empowering Transmen: Transmen live with a dual identity where they experience multiple layers of discrimination at once, at family, school, community, and everywhere. Therefore, they are equally in urgent need to educate themselves around menstruation, menstrual discrimination, and dignified menstruation.

This study underscores the urgent need for systemic change. Recognizing menstrual discrimination as a human rights issue is essential to ensuring dignity, equity, and inclusion for transmen in Nepal.

Dignified Menstruation

Background

Menstrual discrimination is a global issue, manifested in over 5,000 euphemisms and diverse harmful practices, ranging from silence, taboo, shyness, stigma, abuses, violence, restrictions, and deprivation from services and resources that are associated with menstruation throughout the life cycle of menstruators in all diversities (Paudel, 2020). Radha Paudel Foundation (RPF), along with its national network, Dignified Menstruation Campaign Nepal (DMC Nepal), has already identified over 50 euphemisms for menstruation in the Nepali language. It exists in both overt and subtle ways, which vary from culture to culture. These experiences are different from person to person, even among identical twins.

However, menstrual discrimination among transmen is heavily overlooked even by individuals and organizations working on menstrual issues and LGBTQIA+ rights. Scholars like Klara Rydström (2020) and Frank (2020) have emphasized how menstruation can trigger gender dysphoria and highlight structural barriers faced by trans people, from body politics, access to menstrual products and bathrooms to the lack of inclusive healthcare and facilities.

RPF, a pioneer for the dignified menstruation movement, along with its national (DMC Nepal) and global network (GSCDM-Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation), has long advocated for inclusive and equitable menstrual activism/research for all menstruators in all diversities. Dignified menstruation (DM) is a decolonized, innovative, holistic, human rights and life cycle approach for equal power relations, dismantling patriarchy and prevention of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (GSCDM, 2019).

Nepal's constitution recognizes the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals, explicitly committing to 'ending all forms of discrimination' and also states that, `no person shall be subjected to any form of untouchability or discrimination in any private and public places on grounds of his or her origin, caste, tribe, community, profession, occupation or physical condition' article 24 (1) (Government of Nepal, 2015). Yet, in practice, transmen remain largely invisible in menstrual issues and gender equality policies.

Transmen are one of the most marginalized and neglected groups in human rights discourse. Although there have been few studies around transman, they mostly focus on menstrual management or stories from the global north. Studies on `menstrual dignity'

or the elimination of all forms of menstrual discrimination associated with transmen from the global south are still missing. To bridge this existing gap, RPF/GSCDM, in collaboration with Unity for Change (UFC), an NGO focused on the rights of transmen in Nepal, initiated this study to better understand the lived realities of transmen in Nepal.

missing. To bridge this existing gap, RPF/GSCDM, in missing. To bridge this existing gap, RPF/GSCDM, in The broad objective of this study is to create Dignified Menstruation-friendly spaces, including home, school, community, and workplace, for transmen in Nepal and beyond.

The specific objectives are;

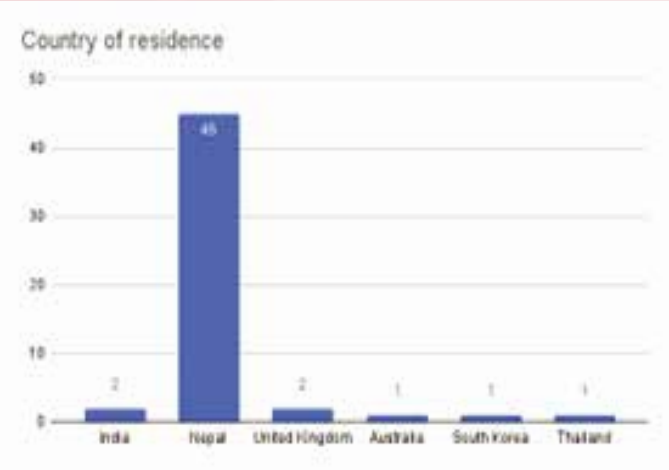
1. To explore the menstrual practices among transmen
2. To identify the impact of menstrual practices among transmen
3. To explore the policy gaps to address menstrual discrimination among transmen

Dignified Menstruation

Methodology

This qualitative study draws both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through group meetings (two virtual and two in-person) with 30 transmen and bisexual women, conducted between January and September 2025. Most participants lived in Kathmandu but represented all seven provinces of Nepal. In addition, an online survey gathered responses from 52 participants (menstruators) aged 15–49, of whom 94.2% were Nepali citizens, with a small number from India (3.8%) and Thailand (1.9%). While most resided in Nepal (45), a few lived abroad, including in India (2), the UK (2), Australia (1), South Korea (1), and Thailand (1).

Secondary data included policies, acts, regulations, and programs in Nepal related to transmen and menstruation. The search for relevant documents was conducted using keywords such as menstruation, menstrual discrimination, DM, transmen, gender non-binary, queer, and LGBTQIA+.



Sources covered published and unpublished materials, reports, policies, and articles obtained from RPF/GSCDM, UFC, and relevant national bodies such as the National Planning Commission and the National Human Rights Commission. Online databases such as PubMed, ProQuest, ResearchGate, Academia, and Google Scholar were also used to access online materials. The findings are based mostly on policy-related documents and articles available from 2007 to 2024 because the government of Nepal changed the trans gender human rights course in Nepal since the constitutional assembly of 2008. A total of six key policy documents were reviewed from the Ministry of Health and Population, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Water Supply, and the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens. In addition, documents from commissions, the National Women's Commission, the National Human Rights Commission, and the National Planning Commission were reviewed.

These were analyzed through the lens of Dignified Menstruation values and principles as defined by RPF/GSCDM to investigate the menstrual practices and policy gaps among transmen. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns in experiences and policy gaps. Verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants and their

anonymity has been maintained for safety reasons.

Limitations of this study

Due to resource constraints, the group meetings were conducted virtually and only focused those associated with UFC.

Key Findings

Out of 52 respondents, 69.2% reported not having undergone gender-affirming medical interventions, while 23.1% had undergone both hormone therapy and top surgery, and 3.8% had undergone either hormone therapy or top surgery individually.

Based on the study's objectives, the following paragraphs describe menstrual perceptions and practices, their impact on transmen, and policy gaps in detail.

Knowledge around menstruation

Most of the participants from group meetings lacked proper knowledge about facts and scientific explanations of menstruation, including physiology and the nature of menstruation, and pre-menstrual symptoms. They also lacked proper knowledge of menstrual management, including menstrual products.

"I had my first menstruation when I was on tiffin time in grade seven in school. I did not know anything. I was just shocked and confused."

- Participant of group meeting

"Each girl has to go through menstruation, because she has more blood in her body than others. Biologically, my body is a girl's body, so I have more blood, which overflows as a form of menstruation."

-Participant of group meeting

Dignified Menstruation

"I had heard the word of nachhune (state of untouchability, used for menstruation in many cultures of Nepal) but did not know about management."

-Participant of group meeting

Participants also did not know about the nature of blood. A few of the participants described menstrual blood as `negative blood', meaning something harmful to the body.

"To my knowledge, menstrual blood is negative blood. The more it flows, the better."

-Participant of group meeting

Only 34% of survey respondents felt well informed about menstruation, while 36% did not feel comfortable discussing it, 20% did not feel the need to discuss it, and 34% experienced negative emotions when discussing menstruation.

Participants used various local terms for menstruation, such as Nachhune (state of untouchability), panchhine (going out or excluded or exile), menses, chhui (untouchability), chhaupadi (chhau- blood, padi- state of having blood or menstruation in the local Achhami language, and due to misinterpretation of the word, it is often used to explain menstrual discrimination), bahira sareko (moving out), and period.

A few participants described words they learned from their parents, e. g. Tika lagayeko (putting red color on their forehead), and others also used abbreviations like MM, which means monthly menstruation. The word "menstruation" did not appear at first while having group meetings (offline and online) for this study.

Knowledge of menopause was also lacking among the participants. They only knew about the omission or stoppage of menstruation, or wanting to end menstruation, but did not have any specific knowledge, information, or concern around menopause. Participants were unaware that they were trying to induce chemical menopause by hormonal therapy, followed by its effects on health and well-being.

Menstrual Experiences before Menarche

Age of knowing something about menstruation:

Most participants from group meetings (GM) learned something about menstrual practices before menarche between 5-9 years of age through informal conversations. Conversations regarding someone menstruating for the first time, about menstrual pads, menstrual cloth, blood-stained on cloth, or not being allowed to participate in cultural activities. Most of the participants observed the sets of menstrual norms and their nuances being followed by their family members. Out of 50 survey respondents, the majority (68%) of the respondents said or heard/saw something about menstruation for the first time at or after the age of 9 years, followed by 6 years or before (14%).

Source of menstruation

Most of the participants of GMs knew something about menstruation through family members, including mothers, aunts, cousins/sisters, and friends. This resonates with the participants from the online survey. Out of 50 respondents, over one third (38.8%) **mentioned**

mothers to be the person they learnt, heard, or saw something about menstruation for the first time, followed by sisters (22.5%), friends (21.3%), and teachers (17.5%).

First Reactions while knowing about menstruation at first in their life:
Participants expressed a variety of emotions, such as feeling scared, afraid, confused, and disappointed, while knowing something about menstruation at first. None of them recalled feeling happy. A similar experience was observed among survey respondents. Almost half of them (48.4%) expressed feeling scared when they learnt, heard, or saw something about menstruation for the first time, followed by the emotions of surprise (25.8%), and the least (1.6%) were happy. Before having their first menstruation, they knew the discriminatory menstrual norms and socialized about them.

Menstrual Experience during Menarche
Age of Menarche:
The participants of GMs experienced menarche between the ages of 9-13 years. The age of menarche varies a bit in the online survey. 34% respondents had their menarche at ages of 10-12 years respectively. The rest of the respondents, or 54% mentioned that they experienced menarche at the age of 13 years or older. It is between the normal age of menstruation, 10-16 years of age.

First reactions upon knowing menarche:
During menarche, participants of GM continuously felt scared, having a feeling that they had a fatal disease like cancer. Seeing blood was a state of devastation internally and externally. A few of them defined it as `dark days', `punishment', or `sin'. They could not share anything with anyone. It was shocking and traumatic. They were performing roles like men, where they don't even think about menstruating or bleeding from their external genitalia. They had a hard time accepting that they were menstruating.
"I was 13 when I first menstruated. Do men menstruate? I didn't think that I would experience menstruation at all. Why did I menstruate?"

- Participant of group meeting

Similar reactions were observed among the respondents of the online survey. Out of the total 50 respondents, more than half (60%) felt scared during their menarche, followed by 20% feeling surprised, and the least felt sad (2%). The rejection of their biological body was observed during group meetings too. They are living in a daydream of men, so occupied with stereotyped thoughts of manhood or masculine attributes.

Menstrual Practices during Menarche:

Participants of GMs followed various forms of menstrual practices during menarche as a mandate of their family practice. They were from various ethnic, economic, and topographical backgrounds. Participants faced invisible discrimination, such as separation from male family members, being kept in a neighbor's or relative's house for seven to 22 days, a separate plate for having food, a separate place for walking or mobile activities, being deprived of consuming milk and milk products, entering temples or any religious spaces, etc. Some expressed their anger and experience as `having invisible conflict within myself and my family due to being deprived of food, water, etc., on time'. Others were not allowed to touch vegetables, flowers, or fruits.

"I cried a lot while having my menarche. My paternal aunt (phupu) kept me at my cousin's house for seven days. I was worried about not being able to join the gym along with my elder brother. My family gifted a skirt, and I felt sad that I was becoming a girl. Meanwhile, I was puzzled by my identity."

- Participant of group meeting

Most participants were excluded from their everyday activities during menstruation, including moving freely, eating certain foods, touching objects, or wearing preferred clothing. One participant shared that he cut the rope he used to hang clothes 2–3 times, hoping his menstrual bleeding would stop sooner, overwhelmed with fear and confusion at seeing blood for the first time. Another participant was prohibited by his mother and sister from wearing pants, even though he usually wore them, due to fear of leaking.

Some participants described being confined for up to 22 days during menarche, unable to eat certain foods like papaya or Prasad (food offerings to God), and restricted from participating in worship. A few shared that they had to hide menstrual clothes, such as underwear, pads, or cloth pads, while washing and drying them. One participant even missed the chance to see his dying father because of menstruation-related restrictions. When it came to managing menstrual blood, most relied on traditional methods, like using a piece of cloth (usually their mother's saree), while a few used market-available menstrual pads. One participant was fortunate to have support from his brother to manage menstrual products. Similarly, about half of the online survey respondents reported experiencing menstrual discrimination, including restrictions on touch, food, mobility, and other daily activities.

Discrimination soars among transmen due to Menstruation

Transmen face multiple layers of discrimination related to menstruation within themselves, from family, partners, community, workplaces, and even policies, as discussed in the upcoming paragraphs.

Pre-Menstrual Symptoms experienced:

Participants often experienced pre-menstrual symptoms (PMS), such as lower abdominal pain, back pain, irritability, headache, and others. Not only do they go through PMS, but they also deal with stigma surrounding menstruation and the pressure to adhere to discriminatory menstrual norms. Thus, participants often avoided disclosing menstruation to family or partners, which limited their access to basic home remedies, like hot water bottles or pain relief. Most were also unaware of the full range of pre-menstrual symptoms or how to manage them with dignity.

Online survey findings mirrored these experiences. 25% reported increased dysphoria, while others experienced irritability (21.3%), mood swings (22.2%), anxiety (17.6%), fatigue (20.4%), menstrual cramps (17.7%), bloating (17.7%), and breast tenderness (15.9%).

Menstrual discrimination within Transmen:

Many participants expressed a strong desire to be perceived as men in accordance with societal expectations, including wearing masculine clothing, maintaining a beard or mustache, having no breasts, and being 'Marda' (powerful man) or embodying traditional masculine traits. That is why they don't expect to have menstruation, as they are fixed with men's attributes and are not prepared for it as well. They avoid interactions with girls and women, especially about menstruation. Thus, most of the participants experience a challenge in accepting their biology while they have menarche and regular menstruation. Menstruation conflicted with this identity, creating internal tension between mind and body. Experiencing menstruation was described as emotionally painful and often isolating.

To avoid this conflict, some participants turned to gender-affirming medical interventions like hormone therapy, top surgery, hysterectomy, or a combination of these. However, many faced societal pressure, stigma, financial constraints, and concerns about the serious side effects of post-medical interventions. They shared.

"Hormonal therapy does not guarantee stopping menstruation and also invites more emotional and physical health issues, including increased blood sugar, cholesterol, and

also invites more emotional and physical health issues, including increased blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure. In some contexts, it is not even legal."

-Participant of group meeting

A few of them even tried to use traditional methods. One of the examples is excessive consumption of turmeric to stop menstruation. Those who do not adopt any medical intervention also do not like to face enquiries from their family, partners, and others. They tried to hide it as much as possible.

"I could not share my menstruation with anyone. I even find it difficult to share about menstruation with my partner, no matter the identity of the partner. I lose my feeling of power and confidence while my partner is aware of my menstruation."

-Participant of group meeting

"I wish my partner wouldn't inquire about my menstruation, I don't like to talk about menstruation and issues related to it, no matter whether my partner exactly as likes me or not."

-Participant of group meeting

" Abdominal cramps and blood spots occur in hormonal therapy, where I always feel challenged to manage emotionally and physically. To me, having menstruation or vaginal discharge in front of a partner is awkward."

-Participant of group meeting

Overall, participants are not on board with dignified menstruation. They are not even accepting their physical body over their sexual identity. As a result, transmen experienced and encountered various forms of discrimination, starting with menstruation, which is unavoidable and biological attributes among menstruators, a few participants shared.

Menstrual discrimination with partners of transmen:

Partners of transmen, regardless of their gender identity, often expect their trans partners to appear and behave as men, without breasts and menstruation. This pressure leads some transmen to take hormones to suppress menstruation. Even with hormone therapy, they sometimes experience discharge, abdominal cramps, or urinary infections, but feel unable to discuss these issues due to stigma.

"I wish my partner wouldn't inquire about my menstruation, I don't like to talk about my menstruation and issues related to it. My partner expects me to appear as a stereotypical man biologically."

-Participant of group meeting

Participants shared that proper nutrition is essential to help their bodies adjust to hormone therapy. However, many felt awkward and unsupported, as their partners often did not understand or acknowledge what they were going through. This lack of empathy and emotional support made the experience even more painful, some participants expressed.

While some participants initially felt proud and confident of their masculine appearance after starting hormones, they later experienced guilt and physical strain due to hormone-induced health issues such as increased levels of cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure, which made them weak emotionally and physically. Hormone therapy also requires special nutrition and regular doctor visits every six months, injecting hormones every month, which can be emotionally and financially exhausting. Participants shared:

"I have been receiving so many calls enquiring about hormone therapy for minimizing or omitting menstruation. Nowadays, I suggest not to use the artificial hormone but accept the body and menstruation."

-Participant of group meeting

Participants strongly emphasized that transmen must first accept their own bodies and sexual identities before expecting validation from partners, family, or society.

Menstrual Discrimination at home:

Many participants shared that their families keep asking about menstruation and keep reminding them, through various rituals and informal conversations, that menstruation is `a state of impurity', `dirty', and `a state of weakness'. A few participants shared that their family members deliberately bring up the topic of menstruation in a completely irrelevant context, which caused stress, anxiety, feelings of exclusion, inhuman, and a lack of dignity. Because of this, several participants chose to avoid family gatherings such as weddings and festivals altogether.

"I feel comfortable interacting publicly as trans/men, but my family, who moderately accepted me, also called my previous name and pronoun, which is very dehumanizing; therefore, I avoided joining my family during fests and festivals."

-Participant of group meeting

Most participants said their families offered little to no support when they menstruated, even when they experienced strong premenstrual symptoms. Instead, family members and relatives mocked them, saying things like "Oh, how can a man menstruate? Aren't you a man?" This lack of recognition of their gender identity was deeply painful. Families insisted they continue following the menstrual practices of their respective communities.

"I feel like crying and extremely sad and alone while family members ignore my identity and demand I follow specific practices related to menstruation, including restrictions. They intentionally drag me here and there to insult me due to my sexual identity."

-Participant of group meeting

Many shared examples of these enforced practices, such as spraying "golden water" (water dipped in gold) while feeding grass to cows during menstruation. Although cutting grass was allowed, feeding it to cows was forbidden, as cows are considered sacred in Nepali communities.

"I feel so depressed while having menstruation and imposing various types of menstrual discrimination, even I attempted suicide for couple of times at home. I do not like to live with such domination and oppression."

-Participant of group meeting

Participants also expressed that the transmen who have not undergone gender affirming medical procedures often choose to hide their menstruation from their families and people around them. Many would find excuses to stay away from home by renting rooms, visiting friends, or claiming to have urgent errands, all just to avoid the discomfort and judgment they faced at home.

Participants stressed that family is not safe for transmen. Some shared devastating experiences of sexual violence within their own families. One participant recounted that his biological father raped him, calling it a "conversion therapy." The family misinterpreted his identity and believed that by forcing him into such acts, they could "correct" his sexuality.

"Father deliberately raped his daughter as a convulsion therapy. Family considered that their daughter was seeking sexual pleasure but was not able to expose so appearing with transmen."

Dignified Menstruation

-A participant of group meeting

Transmen experience various forms of abuse and violence at their homes, spaces that should have been safe and nurturing. Lack of understanding about sexual and physical dynamics among transmen leaves them feeling unseen, violated, and silenced.

Menstrual Discrimination towards transmen in school:

Schools are often unsafe and unwelcoming for transmen. Participants shared that the education system fails to recognize menstruators beyond girls and women, excluding transmen from the spectrum. Schools do not discuss about menstruator and non-menstruators and their differences in all diverse settings. Neither the school

environment nor the curriculum includes discussions about dignified menstruation (DM) or the diversity of gender and sexuality.
The public school's curriculum in Nepal discusses menstrual management in grades five and six only, which is too late for them to enable them to live a dignified manner (RPF, 2025).

"I left school/college if I were there without an emergency pad by myself, and I menstruate. I can't discuss it with my friends. I do not like to let them know about my menstruation."

-Participant of group meeting

The silence and taboo about menstruation and trans identities reinforce a discriminatory environment. Teachers and the school management committee also remained silent and uninformed and unwilling to discuss such issues related not only to transmen but all non-binary people. For instance, while discussing menstruation, they focus on girls and women, not transmen, participants shared. The online survey supports this information; 64% respondents mentioned that the education sector totally did not acknowledge the menstrual challenges of transmen.

Menstrual discrimination in the community and workplace:
Almost all participants shared that their identity as transmen remains unaccepted within their communities and workplace. Although national laws prohibit discrimination, in practice, trans men continue to face stigma and exclusion. Menstruation, already considered a private and shameful matter, becomes even more discriminatory when linked to trans identities, even among educated people.
"Often hormone therapy requires follow-ups due to abdominal cramps, white discharge, urine infections and emotional health issues, but there is no safe space in the hospital to consult with doctors and doctors are not friendly and supportive as well."

-Participant of group meeting

Participants shared that even the medical professionals advised them to get married and get pregnant, while meeting them for any health issues related to menstruation, such as abdominal cramps. Similarly, communities often label trans men as "psyche personality" rather than recognizing them as normal human beings. According to the online survey, 56% of respondents said they wanted to suppress menstruation, while 24% had already done so through gender-affirming medical interventions.

Menstrual Discrimination in the media:

"While initiating this research, the film called `gunyu cholo' is popular for portraying the rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals. However, it does not really demonstrate the challenges we face in every moment in our lives."

-Participant of group meeting

Participants expressed their anger that the media and filmmakers care more about profit, views, and comments than about promoting trans rights. Although the media coverage was well during the pride parade, it was mostly to get more public attention, which did not serve the real purpose. Real stories of discrimination and resilience were missing, they said.

Menstrual discrimination towards transmen in the WASH sector:

Access to safe and inclusive WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) facilities remains a major challenge. Participants shared that they are often unable to urinate or change pads on time due to the lack of gender-neutral toilets. Public restrooms are typically divided into "male" and "female" spaces that are not friendly for transmen, which fuels the dehumanization and undignified treatment. They are always confronted with blaming and shouting.

When they try to use toilets, they face harassment, ridicule, and verbal abuse. Some are called out in public, saying, "Oh bhai (hey brother), women's toilet is on that way!"

As a result, many trans men hold their urine for an entire day until they return home, or even limit their water intake, even in hot weather. This has led to several physical issues, including burning sensation, micturition, rashes, sores, and discomfort from holding urination and prolonged pad use.

"The public places, restaurants, even NGO lead programs are not friendly for us. I was extremely hurt while I was at the district chief officer's office for my citizenship."

-Participant of group meeting

Dignified Menstruation

The majority (60%) of respondents in online survey shared that their country's WASH initiatives did not acknowledge the menstrual challenges of transmen at all. 16% of them agreed that their country's WASH initiatives acknowledge the issue, but also believed that there has been a lack of implementation.

In the online survey, 60% of respondents said that their country's WASH initiatives do not recognize the menstrual challenges of trans men at all. Another 16% said these issues are acknowledged in policy but rarely implemented in practice. Participants also pointed out that existing WASH facilities fail to meet the "4S" indicators for dignified menstruation: Safety, Security, Saving, and Stigma-free (KU, 2025).

Menstrual Discrimination regarding menstrual management:

Participants used the market-led non-biodegradable menstrual pad to manage their menstrual blood. Similarly, the online survey found that 47% of respondents preferred market-based disposable pads. A smaller number had begun to use menstrual cups (13.6%) and menstrual panties (5.1%). However, transmen do not always have the luxury of choice when it comes to menstrual products. They are not aware of a dignified menstruation-friendly menstrual product that fits the three `P' approach: Person, Planet, and Pocket (KU, 2025).

All participants mentioned that managing menstrual blood is challenging at home and in public spaces. Most of the family members of participants from the group meeting are not supportive. Therefore, menstruation is perceived as `bad' or `sin' or `black days'. Therefore, making even basic menstrual tasks like buying pads, storing them, or disposing of them is complex and discouraging.

"Any time, any of the family members pointed out by saying, `Oh, at our hour home, even boys/men menstruate'. The statement is correct, but the connotation is oppressed and discouraged, which is further pulled down to manage menstrual blood. Therefore, I always thought of ending menstruation."

-Participant of group meeting

In public spaces, trans men also struggle with buying and managing menstrual products. Shopkeepers and pharmacists often question them when purchasing pads, asking intrusive questions like "Since you're a man, who are these pads for?" Some even laughed or stared, making the experience deeply uncomfortable. Participants mentioned that the shopkeepers suspect that they are transmen from their vocal tone and are provoked to check their identity.

Dignified Menstruation

The online survey supported these experiences; 55.9% of respondents said they felt uncomfortable buying menstrual products for fear of being misgendered, and 23.7% said menstrual stigma itself made the process distressing.

At an individual level, menstrual management is also complicated by clothing choice. Trans men often wear boxer shorts similar to those of stereotypical men, but those do not securely hold a menstrual pad or offer comfort during menstruation.

"We usually wear box pants as a transman, which is not easy for holding the menstrual pad during menstruation, leaking is common, and the fear of leaking is also common. We loose confidence and felt dehumanized."

-Participant of group meeting

Many reported using two pads at once to prevent leaks, avoiding bathroom breaks in public, and enduring rashes, itching, swelling, and exhaustion from the constant anxiety of bleeding.

Menstrual discrimination in policy:
Participants appreciated the attempts of the government of Nepal around DM since 2017 by having a policy, law, guidelines, including the resolution motion on DM. However, except for the resolution motion on DM 2025, none of the documents addressed the needs and priorities of dignified menstruation or menstrual discrimination among transmen.

A few participants also spoke about how U.S. foreign policy under the Trump administration had negative ripple effects, leading to increased hostility toward LGBTQIA+ people globally. These experiences, both at home and abroad, have caused anxiety and depression among many trans men. Transmen went abroad to avoid daily discriminatory norms and hassles, but they are also under surveillance in aboard, participants shared.

"Transmen are suffering in every step in Nepal, therefore few of them tried to work and reside in aboard, but they encountered challenges while producing documents, including a passport, in immigration, and abroad, e.g., Dubai is not an open country for LGBTQIA+. Owners or employers kicked them out while they learned about their identity."

-Participant of group meeting

Even NGOs and rights-based organizations are often insensitive towards transmen. One participant recalled being mocked during a menstruation program when someone said, "Oh, you're also here?" This reflected a broader lack of awareness among NGO workers and activists about menstrual discrimination faced by trans men.

School Education Sector Plan (SESP) 2022–2032 (MoEST, 2022) explicitly includes WASH in schools and "MHM education" (menstrual hygiene management) within school health activities. It also links WASH, health, and nutrition in the school context. However, this policy does not include the needs and priorities of transgender boys/men or gender-diverse menstruators at all, throughout their life span. \

Similarly, free Menstrual Pad Distribution in Public Schools also did not consider the

menstrual dignity of trans boys/men (MoEST, 2019). The National Health Policy 2019 (MoHP, 2019) frames Sexual Reproductive and Health and Rights within the health system, but does not spell out about menstrual dignity.

Safe Motherhood & Reproductive Health Rights Act 2018 + Regulation 2020: landmark SRHR law (safe abortion, maternal/newborn care) also did not acknowledge the menstrual discrimination at large and needs of transmen to live with dignity. Even the policy formulated in 2023 e.g. National Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Policy also do not acknowledge the menstrual discrimination among transmen (MoWS, 2023).

Despite these gaps, there has been a historic milestone on 21 March 2025, the National Assembly, the supreme policy structure in Nepal, unanimously endorsed the resolution motion on Dignified Menstruation, where the needs and priorities are addressed of transmen, including transmen with disability (GSCDM, 2025).

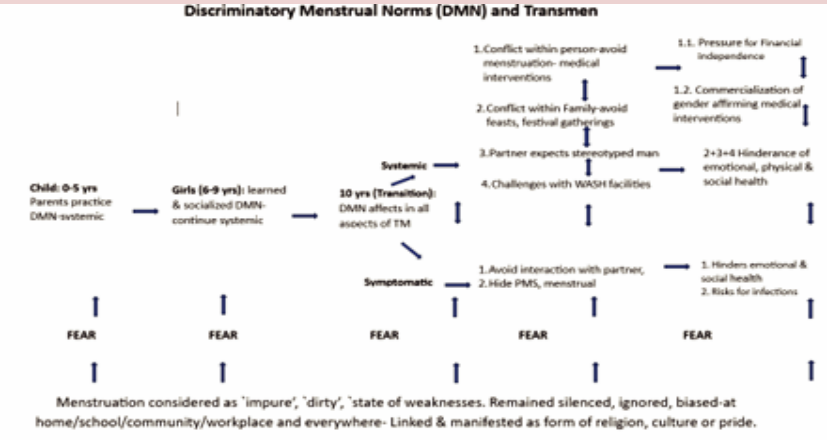
Menstrual discrimination in international policy

The menstrual needs and priorities of transmen are overlooked by international human rights frameworks. The CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against girls and women) (DMC-Nepal, 2025), and the UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) 2006, did not acknowledge the challenges of transmen with disability (KU, 2025). The SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) has the same status regarding DM among transmen (UN, 2015).

Discussion

Menstrual Discrimination instilled by family since birth as a menstruator (Systemic Impact of Menstrual Discrimination)

From the moment a baby is identified as female, families and communities begin shaping her life through deeply rooted menstrual discrimination. Even though a sex reveal is illegal and often impossible due to the cost associated with it.



Once parents believe the child is a girl, they start treating her as a “future menstruator” (girl). They also instilled that a girl would menstruate, they are inferior and disadvantaged than boys (non-menstruator).

This belief system is passed down through generations, creating a vicious cycle of patriarchy and power that starts early, often between the ages of 6 and 9. During these years, children observe discriminatory practices at home and internalize them (KU, 2025). As a result of inequities that are imposed on menstruators, by the time they reach puberty, the fear, shame, and silence surrounding menstruation have already become part of their identity. The data from this study confirms that these early experiences reinforce gender inequality and make menstruation a key tool of control in socialization.

Learning about Menstrual Discrimination flows in two levels during childhood (Systemic Impact of Menstrual Discrimination)

As a systemic impact of menstrual discrimination, parents continuously instilled the knowledge and skills, `do’ and `do not’ as a girl, which is reinforced and socialized from discriminatory menstrual norms where menstruators are compelled to live in inequalities in all aspects of their childhood.

On the other hand, girls absorb discriminatory ideas informally through daily life, by watching mothers being isolated during periods, hearing taboo conversations, and seeing the silence around menstruation in media and schools. Girls (menstruators) between the ages of 6-9 years learn to associate menstruation with untouchability, impurity, restriction, and matters of private concerns, and consider themselves inferior and disadvantaged than non-menstruators.

Dignified Menstruation

The impact review study of dignified menstruation claimed that irrespective of their religion, education, and region, children in all diversities learned menstrual discrimination between the ages of 6-9 years, and it is a departure point of power relations and reinforcement of patriarchy (KU, 2025). The data of this study also revealed the same, where participants learned about menstruation about six years before their menarche, they learned almost all forms of menstrual norms along with their justification.
Parents and her society constantly reinforce the menstrual norms and create a `fear’ factor that originated from the vicious circle of socialization of discriminatory menstrual practices. The above-mentioned data and diagram also revealed that participants learned

menstrual practices. The above-mentioned data and diagram also revealed that participants learned and socialized menstrual norms through their parents and community, though they felt fearful, awful, and vulnerable.

Menstrual Discrimination over ride while transitioning from girl to Transmen **(Systemic Impact of Menstrual Discrimination)**

When a menstruator begins to identify as a transman, the burden of menstrual discrimination does not disappear, it multiplies.

i) The family still treats them as a girl or women and considers as inferior, disadvantaged, and vulnerable and treats them accordingly.

ii) The community reinforces the same biases, and follows nuances of menstrual norms and inequities as the family, and tries to fixate on menstruator's attributes and expects the same behaviors in every moment.

iii) Internally, transmen live with conflicting realities: born with a female body but identifying as male. Society clings to biological identity, while transmen assert their sexual and gender identity, often in isolation and without support.

The study reveals that the knowledge and information around menstrual norms and transmen is heavily overlooked across all sectors and phases, including family, school, community, policy spaces, and everywhere. Even partners often fail to understand the reality of transmen's menstrual experiences. This absence of understanding traps transmen in a painful cycle of silence, shame, and misunderstanding within themselves, with partners, and in society at large.

Transmen deprived from knowing about menstrual dignity (Systemic Impact of **Menstrual Discrimination)**

Dignified Menstruation

Transmen are a part of their respective community and the entire nation. Menstrual discrimination is rarely viewed as a human rights issue, even though Nepal has made strides in dignified menstruation (DM) policies. The majority of the stakeholders, including the government, are hesitant to take DM as an urgent and important concern for mainstreaming. In this context, it is unsurprising that transmen often lack accurate information about menstruation, DM-friendly practices, menstrual management, and menopause.

Homes seldom discuss menstruation openly, and schools, communities, workplaces, media, and policies all maintain a culture of silence. Existing menstrual movements, whether focused on education, management, or WASH facilities, are designed almost

entirely for girls and women. As a result, transmen are systematically excluded from all levels of these efforts. This exclusion also means that transmen miss out on understanding the full importance of menstruation, not just as a reproductive function but as vital to overall health, including the brain, heart, bones, and muscles (GSCDM, 2023). Without this awareness, many struggle to accept their biological processes. Some even pursue gender-affirming medical interventions without fully understanding their advantages and disadvantages, often as a way to eliminate menstruation altogether.

Furthermore, transmen are left out of opportunities to learn about DM, including DM-friendly environments such as inclusive schools, workplaces, menstrual products, WASH facilities, and menstrual leave policies. The study's data show that their understanding remains limited to basic menstrual management, while the broader human rights approach to dignified menstruation is completely absent. As a result, transmen continue to live at the margins of marginalization.

Transmen are always under surveillance and struggled in every moment (Systemic Impact of Menstrual Discrimination)

The family, and community does not recognize the dual identity of transmen; born as menstruators and their sexual identity as men; transmen. Transmen are considered as `criminal' in many circumstances and `fun' or `psyche', `hysteric' for others. The number of identified transmen is also nominal too. The family and community are seeing them as `strange' in every moment and failed to acknowledge the characters of transmen as matter of fact of `fear' or `social pride'. In other hand, transmen also are focusing to portrait their sexual identity as like stereotyped men more than their real duo identity. In some extent it is because of state of vulnerability in their communities and state in general. As a result, they unable to create `safe space' for them to live as DM friendly moments. Therefore, often, they are living within conflicting situations no matter where they are and what they are doing. They keep control for meaningful engagement with others.

Menstrual discrimination is prevalent among Transmen (Systemic and Symptomatic Impact of Menstrual Discrimination)

As members of their families and the wider Nepalese society, transmen are also socialized into menstrual discrimination from childhood. This reflects the systemic impact of such discrimination, deeply rooted in social norms and everyday practices. According to the definition of menstrual discrimination (GSCDM, 2019), transmen experience nearly all of its forms: silence, taboos, shyness, stigma, restrictions, abuse, violence, and deprivation from services and resources.

Even while struggling with internal emotional conflict, transmen continue to practice or internalize menstrual norms, during menarche, after menarche, and to some extent every month, even after identifying as transmen. This reflects the symptomatic impact of menstrual discrimination, which builds upon and reinforces its systemic nature.

As a transman, regardless of gender affirming medical intervention, they are often compelled to avoid the discussion around menstruation among their circles and beyond. This silence fuels the silence and ignorance on menstruation. Despite having a disconnection with menstruation emotionally, if they are living with family members, they continuously practice menstrual discrimination, though the number of practices is comparatively low and less visible.

Their partner's preference often pushes transmen to conform to non-menstruating identities through gender affirming medical intervention. This is the outcome of the systemic impact of menstrual discrimination.

Human rights of Transmen are constantly violated due to menstrual discrimination **`Human Rights' of transmen are inalienable, just like those of all other menstruators and** non-menstruators. However, transmen in Nepal continue to face fragile and complex realities, often due to misunderstandings regarding their sexual and biological identity.

From the perspective of the International Human Rights Declaration (1948), CEDAW (1979), and SDG (2015), transmen are systemically excluded from various fundamental rights. These rights are violated both systemically (through structures, laws, and social norms) and symptomatically (through daily discriminatory practices).
For example, when transmen are denied timely access to food and water due to menstrual discrimination, this results in violations of their rights to dignity, freedom, equality, health, food, water, mobility, non-discrimination, and child rights (if they are under 18). Transmen face numerous discriminatory practices related to menstruation, such as stigma around premenstrual symptoms, lack of access to menstrual management materials, and exclusion from WASH facilities—which collectively amount to violations of their human rights.

Such discriminatory menstrual norms affect their emotional, physical, and social well-being, which is eventually a violation of human rights (Paudel, 2023). While they limit drinking liquids and hold hours to urinate or to change their menstrual products, they would encounter all dimensions of health risks. Such menstrual discrimination

infringes upon at least 14 fundamental constitutional rights, including: Right to dignity (Article 16(1)), Right to freedom (Article 17(1)), Right to equality (Article 18(1,2,3)), Right against exploitation (Article 29(1,2,3)), Right to a clean environment (Article 30(1)), Right to housing (Article 37(1)), Right to food (Article 36(1,2)), Right to safe motherhood and reproductive health (Article 38(3,4)), Right of children (Article 39), Right to social justice (Article 42) (Paudel, 2017; DMC-Nepal, 2025).

From the lens of SGBV (UN 1993), such menstrual discriminatory practices fall under more than two categories of SGBV, which is also eventually a human rights violation. For instance, `not allowed to get water and food on time', falls under the category of emotional, physical, and deprivation from services and resources, where sexual violence may also be associated, depending upon context, which is also a violation of human rights. Yet, such violations are acknowledged and addressed across human rights frameworks, including LGBTQIA+ communities (GSCDM, 2025; DMC-Nepal, 2025).

Recommendation

Educate the community on dignified menstruation: Menstrual discrimination is an underlying cause for the construction of power relations and the reinforcement of patriarchy, where menstrual norms are imposed on transmen in the name of culture, pride, religion, and gender. To create equal power relations and dismantle the patriarchy, the contextual, multi-methods, participatory intensive educational programs around menstruation are urgent and important too. Such programs need to penetrate into each family through engagement with child and youth clubs, community and faith leaders, etc.

The concepts of menstruators and non-menstruators challenge the conventional gender identity, which is heavily confined to girls and women, where transmen have been missing since the beginning of all socio-economic and political conversations, including human rights. Once everyone disaggregated the human beings, every door would open for transmen everywhere in a systemic manner.

Likewise, family and communities need to educate around concepts of dignified menstruation, such as menstruation, menstrual discrimination, dignified menstruation, DM friendly menstrual products, institutions, WASH facilities, etc., to urge recognition of the dual identity of transmen and appeal to create an enabling environment for transmen. Each stakeholder in the community is not only accepting their presence but

also advocating to sustain their rights magnificently.

Endorse DM Values Across Sectors: In order to build an understanding of DM and robust the agency among transmen, each sectors need to be well-equipped to welcome them. Therefore, each sector, such as education, health, WASH, forest, etc., has to endorse the DM policies and programming. The current policies, including gender equality and social inclusion policies, are not recognized and address the menstrual discrimination and its gravity for constructing unequal power relations and patriarchy. The values of DM also have to be demonstrated through safeguarding policy, finance policy, human resource policy, etc. Such provisions allow addressing the systemic and symptomatic impacts of menstrual discrimination across all sectors and levels. RPF/GSCDM has developed the indicators and approaches for schools, the workplace, WASH, and menstrual products for aligning with DM, which could be the reference for endorsement of DM policies.

Engage the Media: The menstrual discrimination is overlooked for decades of human rights discourses, where human rights and constitutional rights of transmen are violated systemically. From educating to family and community, holding accountability of the sectoral government of Nepal, from federal to local, the engagement of the media is very important. The multi-language and contextually diverse media programs easily amplify the voice around DM, along with transmen.

Empower Transmen: Transmen are living a dual identity with doubts, ignorance, myths, and rumors around menstruation and transmen, which is why they have been experiencing multiple layers of discrimination at once at family, school, community, and everywhere. Therefore, they are equally in urgent need to educate themselves around menstruation, menstrual discrimination, and dignified menstruation. The organizations that are working around LGBTQIA+ need to take it seriously and incorporate the DM values into their policies and programming.

Funding**:**
No funding was allocated for this study.

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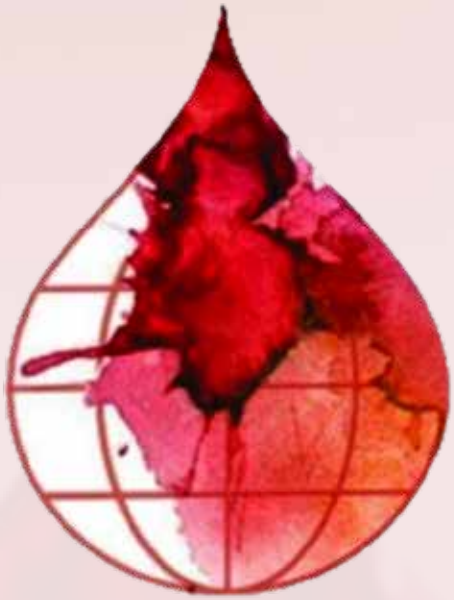
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Dignified Menstruation



Dignified Menstruation

MENSTRUAL DISCRIMINATION

AMONG TRANSMEN IN NEPAL

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