



GLOBAL  
INTERFAITH  
WASH  
ALLIANCE

*Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Everyone, Everywhere*



**WSSCC**  
WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION  
COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab in Rishikesh also known as the Swachhta Shakti Theatre was been created by the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, in partnership with the Water Supply Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), and was located right near the iconic Ram Jhula Bridge in the Rishikesh Main Market area from December 2019 til February 2020 and then shifted to the world famous Parmarth Niketan Ashram in March 2020.



This innovative space has been created to raise awareness on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and to create a safe space where women, girls and community members can come together to learn about as well as challenge the stigmas and taboos associated with menstruation. Visitors, including tourists and pilgrims of all genders from across India and around the world, as well as from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds, are made aware about the menstrual cycle and why it is important for our communities to welcome as well as talk about periods.

A mobile MHM Lab was also a special feature of a special Gandhi Jayanti programme at the Gandhi Ashram, Delhi in September, 2019 visited by HH the Dalai Lama, Hon'ble President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovindji, respected interfaith leaders and many others. The Leave No One Behind Summit at Parmarth Niketan in December, 2019 also featured a special MHM Lab tent.



*The MHM Lab sessions covered changes faced by a young girl during puberty, why girls menstruate and not boys, how the menstrual cycle works, how to calculate one's period cycle, how one should take care of hygiene during periods, and concludes with a pledge to break the silence about menstruation at a personal and community level.*

**Summary Reports of the MHM Lab Sessions in Rishikesh from December 2019 to February 2020** in collaboration and partnership between the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance and the Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council:

S No	Date	Pg No
1	February, 2020	2
2	January, 2020	29
3	December, 2019	38

# Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report

February 2020

**The Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab in Rishikesh**, also known as the Swachhta Shakti Theatre, has been created by the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance (GIWA), in partnership with the Water Supply Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), and is located near the iconic Ram Jhula Bridge in the Rishikesh Main Market area. This innovative space has been created to raise awareness on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and to create a safe space where women, girls and community members can come together to learn about as well as challenge the stigmas and taboos associated with menstruation.

Visitors, including tourists and pilgrims of all genders from across India and around the world, as well as from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds, are made aware about the menstrual cycle and why it is important for our communities to welcome as well as talk about periods. The session covers changes faced by a young girl during puberty, why girls menstruate and not boys, how the menstrual cycle works, how to calculate one's period cycle, how one should take care of hygiene during periods, and concludes with a pledge to break the silence about menstruation at a personal and community level.

***During the third month of sessions, the MHM Lab is proud to have reached 1,498 individuals!***

This monthly report provides detailed descriptions of the following MHM activities:

- Section 1: Summary of Lab Visitors and Total Beneficiaries
- Section 2: Special MHM Activities
  - Menstrual Health Awareness Day sessions
  - MHM Medical Camps
- Section 3: Photos from the MHM Lab
- Appendix
  - Testimonials
  - Photos from Menstrual Health Awareness Day ("Happy Period Day") Sessions
  - Photos from MHM Medical Camps
  - Photos and Reports from MHM School Sessions



In celebration of "Period Day," a session was conducted with male students of class 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of Kendriya Vidhyalaya, Rishikesh, helping them to understand the female reproductive cycle and their social responsibility as men to support women with respect to Menstrual Hygiene Management. 03-02-2020)

## Section 1. Summary of Lab Visitors and Total Beneficiaries

Table 1. Beneficiaries in MHM sessions (overall)

<u>Details</u>	<u>Beneficiaries</u>
Average number of daily visitors at MHM Lab	35
Total visitors at MHM Lab in Feb'2020	1007
Female	916
Male	91
Sessions conducted in schools	10
Total beneficiaries in school sessions	491
Number of Mooncatchers pads distributed	76

Table 2. February 2020 sessions conducted in schools and community

<u>Date</u>	<u>School Name</u>	<u>Total participants</u>
03-02-2020	Kendriya Vidhyala, Rishikesh (Happy Period Day)	45
04-02-2020	Parmarth Vidhya Mandir (Happy Period Day)	45
04-02-2020	Prakash Bharti Vocational Training Centre	34
05-02-2020	Govt. Inter College, Laxman Jhula (Happy Period Day)	58
11-02-2020	SVN, Pashulok	53
12-02-2020	IRBVV, Raiwala	32
13-02-2020	IRBVV, Garhi Shyampur	48
24-02-2020	Parmarth Vidhya Mandir (Medical Camp)	45
25-02-2020	GPD and GJHS, Kharasrot (Medical Camp)	30
27-02-2020	Govt. Inter College, Shyampur, Haridwar	101
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 Sessions conducted in different schools</b>	<b>491</b>

Table 3. Details and gender breakdown of MHM Lab visitors by day in February 2020.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Visitors</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
01-02-2020	10	4	6
02-02-2020	30	0	30
03-02-2020	48	0	48
04-02-2020	46	0	46
05-02-2020	27	0	27
06-02-2020	62	0	62
07-02-2020	55	2	53
08-02-2020	47	0	47
09-02-2020	44	4	40
10-02-2020	30	3	27
11-02-2020	35	4	31
12-02-2020	34	2	32
13-02-2020	20	6	14
14-02-2020	20	1	19
15-02-2020	78	2	76
16-02-2020	19	2	17
17-02-2020	8	0	8
18-02-2020	36	2	34



19-02-2020	20	0	20
20-02-2020	25	2	23
21-02-2020	66	16	50
22-02-2020	25	03	22
23-02-2020	18	01	17
24-02-2020	14	02	12
25-02-2020	<i>Lab closed; Staff in Camp at Kharasrot</i>		
26-02-2020	125	18	107
27-02-2020	23	03	20
28-02-2020	32	09	23
29-02-2020	10	03	07
<b>Total</b>	<b>1007</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>911</b>

## Section 2. Special MHM Activities

### Section 2.1. Menstrual Health Awareness Day

Menstrual Health Awareness Day or “Happy Period Day” has been celebrated on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February since 2019. This year, GIWA celebrated the occasion for three consecutive days, from 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020 to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020, at different locations and with different target groups. To commemorate the occasion, "Happy Period Day" cards were printed and distributed, and red circles were drawn on the back side of girls' hands, symbolizing a mark of blood and a feeling of pride for menstruating.

In summary, Menstrual Health Awareness Day was celebrated with these special sessions (detailed descriptions below):

1. **03-02-2020:** A session was conducted at Kendriya Vidyalaya private school, Rishikesh with male students of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> class (45 students).
2. **04-02-2020:** Two different sessions were conducted at Parmarth Vidhya Mandir, first with 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> class girl students (45 students) and secondly with Prakash Bharti Vocational Training Centre students (34 participants).
3. **05-02-2020:** A session was conducted at Govt. Inter College, Laxman Jhula, with girl students of class 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> (58 students).

→ Over these **3 days, 182 beneficiaries** were educated about Menstrual Hygiene Management.

Description of special “Period Day” MHM sessions:

- **03-02-2020:** A session was organised with male students of class 10 and 11. Menstrual Hygiene Management awareness is not only essential for females, but it is also necessary to include boys and men in this awareness and stigma-smashing initiative. Educating male students this young age will lead to better understanding and supporting females throughout their lives. When the theme of the session was discussed with the students, they initially felt shy and were perplexed as to why the session was being conducted with boys instead of girls. It was then pointed out that if the famous Mr. Arunachalam Murugunatham (Padman of India, who was instrumental in increasing availability and affordability of sanitary pads in India) also felt like this, then sanitary napkins would likely not be widely available at such a reasonable price. Menstrual hygiene is something about which even mothers are often not comfortable talking to their own daughters, but it is a need of our nation today for everyone to feel comfortable in talking about it to break the taboo. If birth is considered God's gift, then periods should also be considered sacred, for without a healthy menstrual cycle there is no childbirth possible. As they warmed to the topic and learned about the anatomy of the female reproductive system physiology of the menstrual cycle, the boys actively participated in the session and promised from now onward they will respect the girls in their school and will not feel shy in talking about menstruation.
- **04-02-2020:** Two sessions were organised:  
Session 1: A session was organised with a mixed group of young girls, some of whom had reached puberty and others who had yet to reach puberty. The group actively participated during the session and many girls asked why periods are painful. They prefer to not take medicine but asked about taking it for period cramps. They were informed that just as we dip a

towel in water and extract water from it by squeezing it, likewise the uterus also extracts the built-up lining to clean it, causing painful cramps. Medicine is not the ideal solution because if painkillers are consumed on a frequent regular basis, the chemicals may have a negative impact on the reproductive system. In general, it is better to avoid medicines when not necessary. Some gentle exercise and yoga postures can be practiced regularly to gently move the body and relieve the pain, i.e. regular 30 minutes' walk, gentle asanas like bound angle pose (baddha konasana) and bridge pose (setu bandha sarvangasana). Students were delighted to about their bodies, and what actually happens inside that causes bleeding every month.

Session 2: This session was organised with ladies and girls of a vocational centre. During the start of the session, the ladies were not very interested in the topic but as they started hearing more about their body parts and functions, their participation increased. Their questions were answered, such as why menstruation causes pain, using the analogy that as we squeeze extra water from wet cloths, our uterus also squeezes to clean the blood and thickened lining gathered in it while menstruating. In answer to a question about why the blood of menstruation is considered dirty, they were informed that blood is not dirty while it is in your body, but when blood comes in contact with air while menstruating, the possibility of bacteria increases and hence it can be infection prone. There is a need for women and girls to maintain proper hygiene during menstruation as the vagina and cervix are more open and can become infected by contact with contaminated material.

- **05-02-2020:** This session included students of classes 7 to 12, with 58 girl students in the session, only 5 of whom had not reached puberty yet. In celebration of "Happy Period Day", girls were asked to make a mark on the backside of their left hand using red lipstick, symbolizing a mark of period bleeding and not feeling shame about it. The girls were educated that menstruation should be a matter of pride for a lady, because only due to this she becomes capable of conceiving and giving birth to a new life. There is immense need for maintaining proper hygiene during menstruation to avoid any infection. Because people are hesitant to openly discuss this topic, they don't even share problems related to it, so for both males and females, now is the time to talk about it so that myths and problems can be shared on an open platform. The Mooncatchers pad was also demonstrated to the students, aimed primarily at girls who are unable to purchase panties and don't have appropriate cloth to use for period management, due to which they may avoid attending school for those days every month. This absence negatively impacts their studies, so Mooncatchers pads are provided free of cost to reduce absenteeism during menstruation. Each Mooncatchers pad provides three washable pads and a one-size-fits-all adjustable panty for every girl.

## Section 2.2. MHM Medical Camp

A Medical Camp was organized in two different schools with the objective of making people aware about menstruation, so that they could change their perception and consider menstruation normal, without feeling ashamed or untouchable when they bleed. Discussing gynecological issues faced during periods with women and girls is important because there is a lack of hygiene awareness and education in the community. Frequently, they are not able to consult a private doctor about their health problems, and in government hospitals they may need to visit multiple times for treatment, which is not possible for many women. This results in not treating conditions that should be addressed. The aim of the camp was to discuss what is normal for their body and what is not, and provide individual counselling from a medical practitioner.

The camp was organized in the following locations with total beneficiaries attending:

Date	Venue	School Girls	Community People
23-02-2020	Parmarth Vidhya Mandir	0	50
24-02-2020	Parmarth Vidhya Mandir	45	8
25-02-2020	GPS and GJHS, Kharasrot	20	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 Locations</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>93</b>

**23-02-2020:** Parmarth Vidhya Mandir: 50 ladies from the community attended the session on Menstrual Hygiene Management, aimed at understanding the functioning of their body and why it is important to maintain proper hygiene during menses. This session was followed by individual consultations with the doctors, in which cases like white fluid discharge were common. Many women were not aware that vaginal discharge is normal and indicative of a healthy, functioning vagina. Some ladies had questions and concerns regarding irregular periods, and they were advised individually by the doctors.



Adolescent girls and ladies from community of Chandreshwar Nagar attended the MHM Medical Camp (See Appendix for additional photos).

**24-02-2020:** Parmarth Vidhya Mandir: In this session, girls from class 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> were included. The aim was to help them understand the process of menstruation and how hygiene plays an important role during menses with the help of educational videos, and by sharing their own stories and experiences of their first period. Mooncatchers pads were also demonstrated and distributed to 12 girls who would benefit from using them. In addition to the students, community ladies and adolescent girls also attended the camp, with whom group discussions were held on the subject of different types of taboos related to menstruation.

**25-02-2020:** GJHS, Kharasrot: On this day of the MHM medical camp, sessions with girls from both GPS and GJHS were conducted, as well as with 30 ladies from the community. The community women were educated about proper breast care and how to ensure they are healthy by regularly checking for a few dangerous signs on their breasts (for example, highly variable or changing breast size, presence of red or white patches on the skin, bleeding or fluid discharge from the breast, lumps in the breast). Individual counselling sessions were also conducted with the doctors. In the session with the girls, the Mooncatchers representative facilitated an open discussion regarding different taboos they are asked to follow, and helped them reiterate and reinforce what they learned from the session attended in the MHM Lab. The Mooncatchers pad was demonstrated and distributed to 11 girls.



### Section 3. Photos from the MHM Lab (February 2020)



14-02-2020: Sanskriti and Aadhya, who study in D S B International School, Rishikesh, were happy to make stars with a pledge for the Shakti Sankalp Tree.



01-02-2020: Mr. Kyur ji from Gujrat learned about Menstrual Hygiene Management after visiting the Lab; he especially liked the idea of “breaking the silence” about periods and orthodox thinking about menstruation.



03-02-2020: 29 girl students from Govt. Inter College, Daudhar, attended a session at the MHM Lab.



07-02-2020: Team from MANSI (Maternal and Newborn Survival Initiative), Haridwar, visited the Lab and attended a session. As health workers, they were not previously aware about certain parts and functions of their own bodies.





21-02-2020: A diverse group of different ages, areas, and genders attending a session at the Lab.



23-02-2020: Three college students from Haryana attended the session at the Lab and prepared bracelets symbolizing the period cycle.





26-02-2020: 33 girl students visited the Lab with 3 teachers from G.U.P.S Purwal, (Dogi) Narendra Nagar, Tehri Garhwal



26-02-2020: Explaining to girls about how the egg is developed in the ovary and travels to the uterus via the fallopian tube.





26-02-2020: 92 girl students from GHSS, Garmirpur visited the Lab, with two separate sessions held to ensure all could participate.



08-02-2020: Srishti and Ankita from Haridwar posting their pledge stars on the Shakti Sankalp Tree.





01-02-2020: This group from the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand discussed the orthodox practices applied to ladies during periods, such as not allowing them to have all types of food, not allowing them to enter in the kitchen, and excluding them from main house area while sleeping. After the session they pledged to break these taboos and to not follow any such practice in future, and committed to impart MHM knowledge to everyone in their area.



08-02-2020: UPS, Thana, Dehradun Road, girl students pledging to break the taboos which they were asked to follow by society (family and friends) and making all aware regarding the need of Menstrual Hygiene Management in today's world.

## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020

### Appendix

#### Contents:

- Testimonials
- Photos from Menstrual Health Awareness Day (“Happy Period Day”) Sessions
- Photos from MHM Medical Camps
- Photos and Reports from February 2020 MHM School Sessions

#### Testimonials (School Sessions)



“Jai Hind! Today representatives from GIWA conducted a session on Menstrual Hygiene Management. Earlier, we were not very aware about periods, whenever we heard this word ‘periods’ we used to feel uncomfortable, and if we came to know that any girl was having her period we used to make fun of her. But in the session today, we actually came to know why it happens by learning about the menstrual cycle, its duration and the typical age of menstruating. I learned a lot today, most importantly that we should respect girls as they face so many changes in their bodies during this phase, with the result that they can give birth to babies in the future. Apart from this, the social taboos of not considering a woman pure while menstruating cause so much unnecessary suffering. After the session my friends and I totally changed our mentality, and from now onwards I will make sure to support, respect and provide knowledge to every female who faces any kind of issue during her periods.” Rajan Pundir of class 10 from Kendriya Vidhyalaya, Rishikesh (03-02-2020).



“The GIWA team today explained to students about Menstrual Hygiene Management, which was very helpful. I would request the organisation to conduct such meaningful sessions for students from time to time, in which they impart knowledge about periods, their body structure and functioning.” Kusum Rawat, Teacher, Parmarth Vidhya Mandir (04-02-2020).

## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020



“I will not feel shy or ashamed about periods and will talk to everyone about it without hesitating.” Muskan from class 6<sup>th</sup> of Parmarth Vidhya Mandir (04-02-2020).



“The GIWA team from Parmarth Niketan provided us information about periods. We feel uncomfortable while talking about menstruation but we should not; instead we should be proud when we menstruate and should make lots of people aware that menstruation is something one should be proud of.” Shivani of class 9 from GIC, Laxmanjhula (05-02-2020).



“Today in the session, information about periods was very important and encouraged students in not feeling shy about it. Menstruation is such a topic that neither peer groups nor guardians are able to help girls fully understand the physical changes they face. Even I, being a teacher of science, used to feel shy in imparting knowledge to them about it because boys and girls were both included in the class, but after today’s session my confidence was boosted, and I will make sure to educate girls from time to time about it in a separate session.” Vimla Tiwari, Science Teacher, IRBVV, Raiwala (12-02-2020)



“On our periods, we used to miss school, due to which our studies were negatively affected, and the teacher used to scold us. But now as we have been given Mooncatchers pads today, we will not miss school on our periods; we will attend regularly and will use the Mooncatchers pads regularly.” Jiya Arora of class 7<sup>th</sup> from IRBVV, Raiwala (12-02-2020)



## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020



“In today’s session, I learned how we could keep our vagina clean without using soap. Soap is not required for it, and earlier I was not aware about that fact.” Alka Saroj of class 8 from SVN, Pashulok

## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020

### Testimonials (MHM Lab Visitors)

“What I actually learned in the session today was that if there is any problem, then it is because of confusion. Even if I talk about periods, there is much confusion among the adolescent girls about why these changes are there in her body. No one clarifies their doubts or questions, but in this session girls are helped to understand all about periods, which is important for them to know. I would like to motivate you to conduct such sessions for girls so that they can understand the small things which are crucial for them to know. And being a girl, it’s our responsibility to break the silence. If we are silent, we are unhealthy, and we are unhappy. Break the silence and be happy.” Vijeta Sharma, Nursing student of AIIMS from Rishikesh (08-02-2020)

“Today I am in the MHM Lab of GIWA, where I got information about menstruation. Today I learned the main reason behind it, and that menstruation is necessary for a lady to be able to give birth to a baby in the future. It should be a matter of pride, not shame. We should consume iron in our diet during periods. And most importantly, we should maintain proper hygiene during periods, which will result in safe and healthy periods. If we use cloth, we should make sure it is washed properly and dried in direct sunlight, which will sanitize it. So, periods are very important for ladies and girls.” Ganga of class 5<sup>th</sup> from GPS, Kharasrot (06-02-2020)

“I was here exploring Rishikesh, but we came across the MHM Lab of GIWA. I am really impressed by how beautifully the staff make girls aware about periods, which is really important for them. The organisation is doing such a noble thing for the society.” Mala Patel (01-02-2020)

“Today in the MHM lab of GIWA, I learned so much about menstrual hygiene, like that the duration of using a pad or cloth should not exceed from 5-6 hours, or it can result in infection. Taboos like not touching the pickles and not entering the temples are myths. Society has taken it in a different way.” Sakshi Raturi from Rishikesh

“We are at the MHM lab by GIWA. We have viewed a very informative video and learned many things about the changes we go through during menstruation and puberty, both internally and externally. We are proud to be women and will make others aware about menstruation as well. We are thankful to GIWA for such a knowledgeable session.” Andha and Sanskriti

## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020

### Photos from Menstrual Health Awareness Day (“Happy Period Day”) Sessions



A session at Kendriya Vidhyalaya, Rishikesh with boys on 3-02-2020



Celebrating Menstrual Health Awareness Day (Happy Period Day) on 04-02-2020 with students of Parmarth Vidhya Mandir of class 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>.



## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020



Session

conducted with Prakash Bharti Vocational Training Centre students, consisting of a mixed group of adolescence girls and ladies (04-02-2020)



Demonstrating the Mooncatchers pad at GIC, Laxmanjhula (05-02-2020)



## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020



Students of Govt. Inter College, Laxmanjhula (05-02-2020) showing the mark of Happy Period Day (red mark of blood) stating that they will feel proud in menstruating.

## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020

### Photos from MHM Medical Camps



With the help of Dr. Jahnavi, explaining to the ladies how they could check their breast health status on their own.





## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020

### Individual consultation session.



Girl students watching the “Hello Period” video.



Group discussion with the ladies from community of Kharasrot.



## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020



Teaching ladies how to check their breasts on a regular basis.



Dr. Jahnvi examining a lady who came for consultation about a breathing issue.

## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020



Ruchika Ji from Mooncatchers asking girls how many have reached puberty.



## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020

### Photos and Reports from February 2020 MHM School Sessions



Session conducted with 53 girl students of SVN, Pashulok. Mooncatchers pads were provided to 18 girls who have reached puberty and are not able to purchase pads or arrange appropriate cotton cloth on a monthly basis. (11-02-2020)



Session conducted at SVN, Pashulok on 11-2-2020, with respected Principal also in attendance.



## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020



Session conducted in IRBVV, Raiwala in which 32 girl students from class 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> with their 2 teachers attended. Mooncatchers pads were distributed to 7 girls.

Note: In this school, no dustbin was available for disposal of used sanitary napkins, due to which girls would flush their used pads or cloths in the toilets, leading to pipe blockages. This problem was discussed in the session and it was decided to dig a big hole so that girls could dump their used pads and cloths in that, to be later burnt. One benefit of the Mooncatchers pads is that this disposal situation will not be as much of an issue as they are eco-friendly reusable pads. (12-02-2020)

## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020



Educating students about why regular periods are important for female health, students from class 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> from IRBVV, Garhi Shyampur (13-02-2020)





## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report – February 2020

Explaining to girls about the menstrual cycle and how it functions on a monthly basis causing period bleeding, students of class 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> from GIC, Shyampur, Haridwar (27-02-2020)



A school session at GIC, Shyampur, Haridwar (27-02-2020)



Out of 101 participants in GIC, Shyampur, Haridwar (27-02-2020), 27 girls were provided with Mooncatchers pads (provided free to all those who actually needed them and will use them).



## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report

*January 2020*

**The Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab in Rishikesh** also known as the Swachhta Shakti Theatre has been created by the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, in partnership with the Water Supply Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), and is located right near the iconic Ram Jhula Bridge in the Rishikesh Main Market area. This innovative space has been created to raise awareness on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and to create a safe space where women, girls and community members can come together to learn about as well as challenge the stigmas and taboos associated with menstruation.

Visitors, including tourists and pilgrims of all genders from across India and around the world, as well as from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds, are made aware about the menstrual cycle and why it is important for our communities to welcome as well as talk about periods. The session covers changes faced by a young girl during puberty, why girls menstruate and not boys, how the menstrual cycle works, how to calculate one's period cycle, how one should take care of hygiene during periods, and concludes with a pledge to break the silence about menstruation at a personal and community level.



Session conducted at District Hospital, Rishikesh with ASHA Workers (07-01-2020)

### **Summary of the Lab:**

During the second month of MHM Lab Sessions has reached 733 individuals! We conducted both in the Lab as well as to some schools and special sessions outside of the Lab on special request.

**Below are the details of some specific data of lab (overall):**

<b><u>Details</u></b>	<b><u>Beneficiaries</u></b>
Daily visitors at lab	13 (Average)
Visitors at MHM lab in Jan'2020	375
Female	344
Male	31
Sessions conducted in Schools and Community	06*
Beneficiaries in the sessions	358
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>733</b>

*(See more details below on pg. 4)*

### **January'2019 Sessions conducted in Schools and Communities\*:**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Venue</u></b>	<b><u>No. of Beneficiaries</u></b>
02-01-2020	Kale ki Dhal, Community Meeting I	64
03-01-2020	Kale ki Dhal, Community Meeting II	36
06-01-2020	Nalanda Shikshan Santhan, Khadri	72
07-01-2020	ASHA Workers, District Hospital, Rishikesh	55
13-01-2020	Bankhandi, Community Meeting	41
30-01-2020	Leprosy Eradication Day	90
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>358</b>



## **Testimonials:**

“Session conducted today was really nice, earlier I used to consider menstrual blood impure but today I learnt blood is not impure but when it gets discharged from our body and comes in contact with air then the possibility of infection increases and there is a need to maintain hygiene at this point of time, and it’s a matter of pride and not shame.” Geeta Chauhan, Kale Ki Dhal, 40 years, community (02-01-2020)

“For me periods were known but today I learnt so many other facts like why does periods happen, and why females only why not males, just because periods strengthen the uterus of the lady so that she could hold the fetus in future.” Mansi Kashyap, B.A. Final, Kale Ki Dhal community (02-01-2020)

“Earlier I used to change cloth only 2-3 times a day but in session today I learnt that how much hygiene plays an important role in this and from now onwards I will be changing cloth at least 5-6 times a day to avoid any further infection.” Sarita, age 30 years, Kale Ki Dhal community (03-01-2020)

“I asked MHM educator about white fluid discharge, she told it’s good if discharge is in limit but if it is more then there is need to approach gynecologist for that.” Sonia, age 26, Kale Ki Dhal community (03-01-2020)

“Today session on MHM was conducted by Parmarth organization which was really knowledgeable for me, I used to get periods but actually what happens and how does menstrual cycle work I learnt today.” Vidhyanshi of class 8<sup>th</sup> from Nalanda Shiksha Santhan (06-01-2020)

“Session conducted today was very beautiful and appreciable, there is immense need of such awareness session today and I would like to request the organization to conduct such session in our village area as well because people here are not much aware about it, nor do they want to talk about it much.” Teacher from Nalanda Shiksha Santhan (06-01-2020)

“It is really beautiful that GIWA from Parmarth is doing, I came to know that why does periods happen and hygiene which needs to be taken care of during periods and the orthodox practices which were conducted with females earlier like excluding them from entire family was so inhuman but we will make sure not to follow such practices.” Aarti, age 17 years, from Jonk, Rishikesh (28-01-2020)



### **Details of MHM Lab visitors in January 2020:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Visitors</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
01-01-2020	14	00	14	
02-01-2020	06	00	06	
03-01-2020	00	00	00	<i>Lab was Closed</i>
04-01-2020	17	02	15	
05-01-2020	07	01	06	
06-01-2020	05	02	03	
07-01-2020	04	01	03	
08-01-2020	04	00	04	
09-01-2020	04	01	03	
10-01-2020	06	02	04	
11-01-2020	08	01	07	
12-01-2020	12	00	12	
13-01-2020	17	00	17	
14-01-2020	20	00	20	
15-01-2020	26	01	25	
16-01-2020	16	03	13	
17-01-2020	07	01	06	
18-01-2020	10	00	10	
19-01-2020	11	02	09	
20-01-2020	12	01	11	
21-01-2020	10	03	07	
22-01-2020	10	00	10	
23-01-2020	08	00	08	
24-01-2020	13	00	13	
25-01-2020	10	00	10	
26-01-2020	00	00	00	Lab Closed on Republic Day
27-01-2020	14	00	14	
28-01-2020	11	00	11	
29-01-2020	25	00	25	
30-01-2020	39	00	39	
31-01-2020	19	00	19	

## Photographs and Highlights of this month:

### 30<sup>th</sup> January'2020 (Leprosy Eradication Day)

On World Leprosy Eradication Day in Leprosy Colony area of Chandighat, Haridwar a special session with our MHM Educators took place with people from Eastern States of India as Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal. Many of them have migrated to another state and start living in Leper Colony to avoid the social stigma of society and many of them have started a new family. Although many times the children born from them are normal, they still have a societal stigma attached to them.

Therefore, with the spirit of Leaving No One Behind, our educators joined Vidya Prem Sewa Mission to host a special MHM Session which included both Leprosy survivors and local community members with adolescent girls from the local school. Initially the group was not comfortable and felt shy during the session, but as they were made aware that it's really important for them to actually learn about their body and the reason why changes occur in their body, then they showed interest and actively participated in the session.

It was deeply fulfilling to our Educators when one of the ladies in the group shared her daughter's story, "from last 4 years she did not have a period, and after marriage as she was not able to conceive she got divorced and we married her again, then also she could not conceive and again got divorced which was really painful for our family, and likewise my younger daughter is also facing the same problem and is not having periods from last 2 years." As infertility and amenorrhea (absence of the period) can have varied and complex causes, it was suggested to consult a doctor but it was emphasised that one should not feel shame in seeking resources, education and information to keep oneself healthy.





Session at the Leprosy Colony area of Chandighat, Haridwar



A group from Dhaliwala, Rishikesh are happy to pledge to break the silence around menstruation.





Nalanda Shiksha Sansthan, Khadri (06-01-2020)







Students from Rishikesh join us every day at the MHM Lab





Kale Ki Dhaal, Community Meeting (2-01-2020)



Group from Brazil with Dr. Paula joined our MHM Lab and shared their experience and lauded these efforts.

## Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab Report

*December 2019*

**The Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab in Rishikesh** also known as the Swachhta Shakti Theatre has been created by the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, in partnership with the Water Supply Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), and is located right near the iconic Ram Jhula Bridge in the Rishikesh Main Market area. This innovative space has been created to raise awareness on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and to create a safe space where women, girls and community members can come together to learn about as well as challenge the stigmas and taboos associated with menstruation.

Visitors, including tourists and pilgrims of all genders from across India and around the world, as well as from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds, are made aware about the menstrual cycle and why it is important for our communities to welcome as well as talk about periods. The session covers changes faced by a young girl during puberty, why girls menstruate and not boys, how the menstrual cycle works, how to calculate one's period cycle, how one should take care of hygiene during periods, and concludes with a pledge to break the silence about menstruation at a personal and community level.





### Motivation for the MHM Lab:

- According to the latest data collated by the Ministry of Health, **only 12% of women and girls have access to sanitary napkins** in India, while a majority of them rely on outdated, unhygienic methods during menstruation.
- **Vaginal infections are 70% more likely** when using **unhygienic materials**. (Ministry of Health)
- **71% of girls are unaware about the concept of menstruation** until menarche (Spot On! a 2014 report by the NGO Dasra)
- Compounding this, **70% of mothers**, who are girls' main source of information, **consider menstruation to be dirty and polluting**. (Spot On! a 2014 report by the NGO Dasra)
- A systematic review on MHM in India found that **24% of school girls did not attend school during their menses, and only 37% changed their absorbents in school**. (Spot On! a 2014 report by the NGO Dasra)

Given the multiple challenges women and adolescent girls face, it is evident that promoting menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is not only a sanitation matter; it is also an *important* step towards safeguarding the dignity, bodily integrity and overall life opportunities of women and girls. (World Bank)

The role of men and boys is also essential for an effective menstrual hygiene program. By educating men and boys about menstruation, they can talk about menstruation more freely and be better able to support the MHM needs of women and girls within their households, communities, and schools.



Army men visiting our MHM Lab.

## Our Approach:

The primary focus of the MHM activities is to address the different taboos associated with menstruation which force ladies to live a life of exclusion for these 2-7 days, considering menstruation as a curse. There is a need of creating an environment where everyone (men and women) understand their social responsibility of making others aware about the need of health and hygiene during menstruation.

- **Location:** As MHM Lab is located at the main market of Ram Jhula, Rishikesh, it is embedded in a prime location to engage the community in open discussion and education about menstruation.
- **Educators:** The Lab has 3 MHM enthusiastic and energetic educators educating young girls and ladies by conducting sessions with groups on a daily basis, in which they cover adolescence phase (changes one's body go through), menstrual cycle process, complications of periods, hygienic use of pad and cloth and need of sanitation in their life, safe disposal and decomposition of pad/cloth and most importantly discussing the myths related to menstruation and menstrual hygiene. These three MHM Educators have been trained by WSSCC on Menstrual Health Management and are experienced in community mobilization and awareness. Our MHM Lab Coordinator ensures the lab scheduling is smooth and MHM Educators are effectively empowered and inspired. The MHM Lab Coordinator helps troubleshoot any needs or challenges as they arise and also ensures that the M&E reporting is carefully conducted and reported on a daily basis.
- **Activities:** During the session, the visitors are engaged in conversation that makes them more aware about menstrual hygiene and also gauges the visitors preconceived notions about menstruation. The interaction then brings up the different taboos associated with menstruation with the help of videos related to Menstrual Health and Hygiene, and lastly encouraging them to take a Sankalp (pledge) for not feeling any shame in speaking about menstruation, considering it instead as an honor, cultivating pride about periods and the natural process that is key to all of creation, and about sharing/spreading this message with others. The pledge is taken with the exchange of WSSCC's MHM Bracelet, reading out loud of the MHM Wheel Pledge and by placing a star on the MHM Lab Sankalp Tree.
- **Outreach:** Tourists are approached in the main marketplace by our MHM Educators who explain to them the need of Menstrual Hygiene and invite them to visit the lab for further and detailed discussion and information. This process attracts diverse groups like professionals, pilgrims, tourists, school children, individuals, especially women from across India and around the world.



### **Inauguration of the MHM Lab by Secretary General of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance**

The MHM Lab was opened to the public on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December. However, the Official Inauguration of the lab took place on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2019 when the Secretary General of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance Dr Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswatiji graced the facility and warmly welcomed the volunteers, visitors and students that were present there to fully utilize its services.

A fun and interactive session was also held with more than a dozen girl students, between the ages 8-12 years, from Primary Govt. School, Muni Ki Reti. Out of 15 only 2 girls were aware about periods, and the rest had no prior knowledge. Active participation was there with the group about how hygiene plays an important role in menstruation and why one should break the silence associated with Menstruation.

In sharing with the attendees, Sadhvi Bhagawati ji spoke about these stigmas when she declared that menstruation is, “Not something to feel down about, or dirty about. Women have been granted the wondrous blessing of being able to create and to co-create life and, to maintain the healthy body necessary for that creation, women’s bodies menstruate. It’s not something to be looked down upon. Rather, it’s something to be very proud of!”





Sankalp taken by girls in and outside of the Lab about not considering menstruation as curse or matter of shame, instead cultivating pride in the fact that they were blessed with a female body.

#### **MHM Educators in LNOB Summit:**

During the Leave No One Behind Summit, organised by GIWA, with the support of WSSCC, and the technical support of FANSA, there was a special knowledge sharing and exchange session held in a special MHM Lab set up just outside of the Consultations by WSSCC wherein the GIWA MHM Educators learned from WSSCC Educators the best practices and techniques of speaking about menstruation as well as breaking the silence associated with this process.

During the Summit, the 14 different Consultation Groups, including but not limited to Transgender, Sex Workers, Urban Poor, Homeless, Elderly, Youth, etc, visited the Menstrual Hygiene Management and sessions were organised for these diverse groups. GIWA MHM Educators expressed gratitude for this exchange with WSSCC Educators and Trainers and shared that they gained many insights and information to facilitate their ability to be better able to outreach, educate, inspire and engage others.





### WSSCC Team visit to MHM Lab on 20<sup>th</sup> Dec'2019:

At the completion of the LNOB Summit the Senior Leaders of the Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) Team including James Wicken, Head Global Policy, Advocacy, Innovation Unit, Geneva, Shri Vinod Mishraji, WSSCC India Head, Enrico Muratore Aprosio. Technical Expert on Leave No One Behind, Equality and Non-Discrimination, and Gender, Geneva, Trupti Ashtankar and many others from WSSCC Team who visited the Menstrual Hygiene Management Lab at the warm invitation of GIWA's Founder/Chair HH Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji alongwith members of the LNOB Consultation Group.



## Overview of Numbers of the MHM Lab:

In just the first month the MHM Lab has touched more than 500 individuals! This vital conversation has reached out to 6 schools by special demand from the MHM Lab Visitors inviting our Educators to their schools and their communities.

<u>Details</u>	<u>Beneficiaries</u>
Daily visitors at Lab	15 (On Average)
Total Visitors at MHM Lab in December 2019	284
Visitors of the MHM Lab- Female	226
Visitors of the MHM Lab- Male	58
Sessions conducted in Schools and Community	06
Beneficiaries in the sessions	225
<b>TOTAL BENEFICIARIES</b>	<b>509</b>

(See Detailed List on pg 9-10)\*



MHM Session with School Girls.

## Some Testimonials:

"I learned today that if my period cycle is not regular or if it is delayed by 15 or 20 days, it means there is some internal issue. Those ladies who think they are unclean or impure during menses are wrong. Before, we knew that we get our periods, but we came to better understand the actual reason and physical process behind the menstrual cycle in the session today." Meenakshi of Class 8<sup>th</sup> student from Chandrashekar Public School

"In today's menstrual hygiene session conducted in the school, students and teachers alike learned very much. We were not so deeply aware about menstruation before, and we also



came to know about the reusable sanitary pads as well. These pads are very good for those who are unable to afford proper cloth during menstruation, and even better – they are environmentally friendly!” Pushpa Chauhan, teacher from Chandreshwar Public School

“The menstrual hygiene session was very fruitful for us. Here in this slum area, parents are reserved with such topics and don’t talk about menstruation. But if girls are not educated about menstruation by their parents, they need someone to teach them, and after this session the girls can even teach their parents about menstruation and menstrual hygiene now. We learned that cloth is environmentally friendly and effective for period management; before, we were of the opinion that pads are best, but this session changed our perspective.” Monika Arora, teacher from Chandreshwar Public School

“The MHM educator from GIWA at Parmarth Niketan conducted a session at our school today regarding menstrual hygiene. She taught us why periods happen and how the menstrual cycle works, and asked us to discuss menarche with our elders. I have yet to reach puberty, but I know what to do when I do get my period and am thankful to the organization for that. If I get my first period in school, I will inform my teacher, and at home will inform my elder sister or mother, and even make my friends aware about it as well.” Suhana Parveen: Class 5<sup>th</sup> from Govt. Primary School, Chandreshwar Nagar

“I was not aware about periods earlier, but today during the session I learned that there is nothing to worry about with menstruation; it is a normal phenomenon for girls and helps our bodies get stronger with time. An important matter is that during menstruation we should maintain proper health and hygiene to avoid infection.” Nelaam of class 4 from Govt Primary School, Seesamjhadi

“I was not very aware about periods earlier, but today in this session I learned much about menstruation. My mother used to say that one should not bathe while menstruating, but the MHM educators told us how it is very important to maintain hygiene. From now onwards, I will do that, and also make sure I dry my cloths in sunlight to sterilize them, which is very important.” Kusum of class 5<sup>th</sup> from Govt Primary School, Seesamjhadi

**December 2019 Daily Reporting Summary:\***

<u>Date</u>	<u>No of Visitors</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
06-12-2019	16	00	16	
7-12-2019	68	05	63	
8-12-2019	02	00	02	
9-12-2019	05	02	03	
10-12-2019	04	00	04	
11-12-2019	11	02	09	
12-12-2019	25	09	16	
13-12-2019	15	09	06	
14-12-2019	18	10	08	
15-12-2019	14	06	08	
16-12-2019	01	01	00	Educators were only at the MHM Lab for part of the day as they were busy supporting the preparations of the LNOB Summit
17-12-2019	LNOB Summit	LNOB Summit	LNOB Summit	
18-12-2019	LNOB Summit	LNOB Summit	LNOB Summit	
19-12-2019	LNOB Summit	LNOB Summit	LNOB Summit	
20-12-2019	09	01	08	
21-12-2019	06	00	06	
22-12-2019	02	01	01	
23-12-2019	0	0	0	Due to heavy rains
24-12-2019	0	0	0	Sessions conducted in a School, see list and details below
25-12-2019	19	00	19	
26-12-2019	10	02	08	
27-12-2019	16	03	13	
28-12-2019	15	01	14	
29-12-2019	03	01	02	
30-12-2019	11	04	07	
31-12-2019	14	01	13	

**December'2019 Sessions conducted other than Lab:**

<u>Date</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>No. of Beneficiaries</u>
09-12-2019	ASHA Workers, Satsang Bhawan, Prakash Bharti	56
18-12-2019	ASHA Workers, Yoga Hall, Parmarth Niketan	43



23-12-2019	Chandreshwar Public School	31
24-12-2019	Govt. Primary School, Chandreshwar Nagar	21
27-12-2019	Govt. Primary School, Seesamjhadi	32
28-12-2019	Gangotri Vidhya Niketan, Bapugram	42
	TOTAL	225

Now is the time to break the silence about Menstrual Hygiene and inspire men and women, boys and girls, to celebrate the female body in all its forms, and honour and welcome the incredible, essential life-giving menstrual cycle during puberty. We believe that the more people who can be reached through the MHM Lab, the closer we come to improving health, sanitation, and well-being for all.



A group of school girls visited the lab with their teachers



Group of visitors from Rishikesh localities putting the first stars on the MHM pledge tree.



Group of visitors from Rishikesh localities visited the lab





More pledges on star tree



Friends pledge with the WSSCC Menstruation Wheel in hand.



Session with ASHA Workers of Pithoragarh District (18-12-2019)



Chandreshwar Public School, girls between age from 8 to 14 years (23-12-2019)





Govt. Primary School, Seesamjhadi (27-12-2019)



Gangotri Vidhya Niketan, Bapugram (28-12-2019)