

Post-COVID menstrual trends, attitudes and practices: A promising approach to sustained innovations in water and climate action advocacy

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Presentation outline

- Definition of terms
- SDG 6.2
- Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Policy
- Men and menstruation
- Awareness campaigns and sensitization sessions
- Menstrual health research and advocacy
- Capacity building and partnership/allyship and media engagement
- Intervention summary
- Key takeaways
- Contact information

Definition of terms

➤ Menstrual health

Is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle.

A definition for policy, practice and research. *Sexual and reproductive health matters*

➤ Climate action

Stepped-up efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-induced impacts ([SDG 13](#))

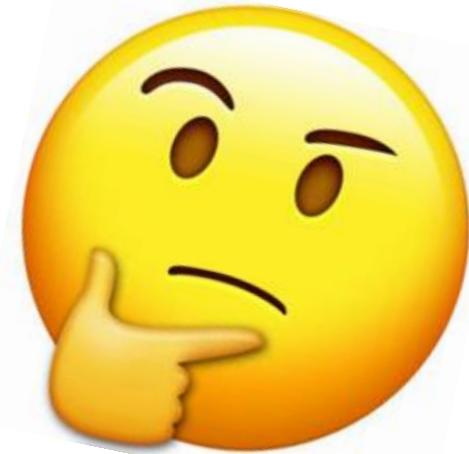
➤ Post pandemic

A period following a pandemic ([COVID-19](#))

Sustainable Development Goal 6. Target 2

Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, and end open defecation, **paying special attention to the needs of women and girls** and those in vulnerable situations

Which are these needs of women and girls



Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Policy(2019-2030)

- Kenya is one of the first African nations to develop a stand-alone MHM Policy. The country is championing to eliminate all forms of discrimination tied to menstruation. Especially discrimination based on social norms that harm the physical , emotional and psychological integrity and human rights of women, girls and non binary
- The policy has a corresponding MHM Strategy document (2019-2024) that demonstrates how men and boys can plug in and support dignified menstruation.

Men and menstruation...5 years ago

MH Day published a study in 2016 that showed two out of three women in rural Kenya receive menstrual hygiene articles from sexual partners. This means that a majority of women in the countryside depend on men for managing their menstruation. Some women even engage in sexual activity with the sole aim of receiving the necessary menstrual products in exchange.

According to a situation analysis carried out by Ministry of Health (2016), 46% of the respondents used disposable pads, with only 6% using reusable pads and 7% relying on old cloths, pieces of blanket, chicken feathers, mud and even newspapers.

Awareness campaigns and sensitization sessions

Empowering communities with information on engaging men and boys as **ambassadors/changemakers** who challenge status quo of myths, misconceptions, taboos, cultural beliefs and practices that promote discrimination through shame, fear, discomfort and lack of dignity for women and girls during menstruation. Menstruation is natural.



Menstrual health research and advocacy

For increased funding and involvement of youth and women in the sector. Supporting information technology and sector innovations especially on water accessibility and sustainable menstrual waste disposal mechanisms.

Menstrual hygiene need not be a nightmare

The world over, menstruation is shrouded in myths, misconceptions and taboos cultivating stigma that subject women, girls and non-binary people to undignified experiences.

Lack of access to quality and affordable menstrual materials, coupled with lack of timely, pragmatic and factual information on menstruation, has exacerbated a dire situation that vulnerable women and girls often find themselves in every month.

In Kenya, approximately 10 million women and girls that menstruate every month face a myriad of related challenges, Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe said in his speech during the launch of the Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) policy 2019-2030 and Menstrual Hygiene strategy 2019-2024 on May 28, an annual commemoration of the World Menstrual Hygiene Day.

He said that "these challenges include lack of accurate information on menstrual health; inadequate access to menstrual products; inadequate access to safe water, sanitation and waste management and inadequate access to menstrual health-related health care."

With the policy and strategy in place, Kenya is championing to eliminate all forms of discrimination tied to menstruation, especially discrimination based on social norms that harm the physical, emotional and psychological integrity and human rights of women, girls and non-binary.



A No Shame in Menstruation walk in Mombasa: Women and girls should take pride in menstruation.

Kenya is one of the first African nations to develop a stand-alone MHM Policy.

One of the policy objectives is ensuring that myths, taboos and stigma around menstruation are addressed by providing women, girls, men and boys access to information on the subject.

This objective presents the tenet on which age-appropriate and target-specific interventions are tailored to break the silence on menstruation.

Failure to act effectively on MHM affects the right of girls and women to basic sanitation, education and health and reflects a development agenda that betrays the voices of women and girls.

Silence on menstruation, taboos and beliefs around it is tantamount to the denial of

essential freedom to women and girls.

Often, authors and perpetrators of taboos and cultural beliefs and practices that promote menstruation-related discrimination are men, mainly due to the patriarchal nature of most societies.

In some cases, female perpetrators inflict this stigmatised damage, as was the sad case of Jackeline from Bonnet County in September 2019, who committed suicide after she was, allegedly, rebuked by a female teacher for soiling her uniform.

It was Jackeline's first menstrual experience.

According to Neville Okwaro, an MHM trainer, there is a need to review socio-cultural and socio-economic policies, guidelines and strategies, which

address gender inequalities and discrimination, to allow girls and women to take pride in menstruation.

Article 43(b)(d) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, provides a guide on good menstrual practices and guarantees the right to water and sanitation.

Apart from the Constitution citing education and health as fundamental human rights in Kenya and further engraved as critical components of social pillars in Kenya's Vision 2030 blueprint, it also addresses issues related to menstruation by giving an entry point towards achieving several human-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) whose promises and targets anchor in leaving no one behind.

SDG 6 particularly pays attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

IT'S NATURE

Research findings and case studies establish that knowledge, attitude and practices churn persistent, significant barriers to high-quality menstrual health management across Kenya and remain a challenge for low-income women and girls.

Indeed, experiencing quality menstrual health goes beyond the impetus provided by the policy and appeals to our human self for empathy, understanding and appreciation that menstruation is natural. Period!

Daniel Karanja, founding director of community socioeconomic development initiatives

Youth end period stigma presents

ULTIMATE MENSTRUAL HYGIENE 5-DAY FITNESS CHALLENGE

28th MAY - 1st JUNE 2020

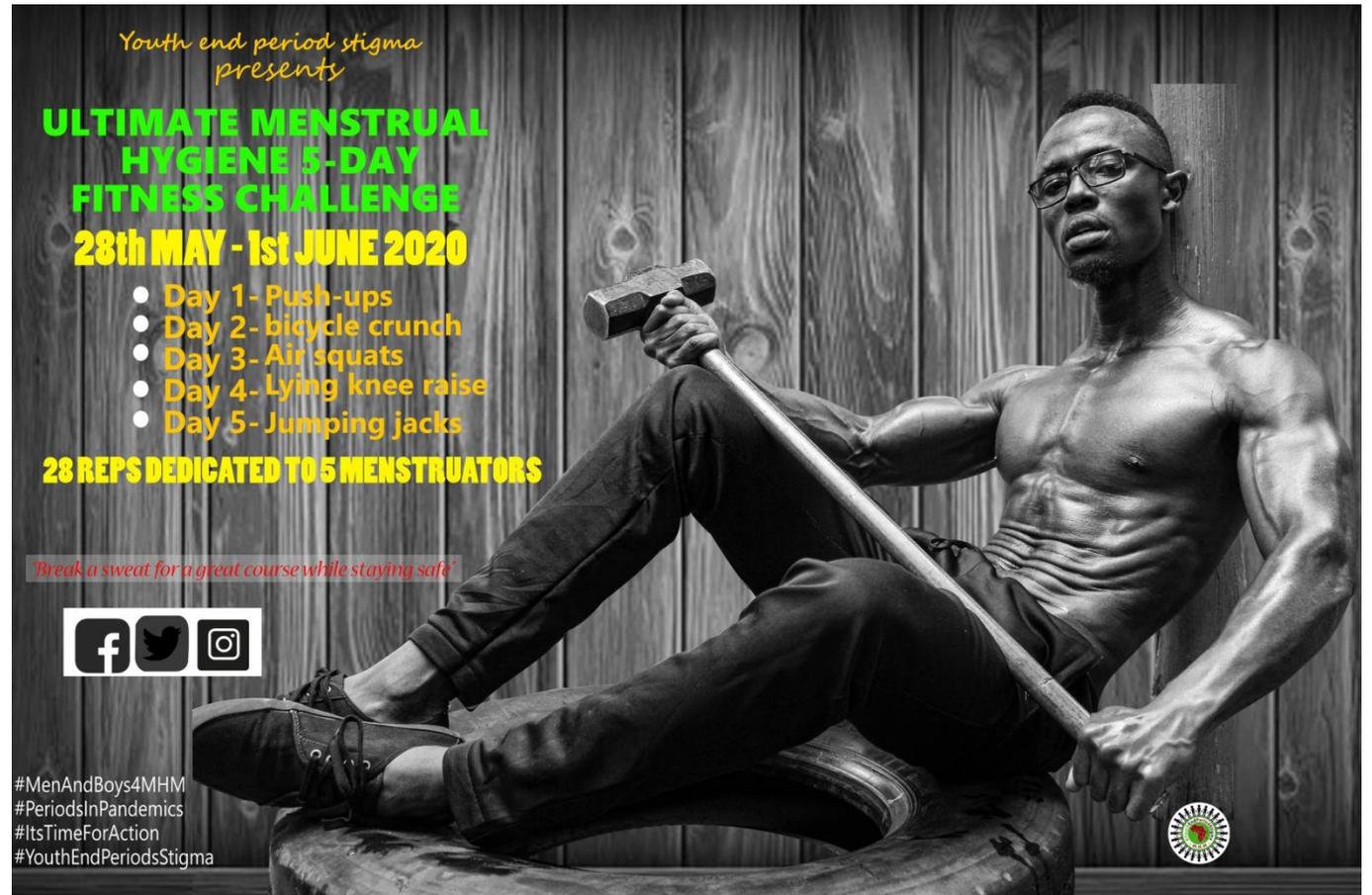
- Day 1- Push-ups
- Day 2- bicycle crunch
- Day 3- Air squats
- Day 4- Lying knee raise
- Day 5- Jumping jacks

28 REPS DEDICATED TO 5 MENSTRUATORS

Break a sweat for a great course while staying safe!



#MenAndBoys4MHM
#PeriodsInPandemics
#ItsTimeForAction
#YouthEndPeriodsStigma

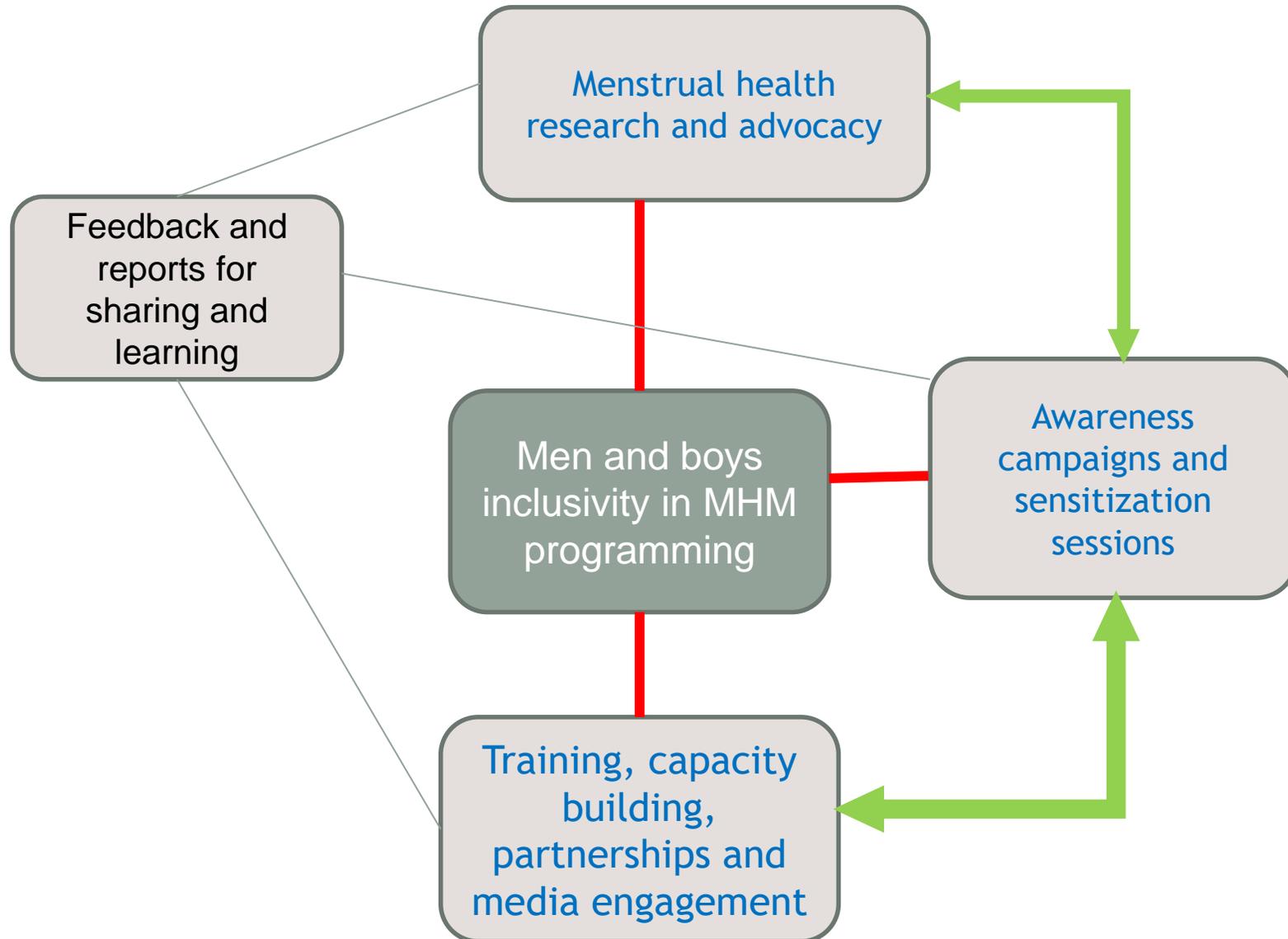


Capacity building and partnership/allyship and media engagement

Promoting training, networking and exchange programs to support menstrual access, availability and menstrual information while advancing MHM from a sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) perspective .



Intervention summary



Innovative approaches in implementing MHM activities post COVID

Enabling environments through policies, guidelines and strategic documents

Menstruation and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

Linking interventions with access to water (profiling and promoting reusable products)

Environmentally friendly interventions. Sustainable menstrual waste disposal mechanism

Highlighting men and boys supporting MHM

Key takeaways

Household Level	Community Level	Programmers	Policy makers/Donors
Normalize menstruation conversations(make it comfortable for men and boys to talk about MHM)	Map areas of need including unpacking avenues for sustainability (pegged on administration and the sub national government structures)	Embrace appropriate community entrance approaches sensitive to culture and religious reservation regarding menstruation	Support policies, guidelines and strategies that create enabling environments for sustainable menstrual waste disposal
Properly segregate solid waste and dispose	Enhance partnerships with sector actors and players in advancing community menstrual health agenda	Actively mainstream the broader goal of environmentally-friendly menstrual interventions in WASH programming	Support research, advocacy and resource investment including financial requirements for sustainable menstrual health interventions
Avail requirements for making reusable menstrual materials	Champion the process of developing a practical and appropriate waste disposal mechanism	Collaborate with other agencies and governmental departments in water and environment sectors	Ensure pragmatic linkage between menstrual health intervention and climate action
Ensure availability of clean water and private spaces		Identify male MHM champions and prioritize media engagement and enhance allyship in menstrual programming	

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Thank you

