



Event Report

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE GALA 2024



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**Creating a
community where
every individual has
access to safe and
dignified menstrual
hygiene
management**

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FOREWORD BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is with great pride and immense gratitude that I welcome you all to this special morning gala organized by HER Movement Tanzania. As the Founder of HER Movement, I am honoured to address you today and to share our mission of empowering young girls and women to achieve safe and dignified menstrual health and hygiene.

Menstruation is a natural and essential part of a girl's life, yet it remains shrouded in stigma and misinformation. Many young girls face significant challenges when it comes to managing their periods safely and with dignity. These challenges often lead to detrimental effects on their education, health, and overall well-being.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of the most heartbreaking issues we encounter is the high rate of school dropouts among adolescent girls due to inadequate menstrual health management. When girls lack access to sanitary products and proper WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) facilities, they are often forced to miss school during their periods. Over time, these absences accumulate, leading many to fall behind in their studies and eventually drop out altogether. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities, trapping them in a life where their full potential is never realized.

In addition to educational setbacks, cultural norms and poverty further exacerbate the challenges these young girls face. In many communities, menstruation is considered a taboo subject, shrouded in shame and silence. Girls are often forced to use unsafe traditional pads made from rags, leaves, or other unhygienic materials due to the lack of affordable and appropriate menstrual products. These practices can lead to severe health issues, including infections and long-term reproductive health problems.

Dear attendees, HER Movement Tanzania is dedicated to addressing these critical issues head-on. We have implemented comprehensive programs designed to provide young girls with the resources and education they need to manage their menstruation safely and with dignity. Our initiatives include the distribution of sanitary products, but we are looking forward to constructing WASH facilities in schools, and organising educational workshops like this one; that aim to break the silence and dispel the myths surrounding menstruation.

I am pleased to share that we have made significant strides in our efforts, particularly in the Kisarawe District. Our programs have reached numerous schools, benefiting hundreds of students. Some of them now have access to safe menstrual products and facilities. These girls are not only able to attend school regularly but are also empowered with the knowledge and confidence to manage their menstrual health effectively.

Stakeholders, today's gala is an opportunity for us to come together and reaffirm our commitment to this cause. Your presence and support are invaluable in helping us continue and expand our work. We need to ensure that every girl in Tanzania, regardless of her socio-economic background, can experience her menstrual periods safely and with dignity.



DR. HORTENCIA NUHU

Executive Director
Her Movement Tanzania

Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you all to join us in this vital mission. Let us all commit to helping young girls achieve safe menstrual health and hygiene. Together, we can create a future where no girl has to choose between her education and managing her period, where cultural norms do not dictate her worth, and where every girl has the opportunity to reach her full potential.

Thank you for your generosity and support. Let us make this gala a memorable milestone in our journey towards empowering the girls and women of Tanzania.

Thank you.

OPENING REMARKS FROM MHH GALA 2024 COORDINATOR



MS. LEYLAH JUMA

Coordinator
MHH GALA 2024

It is an honour to stand before you today as the Coordinator of the Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) Program at HER Movement Tanzania. We are gathered here with a shared mission: to empower adolescent girls and young women with the knowledge and resources they need to manage their sexual and reproductive health (SRH), combat gender-based violence (GBV), and access youth-friendly services. Our goal is to nurture SRH champions who will transform their communities and promote gender equality across various domains, including health, environment, leadership, and economic empowerment.

Today's fundraising gala is a significant step in addressing one of our primary focuses, Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH). Menstrual health is crucial for the well-being and empowerment of women and adolescent girls. **Statistics show that, on any given day, over 300 million women worldwide are menstruating. However, an estimated 500 million women lack access to menstrual products and adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM).** To manage their menstruation effectively, girls and women require access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, affordable and appropriate menstrual hygiene materials, information on good practices, and a supportive environment free from embarrassment and stigma.

We can all testify that despite menstruation being a normal and healthy part of life, it is often constrained by cultural taboos and discriminatory social norms. This lack of information leads to unhygienic and unhealthy menstrual practices and fosters misconceptions and negative attitudes, resulting in shaming, bullying, and even gender-based violence.

Ladies and gentlemen, for generations, girls and women have faced poor menstrual health and hygiene, exacerbating social and economic inequalities, and negatively impacting their education, health, safety, and human development. The multifaceted issues menstruators face require multi-sectoral interventions. WASH professionals alone cannot provide all the solutions to tackle the intersecting issues of inadequate sanitary facilities, lack of information and knowledge, lack of access to affordable and quality menstrual hygiene products, and the stigma and social norms associated with menstruation.

Take a look, **in low-income countries, half of the schools lack adequate WASH services crucial for enabling girls and female teachers to manage menstruation.** Many studies argue that inadequate sanitary facilities affect girls' experiences at school, causing them to miss classes during their menstruation or even drop out. When girls and women have access to safe and affordable sanitary materials, they can manage their menstruation with dignity and confidence. Our work aims to ensure that every girl and woman in Tanzania has the necessary knowledge and resources to manage their menstrual health effectively.

HER Movement Tanzania is committed to breaking the silence around menstruation, dismantling taboos, and promoting a culture of respect and support for all menstruators. We believe that by addressing menstrual health and hygiene, we can significantly improve the lives of girls and women, allowing them to participate fully in society and reach their full potential.

Today's gala is not just a fundraiser; it is a call to action. The funds raised today will go towards providing menstrual hygiene products, building WASH facilities, and educating communities about menstrual health. We have come together because we believe in a future where every girl and woman can manage her menstrual health with dignity, where gender-based violence is eradicated, and where equality thrives in every aspect of life.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our generous donors and partners. Thank you to UN Women, Binti Salha, Marie Stopes, and Her Initiative for your support and commitment to this cause. Your contributions are making a tangible difference in the lives of many.

Let us all join hands to create a future where every girl and woman can manage her menstrual health with dignity, where gender-based violence is eradicated, and where equality thrives in every aspect of life. Together, we can empower the women and girls of Tanzania and pave the way for a brighter, more equitable future.

Thank you.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) is essential to the well-being and empowerment of women and adolescent girls. On any given day, more than 300 million women worldwide are menstruating. In total, an estimated 500 million lack access to menstrual products and adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM). To effectively manage their menstruation, girls and women require access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, affordable and appropriate menstrual hygiene materials, information on good practices, and a supportive environment where they can manage menstruation without embarrassment or stigma.

The challenges that menstruating girls, women, and other menstruators face encompass more than a basic lack of supplies or infrastructure. While menstruation is a normal and healthy part of life for most women and girls, in many societies, the experience of menstruators continues to be constrained by cultural taboos and discriminatory social norms. The resulting lack of information about menstruation leads to unhygienic and unhealthy menstrual practices and creates misconceptions and negative attitudes, which motivate, among others, shaming, bullying, and even gender-based violence. For generations of girls and women, poor menstrual health and hygiene is exacerbating social and economic inequalities, negatively impacting their education, health, safety, and human development.

The multi-dimensional issues that menstruators face require multi-sectoral interventions. WASH professionals alone cannot come up with all of the solutions to tackle the intersecting issues of inadequate sanitary facilities, lack of information and knowledge, lack of access to affordable and quality menstrual hygiene products, and the stigma and social norms associated with menstruation.

In low-income countries, half of the schools lack adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene services crucial to enable girls and female teachers to manage menstruation (UNICEF 2015). Many studies argue that inadequate sanitary facilities affect girls' experiences at school, causing them to miss classes during their menstruation or even drop out.

When girls and women have access to safe and affordable sanitary materials to manage their menstruation, they decrease their risk of infections. This can have cascading effects on overall sexual and reproductive health, including reducing teen pregnancy, maternal outcomes, and fertility. Poor menstrual hygiene, however, can pose serious health risks, like reproductive and urinary tract infections which can result in future infertility and birth complications. Neglecting to wash hands after changing menstrual products can spread infections, such as hepatitis B and thrush.

Promoting menstrual health and hygiene is an important means for safeguarding women's dignity, privacy, bodily integrity, and, consequently, their self-efficacy. Awareness of MHH contributes to building an enabling environment of non-discrimination and gender equality in which female voices are heard, girls have choices about their future, and women have options to become leaders and managers.

Improving menstrual hygiene and providing access to affordable menstrual materials can help improve girls' and women's access to education, opening more options for jobs, promotions, and entrepreneurship, thus unleashing female contributions to the overall economy, rather than keeping them at home.

Disposable sanitary products contribute to large amounts of global waste. Ensuring women and girls have access to sustainable and quality products, and improving the management of the disposal of menstrual products, can make a big difference to the environment.

Kisarawe is one of the districts that the number of students drops out from school is very high due to numbers of reasons, menstruation being one of them this is because of the lack of menstrual hygiene resources which makes them to not attend school. Also, they are facing challenges on early marriage, early pregnancies.

BACKGROUND

Her Movement Tz is an organisation that supports women and girls in sexual and reproductive health and rights and empowerment, also we are focusing on fighting against gender-based violence to women and girls in Tanzania.

Our work is to promote equality in different aspects such as health, environment, leadership and women economic empowerment.



VISION

To empower more Adolescent girls and young women to have knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and achieve their goals.



MISSION

To ensure sure that adolescent girls and young women have knowledge on Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH), Gender Based Violence (GBV) as well as access to youth friendly services and become SRH champions in their communities



PRE - ACTIVITY

We Prepared a documentary on assessing challenges hindering accessibility of menstrual health and hygiene to AGYW.

VENUE:

Kimani secondary school, kisarawe District

We prepared the documentary which included students, as they were explaining challenges they face when they are on menstruation.



Outreach (pre activity) aiming on spreading education on sexual reproductive health and menstrual health hygiene



Outreach (pre activity) aiming on spreading education on sexual reproductive health and menstrual health hygiene

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE GALA 2024

Saturday
18 May

SPEECH FROM GUEST OF HONOR

Hon. Katherine Gufford, the Deputy Country Representative from UNWOMEN. Her impactful speech emphasized the critical role of menstrual health in Achieving gender equality and highlighted the urgent need to address the stigma and barriers faced by women and girls. Her insights called for collective action and inspired the audience to advocate for better menstrual health and hygiene practices, aiming for a more equitable future for all.

She recommended that we must all work together even more closely to create a society where every- one has access to safe mensrual health and hygiene and we must promote education, raising awareness about health and gender issues, and advocate for policies that promote equality and justice for all. Furthermore, she urged for Collaboration and coordination as powerful tools for effectively addressing health and gender issues.



HON. KATHERINE GUFFORD

Deputy Country Representative
UNWOMEN

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

We conducted a panel discussion from various speakers to discuss on various agendas that affects women and girls in menstrual health management. Speakers were from different aspect. From the government, stakeholders, CSO, youth led organisations and influencers.

Panelist One

What are the Gender roles in Menstrual health and hygiene?



Mr. Tariq Ghusob

Senior Communication Officer, Her Initiative

Gender roles in menstrual health and hygiene vary across cultures and historical periods. In some ancient civilizations, menstruation was often associated with rituals, taboos, and beliefs about purity and impurity. For example, in ancient Greece, women on their periods were often secluded and considered ritually impure. Similarly, in ancient Egypt, menstruation was sometimes seen as a sign of fertility but was also associated with ritual impurity. These beliefs influenced how women were treated during menstruation and shaped societal expectations surrounding their roles and behaviours. However, it's important to note that these roles and beliefs varied widely among different ancient civilizations and were not uniform across time and place.

Panelist Two

How is the Condition of the Menstrual Care System within Schools?



Dr. Sion Valentine

Psychology student, Mental Health Advocacy

The condition of the menstrual care system within schools can vary significantly depending on factors such as location, resources, and cultural attitudes towards menstruation. In some schools, there may be well-equipped and accessible facilities, including clean and private restrooms, stocked with menstrual hygiene products like pads and tampons. Additionally, some schools may have implemented educational programs about menstrual health and hygiene to promote awareness and destigmatization.

However, in many regions, there are still challenges regarding menstrual care in schools. These challenges can include inadequate access to menstrual hygiene products, lack of proper disposal facilities for used products, insufficient privacy and sanitation in restroom facilities, and limited education about menstrual health.

Efforts are being made globally to improve the menstrual care system within schools, including advocacy for policies that ensure access to free menstrual products, implementation of comprehensive menstrual hygiene management programs, and promotion of menstrual health education to address taboos and misinformation.

Panelist Three

What is the Role of the Government and Stakeholders in improving School Water Sanitation and Hygiene (SWASH)?



Mr. Severine Allute

Secretariat Lead, Menstrual Health and Hygiene Coalition Tanzania.

Policy Development and Implementation:

Governments can develop and enforce policies that prioritize WASH in schools, including standards for water quality, sanitation facilities, and hygiene education. Stakeholders, including NGOs and advocacy groups, can work with governments to develop these policies and ensure their effective implementation.

Infrastructure Investment: Governments can allocate funds for the construction and maintenance of water and sanitation facilities in schools. Stakeholders, such as international aid organizations and philanthropic foundations, can provide financial support and technical expertise to improve infrastructure where government resources are limited.

Capacity Building: Governments and stakeholders can invest in training programs for school staff and students on proper hygiene practices, maintenance of facilities, and water treatment methods. This empowers school communities to take ownership of WASH initiatives and sustain them over time.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Governments and stakeholders should establish systems for monitoring the implementation of WASH initiatives in schools, including regular inspections of facilities and water quality testing. This ensures accountability and identifies areas for improvement.

Community Engagement: Governments and stakeholders can involve parents, teachers, and local communities in WASH initiatives, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for maintaining clean and safe school environments.

By collaborating effectively, governments and stakeholders can ensure that schools have access to clean water, adequate sanitation facilities, and hygiene education, promoting the health and well-being of students and staff.

Panelist Four

The Activeness of the Dominant Source of Information for girls regarding MHH (Does the role played effectively by them) ?



Ms. Magdalena Thomas

Gender Equality Youth and Social Inclusive Advisor
Mariestopes

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Panelist Five

How the cost and availability of the menstrual sanitary pads have an effect on AGYW?



Ms. Salha Azizi

Executive Director BintiSalha Foundation

The cost and availability of menstrual sanitary pads can have significant effects on adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in several ways:

Financial Burden: For many AGYW, especially those from low-income households, the cost of menstrual pads can be a significant financial burden. If pads are not affordable, girls may resort to using improvised materials like rags, toilet paper, or even leaves, which are less effective and can lead to discomfort and health risks.

Education: Lack of access to affordable menstrual pads can impact girls' education. Without adequate menstrual hygiene products, girls may miss school during their periods, leading to absenteeism and falling behind in their studies. This can have long-term consequences for their academic performance and future opportunities.

Health Risks: Using unhygienic materials or inadequate menstrual hygiene products can increase the risk of infections and other health problems, including urinary tract infections and reproductive tract infections. This can have serious implications for AGYW's health and well-being.

Psychosocial Impact: The inability to afford menstrual pads can contribute to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and low self-esteem among AGYW. Stigma surrounding menstruation may also discourage girls from seeking support or information about menstrual health and hygiene.

Addressing the cost and availability of menstrual sanitary pads is crucial for promoting the health, education, and well-being of AGYW. Efforts to increase affordability and accessibility of pads through subsidies, distribution programs, and education campaigns can help mitigate the negative effects of menstruation-related challenges on AGYW.

Additionally, promoting sustainable and eco-friendly menstrual hygiene products can contribute to long-term cost savings and environmental sustainability.

Panelist Six

What's the Role of social media as a Source of Information on menstrual health and hygiene?



Ms. Sylvia Mkomwa
Manager Caliber Media and Events

Social media plays a significant role as a source of information on menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) for individuals, particularly for younger generations. Here's how:

Accessibility: Social media platforms provide easy access to a wide range of information on MHH. With just a few clicks, individuals can find articles, videos, and discussions about menstrual health, hygiene practices, and related topics.

Community Building: social media allows individuals to connect with others who share similar experiences and concerns about menstruation. This sense of community can provide support, validation, and encouragement for individuals to openly discuss MHH issues and seek advice from peers.

Education and Awareness: social media can be a powerful tool for raising awareness about menstrual health and hygiene, debunking myths and misconceptions, and promoting evidence-based information. Organizations, influencers, and activists often use social media to disseminate educational content and engage with audiences on MHH topics.

Breaking Stigma: Social media platforms provide a space for challenging menstrual stigma and advocating for menstrual equity and rights. By sharing personal stories, experiences, and advocacy campaigns, individuals and organizations can help normalize conversations about menstruation and combat shame and secrecy surrounding MHH.

Product Promotion and Reviews: Social media influencers and brands often promote menstrual hygiene products and share reviews and recommendations. This can help individuals make informed choices about the types of products that best suit their needs and preferences.

However, it's important to recognize that not all information on social media is accurate or reliable. Individuals should critically evaluate sources and seek information from reputable organizations and experts. Additionally, social media platforms may also perpetuate harmful stereotypes or misinformation about menstruation, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to promote accurate and inclusive MHH education online.

FUNDRAISING

The main target of the HER MOVEMENT MHM GALA 2024 was to conduct fundraising which will support 1000 students to stay at school at the time of their menstrual period. This fundraising will support these young girls to continue with their studies. We have been able to raise 800 sanitary pads which makes a total of 80% of our target. And these sanitary pads will be distributed into two secondary schools in Kisarawe district.



People were contributing on fundraising to reach 1000 pads

AWARDS

As part of commemoration of International Menstrual Hygiene Day, we wanted also to recognise people, organisations who have been in frontline to advocate for menstrual hygiene management in the country, supporting students. We recognised five organisations whom they have been working tirelessly on ensuring that adolescent girls and young women are having menstrual health and hygiene safe and with dignity.

1. **Mariestopes**
2. **Femina Hip**
3. **MHH Coalition Tanzania**
4. **Msichana Initiative**
5. **UN Women**



CLOSING SPEECH FROM THE STUDENT FROM KIMANI SECODARY WHO CAME TO REPRESENT HER FELLOW STUDENTS



Dear guests, stakeholders, and friends of HER Movement Tanzania,

I am very happy to stand before you once again, thanking you for your sincere participation and support you have shown in our safe menstruation (MHH) fundraising event.

We are here today because we believe in the importance of providing a safe and respectful environment for all girls and women. Through your donations and support, we can achieve our goal of ensuring that every girl can study without the restrictions caused by menstruation.

As we heard today, many girls face many challenges that affect their education and health. HER Movement Tanzania is proud to be part of the solution by providing menstrual products, building WASH facilities, and providing proper education about menstrual health.

As we close this event, I want to thank again all our stakeholders, including UN Women, BintiSalha, Marie Stopes, and Her Initiative, for their great support. Together, we can make a big difference in the lives of we, Tanzanian girls and women.

Thank you very much for your time, for your contributions, and for your helpful spirit. I pray that we continue to cooperate for a better future for all girls.

Thank you and I wish you the very best of lucky in your day-to-day engagement.

POST GALA ACTIVITY

As the main target of the GALA was to fundraise for sanitary pads, we were able to successful had 80% of the target we had. We were able to collect 800 sanitary pads (disposable and 5 re-usable pads).

We started our journey to Kisarawe district on 30th of May 2024 went to distribute the sanitary pads to srudents in two secondary schools.

It was a very successful journey as we met the executive director of Kisarawe District who also shared her blessings before heading to the schools. But also we had a prevalage of meeting the district commissioner of Kisarawe Hon, Fatma Almas Nyan-gasa. We had a very powerful conversation with her and promised to continue supporting our initatives in Kisarawe District. Also she was proposing if we can also design some capacity building trainings to empower Adolescent girls and young women in kisarawe district.





OUR FUTURE PLANS

To continue engage and support these students and we are looking forward to expand areas of support as our mission is to empower young girls and women to achieve safe and dignified menstrual health and hygiene.

OUR PARTNERS





LEYLA JUMA COORDINATOR

- +255 (0) 689 949 017
- info@hermovementtz.org
- www.hermovementtz.org

GET IN TOUCH

- her movement_Tz
- hermovement_Tz