



Rural Village Water Resources Management Project Phase III

Dignified Menstruation Management Musical Campaign 2022



Campaign Report

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1 Background

Menstruation-related discrimination is practiced in some way in most of Nepal. The discriminatory practices are often called Chhaupadi or Chhau/Chhui. The most common manifestation of Chhaupadi taboos is that women are restricted from entering temples or kitchens during their menstrual period. However, in Sudurpaschim and Karnali provinces, Chhaupadi is practiced in a severe form. This means that while menstruating women traditionally need to sleep outside of their homes in separate sheds (Chhau hut) or with cattle. Hygiene conditions in the sheds are often deplorable, and due to lack of knowledge or poverty, women don't have clean sanitary pads or cloths. In many cases, women are not allowed to use the toilet or tap, or to bathe, and they are compelled to practice open defecation/urination. They also can't eat milk or curd or nutritious food in general and are considered literally 'untouchable'. Basically, women are excluded from society. Many women have lost their lives or are suffering from health issues due to Chhaupadi taboos, and their social dignity suffers due to these practices.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) are at the core of RVWRMP interventions. Ensuring proportional participation in trainings is key for successful interventions. Focused actions include organising Women as Decision-Makers workshops and supporting RM Gender and Disability Responsive Planning.



RVWRMP is a key promoter of Dignified Menstruation Management (DMM) in Sudurpaschim and Karnali provinces. DMM awareness raising is included in Total Sanitation campaigns and trainings. The Project has also supported Menstruation Hygiene Management (MHM) and sanitary pad-making trainings, improving community knowledge on health and hygiene issues. RVWRMP has worked as a platform to initiate discussions on Chhaupadi and menstruation related taboos, bringing community people together and providing the opportunity and encouragement for everyone to voice their opinions. An online workshop was held with municipal representatives, RVWRMP staff and local schoolgirls, to discuss problems faced at local levels. In that workshop, two local celebrity signers participated and encouraged the girls to talk openly. The Project has organised specific sasu-buhari workshops, where mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law can discuss these topics to bridge generational gaps.

RVWRMP has worked with local religious leaders to change attitudes. One key intervention has been the introduction of private tap water supply schemes, which have given households the chance to take care of hygiene aspects privately and have significantly changed household practices. RVWRMP has raised awareness by celebrating national and international campaigns, such as the 16-days campaign against gender-based violence and international and national menstrual hygiene days. Project staff have regularly attended meetings of the Menstrual Hygiene and Hygiene Management Partner's Alliance (MHM PA) to report progress and discuss challenges and opportunities.



In February 2020, RVWRMP conducted a workshop on Dignified Menstruation Management (DMM) with Project working area vice chairs. The aim was to identify major issues related to menstruation practises, establish effective information and learning sharing, as well as commit to key action points. As a result, the eight-point “Dhangadhi Declaration” for Dignified Menstruation Management was agreed (Annex 1). During the workshop, gender responsive plans, formulated through Women as Decision Makers workshops, were reviewed. A seven-step planning process for gender responsive activities at local level was also agreed. The use of judiciary committees to settle DMM related issues and the role of WASH Boards was discussed.

In November 2021, the Dhangadhi Declaration on DMM was revisited with a new workshop held in Dhangadhi, with 16 core RM vice chairs from Sudurpaschim being present. Progress was reviewed and a joint strategy for DMM was agreed and signed. The key idea was to create a regional alliance or network of the MHM PA in Sudurpaschim and Karnali provinces. The alliance could supplement the national MHM PA by dealing with local challenges. One organisation in the alliance would act as a rotating secretariat for a certain time.

Another idea presented by RVWRMP was to appoint a local female celebrity from Sudurpaschim as a DMM Goodwill Ambassador. The Ambassador could work as a key agent of change to trigger people on DMM at a local (RM) level, by performing concerts in communities and schools. With RVWRMP ending in 2022, it was decided to initiate the campaign quickly to test the concept. An ambassador was recruited for an initial period of five months to conduct one musical campaign facilitated by the Project.



2 DMM Musical Campaign

The objective of the musical campaign was to raise awareness on Dignified Menstruation Management and lessen the impact of harmful menstruation practises among community members of all ages in the RVWRMP working area. The campaign was planned and supported together with participating eight Rural Municipalities (RM) and their staff and conducted by RVWRMP. Participants were interviewed in all the RMs to study the impact of the campaign.

Ms. Rekha Joshi, a popular Deuda singer originally from Bajura, was chosen as the DMM Ambassador. Her familiarity with Chhaupadi taboos, local contextual knowledge and popularity in Sudurpaschim were key aspects to the decision to appoint her. As noted above, already in March 2021, a virtual talk show was organised by RVWRMP with Ms. Joshi to discuss menstruation challenges with local schoolgirls. The success of the event verified the qualifications of Ms. Joshi as a fitting representative and ambassador for Sudurpaschim.

The campaign was divided into two parts. The first part was conducted between 23.2.-9.3.2022 and the second part from 30.5.-4.6. The participating RMs in the first part were Alital, Bogatan Phudsil, Chhabis Pathibhera, Pancheshwar, Shivanath and Thalara. For the second part the participating RMs were Ramaroshan and Turmakhad. The campaign was combined with relevant events in the RMs, such as Total Sanitation and 3-Star School declarations. In addition to the performances, FM radio interviews with the DMM Ambassador were conducted in Dadeldhura and Baitadi. Campaign tools included singing, poetry, speeches, community interactions, interviews, TV and radio reporting as well as the use of social media. Approximately 8 000 participants attended the first part and about 3 000 participants the second part of the campaign.



All participating RMs prepared extensive cultural programmes to complement the musical campaign. The events were attended by high-ranking RM staff who made DMM and sanitation related commitments. Local and provincial news were interested in the event and produced 15 articles and two news segments. Six local FM radio channels spread related messages and news from the event. During the event, RVWRMP compiled two videos from the DMM campaign and actively posted news and stories in social media. The videos have attracted a substantial number of views.

Results and learnings from the campaign as well as the videos were showcased on a national level during the Menstrual Hygiene Day celebrations in Kathmandu in May 2022 organised by the MHM PA. Regular updates of progress have been shared with MHM PA in their monthly meetings. Finally, a music video on Chhaupadi was produced by Ms. Joshi and supported by RVWRMP to conclude the campaign.

3 Learnings from the Campaign

3.1. Interactive sessions

Interactive sessions with schoolgirls were one of the major segments of the programme. Young girls were motivated to discuss menstruation practices thanks to facilitation by Ms. Joshi. The situation of restrictions for menstruating women and girls were discussed. Updates include:

- Toilets can be used by in all households, but public tap use is limited.
- Milk and curd are provided only in a few households.
- There are no more Chhau huts, but separate rooms in the house are often managed
- Entering the kitchen or temples is not common
- No restrictions to go to school
- MHM support is provided in schools

Girls were found willing and eager to talk about menstruation openly. Especially the young generation was committed to oppose menstruation-related taboos and Chhaupadi practises thanks to regular campaigning in schools and communities.

3.2. Participant Interviews

A total of 22 interviews were carried out with both men and women of different ages in all participating eight Rural Municipalities. The age variance of the interviewees was between 15-60 with the average age being 32. The questionnaire contained five questions.

Q1: What message did you receive from the campaign?

In general, all participants agreed that the campaign was about awareness raising, with the key message being the importance of behaviour change on menstruation related discrimination. Participants indicated the need to stop wrongful practices and enhance dignity and equality. The idea of using singing to convey messages was commended.

Q2: What is the importance of such a campaign for DMM?

Most participants hoped that the campaign would raise awareness and bring change to their communities. Girls believed that the campaign would help people understand that menstruation is a natural process. They hoped that older generations would understand that the practices were harmful and wrong. Men remarked on the importance of such a campaign to hygiene and sanitation in general. One respondent felt the campaign was very impactful thanks to its wide reach and large number of participants. Women felt that the campaign was very important for reducing menstruation taboos, supporting equality and reducing gender-based violence.

Q3: How was the performance of Rekha Joshi (DMM Ambassador)? Evaluation score 1-10?

Most participants (71%) stated that the performance was excellent. The rest considered it good or relevant. The average score was 8.9 (19 answers).

Q4: Do you think the Chhaupadi behaviour is beneficial or not? What further need to eradicate it?

Regarding Chhaupadi behaviour, almost all girls agreed that the Chhaupadi practices are harmful. One mentioned that it does give girls some privacy when they are separated, which can be positive, but on the other hand it is very difficult for nutrition and hygiene. All men agreed that the Chhaupadi practices are harmful. Women gave mixed responses. Most agreed that the practices are harmful and there should be more emphasis on awareness raising and hygiene. However, some felt that there were benefits to the

practise as well, such as not having to do hard work like water fetching. All the respondents who considered the practises even somewhat beneficial felt that they should be improved, for example through safer shelters, nutritious food and dignified behaviour.

When asked about ways to eradicate Chhaupadi behaviour, girls agreed that it should be stopped. They felt that more awareness raising activities are needed and changes should happen in homes. Men felt that Chhaupadi should be removed gradually starting from household and community level. Women mentioned that mother's groups should be active to make changes.

Q5: How do such campaigns help change harmful behaviour?

Girls felt that such campaigns enhance awareness raising. One mentioned benefit was that these campaigns are effective to reach all age groups and all family members. It was also noted that it is difficult to raise awareness in general. Men felt that the campaign had enhanced awareness raising and commended the fact that it was in local language. One man felt that the effects of the campaign did not reach homes. Women felt that such campaigns help reduce bad practises and share understanding of the reality. They mentioned specific benefits in households and communities, like old beliefs disappearing, safer shelters as well as improved sanitation and hygiene.

3.3. Key informant interviews

In addition to the participant interviews, four key informant interviews were conducted after the campaign, in June and July 2022. The interviewees were Ms. Joshi, two participating vice chairs and a representative from the MHM PA.

Interview with Rekha Joshi, DMM Goodwill Ambassador (14.6.2022)

Q1. How do you feel about the DMM Campaign

This was the first such experience for me on DMM. It has taught me a lot of the situation of menstruation management in Sudurpaschim. I found the situation to be better than it was before. I found the young generation, especially adolescent girls, to be committed to accelerate the campaign.

Q2. How did it go? Was it successful?

The campaign was successful. I believe that my singing and interaction have contributed raise awareness on DMM. I found that especially the young generation was strongly in favour of our views on DMM. Audiences were emotional while singing Chhaupadi related songs.

Q3. What should be done next for DMM?

The nationwide situation should be assessed by all three tiers of government (national, provincial and local) as well as other stakeholders. They must make a clear action plan to address the issues. The concept of DMM ambassador should be continued and provincial alliances formed and activated.

Interview with Bimala Shahi, Turmakhand RM Vice Chair (21.6.2022)

Q1. How do you feel about the DMM Campaign?

The idea of the DMM Musical Campaign is great! It allowed women to gather for a thematic programme that was not just political like usually. It brought people from remote areas together in one place and gave an opportunity to disseminate DMM messages through music.

Q2. How did the programme go? Was it successful?

The programme was very successful with large masses attracted to participate. It was peacefully completed and both male and female participants realised the harmfulness of Chhaupadi practices. The involvement of the local celebrity singer made it more fruitful.

Q3. What should be done next for DMM?

This type of programme should be continued in remote and selected areas where the need is big. At the same time, it is important to disseminate such messages not only in RM and District headquarters, but also in wards. These messages contribute to cross-cutting issues and are relevant for all kinds of events, trainings and workshops on any level.

Interview with Bina Bhatta, Pancheswor RM Vice Chair (29.6.2022)

Q1. How do you feel about the DMM Campaign?

The musical campaign was effective and fruitful. It has triggered the thinking of elderly people. Some of them mentioned that menstruation related taboos are a barrier for career development. Ms. Joshi is a good example, as she would probably not be successful if she had had to follow Chhaupadi. The young generation seems encouraged to convince the older generation not to follow harmful practises. Girls are interested to continue the campaign thanks to Ms. Joshi.

Q2. How did the programme go? Was it successful?

The Rural Municipality Executive is motivated to continue such a campaign. It should be regularly conducted for more impact. We are ready to allocate more budget for future campaigns.

Q3. What should be done next for DMM?

In our RM, the Executive has put DMM as a key focus point in our policy and programme. We want to have an impact on this point.

Interview with MHM PA representative Guna Raj Shrestha 18.7.2022

Q1. What do you think of the DMM Campaign conducted by RVWRMP? Should it be replicated?

Music is one of the strong tools in remote areas for disseminating messages. Deuda is very popular in Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces. Intended messages for menstruation in the local songs and dialects, specially through the Deuda musical campaign must hence be effective. However, other dialects also need to be explored in the future. As to replicate in other provinces, musical campaign might be useful but it must be in local dialects. Also, multiple artists should be chosen. MHM PA has already approached to very renown singers Prakash Saput and Keki Adhikari (national MHM goodwill ambassadors) for songs in Nepali dialects with a consideration that such music campaign can be effective in social behavior change.

Q2. What are the next steps for DMM in Sudurpaschim and / or national level? Can MHM PA Support?

MHM PA has a plan of establishing provincial level MHM PA in all seven provinces of Nepal. The SUSWA Project has already facilitated to establish Karnali alliance. MHM PA will soon facilitate to establish such provincial level alliance in Sudurpaschim. MHM PA plans to facilitate drafting provincial level DMM policy and develop human resource on DMM in each province in the next one to two years.

Q3. Will the MHM PA support the continuation of the DMM Ambassador Concept?

MHM PA plans to continue Rekha Joshi as Goodwill ambassador of Sudurpaschim for next one year and mobilize her for musical campaign. The concept of provincial level goodwill ambassador is highly appreciable and hence MHM PA plans to appoint provincial level goodwill ambassador in each province in the coming years. The concept of national level goodwill ambassador will continue at the national level.

4 Impact of the Campaign

The DMM Musical Campaign reached a wide range of people in remote locations of Sudurpaschim province. The associated visibility work, such as news, videos and radio shows, helped spread DMM messages even further. Having a local celebrity, Ms. Joshi as the figurehead for the campaign, with first-hand knowledge of the situation and challenges was crucial for its success.

Results from the participant interviews show that generally all groups (men, women and girls) felt that the campaign was a successful tool for awareness raising. The campaign reached men and women of all ages, bridging generational gaps and helping bring families together. Ms. Joshi's performance as well as the manner of disseminating important messages through music was highly praised. All groups agreed that Chhaupadi practises are harmful, and they should be ended. However, the younger generation of girls was more ready to act and more hopeful of changes happening compared to the older generations.

Key informants agreed that the DMM Musical Campaign was very successful. RM representatives were content that many women and men from different age groups were drawn to the event, increasing impact. The selection of a local celebrity with contextual knowledge of the situation was praised. The RM representatives agreed on a need for more such campaigns and were ready to commit to supporting them. DMM Ambassador, Ms. Joshi was happy of the success of the campaign and her own increased capacity in sharing related messages. She urged all government levels to realise the severity of Chhaupadi and formulate clear plans to address the issues.

To share the success of the campaign, RVWRMP participated in the national Menstrual Hygiene Day event in Kathmandu in May 2022. The event was jointly organised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and MHM PA. Two representatives from RVWRMP as well as the DMM Ambassador attended the event, presenting results from the campaign as well as other related work and impact in Sudurpaschim and Karnali provinces. The campaign and DMM Ambassador concept were enthusiastically received, with approximately 150 visitors to the RVWRMP booth.



Finally, the DMM Musical Campaign inspired Ms. Joshi to produce a music video on the topic, titled Chhaupadiko Bedana: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu3ZyCoYpjw>. At the time of writing this report, the music video coupled with other RVWRMP produced videos from the campaign have reached over 100 000 views in social media platforms.

5 Way forward

The DMM Musical Campaign, spearheaded by a local celebrity and publicised extensively in social media, proved to be an effective way to disseminate menstruation related messages to both men and women of different ages in remote areas of Nepal. This first successful campaign serves as a proof of concept that can be used as a steppingstone for similar campaigns in Sudurpaschim and other provinces.

Unified and concentrated effort is still needed throughout Nepal to eradicate harmful Chhaupadi practises. RVWRMP urges for the formation of provincial partnerships dedicated to this cause, supported by national and regional stakeholders. Such partnerships can efficiently coordinate actions with tailored solutions for different societal contexts.

The partnership with Ms. Rekha Joshi, renown local singer in Sudurpaschim was key to the success of the campaign. The presence of a local figurehead brought a lot of visibility to the campaign and people travelled long distances to hear what she had to say. One impact of the campaign was the capacitation of Ms. Joshi for community awareness raising related to DMM. Her tour in the RMs made her more aware of the situation and motivated to use her standing to improve things quickly.

RVWRMP and MHM PA agree on the importance of regional partnerships and local figureheads for DMM. MHM PA is dedicated to establishing partnerships in all seven provinces of Nepal, with the Karnali chapter already formed. The DMM Ambassador concept will be continued in Sudurpaschim as well as started in other provinces, supported by national figureheads.

RVWRMP is grateful for the support of all stakeholders, especially the RMs for the success of the DMM Musical Campaign. The results of the DMM Musical Campaign will be disseminated in final reporting as well as learning and sharing workshops. The effects of this work will be felt for a long time.



Annex 1: Dhangadhi Declaration on DMM

Unofficial Translation for internal use of RVWMRP

DHANGADHI DECLARATION ON DIGNIFIED MENSTRUATION MANAGAEMENT

(Vice-Chairs' DMM Workshop, 11th February 2020)

Clause 38 of Constitution of Nepal, 2015 has ensured the equal lineage right, the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health, and the right against physical, mental, sexual, psychological or other form of violence or exploitation on grounds of religion, social, cultural tradition, practice or on any other grounds. The Criminal code (act), 2019 has prohibited any kind of discrimination and misbehaviour by keeping menstruating women confined in a chhau-hut and punishment is also provisioned for doing so. Similarly, the Local Government Operation Act, 2019 chapter 3, clause 11 has given the right to local government for eradication of social misbeliefs and social malpractices like chhaupadi. Following the provisions of national legislation, and enhancing social development processes in order to support achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, RVWMRP working core RMs vice chairpersons jointly issued a declaration and committed to implement it under their own leadership, with the common slogan of **"Dignified Menstruation Management with Proper Hygiene, Safety and Self-respect"** during the conference conducted on 10 – 11th February 2020 in Dhangadhi, under the chairpersonship of Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality Mayor, and with Sudurpaschim Provincial Assembly Deputy Speaker as chief guest.

1. We commit to declare our RM total sanitized and chhau-hut free within two years, formulating a strategic plan and setting targets through a DMM conference at RM level, fully pursuing the existing act, policy, directives and manuals of federal, provincial and local level in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. We shall coordinate and lobby in a planned way with federal, provincial and local government for required financial resources to implement the DMM campaign under our own leadership, realising that Dignified Menstrual Management is everybody's concern.
3. Considering women and adolescent girls as the key victims of chhaupadi practices, we shall organize campaigns, mobilizing child clubs, adolescent girls' networks and mothers' groups, with participation of schools and leadership of women's groups in an integrated way.
4. To achieve result-orientated and sustainable changes and to establish a totally sanitised community, we shall develop and implement DMM indicators (as sub indicators of total sanitation) for model household, model community, model school and model ward/RM.
5. Considering the total sanitation and DMM campaign as social accountability, self-respect and inevitable factors for sustainable development, we shall develop an "Annual Plan for Total Sanitation and DMM" in each RM and lobby to incorporate it in the policy of the RM for FY 2077/078 with the required financial resources.
6. We shall formulate an information bank of development stakeholders and establish a stakeholders' desk in our RMs. We shall develop a common approach among all stakeholders while implementing DMM and total sanitation campaigns and programs.

7. To share knowledge, experiences and learning of the WASH and DMM sectors, we shall establish a resource centre in our RMs and coordinate with media through interactions, workshops, information management and publications.
8. To implement the DMM campaign effectively, we shall analyse and estimate the required human resources, capacity and formulate strategy to implement it.

The Declaration is signed by following Vice-Chairpersons of Following RMs

Ms. Sarswati Rawal, Ramaroshan, Achham	Ms. Amrita Budha Turmakhand, Achham	Ms. Parwati Rana Dilasaini, Baitadi
Ms. Ms. Bina Bhatta Pancheshwor, Baitadi	Ms. Kushma Chand Shivanath, Baitadi	Ms. Dhanalaxmi Khatri Talkot, Bajhang
Ms. Radhika Kumari Tatala Chhabis Pathibhera, Bajhang	Ms. Gangu Devi Khadayat Thalara, Bajhang	Ms. Sita Thapa Gaumul, Bajura
Ms. Mima Budha Swamikartik Khapar, Bajura	Ms. Kalawati Bhand Ajayameru, Dadeldhura	Mr. Padam Bahadur Bohara Bhageshwor, Dadeldhura
Ms. Jala Kumari Bist Aalital, Dadeldhura	Ms. Chandra Regmi Bhgawatimai, Dailekh	Ms. Padam Kumari Bist Bhairabi, Dailekh
Ms. Amrita Singh Naumule, Dailekh	Ms. Urmila Bohara Apihimal, Darchula	Ms. Bagamati Thagunna Marma, Darchula
Ms. Gauri Devi Thagunna Naugad, Darchula	Ms. Bishna Devi Singh Sayal, Doti	Ms. Bhagawati Devi Bam Bogatan Fudsil, Doti
Ms. Indra Bohara Badikedar, Doti	Ms. Dipa Saud Chure, Kailali	Ms. Puja Devi Budhamagar Mohanyal, Kailali

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