



Community-led Total Sanitation

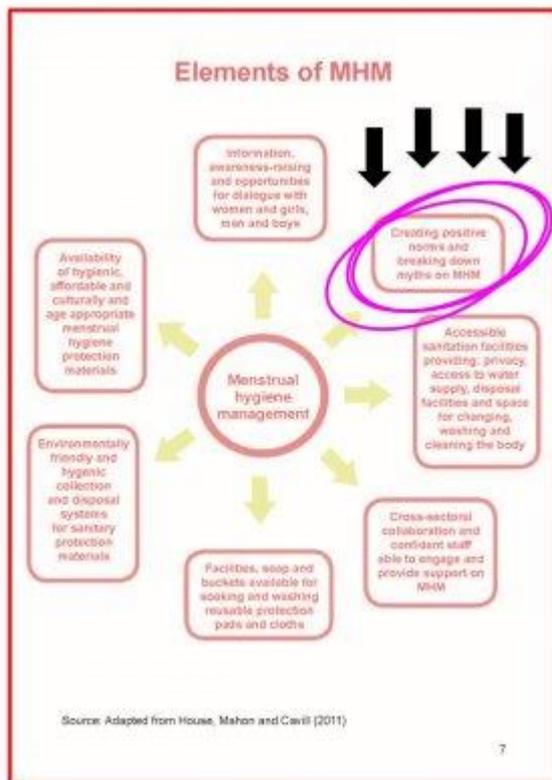
Menstrual hygiene for all! It's time for action!



Menstruation is the most natural thing in the world. Let's face it, without women's menstrual cycles none of us would be here. Yes, maybe take a moment to reflect on this: the bleeding is part of a process that makes new life possible. So how is it that this normal occurrence is still surrounded by much silence, burdened with stigma and made immensely challenging for millions of women in the world? **Take a look at the scale of the problem** Wouldn't it be nice if we no longer needed a special day to raise awareness and menstruation was something that everyone felt comfortable talking about... and even more importantly something that was a beautiful and easy experience for girls and women because they had exactly what they needed to take care of themselves during these days every month!

Alas, because we are not quite there yet, we have **Menstrual Hygiene Day** on the 28th May! So let's make a big noise about how unacceptable the current status quo is and encourage everyone to take appropriate steps to end social stigma, dispel myths and taboos and ensure adequate facilities and products for menstrual hygiene for all! **It's Time For Action!** If you have stories, resources, case studies and other things to share on the topic, let us know! And if you are on social media the following hashtags are suggested for digital campaigning: *#ItsTimeForAction #NoMoreLimits #MHDAY2019* If you are still looking for inspiration for your campaigns, we hope you will find it below! And the **official MH Day website** has a number of **useful campaign materials, posters, visuals etc for free download** to help you with you with your efforts to break the taboo, raise awareness, end stigma, and call for action!

Elements of MHM



Frontiers 6 Breaking the next Taboo: Menstrual Hygiene within CLTS

shared experiences, learning, innovations and recommendations on how to implement and improve menstrual hygiene management in sanitation programmes. On Menstrual Hygiene Day we revisit the Frontiers and zoom in on one of the elements of MHM: **Creating positive norms and breaking down myths on MHM**. Of course this involves first of all breaking the silence and absence of conversation around the topic. As we have learned from CLTS (and elsewhere), simply giving people **facts and figures** and appealing to their mind to understand why something should be done differently is mostly not very successful. Education is only one aspect of the solution. So how do we engage differently with this subject. How do we

bring the reality of what menstruation, menstrual hygiene and the associated challenges look like into the public domain and into the awareness of everyone: from girls and women themselves to the boys and men in their communities to leaders and decision-makers at all levels? We all know the saying *A picture speaks a thousand words* and CLTS has shown us the power of the visual in triggering strong reactions and action for change. So in this vein we dedicate this Menstrual Hygiene Day newsletter to sharing some of the potent visual ways- art, photography, cartoons, movies and more- that are challenging the status quo on menstruation by breaking the silence, dispelling myths and envisioning a different world for millions of girls and women around the globe!

Powerful images: breaking the silence, challenging norms



Imagery can aim to shock and disrupt existing ways of looking at an issue and bring taboo subjects, normally hidden and shamed, out into the open. An example is the US-based poet, illustrator and artist Rupri Kaur whose **photo series 'period'** aimed to "to challenge a taboo, tell a story without the use of words."

Other images document the hidden but widespread challenges many girls and women around the world face when it's their time of the month. **When I have my period I am not allowed to** shows the photographic diary of girls in

Nepal's Sindhuli district who were given cameras by WaterAid to make visible the restrictions imposed on them during their period. Poulomi Basu's work **A Ritual of Exile: Blood speaks** also reveals in photography and film the "social, emotional and physical consequences of normalised violence against women perpetrated under the guise of tradition." Read Rose George's *Blood Speaks* to find out more about the taboos surrounding menstruation in Nepal and Bangladesh and how they impact girl's health and wellbeing.

With the aim of seeing "no girl feeling ashamed of her body" anymore, Aditi Gupta and her husband are **fighting period stigma one cartoon at a time** in India. The Menstrupedia comic is a great example of using visual storytelling to make information available to girls in accessible fun ways and open up the conversation around periods. In the African context, the **Grow and Know books** developed by Dr Marni Sommer through participatory research with adolescent girls in Tanzania provide colourful, picture-based content on menstruation, MHM and puberty.



Photography and art can also serve as a potent tool to reclaim and create positive social norms around menstruation. On Instagram there are now many accounts dedicated to the reclaiming menstruation as powerful and positive- if you are on Instagram, search for example for **#periodpositive #periodart**. And in February this year, Plan International, as part of their **Act for girls campaign** succeeded with their **efforts to get a period emoji** included in the popular set of symbols that have fast become a global language on social media and on phones everywhere.

Are you aware of creative, provocative, educational, awareness raising images in your country context?

Photo competition

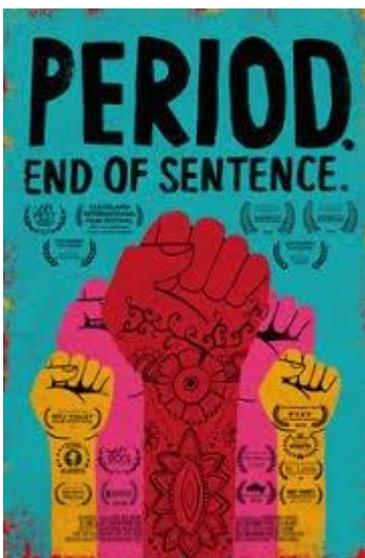


Given the power of images to grab attention and communicate complex issues, we would like to invite you to submit your own photographs on the subject of menstruation and menstrual hygiene. In this photo competition we are looking for any of the following:

- examples of menstrual hygiene management related activities and programmes
- photos that highlight good practice or depict innovative programming
- pictures that challenge taboos, myths and barriers around menstruation
- images that create positive norms around menstruation and MHM

[Read more about his competition and how to enter here](#)

Breaking the taboo: movies about menstruation

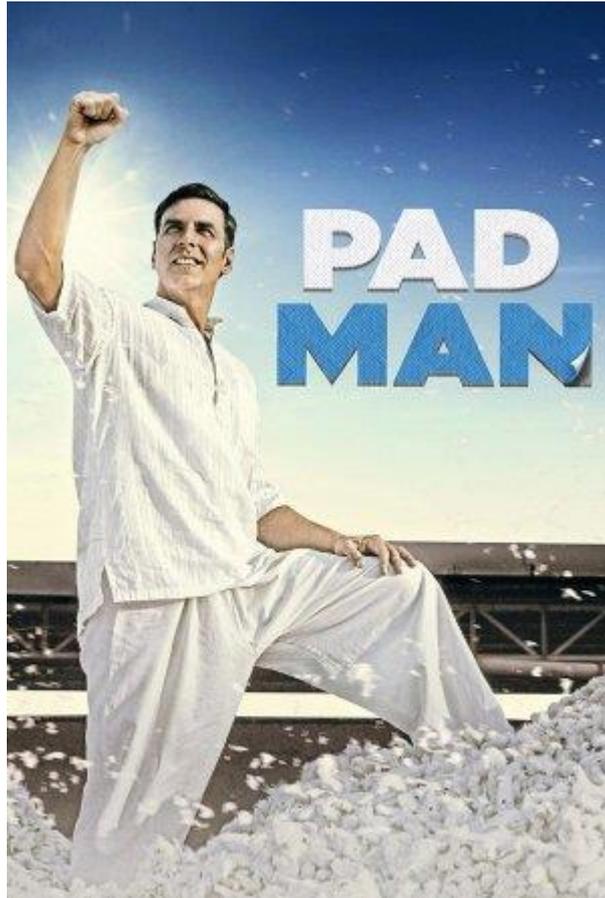


Talk of menstruation is slowly making it into the mainstream. In the last few years, particularly in India, menstruation made it onto the big screen with documentaries and films alike. Evidence of slow change in breaking the silence surrounding the issue, we hope! Take a look at the movies below:

The Oscar-winning documentary **[Period: end of sentence](#)** is about a group of women in a rural village in India who band together to install and operate a sanitary pad-making machine, combating the crushing stigma of menstruation, improving accessibility of sanitary products, and discovering newfound independence and hope for a better future. You can read more about this group of women from Uttar Pradesh in this **[Times of India article](#)**.

Two films focus on Arunachalam Muruganatham, a school dropout from a poor family in southern India, who has revolutionised

menstrual health in developing countries by inventing a simple machine to make low cost sanitary towels. Cultural condemnation, lack of awareness, and the domination of the feminine hygiene market by expensive Western products, have resulted in a situation where just one in ten Indian women use sterilized pads. After discovering his wife's basic and inadequate means of managing her periods, Arunachalamhe started a quest to produce low cost sanitary towels for rural Indian women. Initially shunned as a pervert, he is now being hailed as a visionary hero around the world. **Pad Man** is a dramatised Bollywood style account of this story. A documentary called **Menstrual Man: Venturing where few men dare** and a **TEDX Talk** by the real 'menstrual man' are also available.



Slightly older but nevertheless worth seeing is **The Moon Inside You**. This documentary is a fresh look at a taboo that defines the political and social reality of both women and men in a more profound way than society might be willing to admit. Facing the menstrual etiquette with doses of humour and self-irony, the documentary approaches the subject through both personal and collective references, challenging our preconceived idea of womanhood.

And last but not least, take a look at the trailer for **My Time**, a short film about a girl who gets her first period at school.

And finally... a short history of menstruation in the modern age



Do you know when menstrual pads were invented? Or that menstrual cups have been around for over 80 years? Are you aware that in many countries around the world, there is a tax on tampons and other menstrual hygiene products- do you know which two countries abolished this tax in 2018? **Take a look at some interesting events along the timeline of the history of menstrual hygiene.**

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