

# Status of Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management among Adolescent Girls in Nepal

## Brief description of study

A survey on Status of Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management among Adolescent Girls in Nepal was conducted in all seven provinces of Nepal. The survey assessed knowledge, attitude and practice and psychosocial well-being of adolescent girls (10-19 years) in menstrual hygiene management. The study also explored the experiences of differently abled adolescent girls with regard to menstruation. Field work and data collection was conducted in Oct-Dec 2019.

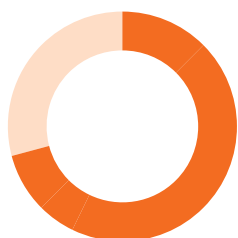
## Methods

The sample size for this cross-sectional survey was calculated considering the prevalence of psychosocial problems among adolescents (P) to be 30%, allowable error (L) to be 5% and Z value to be 1.96, design effect of 1.5 and adding 5% non-response. This gave a sample size of 340, the sample size per province was 510 and a total sample size across the country was 3570. With a plan to consider 35 participants from each selected primary sampling unit (PSU). 15 schools per province were selected randomly which gave a total of 105 PSUs in each province. Therefore, a total sample size of 525 in each province and 3675 across the country was considered to be taken for this study. Adopted version of MR-SSS (menstrual related stress and self-efficacy) tool was used to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice and psychosocial well-being of adolescent girls. All participants were interviewed after obtaining informed consent. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Nepal Health Research Council.

## Key Findings

### KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION

01



71.7%



OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS KNEW ABOUT MENSTRUATION BEFORE MENARCHE

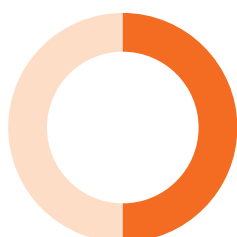


SUDURPASCHIM

PROVINCE WITH LEAST KNOWLEDGE (47.4%)



02



50%



OF THE ADOLESCENT GIRLS HAD NO IDEA ABOUT THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MENSTRUATION AND PREGNANCY.



My mother came to know on her own and asked me, still I felt uncomfortable telling her. I shared it with her only on my second menstruation cycle.

- Adolescent girl,  
Sankhuwasabha, Province I

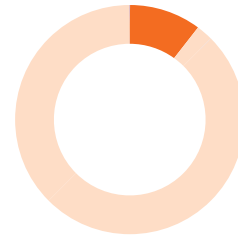
03



59.2%



MORE THAN HALF OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS KNEW CHAUPADI IS **ILLEGAL**



10%



SAID IT IS **LEGAL** AND REST DID NOT KNOW

04



**MOTHERS** WERE THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF INFORMATION AS WELL AS PROVIDING GUIDANCE AT FIRST MENSTRUATION, FOLLOWED BY ELDER SISTERS

05



ADOLESCENT GIRLS FELT MOST COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT MENSTRUATION WITH **MOTHERS, FRIENDS** AND **ELDER SISTER**.

06

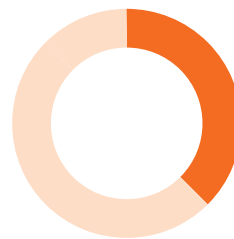


36%



REPORTED **FEELING SCARED** FIRST MENSTRUATION

07



38.4%

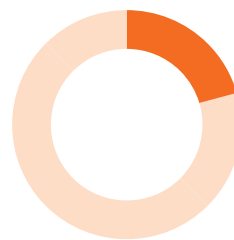


ADOLESCENT GIRLS HAD TALKED OR DONE ANYTHING AGAINST RESTRICTIONS AT **HOME**

08



IF THERE WERE NO RESTRICTIONS, ADOLESCENT GIRLS PREFERRED MOST TO **TAKE BATH, EAT DAIRY PRODUCTS** AND **SLEEP IN THE SAME BED AS BEFORE** WHILE THEY LEAST PREFERRED TO **ENGAGE IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**.



21.2%



ADOLESCENT GIRLS HAD TALKED OR DONE ANYTHING AGAINST RESTRICTIONS AT **COMMUNITY**

## PRACTICES

### Menstrual hygiene management practices

01

Restrictions during menstruation



79.1%



WITH REGARD TO **RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**



**51.9%** IN HOUSEHOLD CHORES

**46.1%** IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

**36.95%** IN PERSONAL ACTIVITIES



"(Sad face) we can't be involved in Bhai-Tika, which only happens once a year. I feel very disappointed. I feel like crying. My mother scolds me saying why I have to have my period during festivals. She wishes to send me off to another house by marrying early therefore she doesn't have to deal with it. That makes me feel bad and it hurts."

- Out-of-school adolescent girl, Jajarkot, Karnali Province

02



**51.2%**



OF ALL GIRLS USED DISPOSABLE SANITARY PADS



**37.7%**



OF ALL GIRLS USED REUSABLE SANITARY PADS

03



**65%**



OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS WERE HAPPY WITH THE MATERIAL



**20.9%**



SAID THEY WOULD PREFER A DIFFERENT MATERIAL

04



**42.6%**



OF THE GIRLS CHANGED PADS 3 OR MORE TIMES A DAY

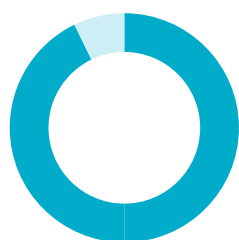
**39.7%**

OF GIRLS CHANGED TWICE A DAY

**11.9%**

OF GIRLS CHANGED ONCE A DAY

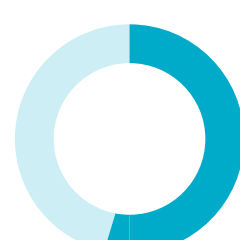
05



**92.9%**



WERE ABLE TO CHANGE SANITARY MATERIALS AS OFTEN AS NECESSARY AT HOME



**55.2%**



WERE ABLE TO CHANGE SANITARY MATERIALS AT SCHOOL. REASONS FOR OTHERS NOT BEING ABLE TO CHANGE WERE: UNAVAILABILITY OF DISPOSAL MECHANISM (29.1%), EMBARRASSED (25.9%), NOT ENOUGH MATERIAL (23.9%).



If my clothes get wet, I put it in my pocket and bring it home. I also wear it until it is worn out or if it's no longer in use, I burn it too or some time I throw it in the river.

- Adolescent girl, Jajarkot, Karnali Province

06

46.6%



GIRLS HAD ACCESS TO **TOILETS** FOR CLEANING PURPOSE

37.7%



WENT TO **WELL/TAPS**

15.6%



WENT TO **RIVER/PONDS**

93.7%



HAD ACCESS TO **SOAP** FOR WASHING AND IT WAS ALMOST THE SIMILAR ACROSS ALL PROVINCES

92%



WASHED AND DRIED SANITARY MATERIALS IN **SUNLIGHT** BUT AWAY FROM OTHERS VIEW

54.1%



OF THE GIRLS TOOK A **BATH DAILY**

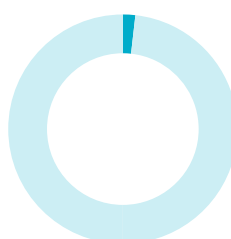
07



60.5%



GIRLS COULD EASILY ACCESS WASHING PLACE (**<15 MINS**)



1.8%



HAD TO WALK **MORE THAN ONE HOUR**

08



DISPOSAL MECHANISM OF USED SANITARY MATERIALS WAS **BURYING AND BURNING**

09



PLACE FOR CHANGING SANITARY MATERIALS WERE **TOILETS** FOLLOWED BY **BED ROOM**. MAJORITY OF GIRLS STATED THAT THE PLACE FOR CHANGING ARE **CLEAN**, **PRIVATE** AND **SAFE**.

10



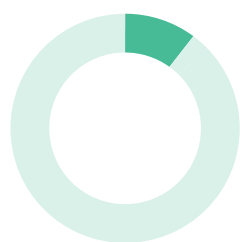
26.7%



GIRLS MISSED **SCHOOL** IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS WITH **DYSMENORRHEA** BEING THE HIGHEST REASON

## Practices around Chaupadi

01



8.7%



OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS  
PRACTICE **CHAUPADI**

0.9% IN PROVINCE 5  
20.5% IN KARNALI  
47.7% IN SUDURPASCHIM

02



THE MAJOR REASON TO FOLLOW  
**CHAUPADI** WAS **FAMILY DECISION**

03



FAMILY MEMBERS WHO  
COMPEL ADOLESCENT GIRLS  
FOR **CHAUPADI** IS **MOTHERS**  
FOLLOWED BY **GRANDPARENTS**  
AND **FATHERS**



Staying and sleeping alone at night in a livestock shed is fearful and frightening. Family members can't even find if anything happens to us when we menstruate and it is a major problem."

- Out of School, Adolescent Girls, Achham, Sudurpaschim Province

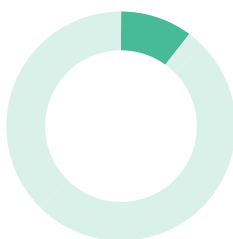
04



75%



OF GIRLS SAID **CHAUPADI**  
IS **BAD**

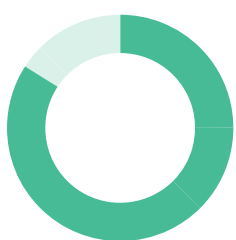


10%



FELT **SACRED** AND  
**ANXIOUS** ABOUT THE  
PROCESS

05



83.9%



OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS  
THINK **CHAUPADI** SHOULD  
NOT BE PRACTICED



22.5%



OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS  
FROM **SUDURPASCHIM**  
THINK THIS SHOULD BE  
**CONTINUED**

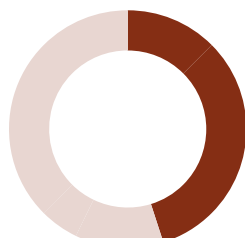
## PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT

01

Secrecy and shame scale



AVERAGE MEAN SCORE



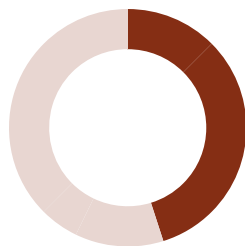
45.2%



OF THE GIRLS RELATED MENSTRUATION  
TO **HIGH SECRECY AND SHAME**

02

## Annoyance scale



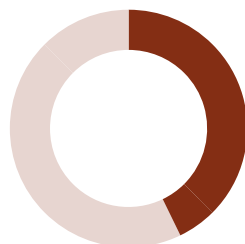
45.4%



OF THE GIRLS EXPERIENCED HIGH LEVELS OF ANNOYANCE

03

## Menstrual stress scale



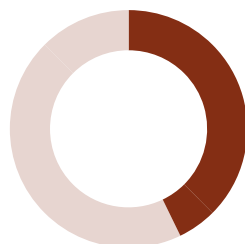
42.5%



OF THE GIRLS EXPERIENCED HIGH MENSTRUAL STRESS

04

## Menstrual self-efficacy scale



42%



OF THE GIRLS EXPERIENCED LOW SELF-EFFICACY

## MENSTRUATION FROM DIFFERENTLY ABLED PERSPECTIVE

Experiences of differently-abled girls varied with the nature of their impairment. Major challenges were



NOT HAVING ACCESS TO **DISPOSABLE SANITARY MATERIALS**



DIFFICULTIES IN **DISPOSAL MECHANISMS**



RELIANCE ON IMMEDIATE **FEMALE FAMILY MEMBERS** FOR CHANGING SANITARY MATERIAL



RELIANCE ON **FEMALE FAMILY MEMBER** TO OBLIGE *CHAUPADI*



ABSENCE OF **DISABLE FRIENDLY WASH FACILITIES** OUTSIDE HOME RESULTING IN THEM STAYING HOME DURING MENSTRUATION



At home, my mother used to wash the used cloth, but in my hostel, I used to wash it with my feet. It is difficult for me. I feel it is difficult to wear a piece of cloth, wash and dry them. There must be a pad. I wish I could use pads so that I don't have to wash clothes.

- Differently-abled Adolescent Girl, Rukum, Karnali Province

I think the distribution of free pads and the availability of disabled-friendly toilets will be helpful.

- Adolescent girl with paraplegia, Kanchanpur, Sudurpaschim Province)

General needs of differently abled adolescent girls were to have access to disposable sanitary materials, disable friendly disposal mechanisms, disable friendly WASH facilities in school, distribution of free pads from government and care and support both at home and school



We have to dwell at chhaupadi hut, Because of my visual impaired during night my sister sleep with me in chhaupadi hut but it is difficult during summer days due to presence of the mosquito so, we light a fire for emitting smoke and sleep.

- Visually impaired adolescent girl, Bajura, Sudurpaschim Province

## Conclusion

- Adolescent girls' knowledge around menstruation is inadequate as one quarter are unaware about menstruation before menarche and one half are unaware of the link between menstruation and pregnancy. This may have direct implications on the level of reproductive health knowledge among adolescent girls and subsequent reproductive health programs.
- Adolescent girls continue to face restrictions during menstruation ranging from restrictions in religious activities, issues of touchability to food consumption. Mothers are the primary source of information and guide for menstrual management as well as major bearers to continue restrictions during menstruation.
- Chaupadi continues to be practiced in three of seven provinces with Sudurpaschim practicing most. Three fourth of adolescent girls know chaupadi is bad but cultural practice is deep rooted.
- Menstruation management among adolescent girls were found to be good: majority had access to disposable sanitary materials, half of the girls were able to change pads thrice or more per day, more than 90% had access to soap for washing and was able to dry menstrual materials, majority had a safe and private place to change. However, home was more comfortable place for menstruation management compared to schools.
- One quarter of girls missed school due to menstruation related issues.
- Menstrual needs of differently abled adolescent girls is largely neglected. Their needs are related to availability of menstrual material and disable friendly WASH beyond home. Their needs are largely fulfilled within household only.
- Majority of girls felt sacred during their first menstruation. Almost half of the girls experienced high menstrual stress, high annoyance and low self-efficacy.

## Recommendation

- Deliberate efforts must be made between the provincial and the local government for formulation of plans, policies and strategies to overcome gaps in the menstrual health and hygiene management directed towards the target group.
- Government should promote sustainable, low cost, affordable and eco-friendly sanitary materials and its distribution to adolescent girls throughout the country.
- Government must intensify monitoring and supervision of MHM related government programs for example, the free pad distribution initiative.
- Government should allocate budget to establish girl-friendly (Chhatra Maitri) schools and take empowerment and engendered approach to capacitate adolescent girls, making them self-concerned and confident to speak up for their own menstrual health needs with everyone at school including male students and teachers.
- Health promotion awareness programs need to prioritize adolescent girls both in school and out-of-school, differently abled adolescent girls and their mothers via FCHVs, mothers' groups and health workers to challenge superstition, myths and ill practices that adversely impact menstrual health.
- Government should take measures for girl friendly and MHM friendly WASH provisions with proper waste disposal facilities in all schools and public places.