

# Menstruation: An urgent call for action for human right, peace, building, empowerment, and sustainable development

Radha Paudel

Anesthetic nurse, activity, author

Founder and President, Action Works Nepal



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
— of the —  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH  
SUPPLIES COALITION

10-14 OCTOBER 2016

#RHSUPPLIES2016



# OUTLINE of Presentation

- Video on Cowshed Practice
- Radha's story
- Forms of Menstrual restrictions
- SDGs and Menstrual Restriction
- Nepal's Constitution: Menstrual Restrictions
- Impact and reason: Menstruation Restriction
- Conclusion



## Video on Menstrual Restriction in Nepal

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/video/2016/apr/01/menstruating-nepalese-women-confined-to-a-cowshed-video>

From Action Works Nepal's work area.

Let's watch the first 56 seconds

# Radha attempted Suicide while she witnessed sets of restrictions on menstruation

Witnessed mother being restricted



Witnessed sisters being abused while living in cowshed



Witnessed Priest purifying women once a year through series of ritual cleansing procedures

## Determined to break these restrictions

- Refused to go to the cowshed
- Did NOT participate at the cleansing ritual
- Violated the cultural "menstrual code"
- Took a lead role while menstruating on mother's death ritual, which should be done by sons only (cultural code: Menstruating women should not be nearby)

# Food Restrictions during Menstruation



- Meat
- Milk and milk products
- Fruits
- vegetables,
- Prasad (offering for god)
- Rice in Karnali
- Pickle in Terai etc.

# Restrictions on TOUCHING during Menstruation



- Any public water source
- Male
- Children below 5yo
- Pregnant
- Faith healers
- Religious books, study materials
- Fruits and vegetable bearing plants and trees
- Foundation of house

# Restrictions on Entering/shelter/joining/ mobility during Menstruation



Any social/cultural  
gatherings: house,  
temple, kitchen,  
school, offices



# Menstrual Restriction and SDGs: Goal # 3,4,5,6,8

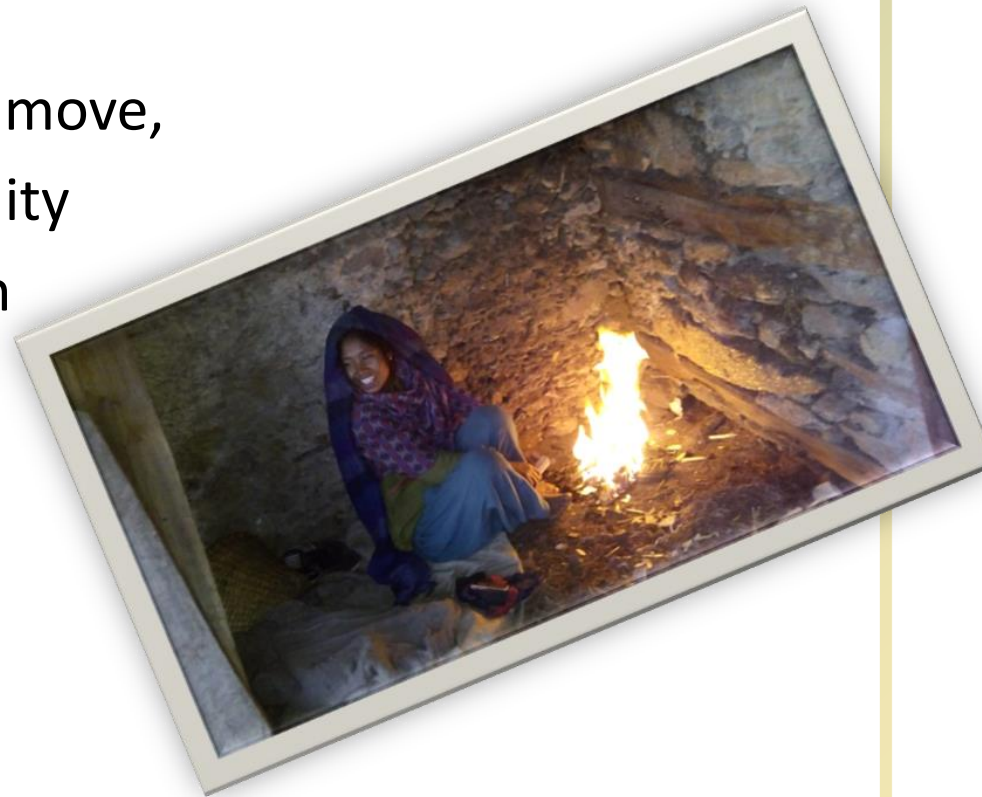
- Goal # 3: Healthy life and promote wellbeing for all ages
- Goal #4: Inclusive and equitable quality education and promote learning opportunities to all
- Goal #5: Gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal#6: Availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal # 8: Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent and their families depend on us and hope we will deliver, but they are growing impatient.



# Nepal's Constitution and Menstrual Restriction

Preamble: Elimination of discrimination..... gender...

- Article 16: Dignity,
- Article 17: Freedom to move,
- Article 24: Untouchability
- Article 29: Exploitation
- Article 30: Health
- Article 35; Housing
- Article 38: Equal Right





# Menstrual Restriction Hits All Aspect of Life

Sustainable Development

Peace

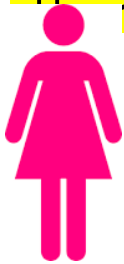


Human Right



Women Empowerment

Power, Gender Inequality, violence, Injustice, Patriarchy, Masculinity



Death

Less income/Poverty

Trauma, shock and suicide

Low Economic opportunities

Deep insight on low status of women

Murder, abuse, rape, killing by wild animals, death due to carbon mono oxide

School droppped out

Infertility

Uterus prolapse +Cancer

School Absent 60 days/year

High Absentism in work

Spontenous Abortions

Chronic Reproductive and Urinary Tract Infections

Stigma and Discrimination at home, school and community

Chronic malnutrition and anaemia

Poor Physical, psychosocial health

Restricted mobility, abstain to join any gathering

Restrictions on food

Restrictions on entering

Restrictions on touching and mobility

# Why Menstrual Restrictions?

**Poor Mindset, Ignorance and Tradition:** NOT considered as everyone's business among donors, human right activists, activists, teachers, health workers, male, etc.

**Stigma, Gender Discrimination and Masculinity:** The menstrual blood considered as bad luck, impure, polluted

**Poverty:** women are economically dependent, products are expensive, which is not the priority in the family, no government subsidies

**Unavailability of Sanitary Products:** limited choice, expensive, no financing opportunities

**Unavailability of toilets with water supply:** Only 37 % toilet coverage (NPC, 2015)

**Policy Attention:** Merely absence, no priority, culture of silence

# Urgent CALL for Action: RHSC

**POLICY REFORM AND ENFORCEMENT:** Research, Training, cross cutting for all development activities, school curriculum, re-write of holy books e.g. Garun puran

**ACCESS TO SUPPLIES** by mobilizing communities in Education, Health, Political Parties, Media, NGOs, Champions

**EDUCATION**  
Empower girls and women by REAL boys+ men-accountability

Menstruation Health is a concern of Human Right, PEACE, Empowerment and Development

Theory of change: holistic approach for redressing the menstrual restriction

The  
Absence  
of WAR  
is not  
PEACE

## CONCLUSION

1. Nepalese are following various forms of Menstrual Restrictions across the globe no matter how much they rich, educated , the geography and so on.
2. It is Everyone's bussiness NOT only women's issue



for achieving SDGs.



#RHSUPPLIES2016