

Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools of Nepal

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Background

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a challenge in developing countries like Nepal. Traditionally, women are not allowed to perform certain activities during menstruation, such as touching senior family members and entering and praying in the temple. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a subject that is taboo in Nepalese society, even among mothers and their girls. Lack of appropriate sanitary installations at homes, but also in schools, hospitals and public places makes it difficult for women to manage menstruation hygienically. Nepal Government's National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan have identified and addressed the need of including MHM facilities in schools (gender-separated and gender-friendly toilets and incinerator) however this Master Plan has not yet been enforced.

In line with SDG target 6.2, Swiss Water and Sanitation Consortium (Consortium) partner organizations are promoting MHM in schools. The program includes MHM training for girls and, teachers, sanitary pad managed by the school, incinerators in school toilets for safe waste disposal. The Consortium partners, Swiss Red Cross, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and Terre des hommes won the Consortium's Global Advocacy Fund (GAF) aimed at boosting advocacy activities. Through the GAF, the Regional Workshop on MHM was organized 5-6 February 2017 in collaboration with the Regional Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee of the Midwestern Region (see Fig 1).

The workshops (Regional and National) brought together a variety of interdisciplinary experts across the Nepal. At the regional workshop 15 key points for MHM were defined: The Dang declaration (http://waterconsortium.ch/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Dang_declaration_MHM_Nepal_2017.pdf). The Dang declaration influenced the national policy for MHM and guided relevant organizations to do MHM related interventions. It also influenced the government to implement the existing MHM guiding instruments/principles.

Key elements for success:

- Coordination among the relevant stakeholders in this MHM issue is very meaningful and collaborative efforts together with Government organizations are being made to address the issue.
- Government, non-government and development partners have been sensitized to the issue of MHM.
- Regional workshop on MHM of Dang raised awareness on MHM among government authorities and other relevant stakeholders.
- Various advocacy workshops (National, Regional and District) on MHM influenced the government to implement MHM related guiding instruments/principles and also draft national policy and new law regarding MHM.
- Engagement of media (radio, newspaper, television) on advocating for MHM also helped to raise awareness throughout the society.



Fig 3: Participants expressed their commitment by signing the Dang Declaration

Lesson learnt and Recommendations:

- MHM requires a holistic multi-sectoral approach including GOs, I/NGOs and development partners to be adequately addressed
- Incorporation of MHM in existing curriculum would be very effective
- Traditional healers and priests should be mobilized to break the social stigma and taboos related to menstruation
- The mass awareness campaign should be continued to break the silence around menstruation
- Continuous joint effort among the government agencies, advocates and development partners is still needed to incorporate the MHM related provisions in the policies and guidelines.



Fig 4: Gender friendly toilet with incinerator attached to the toilet for menstrual waste disposal

Challenges:

- It can be difficult to find a time when all relevant stakeholders are available for discussion and workshop due to their different engagements.
- Social stigma and taboos related to menstruation are barriers for change in the communities and schools.
- Water and sanitation facilities at some schools are insufficient inhibiting proper implementation of MHM in schools.



Fig 5: practicing to prepare re-usable sanitary pad

Conclusions:

Regional workshop of Dang created great momentum to discuss MHM openly between GOs, I/NGOs, CBOs and beneficiaries. **This event with regional and national focus raised awareness among government officials and led to immediate action i.e. drafting of MHM related national policy,** the formation of MHM Practitioner Alliance, conduction of various MHM related campaigns, review of MHM related information in school curriculum etc. Thanks to the MHM advocacy, which made all the stakeholders realize the importance to address this issue and ensure the availability of gender friendly toilet and water access in school according to the guideline of department of education. Continuous joint effort of all stakeholders is needed to complete MHM projects, address the existing gaps in MHM in Nepal and drive MHM policy on national level.



Fig 6: Interaction with government authorities and other stakeholders on the MHM related information in school curriculum

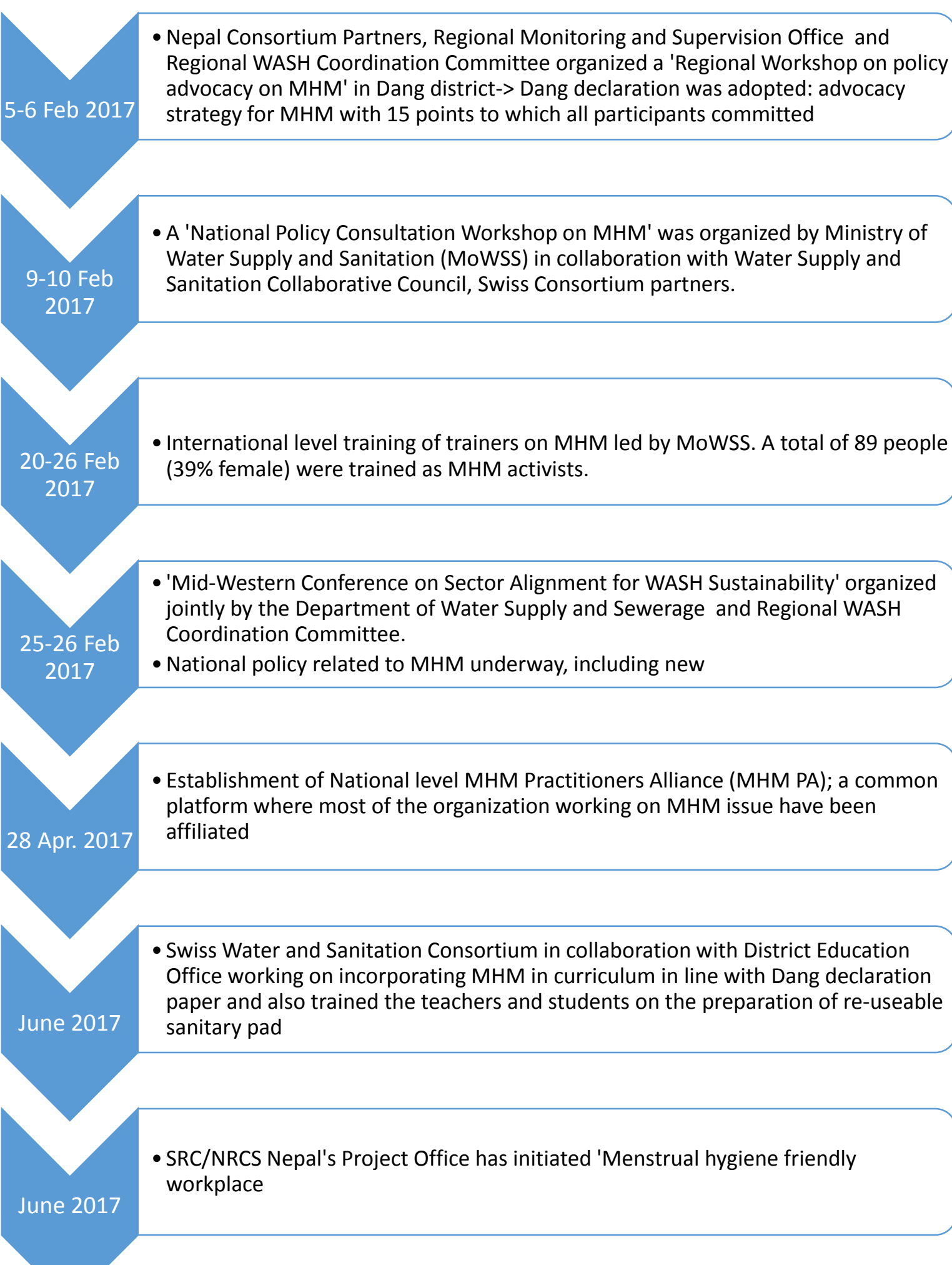


Fig 1: MHM advocacy workshop/events in Nepal supported by the Consortium



Fig 2: Presenting the conclusion of Dang workshop at National policy consultation workshop on MHM

Key roles of Consortium Partners for advocacy on MHM

- Coordination with relevant Governmental Organizations (GOs), I/NGOs and CBOs to assess the existence of MHM related policies/provisions, execution status and gaps
- Collaboration with GOs and other relevant organizations to help organize, manage and facilitate the advocacy workshops on MHM.
- Being an active MHM- Practitioner Alliance member for advocacy/lobbying on MHM including dissemination of workshop conclusions and conducting MHM campaigns on different levels.

Further information:

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