

# Report of Reusable Sanitary Pad Making and Entrepreneurship Development Training

Dogma, Sunapati Rural Municipality  
Ramechhap, Nepal

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Menstruation is a normal biological phenomenon and a key sign of reproductive health. Whereas, Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) has been defined as: 'Women and adolescent girls using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect blood that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials<sup>1</sup>. However, menstrual hygiene is not just about the management of the menstrual period but also the need to address societal beliefs and taboos surrounding the issue.

Safe and effective menstrual health management is crucial for the good sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls. When girls are more knowledgeable about their bodies and fertility, and able to effectively manage their menstrual hygiene, they may be more empowered and better equipped with the information, tools, and confidence necessary to manage their long-term sexual and reproductive health, including family planning.

Globally, according to the 2016 mid-year global census,<sup>2</sup> 44.7 percent of the world's female population is aged between 15-44 years old. Whereas in Nepal, according to the 2011 National Household Census<sup>3</sup>, this percentage is slightly higher at 47.79 percent of its national population. The population of females within the menstruating age is around 1 crore and 40 lakhs<sup>4</sup>.

However, due to different factors, in a rural parts of Nepal, menstruation is treated as something negative, shameful, or dirty which directly affects the health condition of women and girls. The girl child in the rural part of Nepal feels ashamed and embarrassed to talk about the normal process. Due to the persisting taboos, women and girls' capacity to manage their periods is affected by several other factors, including limited access to affordable and hygienic-sanitary materials and

disposal options leaving many to manage their periods in ineffective, uncomfortable, and unhygienic ways. With the limited access to information at home and school, millions of women and girls have very little knowledge about what is happening to their bodies when they menstruate and how to deal with it. In some of the districts of Karnali Province and Far-Western Province, an ill practice called *Chhaupadi* is still in practice, where girls during their menarche are forced to stay at *chhaupadi* shed. The death of women and children at *chhaupadi* hut takes place due to suffocation and snakebite whereas rape and sexual assault during *chhaupadi* are also found.

Due to the continuous effort of the Government of Nepal and different development organizations, girls are being sent to school for education. However, according to a study made by UNICEF, still, 28% of public schools lack separate toilets for girls' students<sup>5</sup>.

But due to a lack of MHM materials at school and social barriers, adolescent girls in this region are forced to leave their school during the menstrual period. Therefore, to ensure regular school visits of school girls during menstruation, it is necessary to make teachers, members of the School Management Committee (SMC) & Parents Teachers Association (PTA), and parents on menstrual hygiene management and its dynamics. Availability of MHM materials at school, proper WASH facilities along with MHM facilities should be ensured in the school.

The lack of appropriate, comfortable, and affordable materials for MHM, adequate waste disposal, and adequate toilet facilities at school made leakage and others seeing their menstrual blood a source of stress for girls. Girls avoided changing their sanitary materials at school because toilet facilities were dirty and lacked privacy. Girls preferred to suffer the discomfort of using thick cloth, restricting their movement, and using friends' toilets rather than using the

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<sup>1</sup> Sommer Marni, Emily Cherenack, Sarah Blake, Murat Sahin and Lizette Burgers, *WASH in Schools Empowers Girls' Education: Proceedings of the Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools Virtual Conference 2014*, United Nations Children's Fund and Columbia University, New York, 2015, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> *World Midyear Population by Age and Sex for 2016*, <https://www.census.gov/population/international/data/idb/worldpop.php>

<sup>3</sup> *National Population and Housing Census 2011*, Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>4</sup> *Dignified Menstrual Hygiene Management in Nepal 2076, Sanitation Message Ashad 075-Ashad 2076*, year 8, Issue 17-18, Department of drinking water and sewerage management, Ministry of drinking water.

<sup>5</sup> *Dignified Menstrual Hygiene Management in Nepal 2076, Sanitation Message Ashad 075-Ashad 2076*, year 8, Issue 17-18, Department of drinking water and sewerage management, Ministry of drinking water.

school toilet<sup>6</sup>. In Nepal, the need for the sanitary pad is 15 crore pieces annually whereas only 9 crores and 10 lakh pieces of the sanitary pad are sold, among which only one-third of the sanitary pads used are produced locally. Nepalese women invest three percent of their income in buying sanitary materials required to manage their menstruation. In a lifetime, Nepalese women invest around 2 lakh and 10 thousand rupees on average to manage menstruation which is equal to the average investment Nepalese family made in education<sup>7</sup>.

Due to a lack of coping capacity, people from the poorest and disadvantaged communities are the ones highly vulnerable to the consequences of the epidemics on human health. During the pandemics, to cope and resist the chance of infection, special attention should be provided to a regular supply of clean water, soap, handwashing facility, and sanitation products. Though the direct or immediate impact of the COVID-19 has not been observed on the menstrual cycle, indirect impacts are observed due to lack of proper health facilities, malnutrition, stress, anxiety, restrictions from activities (due to prevailing social stigmas), and lack of menstrual products during the lockdown. Since we don't have records of COVID-19 transmission through faces or blood along with menstrual blood, more attention should be provided to managing menstruation with dignity.

In the context of Nepalese society where discrimination of different forms during menstruation prevails even in normal circumstances, special attention should be provided to the women and girls at home quarantine, quarantine camps, isolation wards, and hospitals. In the background where complaints and dissatisfaction with the management of basic facilities required at quarantine camps and isolation wards are being logged by citizens, social workers, civil society members, and health workers, attention to Menstrual Hygiene Management by government and service providers is ambiguous.

Currently different menstrual hygiene products like disposable sanitary pads, menstrual cups,

tampons, menstrual pants, reusable cloth sanitary pads, and cotton cloths (traditional method). According to the study done by Wateraid in 4 different districts of Nepal, the maximum number of the respondents (66%) used reusable clothes to engross menstrual pour throughout menstruation, the use being expressively higher amongst villages than the

*It is necessary to provide body literacy to all and aware adolescent girls and women on the importance of menstrual hygiene management increasing their accessibility to affordable menstrual products.*

schoolgirls of town. The practice of using old clothes was pointedly higher amongst rural girls. The main reason for not using disposable sanitary pads is a lack of knowledge about their accessibility (41%) and expensiveness (38%), as supposed by the respondents. The cheap and easily available scrap cloth was perceived to be the most usually used by girls in the location of both village and town, though many of them wished for sanitary pads.

A study shows that around 33 percent of the girls used sanitary pads as menstrual absorbents throughout their previous menstruation<sup>8</sup>. More than 50 percent of girls are informed to have inattentive from school during the menstruation period. The girl students, who did not use sanitary pads, were more possible to be inattentive in school. More than half (58%) of the girls said that their performance in school had decreased after having menarche.

In urban areas, the use of disposable sanitary pads is increasing due to their easy availability and being easy to carry and use. However, the use of recycled paper padding with bleaching agents that contains chlorine and dioxin make disposable sanitary pad risky to human health and the environment. In addition, the majority of girls and women residing in rural parts of the nation are deprived of menstrual products at affordable prices. So, it is necessary to promote

<sup>6</sup> Menstrual Hygiene Management in Udaypur and Sindhuli Districts of Nepal 2016, WaterAid.

<sup>7</sup> Dignified Menstrual Hygiene Management in Nepal 2076, Sanitation Message Ashad 075-Ashad 2076, year 8, Issue 17-18,

Department of drinking water and sewerage management, Ministry of drinking water.

<sup>8</sup> Prasad, Ram, Adhikari Ram, and Krishna Maharjan, 'Menstruation Management Among Female School Adolescents in Makawanpur District, Nepal', 2017, 83-86



environmentally friendly and hygienic menstrual products which can be easily afforded by girls and women.

### Project Location

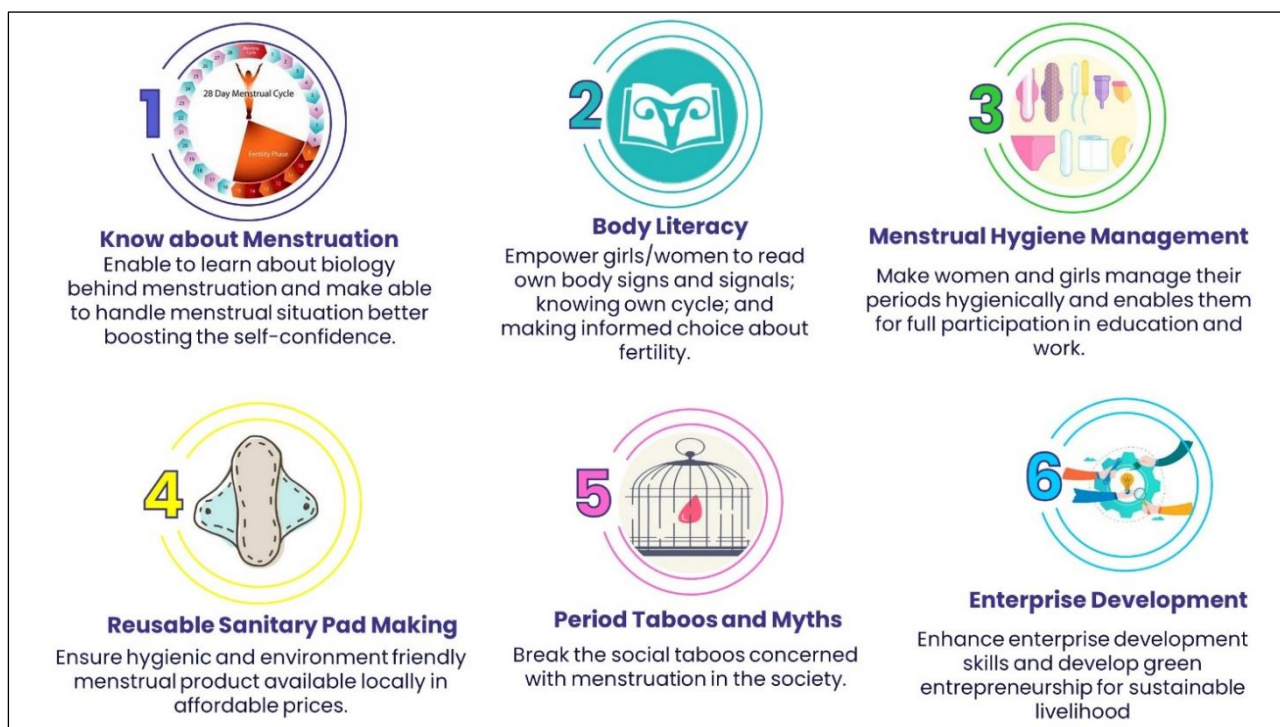
Chhahari Organization Nepal with support of 'Project Nepal-for our children of the mountain' and facilitation support of Eco Connect Pvt. Ltd. organized "Reusable Sanitary Pad Making and Entrepreneurship Development Training" at Dogma, Sunapati municipality-03 of Ramechhap District, Bagmati province. The municipality spans 85.09 square kilometers of area, with a total population of 14,616 as per census 2021. Among the total population, 52.6% are females whereas 47.4% are male. The training was conducted at Shree Krishna Secondary School with the support and coordination of the school management committee.

### Training Team

The training was facilitated by Eco Connect Pvt. Ltd. Facilitators with good knowledge and experience in the field of WASH and MHM and expertise in conducting similar training were used for delivering the training sessions. The training team consists of lead trainer Mr.Sushil Kumar Karki and co-trainer Ms.Sapana Tiwari. Chairperson of Chhahari organization Nepal Mr.Pasang Tamang, Secretary Mr.Binod Kumar Adhikari, and Principal of Shree Krishna Secondary School Mr. Ganesh Singh Dhami have supported the logistics management.

### Objective

The main objective of the training was to create enabling environment for girls/women to manage their menstruation with dignity. The specific objectives of the training were:



# Participants Summary

The training was divided into two part, Orientation on MHM and Reusable sanitary pad making & Entrepreneurship Development Training. Orientation was provided to 53 individuals (teachers, students- both boys and girls, and community women) on day 1.

8%

Male

92%

Female



Reusable Sanitary Pad Making & Entrepreneurship Development Training was provided to 30 individuals (all girl and female) on Day 2 & 3.

20%

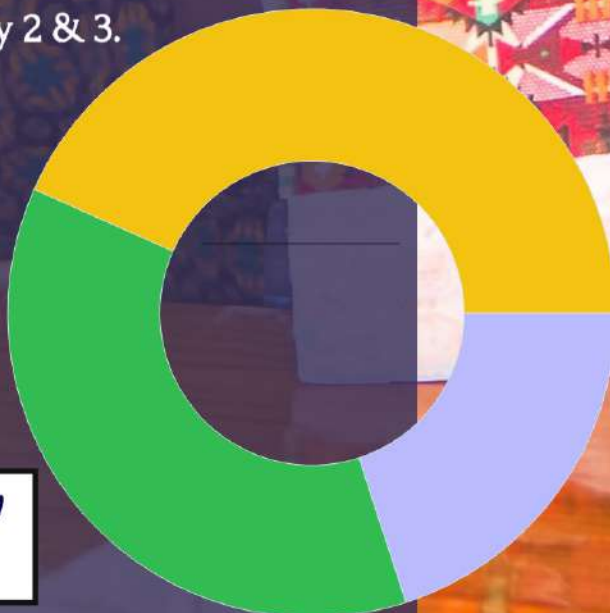
Teachers

37%

Students

43%

Community Women





## Detailed Proceedings

The training started with the formal opening ceremony in the presence of Chief Guest Ward member of Sunapati Rural Municipality-03 Mr. Tashi Lama, and the Chairperson of the School Management Committee (SMC) Mr. Yugesh Moktan.

Teacher of Shree Krishna Secondary School Mr. Gyanendra Kumar Moktan welcomed chief guests, guests, trainers, and participants in the training whereas Chairperson of Chhahari organization Mr. Pasang Tamang, and secretary Mr. Binod Kumar Adhikari shared the context of the training. Chief Trainer Mr. Sushil Kumar Karki has shared the objective of the training and highlighted the role of local government, SMC, and community towards dignified menstruation. The Principle of Krishna Secondary School Mr. Ganesh Singh Dhami shared the importance of menstrual hygiene management and the problem raised due to the lack of proper menstrual hygiene management products at the local level. During the ceremony, the Chhahari organization has handover Books of different genres to the library of Shree Krishna Secondary School. The chief guest of the opening ceremony was ward member Mr. Tashi Lama gratitude's Chhahari Organization for supporting the school with books and organizing the training which will enhance the knowledge of teachers, students, and community women on menstrual hygiene management. Mr. Gyanendra Kumar Moktan has conducted the opening ceremony as master of ceremony.



After the formal opening ceremony, a technical session of the training started with the following sessions:

### Day 1

#### Session 1: Setting the stage

To make participants at ease with training content and learn their expectations and knowledge about the subject matter, different activities were conducted at the beginning of the technical session of training.

- Participants were requested to introduce themselves.
- Participants were divided into four groups.
- The expectation of participants was collected and was listed with the snowball method.
- Participants were informed about the objective of the training sessions and the contents to be incorporated.
- Participants were divided into four groups.



#### Session 2: Sanitation Movement of Nepal

The objective of this session was to introduce participants to the sanitation movement of Nepal and its present context. Learnings and achievements of the Open Defecation Free (ODF) campaign were shared.

Total sanitation guideline-2073, Goal of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), School Sector Development Plan-2016, and Civil Code Bill-2074 were discussed from the perspective of menstruation and menstrual hygiene management (MHM).

### **Session 3: Know about Menstruation-Group Work**

This session was intended to learn the knowledge of participants about menstruation and its cross-cutting issues. Participants were asked to discuss their understanding of menstruation. Brainstorming on the following questions was done

1. What do you know about menstruation? What age does it start? How long does it last? Do all women menstruate? Until when?
2. What are the menstruation taboos, practices, and challenges being practiced in your community or you have heard about?
3. What are the health issues girls/women should face during menstruation?
4. How do those issues impact the education, work, family life, and the general lifestyle of girls/women?



Both the group presented the discussion outputs of their group and the trainer Mr.Karki facilitated them with facts and figures related to menstruation based on the understanding of the participants.

### **Session 4: Know about Menstruation**

In this session, an overview of menstruation was presented and the following topics were discussed

- Biology of menstruation
- Menstrual cycle
- Symptoms of menstruation
- Menstruation is a vital sign of reproductive health
- Menstrual hygiene and its management
- Challenges girls and women face due to gender inequality
- Nutrition during menstruation
- Comparative analysis of menstrual hygiene management products available on the market.

### **Session 5: Menstrual Hygiene Management practices and products**



In this session, the importance of menstrual hygiene and its impact on health, education, environment, and human right was shared. The importance of dignified menstruation for better health, environment conservation, reducing school absenteeism rate, and ensuring the basic human right of all was discussed. Information about the disposable sanitary pad, reusable sanitary pads, homemade cloth pads, tampons, and the menstrual cup was provided and a comparison of different menstrual hygiene materials available at the market with regards to their cost, health, and environmental impact was done. Group work was conducted where both the group present their views regarding the pros and cons of reusable sanitary pads and disposable sanitary pads. Cost calculation of disposable sanitary pads needed for an individual and a family was done to show the cost required for menstrual hygiene management. Participants got an opportunity to learn about more environmentally friendly and economic menstrual hygiene products during the session.



## Day 2

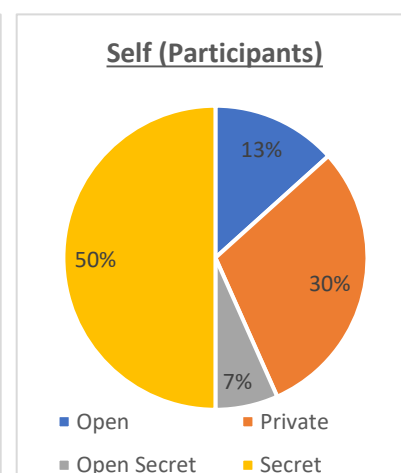
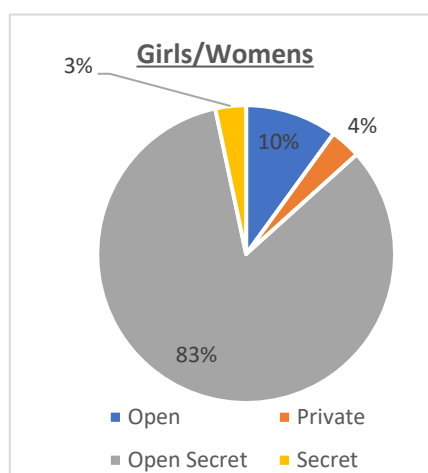
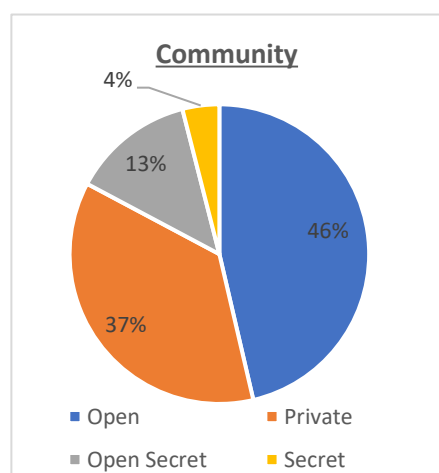
Day 2 started with a review of day one. Trainer Ms.Sapana Tiwari recalled the sessions of day one and highlighted the sessions for day two.

### **Session 6: Myths and Stigmas related to Menstruation**

In this session, with the help of the icebreaker game perception of the community, adolescent girls, and participants on menstruation were collected. The Johari window was used as a tool and participants were asked to present their views individually. The majority of the participants think that the society where they live considers the topic of menstruation as open and is discussed with everyone (represented by a yellow color card in the figure), similarly, the majority of participants think that women and girls of their community take menstruation as an open secret and discuss it only with friends (represented by a pink color card in the figure).



Whereas the majority of participants responded that they take menstruation as a secret topic and discuss less about it with others (represented by a light green color card in the figure).

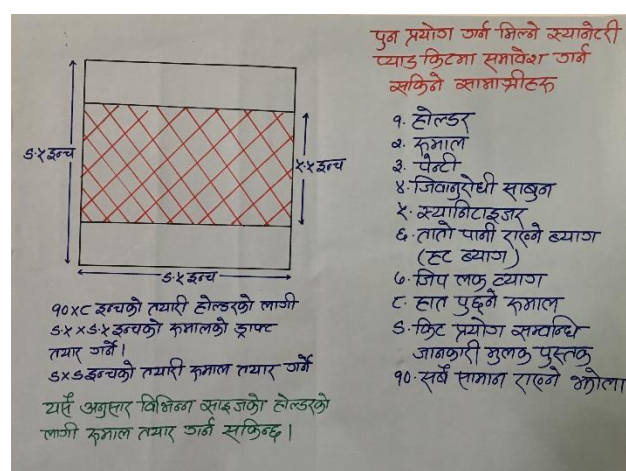
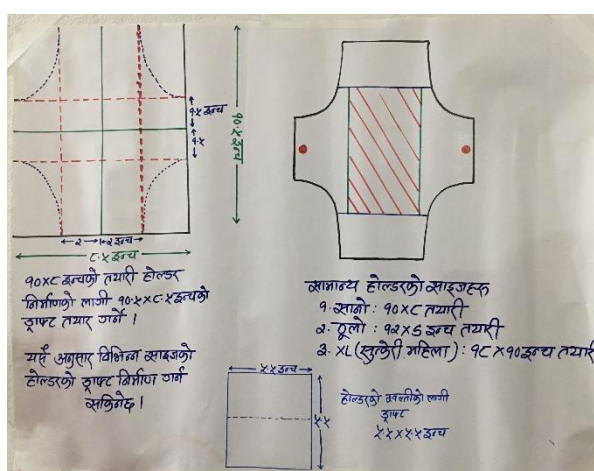


Further, myths related to stigmas in different culture, societies, and regions of Nepal was discussed. The reason behind not allowing menstruating girls and women to travel freely, do household chores, and visit temples were shared with the perspective of Hindu culture and why we should get change those perceptions on this current situation was discussed. Participants actively participated in the discussion and shared their views.

## Session 7: Reusable and Eco-Friendly Sanitary Pad making

A practical session on reusable sanitary pad making was conducted where participants practically developed a draft for the sanitary pad, cut clothes according to the draft, and stitched clothes to make sanitary pad holders and napkins.

Drafts for a reusable sanitary pad of size 10\*8 inch were developed. The drafts were developed on chart paper and then the final drafts were developed with the help of Chart papers. Handholding support was provided to each participant for perfect draft development.



The participants have learned to cut the cloth and stitch them by hand. Participants were introduced to a plastic bottom placing die set machine and oriented on its operation module. All the participants practically placed plastic bottoms on the holders they have prepared.



## Day 3

Day 3 started with a review of day two. Trainer Ms.Sapana Tiwari recalled the sessions of day two and highlighted the sessions for day three.



## **Session 8: Reusable and Eco-Friendly Sanitary Pad making Contd..**

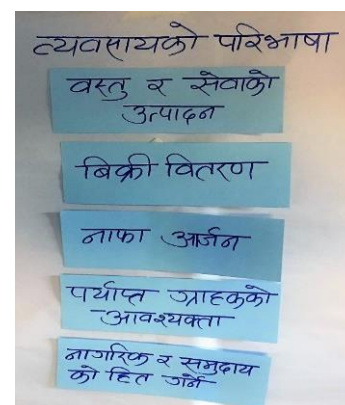


Participants were taught to develop a draft for a napkin to be used along with a holder. Participants developed a draft and then developed a napkin with fabric. Necessary support was provided.



## **Session 9: Know about business and business categories**

In this session, the concept of business along with different categories of business was shared. Participants were asked to note the business available in their community. Three business categories namely Production, Trading, and Services type were explained with an example. All businesses noted by participants were categorized and explained with suitable examples. In this session, participants got the opportunity to know about the types of businesses being operated in their community.



## **Session 10: Business cycle**

In this session, different steps of the business cycle and the importance of each step were shared with relevant examples. The types of entrepreneurship i.e., Income generation, self-employment, and entrepreneurship were shared concerning the business cycle to make trainees aware of which state of entrepreneurship they fall upon.



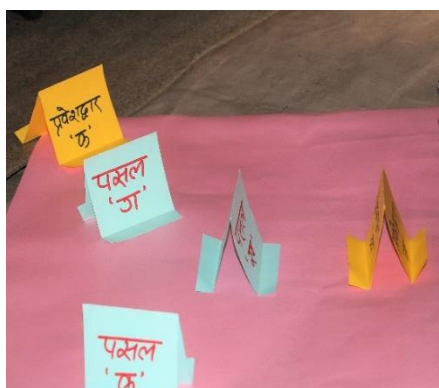
## **Session 11: Access Business Feasibility**

During the session, six steps of feasibility were shared. The steps include selecting a business, identifying customers, mobilizing resources, determining costs, estimating income, and deciding about the viability of the business. A brainstorming game was played on the ground of the school premises. Along with the feasibility information about the value chain framework was also shared. During the practical session, participants got an opportunity to learn about the role of different supporting hands and environment creators for successful business implementation.



### **Session 12: Marketing**

In this session, the importance of marketing for a successful business was shared. The six processes (Ps) of marketing (product and service, place, price, packing & packaging, promotion, and person) were shared.



### **Session 13: Costing, Pricing, and Profit**

In this session, the trainee learned about different factors to be determined while declaring the cost of a product. Ways to determine direct and indirect costs, overhead, and depreciation calculations were practiced practically. Participants identified the cost of reusable sanitary pads, declared the price for it, and calculated the profit they can make. Ice-breaking games were played to make the session lively.



### **Session 14: Closing session**

At the end of the training, a closing session was organized in the presence of the Principal of Shree Krishna Secondary School Mr. Ganesh Singh Dhimi. Gifts were provided to participants namely Ms.



Nikita Karki Khadka and Ms. Sharmila Khati for the best reusable sanitary pad making in comparison to other participants.

Addressing the session, Mr. Ganesh Singh Dhami requested all for optimum utilization of the knowledge provided for managing menstruation along with livelihood development. He further expresses his regards to Chhahari Organization Nepal and Project Nepal for organizing Book Distribution for the school library and training on menstrual hygiene management at Sunapati Rural Municipality. Participants received a certificate of participation from the Chairperson of Chhahari Organization Nepal Mr. Pasang Tamang.

Later, participants of the training thanked the training team and showed their warm gratitude towards all for organizing the training. Participants have expressed their feelings and evaluated the training to be useful for them to change their perception of menstruation. They were also happy to learn about different types of menstrual hygiene management products and business development ideas.

### **The output of the Training**

1. Orientation on body literacy along with menstrual hygiene management was provided to 53 individuals (teachers, students, and community women) of Sunapati Rural Municipality.
2. 30 Participants got to learn about different types of menstrual hygiene products available at the market and choose the best one for them.
3. 30 participants got to learn to make reusable cloth menstrual pads useful for them and their family members-girls and women to manage their menstruation with dignity.
4. Participants learn different areas of the business cycle and the competencies required to start a business and become a successful entrepreneur.
5. Teachers learned the skill of reusable menstrual pad making to teach students of class 10 as provisioned by the curriculum under Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).

### **Way Forward**

1. Teachers participating in the training will share the knowledge of menstrual hygiene management and reusable sanitary pad making with students under a comprehensive sexuality education course.
2. Participants can start the production of the reusable sanitary pads at the local level and start enterprises related to menstrual products. Coordination and cooperation with the local government may be crucial for market exposure and support required.
3. For the sustainability of the training and refresher training for the participants within a year will be useful.

