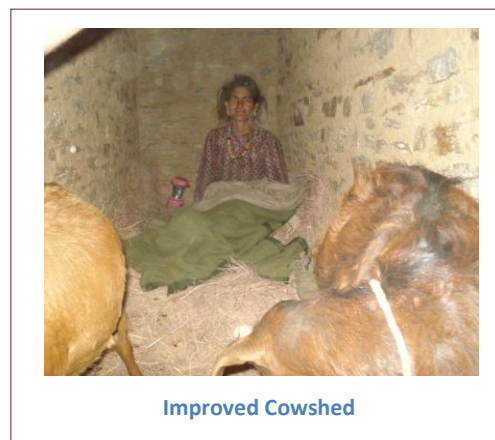


Research report on
'Miteri Gau-Let's Live Together Campaign' to initiate
Chhaupadi Free Community
in Jumla and Kalikot districts of Karnali, Nepal,
December, 2012



Research conducted by
Action Works Nepal



Supported by
50 Cents Period, USA



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Objectives of the study	5
3. Methodology	5
4. Results	6
4.1 Places where girls were kept during their menarche	6
4.2 Places where girls stay during their menstrual period	7
4.3 Feeling of girls during the menstrual period	7
4.4 Restriction in different places (mobility) during the menstrual period	8
4.5 Restriction in food during the menstrual period	9
4.6 Restriction imposed by individuals at home	9
4.7 Use of sanitary materials during the menstrual period	10
4.8 School attendance by girls during the menstrual period	10
4.9 Changes required in the schools	10
5. Analysis and discussion	12
5.1 Understanding of Chhaupadi	12
5.2 Initiation of Chhaupadi practice	13
5.3 Restrictions in entry and touch	13
5.4 Restriction in food	13
5.5 Feeling/experience during menstruation	15
5.6 Cleanliness at Chhaupadi or menstruation	14
6. Conclusion and way forward towards a Chhaupadi free community	16
7. Recommendations	17
7.1 Community level activities	17
7.2 School level activities	17
8. References	17
9. Annexes	18
Annex1 List of research participants	18
Annex 2 Responses from survey respondents	21

List of Tables

Table 1	Data collection process and respondents	6
Table 2	Places where girls are kept during their menarche	7
Table 3	Feeling of girls during the menstrual period	7
Table 4	Places where girls stay during their regular menstrual period	8
Table 5	Restriction in various places during the menstrual period	8
Table 6	Restriction in food during the menstrual period	9
Table 7	Restriction imposed by individuals at home	9
Table 8	Restriction imposed by individuals in the community	10
Table 9	Use of sanitary materials during the menstrual period	10
Table 10	School attendance during the menstrual period	11
Table 11	Reasons for not attending school during the menstrual period	11
Table 12	Changes required in the Schools	12

1. Introduction

Menstruation is still practiced as taboo in some parts of Nepal. Menstruation is considered as an event of impurity, stigma and sin. During menstruation period women and girls are separated from others including from men and kids and kept them in isolation at the cowsheds. In this period, women are not allowed to eat green vegetables, fruits and restricted to enter inside the house, kitchen, temple, school and any other places of social interaction. The situation is more panic and terrifying because women and girls, while leaving in the cowsheds, have to encounter with many abuses and exploitations such as sexual harassment, snakebites, extreme cold and many psychological and physical problems. However, menstruation is still considered as an impurity and taboo by 58 % population belonging different culture in Nepal (CBS, 2011).

The existing practice of Chhaupadi is the serious form of cultural and gender based violence. The practice promotes various forms physical, psychological violence and an obstacle to build capacity and confidence of women and girls in social, political and economic activities. The Chhaupadi practice causes restriction in mobility of women and girls from their childhood. It is also associated with reproductive health of women.

Action Works Nepal (AWON) started to work informally on peace building, human rights and education from 2001 and formalized its activities in 2010 as a grassroots based national NGO. AWON is committed to empower poor, excluded and marginalized communities by supporting them in establishing their basic rights. It aims to achieve social justice through results-driven and program centered initiatives on political, economic, social, cultural and environmental areas. AWON believes in addressing root causes of poverty and inequality. It also understands that the absence of war is not peace: peace means access to basic entitlements such as food, education, health and shelter by marginalized and excluded groups especially by women and girls.

Thus, AWON has initiated 'Miteri Gau- Let's Live Together' campaign as part of addressing inequalities. The campaign is based on mobilizing a large number of likeminded individuals and organizations globally.

AWON identifies its target groups using participatory power mapping process and focuses its activities to empower them. AWON has identified landless, *Dalits* (so called untouchables), marginalized *Janajatis*, *Haliyas*, People Living With and Affected by HIV/AIDs (PLWHAs), sex workers, and conflict- and disaster-affected people, who are poor, vulnerable and/or socially excluded as primary target groups. Within each category AWON's efforts for attaining tangible benefits for lives and livelihoods focus on women, children and girls. To achieve the aim, AWON has crafted three strategic directions:

- 1) *To empower poor, excluded and vulnerable to exercise their human rights, especially focusing on education, health, employment and environment,*
- 2) *To improve livelihoods of poor, excluded and vulnerable communities through vocational training, employment opportunities, reducing vulnerabilities by climate change impacts, and*

economic empowerment activities led by local communities,

- 3) *To mobilize civil society, media and other like-minded organizations and networks for good governance and to link micro-level issues with national-level policy advocacy.*

This study has been conducted in the four villages of Jumla and Kalikot districts in the Karnali region of Nepal. The study has been conducted as a baseline study to know status of Chhaupadi in the study area to develop strategies and activities to address this issue. The following sections present objectives, methodology and major findings of the study.

2. Objective of the study

The study was conducted to identify and explore following three objectives.

- To explore the perception of local communities on Chhaupadi,
- To identify the ways/strategies to address the Chhaupadi system,
- To come up with recommendation for upcoming program.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The data collection methods include literature review and collection of secondary data, questionnaire survey (n=88) of adolescent and young girls, four events of focus group discussions (FGDs) with local community members including parents, school teachers and boys, and participant observation. Some published and unpublished articles, reports and project documents were reviewed to know the status as well as learning and recommendations.

The study was designed and the data collection process, including selection of respondents, data collection tools and analysis, was finalized in consultation with experts affiliated with AWON and 50 Cents period. The primary data was collected from school aged girls (6-12 grades, who had menstruation) from the respective VDCs. In addition to this, four events of FGDs, one in each VDC, were organized with local communities. While, Chhaupadi related cowsheds and other objects and events were observed using participant observation.

Four VDCs, two each from Jumla and Kalikot districts, were selected for this study. Self-administered questionnaires were used for data collection. The data collection was carried out in December 2012. Following Table provides data collection sites, process and respondents.

Table 1 Data collection process and respondents

Districts	VDCs	No of survey respondents	Data collection date
Jumla	Kudari	22	10-11 Dec 2012
	Tamti	22	13-14 Dec, 12
Kalikot	Phoi Mahadev	22	16-17 Dec, 2012
	Rachuli	22	18-19 Dec, 2012
Total: 2	4	88	Total 10 days

A total of 88 girls were purposively identified as respondents of questionnaire survey. The schools were closed due to winter vacation and thus the respondent girls were selected through group discussions in each hamlet and a home visit was done to identify the selected girls. Five events of Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) were conducted in each study village. Altogether 81 participants participated in FGDs.

The study team was led by Ms Radha Paudel, Founder/President of the organization. The team leader facilitated all FGDs, conducted a pre-test of questionnaire survey and explained the data collection process to the team members. The District Coordinator and Social Mobilizers of AWON were mobilized in identification of respondents as well as distribution and collection of questionnaires. Remoteness in terms of scattered settlement of respondents, extreme cold weather following snowfall, hesitation of some local community members to share their opinions in this issue were found some of the limitations of this study.

4. Results

The result presented in this section is based on analysis of household survey data which is also complemented by the information generated from focus group discussions and participant observation.

4.1 Places where girls were kept during their menarche

The 88 survey respondents were the adolescent and young girls who had their menarche in the last five years. As reported by the respondent girls 77 % of them were kept inside the cowshed when they had their menarche. Similarly, 14% respondents reported that they were kept in a separate room inside the house and 9% said that they were kept in neighbors' house (Table 2). None of the respondents said that they were allowed to stay in their normal bedroom. The practice is almost same in all VDCs. The participants of all FGDs agreed that this practice is common and they would like to continue this practice as this is guided by their religion and culture. They expressed a strong feeling that the girls during the menarche became impure and any man including their brothers and fathers should not allow to see them for about a week.

Table 2 Places where girls are kept during their menarche

Places where girls kept during their menarche	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total percentage
In the same bed	0	0	0	0	0
In a separate room inside the home	9	0	32	14	14
Neighbors' house	5	32	0	0	9
Cowshed	86	68	68	86	77
Total	100	100	100	100	100

4.2 Places where girls stay during their regular menstrual period

As reported by the respondents, 86% of the girls were kept in a cowshed and the rest 14 were kept in a separate room inside the home in each menstrual period (*Chhau* period). The situation was found most terrible in Tamti VDC following by Kudari, Rachui and Phoi VDCs (Table 3).

Table 3 Places where girls stay in their regular menstrual period

Places where girls kept during their regular menstrual period	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
In the same bed	0	0	0	0	0
In a separate bed/room inside the home	27	14	9	5	14
Cowshed	73	86	91	95	86
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Most of the women and men in the FGD expressed that they were in favour of this practice. As they expressed women should be kept in the cowsheds (*Chhaupadi Goth*) during the menstrual period because of impurity. However, some women in the FGD raised concerns about their loneliness and security while they kept in the cowsheds. The researchers observed some cowsheds where the women were kept during the menstrual period and photographs were taken for reference.

4.3 Feeling of girls during the menstrual period

A highest number of respondents (77%) mentioned that they feel humiliation in front of others during the menstrual period. As reported, they consider themselves impure and inferior in comparisons to boys when the menstrual cycle starts. About two third of the girls reported that they feel loneliness and scared during each menstrual period as they have to live and sleep alone inside the cowshed or a dark room inside the house. Respondents also said that they feel scared because of chances of snake bite, chances of violence and rape and hesitation. About 65% girls

reported that they always feel cry and spent most of their time in crying during the menstrual period. Twenty two percent reported that they always feel the boys may tease them and felt worry about how to face the boys and parents. Only 22% girl respondents reported that it doesn't a matter of hesitation and humiliation as they consider menstrual cycle as a normal process (Table 4).

Table 4 Feeling of girls during the menstrual period

Feeling of girls during the menstrual period	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
Feel lonely and scared	59	73	77	91	75
Like to cry	50	64	95	50	65
Feel humiliation in front of others	73	68	86	82	77
Teasing by boys	9	14	41	23	22
Doesn't matter	18	23	32	14	22

4.4 Restriction in different places during the menstrual period

Almost all the survey respondents reported that they were restricted in going inside various places and participate in many functions at the time of menstrual period. Eighty percent of the respondents claimed that they were not allowed to go inside the temple. While, 77% reported that they were not allowed to go inside the pray room followed by 70% not allowed in the kitchen, 48% not allowed in the social gatherings and 19% were restricted in the schools. The situation was more or less same in all sample VDCs (Table 5). The girls said that they have to face this situation every month. Women in FGD responded this situation very normal as they were passed through the same situation throughout their life.

Table 5 Restriction in various places during the menstrual period

Restriction in various places during the menstrual period	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
Kitchen	68	82	82	64	74
Worship/pray room	59	77	95	77	77
School	23	18	23	14	19
Temple	82	91	86	86	86
Social gathering	55	45	23	68	48

4.5 Restriction in food during the menstrual period

Various forms of restriction in eating and drinking food during the menstrual period were reported by the survey respondents. Over two third (76%) of the respondents has reported restriction in eating and drinking milk and other milk/dairy products. Sixty four percent respondents reported restriction in eating holly foods. Eating holly foods following a pray is considered as a gift from the god. Similarly, 51% respondents mentioned restriction in eating meat and meat products followed by 28% reported restriction in eating vegetables (Table 6). The pattern showed that the women and girls were restricted in eating and drinking all kinds of nutritious foods and the restriction was making them further weak and miserable. The survey data was confirmed by all FGDs with further explanation in why eating nutritious food should be restricted during the menstrual period.

Table 6 Restriction in food during the menstrual period

Restriction in food during the menstrual period	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total average
Milk and dairy products	64	68	86	86	76
Meat and meat products	32	59	41	73	51
Vegetables	18	41	27	27	28
Prasads (holly foods from pray)	59	64	59	73	64
Others (not identified)	0	5	5	0	2

4.6 Restrictions imposed by individuals at home

Sixty seven percent respondents reported that the restrictions were explained and imposed by their parents followed by traditional healers (18%), relatives and neighbors (10%) and grandparents (7%) (Table 7).

Table 7 Restriction imposed by individuals at home

Restriction imposed by individuals	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
Parents	64	59	77	68	67
Grand parents	5	5	0	9	5
Traditional healers	23	18	14	18	18
Relatives and neighbours	9	18	9	5	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100

4.7 Restriction imposed in the community

A majority of the respondents (59%) reported that the traditional healers imposed them in various activities during the menstrual period. While, 41% respondents said that the restriction was from senior people including parents, relatives, neighbors and community members (Table 8).

Table 8 Restriction imposed by individuals in the community

Restriction imposed by individuals in the community	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
Traditional healers	59	55	64	59	59
Senior people (including parents, relatives, neighbours)	41	45	36	41	41
Total	100	100	100	100	100

4.7 Use of sanitary materials during the menstrual period

The survey also revealed that the majority of the respondents were not aware of using sanitary pads during the menstrual period. About 31 % of the girls were using sanitary pads while the rest 69% of the respondents were using a piece of cloths during the menstrual period (Table 9). Respondents those using sanitary pads were not replacing it frequently because of its high cost and limited awareness on use. While, those who were using cloths reported that they hesitate to wash the used cloths in front of other family members and neighbors. If they manage to wash during the night they hesitate to dry those cloths and keep in a dark place. The situation well reflects very poor hygienic condition of women and girls in the study region.

Table 9 Use of sanitary materials during the menstrual period

Use of materials during the menstrual period	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
Sanitary pad	14	32	41	36	31
Cloths	86	68	59	64	69
Total	100	100	100	100	100

4.8 School attendance by girls during the menstrual period

The respondents reported that the menstrual period was also associated with school attendants of girls. Twenty eight percent respondents informed that they never attend school during the menstrual period. While the rest 72% reported that they mostly attend their school during the period (Table 10).

Table 10 School attendance during the menstrual period

School attendance during the menstrual period	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
Yes (mostly)	59	77	82	68	72
No (never)	41	23	18	32	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The respondents reported various reasons for not attending school during the menstrual period. One of the major reasons was abdominal pain (42%) followed by lack of toilet in the schools (30%) and other reasons (28%) such as restriction by parents, teasing by boys in the schools and self-hesitation (Table 11). Many parents in the FGDs mentioned that the girls shouldn't go to school during the menstrual period as they may pass through the temples and can touch boys in the school.

Table 11 Reasons for not attending school during the menstrual period

Reasons for not attending school during the menstrual period	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
Abdominal pain	36	36	41	55	42
Lack of toilet in the schools	14	41	32	32	30
Other (restriction from parents, teasing by others, hesitations)	50	23	27	14	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100

4.9 Changes required in the schools

The respondents suggested some changes required in their local schools to increase the attendance of girls and make them comfortable during the menstrual period. Sixty percent of the respondent girls reported that toilet construction in each school is very important and emphasized that there should be separate toilets for boys and girls. Twenty seven percent demanded a general awareness and education on menstruation among parents, teacher, girls and boys. 15% requested facility of rest room and sanitary pads in the schools. About 17% said that there shouldn't be a temple close to school as passing through the temple is restricted during the menstrual period. Five percent of girls demanded dress freedom during the period and another 5% said that they should not force to stand up during the period (Table 12).

Table 12 Changes required in the Schools

Changes required in the Schools	Percentage of responses according to VDCs				
	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tamti	Total
Toilet construction	55	59	68	59	60
Education and awareness on menstruation	41	14	23	32	27
Dress freedom	9	0	5	5	5
Rest room, sanitary pad	18	14	27	0	15
Other (not to make stand up in the school)	5	0	14	0	5
Other (do not construct temples close to school)	9	0	9	50	17

5 Analysis and Discussion

This section presents an analysis of results and discusses according to the objectives of the study. The following sections present perception of women, men and girls on various issues related to Chhaupadi system and its causes and implications.

5.1 Understanding of *Chhauadi*

Based on the perception of women *Chhaupadi* applies for restriction during menstruation and childbirth period. Chhaupadi composed two words; Chhue (untouchable) and Padi (shed could be for cow or buffalo). For menstruation, it is called *Phadko Marne* (stepping out), *Chhue* (untouchable), *Bahir Sarne* (moving out) where women and girls stay in cowshed during period. When women and girls followed delivery of children they have to follow Chhaupadi for 11 days period. Both menstruation and childbirth period are considered a impure stage as they consider blood becomes impure at this stage. There is a feeling that the impure person should not watch and touch anything related to god and god's followers specially elders, small children, traditional healers etc.

While this issue was asked to a group of man, they smiled and hesitate to speak at first. Even in talking, they felt embarrassed by themselves because they considered *Chhaupadi* or menstruation is bad notion or women's things so they do not like to part of it. However, the perception and understanding on Chhaupadi among men was similar to women. They seemed too restrict to demonstrate that the blood is impure and impure to god and men. They added, the ancestors made such regulations to save human beings from any unfortunate and badness.

The issues related to impurity and restrictions are the key hidden and hindering factors to empower girls and women in the region. Girls and women are far behind by losing their confidence, self-esteem, self- confidence and overall impact on their mobility. They have a

strong feeling of second class citizen. The practice is deep rooted and associated with religion and culture.

5.2 Initiation/source of Chhaupadi practice

Regarding the commencement of this practice, women do not know exactly who told them to initiate this practice and restrictions; however, they said “*it is all made by god*”. As they said “*it is following since Satya Yug (Era of truth or god Ram's times/thousands years back) by their ancestors therefore it is crucial to continue such practices today*”. They further added “*anyone not following this practice will be punished by god and the family members will be in trouble*”. According to local community members menstruation and childbirth are entirely impure conditions, these are not suit for the god/worships at all. There was a strong believe that the god always remains inside the home and punishes anyone not following the instructions. They said that if god became angry family members start *Puturne* (chanting the Mantra as traditional healers did and doing several misbehaves unknowingly. Regarding the commencement of this practice, men also do not know exactly who told them to practice this but they said “*it is the god who instructed us to this practice*”. They further added that “*each women and girls have to follow if they want to see peace and harmony at their home and community*”.

Fundamentally, all religions; Hinduism, Christianity and Muslim considered that menstruation is impure. However, it is not practices in Buddhism. Even some Buddhist says impurity considering menstrual process with hygiene. The social norms and values have never reviewed and changed. They never understood how women are suffering from stigma due to such societal rules and practices. However, there is no any logical foundation to support this practice even in Hindu religion. The Hindus has many goddesses such as Durga, Laxmi, Saraswoti and they are allowed to pray throughout the year. Why worship is not closed every month during their menstrual period?

The female community health volunteers (FCHVs) and teachers were following the practice themselves and promoting the same to others. Because of severe ignorance, they do not have options except god and god' blessing. Psychologically they lose their confidence so hesitate to take actions or break the silence. When they become sick they think god is not happy.

5.3 Restrictions in entry and touch

The discussion and observation revealed that 100% houses were following the Chhaupadi though some of them didn't like to disclose. Even school teachers (women and men), health workers are doing same in the name of culture, god and grandparents. They said “we do not like to hurt anyone and god.

Women and girls are not allowing to entry house at least for five days. It means they have to stay outside the house either in cowshed or *Chhuikulo*. In case of unavailability of personal cowshed and Chhuikulo, they made same for communal purpose (within their family clans). In case of

entry by fifth day, they do not allow entering kitchen and worshiping room till seven days. However, it depends on the people remain at home e.g. if this house has traditional healer; women and girls are only allow to enter after 7-9 days.

According to the practice, the girls do not allow going school as well. But now a day, girls were going to school directly from the *Chhaupadi Goth* or without telling anything publicly. However, they were restricted to touch boys, teachers at school and not allowed to touch and read and holey books. Girls are not allowed going school during menarche. If it is publicly known it increases stigma and discrimination because menarche indicates ready for marriage and child birth. Likewise, the menstruate women and girls are also restricted to join the public gathering e.g. wedding due to sense of impurity and symbol of badness. In case of they join, women and girls should stay separate so they do not like to go due to stigma. Similarly, the public or private taps also not allow touching that hinder to use or get enough water to remained clean. They do not allow touching the vegetables and fruits due to having faith of dying.

Men explained very good logic in following Chhaupadi in many ways such as cleanliness and purity of women, her family and the entire society. Respondents strongly expressed that they also managed to remain far or untouched if they aware if someone has period. Men are the symbol of god so they can't deny what their seniors instructed.

Indeed, it is all misconceptions and myths towards the menstruation and childbirth due to gender biasness since civilization of the society. There is no logic anywhere. In a Hindu temple called Muktinath in Mustang district of Nepal, women are working as a priest where they do not following any kinds of separation and restriction. Such good practices are not disseminated in other parts of the country.

Grandparents or traditional healers do not have any exposure or open discussion about this practice at all and they are fully occupied with such misconceptions. As this practice has been continued from generations to generations, they hesitate to break this practice socially. The communities have a strong believe that if they don't continue this practice it will cause misfortune in their life. There are huge gaps in what the teachers teach in the schools and what they practice at home. Similar gaps were observed in the life of health workers and other educated people. The untouchability and restrictions imposed to women in the name of purity, religion and culture is against the provisions of CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, 1820, and interim constitution of Nepal. It shows a urgent need to educate people at mass scale and to develop some role models in the society among traditional healers, family or community to break such cruel and criminal practice.

5.4 Restriction in food

Women and girls are not allow drinking milk especially cow's milk because cow is consider as god or holey animal according to the Hindu myth. During the FGD, respondents said that there are many restrictions indeed but these restrictions follow in front of the elders and traditional

healers. They do not allow eating rice, vegetables, materials that offer to god, meat and meat products, and milk and milk products. If they eat, god would be angry and many misfortunes arise at home such as sickness or even death of family members. Men also have same idea about the restriction in food. They shared few examples of sickness wherever the women and girls were not following restrictions.

Restriction in eating and drinking food is a form of discrimination at the name of cultural values and norms. During menstruation and childbirth, women and girls needs more fluid, nutritious foods. They need rest and psychological support from the family and friends in this period. Thus, these all forms of restrictions are against human rights as deserved by women and girls.

5.5 Feeling/experience during menstruation

Almost all women said they cry during their menarche. They felt disempowered due to the behavior and practice of others at this stage. They also felt embarrassed to talk/stand in front of any men members specially fathers, brothers, and teachers. They experienced insecure while staying in cowsheds. They heard many bad stories about sexual harassment, exploitation even rape, unwanted pregnancy and death. They also felt insecure from the animal bites and snake bites as they heard it from their senior sisters. They felt so cold due to limited clothes, itching and uneasiness due to dirt because have to stay in *Piral* (dry pine needles). The most irritating thing is that they use the same clothes (as part of sanitary towel) for four days. Many respondents do not know about how to use the cloths.

Almost all respondents do not have any feeling except feeling that their girls ready to get marriage or more serious to her marriage. Since the menarche, they gradually minimize talking and touching their daughters. They also restrict girls to remain late outside the home, talking with men members, going outside's gathering and night stay. Some male respondents added that they become irritate when they heard that their wives have period because they have to cook food, clean the utensils and kitchen during this period if they are living in a nuclear family.

The development aids, academia and other agencies have not paying attention in doing research on impact of menstrual taboo. However, the small scale and limited researches and empirical findings showed that *Chhaupadi* has great negative impacts on the life of girls and women and entire society at large. Since menarche, girls are restricted in terms of their public mobility, restriction in education and forced to get early marriage. Restriction in mobility leads to poor education, lower creativity and overall development of women. Likewise, the poor physical and psychosocial state causes poor self-esteem and confidence among women and girls. Finally, they deprived from the agency and dignity at personal and collective level.

5.6 Cleanliness at Chhaupadi or menstruation

In general, they study village has limited water supply. During the *Chhaupadi* period, there is restriction to touch and use public taps. Thus the cleanliness is really undermined due to lack of

access to adequate water. Further, due to economic condition and lack of knowledge, the girls and women use old pieces of clothes to hide the blood. The clothes sometime not changed till fourth days and some times daily basis depends on availability of clothes and water. They keep the cloths in dark places to dry where people cannot see them. Men usually do not aware of it and do not like to take concern as well. Very few men who are aware also do not like to discuss openly with their wives and daughters.

Some educated women heard that they may get sick if they do not take care of blood properly. But they do not realize the degree of dirty and it is difficult to manage hygiene by using limited amount of water and other resources.

Cleanliness is crucial in menstruation and childbirth period. Cleanness of the place where they kept, cloth they used and availability of clean and adequate amount of water is very important. The lack of personal hygiene and *scarcity of water causes women and girls exposed to many infectious diseases such as Reproductive Tract Infections and Urinary Tract Infections*. Respondents experienced weakness, abdominal cramps and back aches during the menstrual period. But they do not share it with anyone considering as a normal phenomena. Men respondents, except some teachers, were not aware about this.

6. Conclusion and way forward towards a Chhaupadi free community

As discussed above the *Chhaupadi* practice is deep rooted in the society and it is always associated with religion and culture. Thus eradicating *Chhaupadi* from the society is a big challenge. But unless this system is not eradicated from the community and society empowerment and growth of women is not possible. There is a need to develop a systematic process to aware community members by developing and mobilizing some role models among traditional healers, health workers, political party leaders and teachers. Use of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials is important for awareness. Preparation and dissemination of documentary in local dialect is a very good communication means where the majority of communities are illiterate.

AWON should design a long term project (at least five years) to eradicate Chhaupadi system from some villages and it can gradually expand its learning in other places. A short term project can initiate to aware community on Chhaupadi system but it may have negative consequences if the message and actions are not properly disseminated.

Exposure of the communities in other parts of the country where they follow Hindu religion and cultures without practicing *Chhaupadi* is very important. AWON should develop some change agents among the educated people within the society. There are many examples in the country where women and men became ready to destroy their *Chhaupadi Gohs* and eradicate this practice from the society (Gentle P., 2006; Annapurna Post Dec 20, 2012). Exchange of change agents from the similar context can motivate people to understand and act accordingly.

7. Recommendations

The following section presents various recommendations at community, schools.

7.1 Community level activities

1. Engage with traditional healers and senior people in the discussion of the Chhaupadi
2. Prepare change agents among traditional healers, school teachers, health workers and political party leaders. Use local change agents to mobilize the community.
3. Organize various awareness raising activities to increase the number families to avoid Chhaupadi
4. Mobilize media to discuss this issue and prepare documentary in the local language as a awareness material
5. Organize exposure visit of communities and change agents in a *Chhaupadi* free community with similar Hindu context.
6. Link Chhaupadi free activities with other community development and empowerment activities.
7. Felicitation of role models is important to recognize their contribution and to develop many role models.
8. Bring famous Hindu religious leaders in the villages who can give speech against Chhaupadi system and can elaborate Chhaupadi is against Hindu religion and culture as the religion respects women and girls.

7.2 School level activities

1. Discuss about menstruation in the classroom and promote mobilization of teachers and students to run education campaigns in the villages
2. Engage boy to talk take actions against Chhaupadi
3. Installed toilet and water taps in the schools for hygiene
4. Provision of first aid including sanitary pad in school
5. Bring community health workers in the schools on a periodic basis to teach students on menstrual hygiene.

8. References

Annapurna Post Dec 20, 2012

Gentle, P. (2005) Contribution of popular education in social movement: Some experiences from advocacy literacy approach, Nepal. *Society and Education, Occasional issue* (1): 81-93.

9. Annexes

Annex -1 List of research participants

1. Participants of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Chhaupadi in Kudari, Jumla

SN	Name	Gender	Caste	Other Jobs/position
1	Shanta Bdr Shahi	M		
2	Krishna Chandra Chaulgain	M		
3	Jit Bdr Hamal	M		
4	Ekraj Upadhya	M		Politician
5	Brisha Nath Yogi	M		
6	Prem Bdr Rimal	M		
7	Nanda Bdr Shahi	M		
8	Ratan Shahi	M		
9	Man Bdr Shahi	M		
10	Lalkarna Nepali	M	Dalit	
11	Laxmi Chandra Chaulagin	M		Teacher
12	Devi Bhakta Chaulagain	M		
13	Man Bdr Hamal	M		
14	Bise Sarki	M	Dalit	
15	Saune Sarki	M	Dalit	
16	Kashiram Buda	M		Government employer
17	Padam Khatri			
18	Lal Bdr Bhattari			
19	Tek Bdr Shahi			
20	Kali Bdr Shahi			
21	Chabilal Chaulgain			
22	Jaya Shanker Chaulagain			
23	Dhan Bdr Thapa			
24	Mandir Triwa		Dalit	
25	Shyam Bhakta Lamichhane			
26	Bal Bdr Shahi			Government employer
27	Man Bdr Nepali			
28	Bir Bdr Singh			School Management committee

2. Participants of group meeting with men on Chhaupadi in Tamti, Jumla

S.N	Name	Gender		
1	Dal Rawat	M		
2	Jarsi Rawat	M		
3	Naina Rawat			
4	Sajarni Rawat			
5	Naina Bdr Rawat			
6	Harka Bdr Rawat			

7	Nar Bdr Rawat			School Teacher
8	Lal Bdr Rawat			Traditional Healer
9	Amar Rawat			
10				

3. Participants of group meeting with women on Chhaupadi in Tamti, Jumla

S.N	Name	Age		
1	Rupa Buda/Rawat	40		
2	Jayapura Buda	18		
3	Kusum Buda	Don't Know		
4	Munasari Buda	"		
5	Lalsari Buda	"		
6	Burikala Buda	"		
7	Mansari Buda	29		
8	Anar Buda	Don't Know		
9	Maiya Buda	"		
10	Manu Buda	"		
11	Sukeli Buda	40		
12	Siuli Buda	Don't know		
13	Piuli Buda	"		
14	Haikali Buda	"		
15	Saiba Buda	"		
16	Ratna Maya Kuwar	"		
17	Kanchi Buda	"		Manopause woman
18	Sarkini Buda	48		Manopause woman
19	Jayakali Buda	45		Manopause woman
20	Nainasara	29		
21	Sayakali	Don't know		Manopause woman
22	Haina Kali	"		Manopause woman
23	Devi Sara Rawat	"		Female Community Health Volunteer
24	Gori Kala Rawat	"		Paralegal member

5. Participants of group meeting with women on Chhaupadi in PhoiMahadev, Kalikot

S.N	Name	Age		
1	Sujakala Shahi	25		
2	Kalash Hamal	22		
3	Sirkala Hamal	30		
4	Sapna Hamal	35		
5	Gorikala Shahi	35		
6	Laxmi Shahi	36		Female Community Health

				Worker
7	Janaki Pandey	22		
8	Laxmi Pandey	50		
9	Sulochana Shahi	32		
10	Dantasila Shahi	28		
11	Santa Shree Shahi	30		
12	Bipana Pandey	50		
13				

5.Participants of group meeting with men on Chhaupadi in PhoiMahadev, Kalikot

S.N	Name	Age		
1	Lal Chandra Pandey	52		
2	Bade Bahadur Pandey	55		
3	Lokendra Hamal	24		
4	Lila Pandey	50		
5	Manichandra Pandey	60		
6	Dadising Karki	50		

Annex 2 Responses from survey respondents

Responses according to VDCs										
Responses	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tanti	Total	Phoi	Rachui	Kudari	Tanti	Total
	Number of responses					Percentage of responses				
Place during Menarche										
As same bed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
At home but separate room	2	0	7	3	12	9	0	32	14	14
Neighbors house	1	7	0	0	8	5	32	0	0	9
Cowshed	19	15	15	19	68	86	68	68	86	77
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Place during regular period										
Same bed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cowshed	16	19	20	21	76	73	86	91	95	86
Different room/bed	6	3	2	1	12	27	14	9	5	14
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Restriction in place										
Kitchen	15	18	18	14	51	68	82	82	64	58
Worship room	13	17	21	17	68	59	77	95	77	77
School	5	4	5	3	17	23	18	23	14	19
Temple	18	20	19	19	76	82	91	86	86	86
Social gathering	12	10	5	15	42	55	45	23	68	48
Restriction in eating										
Milk and dairy product	14	15	19	19	67	64	68	86	86	76
Meat and meat product	7	13	9	16	45	32	59	41	73	51
Vegetables	4	9	6	6	25	18	41	27	27	28
Prasad	13	14	13	16	56	59	64	59	73	64
Others	0	1	1	0	2	0	5	5	0	2
Total										
Use of sanitary materials										
Sanitary pad	3	7	9	8	27	14	32	41	36	31
Clothes	19	15	13	14	61	86	68	59	64	69
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Care during period										
Clean old clothes	17	14	11	14	56	77	64	50	64	64

Any type of clothes	2	3	3	5	13	9	14	14	23	15
only panties	3	0	2	0	5	14	0	9	0	6
Others	0	5	6	3	14	0	23	27	14	16
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Ways to drying clothes										
hide from anyone	14	13	12	14	53	64	59	55	64	60
sunshine	6	7	5	6	24	27	32	23	27	27
As regular clothes	2	2	5	2	11	9	9	23	9	13
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Store of cloths										
pack and in cowshed	19	19	19	21	78	86	86	86	95	89
pack and anywhere	1	2	1	1	5	5	9	5	5	6
separate	2	1	2	0	5	9	5	9	0	6
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
If more than one women										
Turn by turn	6	7	5	3	21	27	32	23	14	24
Separate	16	15	17	19	67	73	68	77	86	76
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Use of medicine										
yes	3	5	19	5	32	14	23	86	23	36
No	19	17	3	17	56	86	77	14	77	64
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Consult with health worker										
Yes	11	10	10	8	39	50	45	45	36	44
No	11	12	12	14	49	50	55	55	64	56
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
School during period										
Yes	19	17	21	14	71	86	77	95	64	81
No	3	5	1	8	17	14	23	5	36	19
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
If not why										
Abdomen Pain	8	8	9	12	37	36	36	41	55	42
Absence of Toilet	3	9	7	7	26	14	41	32	32	30
Others	11	5	6	3	25	50	23	27	14	28
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
School attendance during the period										
Yes	13	17	18	15	63	59	77	82	68	72
No	9	5	4	7	25	41	23	18	32	28

Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Changes required in the schools										
Toilet	12	13	15	13	53	55	59	68	59	60
Education on Menstruation period	9	3	5	7	24	41	14	23	32	27
Dress freedom	2	0	1	1	4	9	0	5	5	5
Not construct temple nearby school	2	0	2	11	15	9	0	9	50	17
Not to make stand up	1	0	3	0	4	5	0	14	0	5
Rest room, sanitary pad	4	3	6	0	13	18	14	27	0	15
Total										
Restriction Instruction at Home										
Parents	14	13	17	15	59	64	59	77	68	67
Grand parents	1	1	0	2	4	5	5	0	9	5
Traditional Healers	5	4	3	4	16	23	18	14	18	18
Other relatives and neighbours	2	4	2	1	9	9	18	9	5	10
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
Restriction instruction in the community										
Traditional healers	13	12	14	13	52	59	55	64	59	59
Senior people	9	10	8	9	36	41	45	36	41	41
Total	22	22	22	22	88	100	100	100	100	100
How do you feel during period										
Feeling Lonely	13	16	17	20	66	59	73	77	91	75
Like to cry	11	14	21	11	57	50	64	95	50	65
Feeling humiliation in front of boys	16	15	19	18	68	73	68	86	82	77
Doesn't matter	4	5	7	3	19	18	23	32	14	22
Teasing by boys	2	3	9	5	19	9	14	41	23	22