

# Menstrual Practice in Nepal

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Menstrual Health: Research  
Presentation

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**actionworks**  
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ACTIVISTS FOR MENSTRUAL RIGHTS and

Panel 1

# Outline of Presentation

- Videos and photos on Cowshed Practices
  - Menstrual Practice, Forms of Restrictions, and Prohibitions
  - Menstruation and Stigma
  - Cowshed and Chhaupadi practices and its Consequences
  - Nepal Government, Constitution and menstrual restriction
  - Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Menstrual Restriction
  - Action works Nepal and Radha Paudel: Action to Abolish Menstrual Restriction
  - Monitor and evaluation
  - Challenges/barriers

# Video prepared in consultation of Action Works Nepal and its working area

- <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/video/2016/apr/01/menstru>

(Let's cut the in one minute)

# Fear Expressed While Staying in Cowshed



Interview & video by RadhaPaudelFoundation. Verbal Consent obtained





Living away from home, in cowshed with animals. No light, no window(s) for safety and ventilation. Is this dignifying life for women and girls? Can you imagine living this way? “Birthplace is no one’s choice” . Everyone deserves basic human rights.



## Varities of sheds





- A 15-year-old girl's dead body was found in the morning while practicing chhaupadi in Nov 2016-western Nepal
- A 21 year-mother found dead in the cowshed leaving the neonate behind in Nov 2016-western Nepal
- Women must stay at cowshed not only during menstruation but also immediately after the childbirth
- People are dying 18 years before than national average life(67.6) expectancy (HDI 2014)  
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# Menstrual Practice, Restrictions, and Prohibitions

- Segregation, Restrictions, Banning and Prohibitions from basic rights
  - Restricted to sleep in cowshed or designated area
  - Prohibited from touching the foundation of the house and water source.
  - Banned from eating certain types of foods, fruits and vegetables. Varies in the location.
  - Banned from joining social events, meetings, prayers, temple, etc.
  - Prohibited from touching pregnant women, infant and children, male members and elderly
  - Prohibited from touching books, male teachers, male doctors, faith healers, and priests
  - Prohibited from touching lactating cows, fruit and vegetable bearing plants and trees

# Menstruation and Stigma

- Cultural practice of segregation, its an event of impurity, stigma and sin
- Cursed by god = Impure/untouchable (written in religious books)
- Banns and restrictions- women who violate the practice are blamed held accountable for crop failures, illnesses and sudden deaths of animals, children, loss of pregnancies, etc.
- They become isolated from family, school, and their communities.
- Instead of being aware of their body, they are ashamed and embarrassed about themselves and remain isolated and silent
- While practicing chhaupadi, everyone knows she has period or she has already started menstruating and the profiling/ targeting starts:
  - Being teased, harassment



# Cowshed and Chhaupadi practices and its Consequences

- Emotional harm up to suicidal
- Physical harm including rape and murder
- Malnutrition
- Lack of supply, sanitation, safety and security
- Extreme cold and scorching heat
- Poor air quality
- School drop outs
- Deprivation from opportunities and economic empowerment
- Early marriage and early childbearing

# Nepal Government and Constitution

- The Nepalese Supreme Court declared Chhaupadi illegal in 2005
  - Cowsheds and chhaupadi practices are still continuing.
- Nepal promulgated an inclusive and gender responsive constitution in 2015
  - Articles 16, 17,18, 24,30,31,35,36,37 and 38 are directly and indirectly linked with Menstrual Health, Hygiene and Rights (MHHR) and it is considered the fundamental rights.
  - The constitution has provided enough space for menstrual health right but need to unpack while formulating by laws and regulations as evidenced by continued chhaupadi practice
  - Chhaupadi is practiced wherever Nepalese community is: in western part of Nepal; in cities such as Kathmandu; overseas such as UK and US (note



# Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

- Menstrual Health Hygiene and Rights are the key foundation for peace, human right, empowerment and achieving SDGs
- Poor MHHR is the key barrier to achieve just and equal society; and SDGs goals because more than 95 percent families have been negatively influenced by the ranges of restrictions either at private and/or public and/or both level.
- SDGs
  - Out of 17 goals and 169 targets, none of the target speaks related to menstrual rights such as menstrual taboos, restrictions, poor menstrual hygiene whereas 6/23/17 it speaks directly on issues such as child marriage and FGM (Female Genital

# Action Taken by Action Works Nepal and Radha Paudel

- Radha Paudel- the first person to recognize menstrual restriction as a fundamental hindrance to the human rights and took action toward removing these practices
  - Menstrual restrictions are associated with ignorance, socio-cultural practices, poverty and gender discrimination
  - Poor MHHR is the key barrier to achieve just and equal society, and SDGs goals
  - Menstrual Health Hygiene and Rights are the key foundation for peace, human rights, empowerment and achieving SDGs
- AWON is the first NGO that started to take an action against menstrual restriction with an holistic approach

# Management/Implementation Action Taken by RPF and AWON

- Phase I
  - Empowering girls and women
  - Engaging boys and men
  - Engaging the faith healers
  - Develop community leaders' commitment letter and Charter on how they can help women and girls for their empowerment
- Phase II
  - Intervention: Build critical mass involving, recognizing and mobilizing champions from specific groups such as politicians, medias, professionals, and activists.
- Phase III

# Monitor and Evaluation

- Train volunteers and staffs in each community  
Evaluate and understand the community structure and
- Set up meetings and start dialogue about menstruation
- Educate- set goal for the groups (formed)
- Expectation is to change the practice
- Enforce commitment that's been made by various community group: women, male members, faith healers, priests, teachers, school children (girls and boys)
- Follow up every three months
- Reward and reinforce

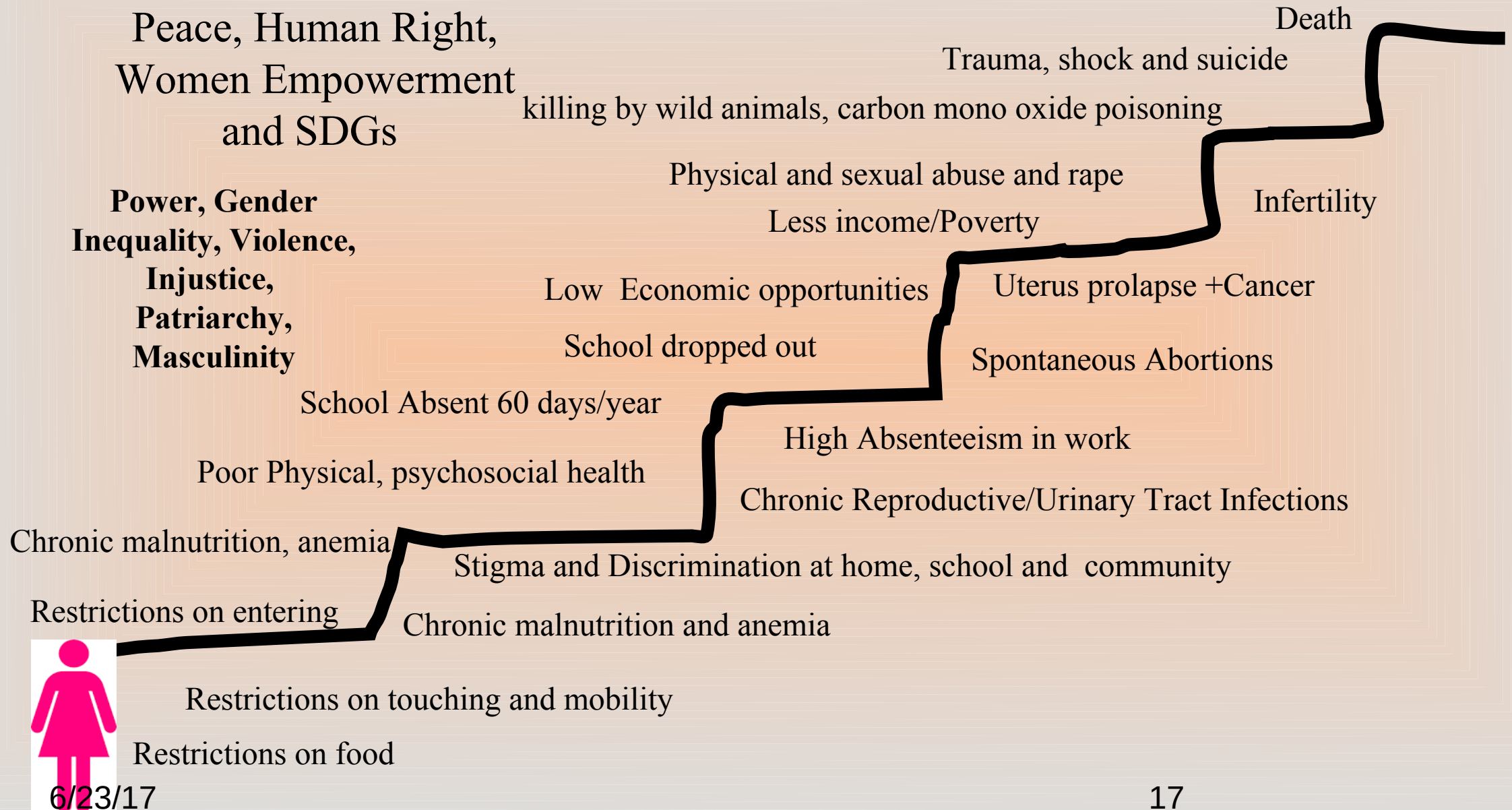




# Challenges/barriers to successful implementation

- Stereotype male dominated perceptions and practices in the community
  - Threat from traditional healers and religious leaders
  - Poverty and dependence, discrimination and Masculinity: rural women do not have power
  - Traditional mode for livelihood
  - Resource concentrate at elite lead NGOs and the grassroots leaders heavily marginalized
- Stigmatize talking about MHM
- Government's less priority to MHM
- Other NGOs and government worked on solving part of the problem rather than taking an holistic approach
- Geographical proximity

# Menstrual Restriction Affects all Aspect of Life



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# Conclusion and Urgent CALL for Action

Theory of  
change:  
holistic  
approach for  
redressing  
the menstrual  
restriction



No  
women  
no  
peace