

#NepalsMenstrualMovement is reaching millions

Scaling-up the promotion of menstrual health in cooperation with an influencer

Background: S2HSS' activities around Menstrual Health and Hygiene

GIZ's Support to the Health Sector Strategy (S2HSS) is advocating to put menstruation on the national agenda and to make sure that adolescent girls in particular have the information and resources they need to manage their menstruation safely and with dignity.

Context

In Nepal, millions of adolescent girls face challenges in managing their menstruation which may negatively impact their health, education and social life. The obstacles are deeply embedded cultural beliefs about menstruation and access to affordable sanitary products as well as the availability of functional sanitation facilities. As per a recent study conducted by Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC), only around half of all adolescent girls were able to change sanitary materials at school. They mention unavailability of disposal mechanisms (29,1%), embarrassment (25,9%) or a general lack of sanitary products (23.9%) as reasons. More than 90% of girls and women in Nepal face restrictions regarding religious practices such as visiting temples and worshipping during their menstruation (CBS, 2019).

In recent years, menstrual health and hygiene has significantly gained attention in Nepal. As a result of the growing momentum of menstrual health and hygiene management, the Government of Nepal in 2019 has announced to make sanitary pads available free of charge at every public school in the country.

S2HSS collaborates with the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance (MHM PA) Nepal, a multi-stakeholder network of 60+ organizations, to raise awareness and collectively advocate for Dignified Menstruation on all political levels throughout the country.

GIZ Gender Competition 2022

Submission by GIZ's Support to the Health Sector Strategy (S2HSS) Nepal. In cooperation with Sector Programme "Water Policy – Innovation for Resilience" and the GIZ Staff Initiative MenstruAction.



Implementation

- Constructed female friendly WASH facilities and upgraded in 17 schools of Western Nepal that is benefitting more than 5000 girls.
- Implementing WASH in School program aligned with Ministry of Education's protocol to ensure sustainable WASH facilities/services in schools.
- Supported the distribution of 1.3 million compostable sanitary pads to more than 4000 girls in two municipalities in Western Nepal.
- Developed and disseminated informative videos on menstrual health to reach adolescents with appropriate messages on the topic.
- Set up three low-cost sanitary pads' production units in Western Nepal through women led NGOs and cooperatives to ensure production of compostable sanitary pads for girls and women.
- At the national level: support of advocacy and cooperation through strengthening of the MHM PA's governance structures and common advocacy through the establishment of a Secretariat and secondment of a Development Advisor and national counterpart expert.



A few screenshots of the film documentary showing Goodwill Ambassador Keki Adhikari in action.

Social Media Campaign #NepalsMenstrualMovement

The challenge

How to reach adolescents on a broad scale to raise awareness and share educational materials?

The solution

Engage a popular national actress and influencer as Goodwill Ambassador.

Keki Adhikari is a well-known actress, model and film producer in her native Nepal. Since October 2020, she has a new role: as Goodwill Ambassador for menstrual health. Working with S2HSS and MHM PA, she is raising awareness about the challenges which women and girls in Nepal continue to face during their monthly periods. With more than 1.5 million followers on social media, Keki Adhikari is in a powerful position to raise her voice and reach Millions!

The Social Media Campaign #NepalsMenstrualMovement included several posts with Information and Education Materials in 2020.

To scale up, in 2021 a film documentary was produced with Keki Adhikari as a presenter and the award-winning German filmmaker Dirk Gilson. The aim was to showcase challenges and changes for girls and women in rural Nepal as well as education and advocacy efforts by local organizations and the MHM Partner's Alliance as a whole. The first part of the two-part series was released along with several video clips towards Menstrual Hygiene Day 2021 and reached altogether around 2 million people.

Key success factors – lessons learned

1. It's important to choose the right person.

The Influencer should have a good image and be popular among the target group. Their intrinsic motivation is essential. Financial incentive alone should not be the only driving force to become an influencer.

2. Getting to know each other is essential.

It's important to get to know each other and learn about interests of the goodwill ambassador. The pandemic situation delayed face to face meetings with Keki Adhikari. However, there was an opportunity to spend some time with her during the documentary shoot which strengthened the collaboration immensely.

3. Briefing about the campaign is imperative.

It is important to thoroughly brief the ambassador about the project and the campaign. The goal is that the ambassadors should be able to convey the message in their own words to the public.

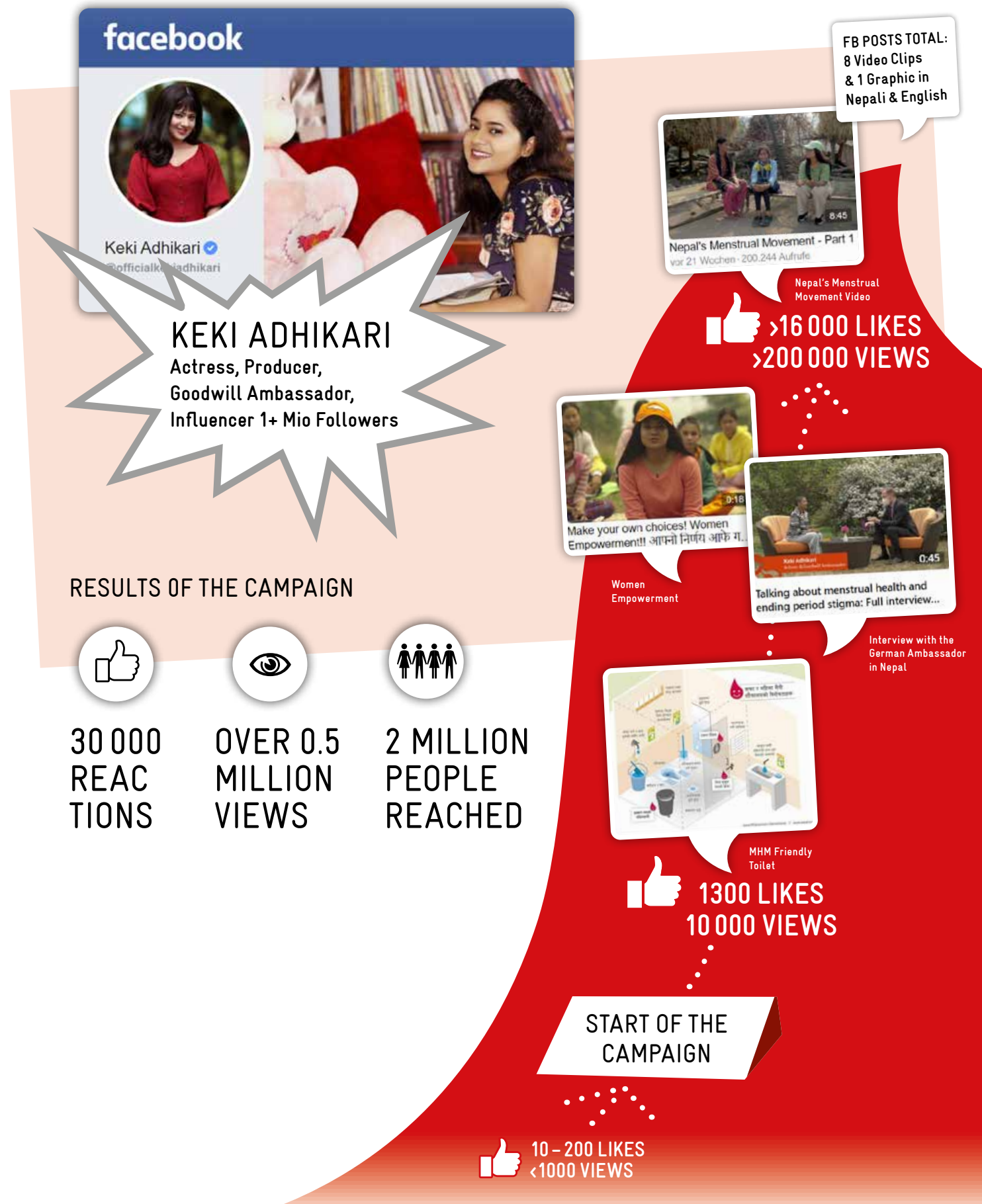
4. Exposure visit is helpful.

In the initial phase, the pandemic did not allow to take Keki Adhikari for an exposure visit in the community. However, this is seen to be important to make the ambassador more sensitized and aware on the issue through the interaction with different stakeholders.



Keki Adhikari in a conversation with students of Durga High School in Western Nepal. The girls share how they experience and manage their menstruation.

How to go viral – reaching your target group in millions?



"Let's stand together against all kinds of menstrual taboos. High time to change or we will remain static!"

महिनावारीसम्बन्धी सबै किसिमका रुढिवादी अन्धविश्वास विरुद्ध हामी सबै एक होऔं । अब पनि परिवर्तन मएनी भने हामी सधैको लागि स्थिर हुनेछौं ।

– केकी अधिकारी (अभिनेत्री)



giz

MHM



Left: Announcement post by GIZ Nepal

Right: Post by the German Embassy Nepal on MH Day 2021

“Why shouldn't we talk about menstruation? It's for us the men to learn and to listen more than tell the people what to do.”

Roland Schäfer, German Ambassador in Kathmandu

#NepalsMenstrualMovement has inspired action beyond borders

National level

The idea of forming a network to speak with one voice in advocating for Dignified Menstruation has inspired 60+ local and international civil society organizations, academia, companies as well as bilateral and UN agencies to join the MHM PA. Through the secondment of a Development Advisor and a National Counterpart Officer supporting a secretariat for the Alliance, internal governance structures and a common strategy could be developed and its work has become more visible through Social Media Channels and a Website.

German Development Cooperation level

The Social Media Campaign #NepalsMenstrualMovement has also been actively supported by the German Embassy. The former German Ambassador engaged in a conversation with Goodwill Ambassador Keki Adhikari about Dignified Menstruation for the film documentary and the German Embassy shared the campaign posts on their social media channels.

GIZ level

Within GIZ, the staff initiative MenstruAction has been gaining pace and followers during the past two years – with the authors as co-leads. Supporting the global campaign for Menstrual Hygiene Day on 28 May each year, GIZ staff has taken a stand by engaging in the “Menstrual Bracelet Campaign” in 2020 and 2021. This year, around 300 colleagues from 38 countries have participated – including Chair of the GIZ Management Board, Tanja Gönner.

Global level

The cooperation with the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) and the GIZ Sustainable Sanitation Programme (now WaPo-RE) since 2015, particularly in the area of Menstrual Health and Hygiene and WASH, has ensured that the activities in Nepal are in line with the global agenda. The long-standing cooperation has now reached its peak with the successful collaboration on the joint production of multi-media content for the campaign.

National and global outreach of #NepalsMenstrualMovement

- Other development partners are planning to engage Goodwill Ambassadors and have asked S2HSS for advice and exchange.
- Keki Adhikari has been asked to attend events by other partners of MHM PA related to her role as Goodwill Ambassador.
- A new production of songs and videos to raise awareness on the topic of Menstruation is currently prepared with Keki Adhikari and Prakash Saput, another popular singer and activist from Nepal.
- The success story #NepalsMenstrualMovement was featured as a good practice in *Studio MH Day 2021* by the Global MH Day Secretariat Berlin.



It has also been featured in the publication “Menstruationshygiene – Vom Tabu-Thema zur Chance für die deutsche Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Nothilfe” by the German WASH Network.

- Article published on BMZ HealthyDevelopment: “Menstrual Hygiene Day: Nepal's movement for dignified menstruation gathers pace”.
- The film documentary “Nepal's Menstrual Movement” will be screened at the Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF) 2021.
- The film documentary “Nepal's Menstrual Movement” is also an entry of the the WHO “Health for All” Film Festival 2022. An earlier produced animation video “Menstrual Hygiene” (NHEICC/GIZ) was an official nomination at the WHO Film Festival in 2020.