

Periods@Work – Many initiatives, one goal



GIZ Gender Competition 2024 Submission
Category “Gender Mainstreaming within the Company”
<https://gizonline.sharepoint.com>: <https://bit.ly/47T0LRG>

1. Corporate Culture

MenstruAction: GIZ staff join the Global MHH Movement

In 2015, GIZ staff working in the fields of education, health, gender and WASH got together to launch MenstruAction as company-wide initiative. Their shared goal was to integrate menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) both into their work and into GIZ's workplace practices by raising awareness, in Germany and in partner countries, through events, campaigns and cooperation and exchange with other internal and external actors.

With menstruation bracelets, the movement gathers pace

In 2020, 100 GIZ colleagues around the world shared a picture of themselves wearing a menstruation bracelet (with 23 white and 5 red beads, representing the monthly cycle) to make their support for MHH visible. By 2022, this number had already grown to 700. And it spread to other organisations: Welthungerhilfe (since 2021), Engagement Global (since 2022) and KfW DEG colleagues (since 2023, see photo on page 4) have also joined the movement.

Assessing GIZ's period-friendliness

In May 2023, the initiative conducted a survey with more than 800 participants on the situation and the wishes of a period-friendly workplace in HQ and in the country offices, with surprising results. They used the sharing of the outcomes as opportunity to create the “MenstruAction News”.

In May 2023, the initiative organised an event “Periods@work – Why the topic of menstruation belongs at work” at the GIZ Representation in Berlin with colleagues from various areas. Speakers included: Daniela Spies – GIZ Equal Opportunities Commissioner, Katrin Freitag – Senior Expert Facility Management Berlin, Dr. Angela Langenkamp – GIZ Gender Commissioner. The event started the process of:

- exploring together with the Facility Management if and how emergency hygiene products can efficiently be provided in the GIZ office toilets in Germany.
- In addition, the initiative co-organized a new exchange format “Thought Leaders Circle – Periods@Work” with Bayer AG, SAP, UNIQLO, Berlin-Lichtenberg and the Institut für Zyklusgesundheit. The first discussion took place in Berlin on 15th November 2023.

The GIZ Equal Opportunities Commissioners take a stand for menstrual health as part of “Equal Health”

Since 2021 the GIZ Equal Opportunities Team launched a number of formats to promote MHH:

- Two events in the Safe Space exchange format, including an exchange room on the topic of menstrual health in the workplace, as well as menopause.
- A Teams channel around the topic of “Equal Health” with information on cycle health.
- Two events on cycle-oriented work with a total of over 1,500 participants and more than 2,200 views of the recordings.
- A regular exchange with Corporate Health Management (CHM) and Medical Service (MED) on gender equality and health, including menstrual cycle health and menopause.
- Several info sheets on cycle health – info sheet menopause and info sheet cycle health (available in German and English).
- Event on the topic of “Menopause at the workplace” with 380 participants.
- Good practice example: free emergency menstrual products available for all colleagues at the GIZ Office Vietnam – A joint initiative by the Equal Opportunities Team together with the Gender Focal Person, Net Pham Thi Hong, and Corporate Health Management. See more good practices from other GIZ country teams and offices on page 3.

Photo: Event “Periods@Work – Why the topic of menstruation belongs at work” on 30th May 2023 at the GIZ Representation Berlin



A) Joint activities by the GIZ Equal Opportunities Team and the staff initiative MenstruAction:

09/2023: At the Period of Change Conference in Berlin: Joint positioning of GIZ's Periods@Work activities (keynote speech, panel discussion, workshop) – as well as use of the two conference days for intensive exchange between colleagues of the Equal Opportunities Team, the staff initiative and many experts in the field of the conference's topic "Power of Prevention – Innovatives Personalmanagement durch Zyklusbildung".

09/2023: Booth informing about sustainable MHH products in front of the canteen in Bonn as part of the German Sustainability Days 2023.

10/2023: Peer-to-Peer Session #LetsTalkPERIOD / #MenstruAction at the GIZ Gender Network Meeting in Berlin; organised by Adela Llydia (Gender Focal Person, GIZ Albania) together with MenstruAction and Daniela Spies (GIZ Equal Opportunities Commissioner).

B) Joining forces with the medical service and the Facility Management (Berlin, Bonn, Eschborn)

Since May 2023, GIZ's Medical Service is also on board with Periods@Work: In cooperation with the GIZ Equal Opportunities Team, it has been providing emergency menstrual products on its premises in Bonn and Eschborn as well as in an assigned room of the properties in Berlin. There is a sticker in each women toilet in the Berlin, Bonn and Eschborn offices that points users to this new service. However, due to the limited accessibility of the medical service (both in terms of location and time), this is only a temporary solution.

Since June 2023, discussions on more comprehensive solutions with various GIZ units and functions are underway which will be hopefully implemented in the near future in HQ – following the lead of the good practices already available in a few GIZ country offices (as shown on the next page).

2. Gender competence

Providing menstrual products for emergencies in the workplace is not only a matter of gender equality but also makes economic sense. Treating menstrual products as essential hygiene items, just like toilet paper, contributes to destigmatising periods and aligns with BMZ's feminist development policy. In its strategy for feminist development, the BMZ urges its implementing organisations to advance feminist development policies within their own structures through learning and adaptive processes. Providing menstrual products for emergencies in the office toilets is one way of doing just that.

The MenstruAction survey showed that 62 percent of the 829 surveyed women had been surprised by their periods between one and three times per year. If emergency menstrual products were available in their toilets, this would no longer need to worry them. By providing them, GIZ would follow in the footsteps of several major German companies, including SAP SE, OTTO Group, Bayer AG, Lichtblick SE, among others.

Addressing MHH at the workplace is one important way in which GIZ can realise gender equality at a practical level, fostering equal opportunities, cultivating a non-discriminatory work environment, and promoting healthy attitudes and behaviors among all employees, irrespective of their gender identity.

In respect to gender-transformation, the initiatives are also committed to sensitizing non-menstruating colleagues. As it is a topic that not only menstruating staff needs to be aware of, which is why the initiative addresses all staff members. And the message is being heard: In many GIZ units, male colleagues have already expressed their support for the MHH initiatives.



Photo: Open House 2023 at BMZ Berlin: Svenja Schulze, German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development and members of the GIZ staff initiative MenstruAction show their joint support to break the taboo around menstruation by wearing the menstruation bracelet.

HIGHLIGHTS:

MHH related activities at GIZ country offices

In many partner countries, GIZ's Gender Focal Persons have initiated MHH related measures. This world map highlights inspiring examples. Those marked "Pad" already have menstrual products for emergencies in their office toilets, those marked "Menstruation Bracelet" have begun to raise awareness and advocate for MHH and Periods@Work.



GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE MALAWI

Collaborating with the NGO UFULU to combat menstrual stigma and expand women's options.

Integrating menstrual cup training into various project sessions, such as agribusiness, health, nutrition, or education, promotes body awareness and autonomy. The initiative, shared among GIZ projects, aims to reduce absenteeism due to menstruation, improve menstrual health, and empower women through knowledge-sharing in a safe, inclusive space. The workshops garnered interest within GIZ, leading to an internal workshop for interested colleagues.

GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE ALBANIA

GIZ REPRESENTATION BRUSSELS

GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE NIGERIA

WORKING GROUP,
PLASTIC4PADS INITIATIVE

GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE RWANDA

GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE ZAMBIA

GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE PAKISTAN

GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE NEPAL

GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE INDIA

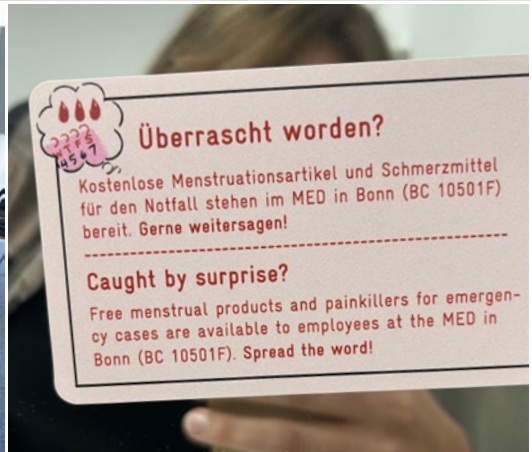
GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE PHILIPPINES

GIZ COUNTRY OFFICE VIETNAM

Creating a menstrual-friendly workplace in Vietnam.

According to the Labour Code, female employees are entitled to a daily 30-minute paid break during their menstrual period. The number of menstrual leave days is negotiated and is at least 3 working days per month. GIZ Vietnam supports this by providing sanitary napkins and tampons in the first aid kits in country and project offices. This gives colleagues easy access to free emergency supplies. This small action can have a big impact on health and well-being. In addition, GIZ Vietnam's flexible working time policy allows menstruating people to take a break at any time.





Photos (from left): Inspired by MenstruAction, 15 KfW DEG colleagues took a stand and shared a menstruation bracelet photo collage via the official DEG LinkedIn account on Menstrual Hygiene Day 2023. | Group photo after the Peer-to-Peer Session #LetsTalkPERIOD / #MenstruAction at the GIZ Gender Network Meeting in Berlin. | Sticker in one of the office toilets in Bonn, Berlin and Eschborn.

3. Cooperation

Who do you work with?

We are cooperating with colleagues of the following external networks and partners: Global Menstrual Hygiene Day & WASH United, Global Menstrual Collective, Share-Net Netherlands hosted by the KIT Royal Tropical Institute, UN Women Germany (#HeForShe), Mailman School of Public Health – Columbia University, Bayer AG, Institut für Zyklusgesundheit Berlin, WaterAid, Welthungerhilfe, Engagement Global, KfW DEG, WHO Regional Office Europe, Social Changemakers and Innovators (SOCHAI) Nepal.

Internally, we are cooperating with the Diversity and Sustainability Office, the Gender Ambassador, Martha Gutierrez, and Gender Commissioner, Dr. Angela Langenkamp, as well as the following Gender Focal Persons: Paula Gräfin von Königsmarck (Representation Berlin), Marina Peters (Representation Brussels), Kathrina Schipper (Rwanda), Net Pham Thi Hong (Vietnam), Adela Llatja (Albania), Hannah Scheuermann (G500), Scherazade Siganporia (India), Milu Shree Shakya (Nepal), Beau Davis & Lilian Seffer & Kate Okoh-Kpina (Nigeria), Dina Al Najjar & Razan Ishaqat (Jordan), Ghayda Shahatit (Water Cluster, Jordan).

SUBMITTED BY:

MenstruAction Staff Initiative – Periods@Work team: Alaha Safdari (G130), Daphne Manolacos (G310), Natalie Schmitz (G310), Theresa Rettner (0800), Sarah Ghani (0095), Philipp Dering (G310), Dorina Heller (A170), Salvador Braedt (G130), Jan Schlenk (G310), Teresa Kappauf (G130), Tanja Cronenberg (G310), Gloria Stratmann (G430), Dr. Arne Panesar (G310), Adela Llatja (Albania), Kathrina Schipper (Rwanda), Inken Adrian (Malawi), Net Pham Thi Hong (Vietnam), Viktoria Hoj & Elda Beqiri (Albania), Dr. Gabriele Lames (G110), Nicole Siegmund (G310), Melissa Amann (7800). *

In cooperation with the Equal Opportunities Team with Dorina Heller, Sarah Ghani, Daniela Spies, Esther Löhr, Dr. Reinhold Ernst, together with Katrin Freitag, Aissa Giering (Facility Management) and Laura Döpfer (Corporate Health Management).

* As part of the wider MenstruAction community: Alexandra Plüschke (Nepal), Alice Brandt (Guatemala), Alina Noeth (G110), Anna Bohlender (G420), Anna Kristina Kanathigoda (Zambia), Anke Peine (Zambia), Anton Scholz (Representation Berlin), Dr. Bella Monse (G310), Bettina-Sophie Heinz (G310), Bosse Alexander Klama (Corporate Communications, Berlin), Brenda Mbaja Lubang'a (Pakistan), Dieter Rothenberger (G310), Doreen Mbalo (Zambia), Dorothea Hohengarten (Corporate Communications, Bonn), Elaine Cheung (South Africa), Elke Hüttner (G300), Fanni Zentai (G310), Frederick Madrid (Philippines), Grace Mwanza (Zambia), Hannah Scheuermann (G500), Hannes Utescher (G120), Dr. Heike Höffler (Zambia), Irine Faith Alinga (Uganda), Jenny Misterek (Iraq), Juan Alfonso Leonardia (Philippines), Karin Kortman (Regional Office Germany-West), Kimmy Wee (Philippines), Lara Prins (G420), Laura Kieweg (G310), Lena Borisch (AIZ), Laura Emmerich (G110), Linos Xanthopoulos (G520), Lira Burgija (Albania), Liza Marana (Philippines), Maren Heuvels (G310), Margarete Lim (Philippines), Mariam Ibrahim (1710), Marina Peters (Representation Brussels), Mintje Būürma (Jordan), Dr. Michael Köberlein (2B00), Miriam Spykermann (G510), Nabila Farouq-Martius (G410), Nicole Glorian (G130), Natalia Wiik (G110), Nora Valenzuela Llorente (Pakistan), Rabia Baloch (Pakistan), Sami Pande (Nepal), Sarah Peters (Representation Berlin), Sebastian Koecke (Zambia), Stephanie Mumenthaler (4C10), Susanne Schultz-Dopke (G530), Svenja Freund (4B30), Tirtha Kumar Sinha (Nepal), Tom Stadelmann (G310), Valerie Broch Alvarez (Libya), Wezzie Banda (Malawi).

CONTACT: menstruaction@giz.de

1 December 2023