**Menstrual Health and Hygiene**

* Activity: Community Conversation (Discussion and Coffee Ceremony)  
  Touchpoint: People of influence (youth groups, Women’s Army, community elders, religious leaders, Kebele leaders)
* Description: A guided discussion on menstruation and menstrual health and hygiene to help destigmatize the topic throughout the community and lead to actions of support. This event should be very casual–this is not a training or lesson but a group discussion meant to encourage thought on the topic. Please consider sitting in a circle or in a format that invokes equal participation both from attendees and those guiding the discussion.
* Before Event:
  + Define specifically who should be invited. Consider people from the following list:
    - Include men - discussion groups can be separated by gender if that makes it more comfortable to discuss
    - Women Development Army (WDA)
    - Model Mothers & Influential Fathers (community role models)
    - Health Extension Workers (HEWs) & Kebele Manager
    - School MHM Club Members (for peer-led engagement)
    - Faith-Based (FBO) & Community-Based (CBO) Leaders
  + Important: Consider the number of participants in each group. There should be space for people to participate freely. Suggest no more than 25 people per group.
  + Set venue. Ensure the venue space is large enough to accommodate participants, ideally with enough space to hold several smaller group discussions. Venue should be centrally located and easily accessible for all community members.
  + Mobilize Community
    - Community Outreach: Use Community WASH Promoters (CWPs) and village leaders to announce the event.
    - School Mobilization: School director to inform students via MHM clubs
    - Creative Engagement: MHM clubs prepare poems, songs, and dramas to perform.
  + Determine materials needed
    - Local examples of menstrual products
    - Printed posters and catalogue to distribute and or reference
    - Banners
* During Event:
  + Opening prayer by Faith Based Organization leader
  + Welcome speech (Kebele manager/HEW)
  + Opening song or skit from Schools MHH Club if possible and available
  + Set ground rules: rearrange seating arrangement to be inclusive–aim for a circle arrangement. Explain that this is a group discussion to learn and help each other learn – NOT a training event but a space where people should feel safe to openly discuss.
  + Conduct a True/False activity. Read a statement from the list, ask people to vote if they think it is *true* or *false*. Reveal the answer after participants have all voted then have a discussion around the initial statement to help demystify the biological process and address common beliefs. Ask the follow up questions and allow plenty of time for people to THINK then respond:
    - Statement:
      * Menstruation is a disease (*false*)
    - Follow up key discussion points and questions:
      * What do you know about menstruation?

(Menstruation, or period, is normal vaginal bleeding that occurs as part of a woman's monthly cycle. Every month, your body prepares for pregnancy. If no pregnancy occurs, the uterus, or womb, sheds its lining. Menstruation does NOT mean a girl is ready for pregnancy, marriage, or parenthood.)

* + - * At what age does it usually start to regularly come?

(Between ages of 10 and 15, though it can be earlier or later. Between 16-18 the cycle becomes more regular and after 18 periods are expected to follow a more consistent pattern)

* + - Statement:
      * Girls should go to school during their period (*true*)
    - Follow up key discussion points and questions:
      * What is preventing girls from going to school during menstruation? (stigma, shame, bullying, lack of products, pain, no space to manage hygiene…etc)
      * What can we as a community do to make school more comfortable for menstruating girls?

(Help make menstrual products more accessible, improve school water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, provide education for all students, encourage open conversations, involve parents and community leaders, promote respect and dignity)

* + - Statement:
      * Menstruation only a women’s issue (*false*)
    - Follow up discussion and questions:
      * Male engagement in menstruation is crucial for several reasons:
      * Men can play a significant role in challenging the shame and secrecy surrounding menstruation by openly discussing it and promoting accurate information.
      * Men's involvement can help dismantle harmful gender norms and create a more equitable society where menstruation is not a barrier to participation in various aspects of life.
      * By actively engaging in conversations and taking action, men can contribute to a world where menstruation is no longer a source of shame or inequality.
    - Statement:
      * Menstruation is something to be afraid of or embarrassed of (*false*)
    - Follow up discussion and questions:
      * What challenges do girls/women face in your community?
      * What are some common myths or misconceptions about menstruation in the community?
* Discussion and exhibition on solutions and products available: Discuss the three pillars (hygiene, safety, dignity) and practical ways to manage menstruation. Ask the following questions and allow enough time for people to think, then respond. If it is more appropriate for this group, consider having people talk in pairs, and sharing back with the group.
  + What materials are used to manage menstruation in our community?
  + What are some of the barriers we see in the community around MHM?
  + How can we support women and girls better?
* **Call to action:** Identify ways the community can improve support by asking people to divide into similar groups (WDA, FBO, Kebele leaders etc.) and ask the following questions–have them write down their commitment (optional to share to the group):
  + What is the one thing your group can do to be more supportive for women and girls menstruating in your community?
  + What is at least one thing men and boys should understand about menstruation?
  + What role can religious/community leaders play?
* Coffee Ceremony and closing
  + Remind participants of what was discussed and determined during the meeting. Examples: Menstruation is normal and healthy. Hygiene is important to prevent infections. Girls have the right to privacy, comfort, and education during menstruation. Boys, men, teachers, and parents all have a role to play.
  + Coffee ceremony
* Display locally available menstruation products
  + Show examples of different locally available products and view/make available the catalogue
  + Note: we are not distributing the products but can help people understand where to get access (other organisations, shops, government programs etc.)