



CIFAL Philippines-Bridging the Gender Health Gap: A Forum Addressing Period Poverty in the Philippines

Population

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ARRIÈRE PLAN

Gender is an essential determinant of access to healthcare. The World Health Organization's (WHO) 2019 report shed light on how gender and power influence access to healthcare and services. The norms and power imbalances often result in unequal access to healthcare, with women and young girls facing barriers due to traditional and societal roles and limited decision-making power. Throughout the years, there have been improvements in addressing accessibility of gender-related health services. Despite the positive developments, women, and young girls from developing countries are still not being reached. In the Philippines, children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities bear the brunt of lacking access to health services (Peñalba, 2021). The lack of accessible and sanitary toilets alters the way young girls manage their menstrual health. Ellis et. al (2016) observed that young girls in school reduced their food and water intake to delay changing their menstrual pads until they went home because of unsafe and unhygienic toilets. Many women also experience the same in using public toilets because they are not well-maintained and left in dismal condition. These unfortunate circumstances contribute to what is defined as period poverty: the lack of access to menstrual and hygiene products and inadequate access to basic sanitation services, facilities, and information about menstruation (Rossouw & Ross, 2021). Socio-cultural factors, such as taboos, social stigmas, and prejudices surrounding menstruation can exacerbate the health risks women and young girls face. It is within this context of inaccessibility to menstrual products, education, and facilities by girls and women that UP-CIFAL Philippines conceived of holding the "Bridging the Gender Health Gap: A Forum on Addressing Period Poverty in the Philippines", a forum that intends to delve deeper into the status of gender health inequity, particularly the presence of period poverty, in the Philippines. It aims to initiate important discourse about the presence of period poverty in the Philippines, particularly the integration of menstrual health management (MHM) in education curricula and mainstreaming MHM through policies and frameworks.

CONTENU ET STRUCTURE

Welcoming Remarks given by Jon Michael Villasenor, WASH Specialist from UNICEF Philippines
Topic 1: Contextualizing Period Poverty in the Philippines
Period Poverty as a Novel Concept, a discussion on menstrual health as a human right, the definition of period poverty, and the aspects and impacts of period poverty given by Gianinna Czareena Chavez, Founder Menstruator of We Bleed Red Movement
Period Poverty as an Overlooked Health Issue, a discussion on period poverty as a health issue, period stigma, challenges faced by

menstruators in the Philippines, and available, affordable, and sustainable menstrual products delivered by Cleo Loque, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Hiraya Pilipina

Topic 2: Promoting Menstrual Health Management among Young Adults Popularization of Menstrual Health Management in Education, a discussion on integrating menstrual health management in basic and secondary education curriculum in the Philippines and mainstreaming menstrual health management in communities delivered by Dr. Maria Corazon Dumlao, MD, MPH, DHBI, Chief Health Program Officer of the School Health Division, Department of Education

Topic 3: Mainstreaming Menstrual Health Management through Policies and Frameworks Harnessing Laws and Policies towards Addressing Period Poverty, a discussion on available policies and social services specific to addressing period poverty in the Philippines, given by Athena Charanne Presto, Senior Lecturer at the UP Diliman Department of Sociology

Local Community Initiatives in Alleviating Period Poverty, a discussion on implementation of menstrual health-related policies and programs at the local level and menstrual health management awareness initiatives within the local community, delivered by Dr. Sarah Marie Huyong, Municipal Health Officer of LGU Tangalan, Aklan

Panel Discussion on the Opportunities and Challenges in Addressing Period Poverty with the Speakers and Ms. Aiai Garcia, Founder and CEO of Nala Woman, moderated by Assoc. Prof. Ma. Dulce Natividad

Synthesis provided by Dr. Marie Aubrey Villaceran, Director of UP Center for Women's and Gender Studies

Congratulatory Remarks given by Dr. Estesa Xaris Legaspi, Director of Lasallian Center for Inclusion, Diversity, and Well-being

Closing Remarks given by Dr. Michelle Palumbarit, UP-CIFAL Philippines Director

MÉTHODOLOGIE

The orientation was held on-site but a Zoom webinar was set up for online attendees.

AUDIENCE VISÉE

The primary participants of this forum are high school and college students, as well as policymakers, government officials, and members of the academe tasked to address gender-based health concerns in their specific stakeholder communities. Medical workers and other civil society organizations will be invited as well.