

# **The Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene Collective<sup>1</sup>**

## **Foundational Statement (version February 2020)**

### **1 The Opportunity**

Menstruation is a normal biological process experienced by around half the world's population for a significant part of their lives. However, for many people, menstruation is shrouded in fear, shame, and discomfort. If the myths, taboos and stigma around menstruation are dispelled; and access to facilities, safe products and services for supporting menstruation secured; the well-being of people who menstruate can be enhanced. Potentially, this has the power to contribute to increased education, health, livelihood and economic opportunities.

Attention is now being given to the importance of menstruation; and there is a surge of initiatives, activism and entrepreneurialism across the world seeking to address menstrual discrimination. Taking collective action at the global level can accelerate this transformation.

A group of stakeholders from across sectors engaged in menstrual health and hygiene met in Geneva in March 2019, convened by Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), to explore the case for establishing a global coalition for menstrual health and hygiene. The lack of sufficient and evidence-based investment was identified as the biggest obstacle in accelerating progress and achieving results. The group concluded that focusing on evidence and advocacy to drive and guide improved investment in menstrual health and hygiene is a mutually beneficial starting point for a new Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene Collective.

### **2 Who We Are**

The Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene Collective (hereafter referred to as the Collective) was established during the co-creation workshop in March 2019, convened by WSSCC. The Founding Members of the Collective include representatives from UN organizations, academia, government, funders, private sector, existing coalitions, advocacy groups, youth focused organizations, religious groups, independent consultants and international non-governmental organisations.

The purpose of the Collective is to drive and guide investment in menstrual health and hygiene through evidence-based advocacy. It is important to stress that we are not

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene Collective is a temporary name. A process for formally naming the Collective is underway and will be agreed by the founding members.

creating a new global fund, or directly channelling investments. We have come together to use our collective strength to increase and guide investments toward menstrual health and hygiene at all levels.

Members of the Collective will work together to build the evidence and advocate for investment, policy and programming across relevant sectors (WASH, health, education, gender, etc.) including access to information, products and services, and establishing positive social norms and practices around menstruation.

Existing alliances, coalitions and groups engaged with menstrual health and hygiene are invited to be members of the Collective. The Collective will work with them to leverage their functions and strengths.

The Collective will further develop its membership structure and reach out to potential members to build a diverse membership of individuals and representatives of organisations that identify with the Collective's purpose and priorities as agreed by the Founding Members.

Advocacy for improved investment will include the voices and priorities of young people and marginalised groups.

**The following agencies have co-created the Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene Collective:**

Africa Coalition for MHM	Save the Children
Columbia University	Simavi
Emory University	The Case for Her
Global Interfaith WASH Alliance	Toilet Board Coalition
Johns Hopkins University	UNFPA
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	WASH United
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	WaterAid
Menstrual Cup Coalition	WHO
Menstrual Health Hub	WSSCC
Menstrual Hygiene Alliance	Youth Ki Awaaz

### **3 The Collective's Purpose and Priorities**

**Our purpose is to drive and guide investment in menstrual health and hygiene through evidence-based advocacy.** As members of the Collective we will work together on the following four priorities. Each priority is illustrated with potential activities to give an idea of the type of collective efforts envisaged that members may

engage in under the Collective's banner related to the priority. The actual activities of the Collective will be determined by members and included in the annual plan.

### **3.1 Menstrual health and hygiene are incorporated into relevant policies**

- Provide guidance for policy development and integration
- Knowledge management and sharing including best practice, measurement tools and processes
- Develop positions for specific policies e.g. menstrual product taxation

### **3.2 The availability and use of evidence to drive investment in menstrual health and hygiene is strengthened**

- Influence investment in research to address evidence gaps
- Establish MHH Collective as trusted source of credible evidence
- Make available tools to improve program evidence

### **3.3 A clear and strong public narrative for more and better investment in menstrual health and hygiene is mainstreamed**

- Build a positive narrative around menstruation and counteract negative stories
- Increase media coverage on menstruation and menstrual health
- Provide a reliable voice to addressing the need for more and better funding

### **3.4 Connection and collaboration across global menstrual health and hygiene is strengthened to enhance collective effort**

- Regular communications to members and wider audiences
- Communication and sharing of learning and resources
- Inspire collective actions through initiatives such as awards
- Identifying and facilitating opportunities for members and stakeholders to engage in collective efforts

## **4 Governance**

The Collective will represent members through a system of distributed leadership. The Collective's governance structure is purposefully light; with a loose alliance in place initially rather than a registered, separate entity. Formal registration may be pursued in the future based on need, i.e. form will follow function to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. The governance structure may evolve depending on the shape the Collective takes beyond its formative stages.

## **4.1 Core Group**

The Collective is currently led by a Core Group comprising of volunteers from the founding members endorsed at the co-creation meeting. Members of the Core Group are individuals who have decision-making power at the institution they represent.<sup>2</sup>

## **4.2 Action Groups**

The initial activities of the Collective are delivered by Action Groups that were self-selected at the co-creation meeting. The Action Groups are self-governing. They provide updates to the Core Group and are supported by the Coordination Team. New Action Groups may be formed by members and proposed to the Core Group. Action Groups may exist for a specific activity or be continuous and may disband over time.

The initial action groups are:<sup>3</sup>

1. Building and consolidating the evidence
2. Global advocacy framework
3. Mobilizing the public narrative
4. Collective action
5. Investment case (SROI+ROI)
6. Common Language and Terminology

## **4.3 Coordination Team**

Day-to-day activities to coordinate the Collective and support the Core Group and Action Groups are conducted by a Coordination Team who report to the Core Group. The Coordination Team is responsible for carrying out a programme of work in line with the stated aims of the Collective. The members of the Collective, particularly the Core Group and Action Groups are required to support the Coordination Team in responding to requests in a timely manner.

The key roles and responsibilities of the Coordination Team include:

- Contributing to strategic thinking and planning
- Fulfilling agreed actions in the operational plan and work plans
- Coordinating meetings of the Core Group, supporting facilitation, agenda preparations and logistics
- Ensuring governance documentation is up-to-date, shared with members, signed and filed as required

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<sup>2</sup> See the Core Group's Terms of Reference for more information.

<sup>3</sup> For more information contact the Coordination Team.

- Day-to-day management of the Collective – including membership requests, communication with potential members, reporting on progress to members and the Core Group, managing budgets
- Managing internal and external communications

## **5 Membership**

The Collective is a global level initiative and currently does not intend to have a devolved structure with regional and/or national chapters of membership. Existing regional and national coalitions with mutual interests that align with the Collective's purpose will be invited to become members of the Collective to strengthen linkages from global to national levels. The Collective will actively seek diverse members from across different sectors and stakeholder groups.

### **5.1 Membership criteria**

The Collective will develop an ethical policy that includes specific membership criteria. At present the following principles will be applied to determine eligibility for new members.

- Members must have a mutual interest in achieving the Purpose of the Collective and endorse human rights, particularly gender rights.
- Most members will represent an organization. Individual members will be considered, particularly if they can contribute to the Purpose at a global level. National or local level organisations located where existing coalitions or collaborative platforms are members of the Collective are expected to engage with the Collective through these rather than directly.
- Government departments (e.g. Ministries / departments of gender, health, education, water and sanitation etc.) can become members of the Collective. Governments as a whole are not eligible.

### **5.2 Membership process**

Organisations and individuals should apply to the Coordination Team to become members. If the request is not straightforward the Coordination Team may consult with the Core Group to decide on membership.

## **6 Reviewing the Foundational Statement**

The Global MHH Collective should undertake a full review of the governance arrangements after one year.

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