

The Business of Change 2025

MANAGING MENSTRUAL WASTE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



Section: End of Life Treatment

Collective action for sustainable impact: learnings from a school-based pilot in Jaipur

Organization

Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR)

Context & Challenge

» **Region:**

Rajasthan, Jaipur

» **The Challenge:**

Absence of on-site, locally managed, and environmentally safe solution for menstrual waste management in school and community systems to improve access, knowledge, education, reduce health risks, and support safe MHM.

The Intervention

» **Approach/Model:**

Community-led WASH and waste management systems, resilient WASH facilities scalable through government support, and integrated menstrual health management as a key component of inclusive, climate-resilient WASH.

» **Key Activities:**

- CFAR introduced community-owned deep burial pit for menstrual waste management at Mahatma Gandhi government school, Jaipur
- Knowledge sessions with girls from grades 6–12, school authorities, communities on safe menstrual waste management, proper pit usage and segregated waste disposal through designated dustbins for effective waste management
- Trained sanitation workers on proper handling procedures and safety protocols and regular support through CFAR team
- Established multi-stakeholder monitoring system involving SHGs, child cabinet, school management committee, and sanitation workers
- Implemented comprehensive tracking including pad counting, disposal monitoring, regular pit emptying with mud and leaf layering, PPE compliance, pit security, odor control, and ongoing stakeholder communication

» **Partners & Stakeholders:**

- Student-led Child Cabinet, School administration, sanitary Workers, Sanitation-based Self-Help Groups, The School Management Committee - Parents, Frontline workers, The Directorate of Women's Empowerment (Government of Rajasthan), The Rajasthan Menstrual Health Alliance (14 CSOs, CBOs, and UN agencies)



» Resources:

The deep burial pit was supported by a comprehensive ecosystem including structured knowledge sessions for students on gender, WASH, and menstrual health using a co-developed curriculum delivered by trained community facilitators during Saturday 'No Bag Day' activities. Community outreach extended through Jaipur Vaani radio broadcasts on handwashing demonstrations and transgender menstrual health awareness, while CFAR collaborated with government agencies to improve water supply and toilet facilities.

SHG members provided crucial support by monitoring the pit, promoting household waste segregation into wet, dry, and menstrual streams, and engaging in sanitation-based livelihoods that reinforced sustainable waste management practices throughout the community.

» Cost of implementation and financial model:

The intervention requires an upfront investment of Rs 85,000-100,000 for raw materials and labor for two pits, plus Rs 15,000-20,000 for optional safety features, while leveraging significant pro-bono contributions from CFAR, community volunteers, and local committees for capacity-building and monitoring activities.

Government support covers essential infrastructure including land, sanitary worker salaries, existing sanitation facilities, and waste collection services as part of their existing mandate, eliminating financial burden on the project.

With no recurring Operations and maintenance costs and repair responsibilities resting with school authorities and government departments, the model achieves cost-effectiveness through strategic resource sharing, making replication highly feasible when integrated into existing government sanitation and health programmes.

Results & Impact

Dimension	Results & Impact
Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The uptake of deep burial pits rose from 334 girls disposing 200 pads to 429 girls disposing over 160 pads efficiently within one year. Directly benefited 38,586 girls, women, and individuals from Sexual and Gender Minorities across the program area. Strengthened waste management practices across 90 institutions (Schools, AWCs, Health Centres) in 46 municipal wards and 122 settlements. Successfully replicated in Padampura Khurd Village, Rajasthan, benefiting 80 women and girls with a safe, sustainable solution
Individual & Community-level outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive shifts in menstrual hygiene practices among students and staff, with increased awareness of safe disposal methods Enhanced community engagement and acceptance of menstrual hygiene interventions
Institutional outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff and institutional stakeholders adopted structured protocols for menstrual waste disposal, enhancing hygiene management Increased engagement with state and local government to promote and participate in menstrual health programs
Structural / Policy outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognised by The Sigma Foundation as a best practice for safe and climate-adaptable menstrual waste decomposition Evaluation by IPE Global (2024) recommended expansion beyond schools Endorsed by Swachh Bharat Mission and Department of Local Bodies during Swachh Sarvekshan 2025 for broader scaling
Environment, health & inclusion outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The deep burial pit diverted menstrual waste from landfills and open disposal sites, significantly reducing plastic pollution while enabling safe decomposition through natural processes with organic layering materials.

Enablers & Barriers

» What worked:

- Government supported and community Led - Support from local authorities and communities ensured action and implementation.
- Inclusive and consultative design - Drawing from prior models and local needs made the solution practical and user-friendly.
- Comprehensive approach - Combining infrastructure, education, and awareness addressed both physical and behavioral aspects of menstrual hygiene.

- Capacity building - Training community facilitators created local ownership and sustained engagement.
- Institutional reinforcement - Involving schools, Child Cabinets, and SMCs helped promote good hygiene practices.
- Collaboration with SHGs and civic bodies – Strengthened monitoring, maintenance, and sustainability of waste management practices.

» **What was Challenging:**

- There is potential for cross-collaboration between government departments and shared ownership.
- Menstrual waste was largely seen as a private concern, so it was often overlooked in city planning and services.
- Stigma and structural inequalities related to gender, caste, and disability restricted open participation.

Sustainability and Scale

» **Sustainability:**

The intervention established a multi-stakeholder management system with trained master trainers and local actors (SMCs, SHGs, sanitary workers, Child Cabinets) operating through defined roles and SOPs, while community volunteers provide ongoing capacity-building and monitoring support. Government support ensures financial viability by supporting infrastructure development, sanitary worker honorariums, and waste collection services that offset recurring operational costs, creating a self-sustaining model for long-term impact.

» **Scaling Potential:**

The model's low-cost, community-owned design makes it easily adaptable to diverse contexts, as evidenced by successful replication in Padampura Khurd Village, Rajasthan. With endorsements from Swachh Bharat Mission and recommendations for expansion beyond schools by IPE Global, the intervention has strong policy support for nationwide scaling across educational institutions, community centers, and rural settlements.

Key Takeaways

- **Multi-stakeholder support** – Community-led initiative with local and institutional support for legitimacy and shared ownership, involving SMCs, SHGs, sanitary workers, Child Cabinets, and government backing to ensure sustainable operations.
- **Integrate education with infrastructure** – Integrating menstrual waste solutions with gender-sensitive awareness and school-based hygiene programs through knowledge sessions and behavioral change activities that promote proper usage and disposal practices.
- **Technical co-design for sustainability** – Collaboratively designed pit models with safety measures and expert oversight ensure technical viability while remaining cost-effective and locally manageable.
- **Government partnership for financial viability** – Strategic government support for infrastructure, worker honorariums, and waste collection services creates a financially sustainable model that offsets recurring operational costs.

Further Information

Contact person	Email	Website and other online resources
Juhi Jain Deputy Director	juhi.j@cfar.org.in	www.cfar.org.in Deep Burial Pit Learning Brief (2024) https://drive.google.com/file/d/15qvopUyzVZ2V0af1bNxYRmeI-wEBdlav/view?usp=sharing



Menstrual Health Action for Impact (MHAi) is a think tank that advances the health and wellbeing of girls and women through an intersectional lens on menstrual health. The organization supports policy, program, and sectoral shifts using strategic consulting, policy engagement and cross-sector collaboration across low- and middle-income countries.

<https://www.menstrualhealthaction.org/>



India Sanitation Coalition (ISC), launched in June 2015, at Federation of Indian Chamber Commerce and Industry (FICCI), enables and supports safe and sustainable sanitation by bringing multiple organizations on a common platform through a range of catalytic actions. These include supporting the unlocking of WASH financing with focus on the private sector, forging partnerships with allied organizations for leading the discourse on sustainable sanitation; convening, curating and disseminating best practices in the sanitation advocacy — space and providing inputs into the policy aspects of sanitation through participation at allied forums.

<https://www.indiasanitationcoalition.org/>

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Social Link

