



# IT'S BLOODY HOT

MENSTRUAL EQUITY SUMMIT



#Better4Kenya

INTIMATES





To commemorate MHM Day, Pathways Policy Institute joined hands with Drawing Dreams Initiative and other partners in holding the inaugural Menstrual Equity Summit in Laikipia County, Kenya on the 26th and 27th of May 2023, marking a significant milestone in the pursuit of *Menstrual Equity* and proper *Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management*. This two-day event gathered stakeholders from diverse sectors to engage in discussions on menstruation and its impact on society. Under the theme "It's bloody hot! Reimagining and strengthening collective action for menstrual equity." The summit set out to foster inclusive dialogue, education, and policy development for a more equitable future.

This summit which was officially opened by the governor of Laikipia County brought together stakeholders from various sectors to discuss menstruation and its impact on society. They included representatives from the national government represented by the Ministry of Education, county government leadership including The Governor of Laikipia County Hon. Joshua Irungu, The Deputy governor Hon. Reuben Kimuri, The First Spouse Hon. Grace Wakahora, The Speaker of the County Assembly, members of the County Assembly, the department of Health and Civil Society Organizations including Pathways policy Institute, Malkia initiative, She Leads, The Leo Project, Better for Kenya, One for One Foundation, Bethel Network, Flow girl, Binti Mwangaza among others.

This diverse gathering reflected a commitment to multi-sectoral collaboration to address the challenges surrounding menstrual health.

Dr Taiti, the CEC Department of Health Laikipia County, during his speech, shared insightful recommendations to improve menstrual health management in the county and beyond. These recommendations encompassed various aspects such as promoting open discussions to combat stigma, supporting local production of sanitary towels for sustainability, ensuring complete menstrual hygiene by providing panties alongside pad donations, involving all community stakeholders through capacity-building initiatives, improving coordination between stakeholders to avoid duplication, establishing proper disposal mechanisms for sanitary products and advocating for policy implementation through







He acknowledged the importance of reusable menstrual products, such as menstrual cups and reusable pads, while highlighting the challenges faced in a region with limited water supply. To ensure proper hygiene and support the use of sustainable options, he called for increased budget allocation to guarantee an adequate water supply in schools and public spaces. This emphasis on addressing water scarcity and promoting hygiene provided valuable insights for stakeholders involved in budget advocacy and accountability.

The Speaker of the County Assembly, Hon. Lantano Nabaala, emphasized the significance of involving women caucuses in policy discussions to ensure the effective implementation of measures that impact girls and women. He shared personal experiences from his community, where misconceptions about menstruation persist due to a lack of accurate information. The Speaker expressed his commitment to prioritizing policies and guidelines that promote menstrual health in Laikipia County while encouraging other counties to follow suit.

The attendance of Femi One, a famous artist who uses her platform to advocate for Menstrual equity was an exciting addition to the summit that ensured the participants' spirits remained high even as they engaged in very important conversations. The summit featured engaging plenary sessions that explored critical topics related to menstrual health and hygiene management.





These sessions included discussions on the importance of menstrual health in achieving socioeconomic progress and gender equity, the adoption of eco-friendly menstrual hygiene products in the face of global challenges, budgeting and financing of menstrual health and hygiene, access for individuals with disabilities, comprehensive education and support systems in schools, and menstrual health as a key component of reproductive health. To end the first day of the summit, partners collaborated to develop a call to action aimed at improving menstrual health and hygiene management. The proposed initiatives included improving water and sanitation facilities, establishing technical working groups, raising awareness, leveraging technology, utilizing research and policy advocacy, utilizing schools as platforms for education, and advocating for social accountability.



Pathways joined in on the call to action and committed to utilizing research and policy advocacy in conjunction with organizations like the Malkia Initiative to inform MHM interventions and influence policies. While also partnering with organizations like Asante Africa Foundation, PPI, DDI, The Leo Project and Bethel and using our school-based projects as a platform to educate and reach out to more individuals about MHM.

### Community Health Outreach:

To climax the Menstrual equity summit Pathways On **May 27th**, in conjunction with Laikipia Health Service, CHAT and The National Syndemic Disease Control Council conducted a community health outreach at Neibor village. The health outreach offered free healthcare services, including family planning, cancer screenings, HIV/AIDS testing, and nutritional counselling. Additionally, an educational session on menstrual health and hygiene was organized for the adolescents and young people of the Neibor community. Notably, the boys displayed remarkable confidence in discussing menstrual products, demonstrating the positive impact of the #BetterBoyz program by Pathways which aims to educate young men about menstrual hygiene and reproductive health.





What was outstanding was that the boys displayed confidence and did not giggle or feel uncomfortable during the conversation, they proudly answered questions and explained that they had learnt this during their BetterBoyz sessions. The sessions were conducted by health practitioners who provided answers to the boys and girls in detail.

At the end of the sessions, the girls received 3 packets of sanitary pads and a packet of cakes. The boys were excited to also receive a dignity pack from one of the partners #SirJaySartorial, a young entrepreneur based in Nanyuki. Sir Jay and his team of young people recycled jeans and Ankara materials to create stylish bags for the boys. Each dignity bag had 2 boxers, a toothbrush, and bathing soap. The boys could not hide their excitement, they explained that most times when matters of menstrual hygiene are discussed they never receive anything and only get to witness the girls receive dignity packs.

The outreach revealed a gap in family planning utilization within the Maasai community, primarily due to cultural norms. Increased awareness and education are essential to overcome these barriers, as Laikipia North faces a high rate of teenage pregnancies. By addressing this issue and promoting family planning services, the summit aimed to contribute to the overall well-being of girls and women in the community.

The cherry on the top was the impressive turnout from the Neibor community for the services, **particularly for the outpatient curative services, with 56 females and 37 males over the age of 5 accessing the services.** Additionally, **18 females and 10 males under the age of 5 received curative services.** For clinical breast examination, 26 clients were screened, and the visual inspection with an acetic acid method for cancer screening showed 18 negative results and 1 positive result. **Four patients underwent a PAP smear.**





The Menstrual Equity Summit in Laikipia County marked an important milestone in the journey towards menstrual equity. Through collaborative efforts, inclusive discussions, and policy recommendations, stakeholders committed to creating a more equitable and supportive environment. The summit demonstrated the power of collective action and paved the way for a Menstrual Equity action plan, which will guide future initiatives to bridge the menstrual health gap in Kenya and beyond. As the momentum for menstrual equity grows, the summit serves as a beacon of hope for a more inclusive and equitable future for all.



*Interact with us on our socials*

 Pathways Policy Institute

 Publicpathways

 Pathways policy Institute

