

Menstrual Health hub
mhhub.org

Annual Report 2019

The aim of this document is to showcase the activities and projects that the **Menstrual Health Hub gUG** has undertaken in 2019 in order to achieve its goals and foundation commitments.

About the Menstrual Health Hub (MH Hub)

The [Menstrual Health Hub gUG](#) is a German-registered female health nonprofit focused on knowledge-sharing, ecosystem-building, global advocacy and awareness-raising. We seek to close the gender gap and systematically address gender equality by working on one of the core issues which continues to hold women and girls around the world back; **menstruation**.

From the onset of menarche to menopause and beyond, the menstrual cycle plays a vital role in the health and wellbeing of roughly half the world's population. To date, menstruation has traditionally been addressed under the banner of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in the WASH and development and humanitarian sector. However, 'menstrual health' has emerged as a more holistic and encompassing term that includes both MHM as well as the broader systemic factors that link menstruation with health, well-being, the environment and equity. Thus our approach rests on the notion that menstrual health is an *entry point* to being able to address female health across the lifecycle.

Vision & Mission: We envision a world where female health is a priority in progressing gender equality. Periods and other health issues experienced by women, girls and people who menstruate* should not be reasons why they do not thrive. Inclusive and impartial, our mission is to improve communication, connection and collaboration across the female health space.

Core Principles: An interdisciplinary cross-sector platform and a gatekeeper to the worldwide menstrual health ecosystem, we fill an important gap by bridging efforts and bringing together all actors working in the field – international NGOs, grassroots organizations, researchers, policy makers, health workers, educators, donors, corporations, journalists etc. – to create collective impact and sustainable change. We are guided by the following core principles:

- **CROSS-SECTOR COMMUNICATION:** Engaging all players equally. Building bridges to increase awareness of ongoing efforts.
- **CONSTRUCTIVE CONTRIBUTION:** Encouraging the contribution resources that are valuable to the wider community.
- **CREDIT:** Promoting the proper acknowledgment of contributions / crediting shared resources accordingly.
- **COOPERATION (THROUGH COLLABORATION):** Recognizing that collective action yields greater impact than individual efforts. Promoting cooperation to fill gaps, avoid duplication and unnecessary competition.
- **CENTRALIZATION & CONNECTION:** Everything related to menstrual health in one place.
- **CURATION:** Tailored information for menstrual health stakeholders

**Inclusive language: Not all women menstruate, and not all those who menstruate identify as women.*

INNER CIRCLE 2019:

The Inner Circle of the Menstrual Health Hub gUG consists of a tight-knit circle of supporters who agree to provide technical and financial support for one year at a time. This support allows the MH Hub to continue offering the menstrual health community an updated open-access, online platform free of charge, as well as supporting MH advocacy, community, outreach and collective impact efforts.

We are truly grateful for the advice, support and inspiration we have been able to draw from our Inner Circle. Our Inner Circle organizations for 2019 included:



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Menstrual Health Hub gUG - 2019 Reporting Objectives

The following section is a deep-dive into the activities and projects we have completed in 2019 around the following four areas of work:

- 1. Ecosystem building:** To build and sustain a network of engaged and well-equipped menstrual health players
- 2. Knowledge-sharing:** To establish and manage a knowledge platform for menstrual and female health information.
- 3. Global Advocacy:** To build and contribute to national, regional and international advocacy efforts around menstrual health and ensure it is a priority on the policy agenda.
- 4. Awareness-raising:** To increase collective awareness of menstruation and menstrual health and its connection to female health

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Objective 1: Ecosystem building: To build and sustain a network of engaged and well-equipped menstrual health players

Despite a growing interest in menstrual health around the world, initiatives addressing the many aspects related to menstrual health are often working in silos with little communication and knowledge exchange happening between them. Recognizing and collaborating to create collective action yields greater impact than individual efforts, the MH Hub promotes cooperation to fill gaps, avoid duplication and unnecessary competition.

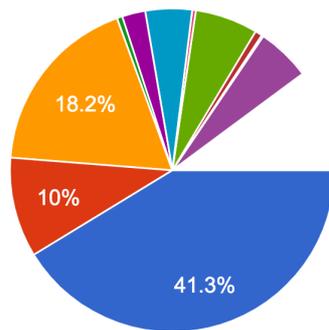
2019 Ecosystem Building Activities:

- The MH Hub has established a network of different entities and projects working across menstrual health, which can be visited online on the **Menstrual Health Registry** and **Global Menstrual Map**, consisting of **581 organizations as of December 2019**. Registration is free and is currently available in five languages (English, German, French, Spanish, Japanese and Portuguese).

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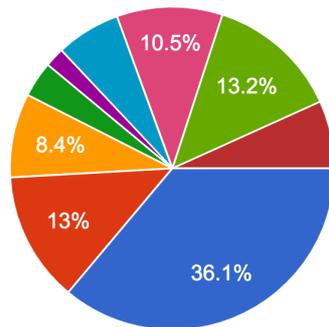


Types of organizations:



- small NGO (operating in one country)
 - international NGO (operating in multiple countries)
 - social enterprise or Femtech enterprise
 - donor
 - corporation
 - researcher / research institution
 - policy maker
 - educator or trainer
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Areas of menstrual health that they work in:



- Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM): WASH-focus, mostly work in low and middle income countries
- Femtech / social enterprise: business model for menstrual products
- Menstrual & Body literacy / 5th Vital Sign
- Menstrual Equity: (policy to make products available to all)
- clinical / medical research
- Menstrual care / corporate products
- Sustainable / environmentally-friendly products
- Menstrual Cycle Ecology / Body literacy
- Menstrual Equity: (policy around menstrual health)

- **Women Deliver:** 3. June, 2019: At Women Deliver, the largest conference in the world on women’s rights and health, the Menstrual Health Hub gave a presentation entitled ‘Connection & Communication for Collective Impact’. Here we shared the systems-level

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education and awareness-raising work we have been doing to forge a connected ecosystem and communicate about the progress therein. We also presented the findings from a survey we took of the global MH community to understand the global priorities and the local challenges around MH.



We asked the following 2 questions to 132 entities working across the menstrual health space:

What are the **most important considerations** needed at the **global level**?

1. **Eliminating menstrual stigma, once and for all – 57.5%**
2. **Creating global standards & policies on safety accessibility & affordability of all products – 42.7%**
3. **Increased investment in MH – 37.4%**
4. **Cost analysis of the impacts of poor MH – 36.6%**
5. **Ensuring period-friendly toilets & infrastructure - 32.1%**

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What are the **biggest MH challenges** facing your **local community**?

Of 132 entities working across the menstrual health space:

1. **Lack of education & awareness – 81.7%**
2. **Menstrual taboo & stigma – 67.9%**
3. **The access to & distribution of quality products - 59.5%**
4. **Adequate disposal of soiled materials – 27.5%**
5. **Pain management – 24.4%**

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Objective 2: Knowledge-sharing: To establish and manage a knowledge platform for menstrual and female health information

We have developed and manage the MH Hub Knowledge Hive, a curated knowledge platform that provides key resources around our four pillars of engagement: Education & Learning, Innovation, Policy, and Research. By collecting information worldwide around all four categories, we ensure that no aspect of menstrual health is left behind enabling access to vital resources and evidence for menstrual health actors within the global movement to use within their work. These resources are publicly available and enable access to learning material, educational reports, and global qualitative / quantitative research.

2019 Knowledge-Sharing Activities:

- **Lifecycle Research - Over the course of 2019 we have had a team of 4 research interns who have been working on an original research project around the life cycle approach.** Steeped in clinical, quantitative and qualitative research on female, menstrual and hormonal health, the MH Hub has been developing the *Life Cycle Perspective* which promotes a new framework for identifying, understanding and capturing women's health experiences across the life cycle. The *Life Cycle Perspective* contributes to the current literature as a framework for unifying multidisciplinary actors in female health and facilitating synergy among disparate health disciplines, with the mutual goal of improving physical and psychosocial wellbeing across the life cycle. A *Life Cycle Perspective* enables researchers, healthcare providers and women to study and recognize potential illness or disorders with consideration to the specific short and long-term implications of hormones within the relevant socio-cultural context in which women's health is understood and experienced. The *Life Cycle Perspective* also has implications for future development of comprehensive female health education curricula, policy and advocacy initiatives, research priorities and product/service innovation in the private sector. We are finalizing our preliminary results through a series of visual materials and hope to publish this in Q1, 2020

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- **Knowledge Hive:** Our long-term goal is to be the largest accessible female health knowledge base in the world. In order to reach out to more organizations, and make the Hive more inclusive, the MH Hub started in 2019 to work with organizations and individuals in Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries in order to collect and offer information on other languages different from English. Over the course of 2019 we have also been focused on menstrual health adjacent categories such as: Mental health, reproductive health, menstrual health, hormonal health, breast health, sexual wellness, pelvic/vaginal health and active ageing. This has been an important step in growing our reach across the female health space more broadly. The Knowledge Hive is comprised of a variety of content across the female health space with 294 pieces of research; 107 educational and learning materials; 80 menstrual health policies; and 291 Femtech innovations.

We were also lucky enough to work with a series of design experts at the General Assembly UX design school in Q2 2019 to begin the redesign and structure of the MH Hub Knowledge Hive with a particular emphasis on how to improve user experiences, add community generated content and increase the interactivity of the platform. We hope to work with developers in 2020 to roll out these changes.

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Objective 3: Global Advocacy: To build and contribute to national, regional and international advocacy efforts around menstrual health and ensure it is a priority on policy agendas

By building an enabling environment that advocates for national, regional and international commitments to menstrual health as a priority in progressing gender equality, the MH Hub supports governments and policymakers about taxation on menstrual products, product distribution and more.

2019 Global Advocacy Activities:

- **SPD ASF Frauenbrunch: Berlin, Germany, 3. February 2019:** We engaged in round table discussions with the SPD Frauengruppe to understand why menstrual health is such an important issue and how to lower the 19% VAT on menstrual products to 12%.

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Global Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) Collective: Ongoing: The Menstrual Health Hub is a core member of the UN- created MHH Grand Coalition. Attached to this document please find a report prepared by our team in March 2019 about the status of menstrual policies around the globe and the current coalitions on menstrual health and hygiene. (Appendix 1 only in English)

- **March 2019:** UN Compound, Geneva, Switzerland
 - **September 2019:** WaterAid Offices, London, UK
 - **October 2019:** Online
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- **Period Empowerment Network (PEN): Nairobi, Kenya, October 20-26 2019:** This programme seeks to develop the civic spirit and the skills of young and adult learners to raise awareness on menstrual health and hygiene, by developing training programmes, community-based interventions and campaigning strategies with youth workers involved in the field of menstruation education as a means to foster menstrual health & hygiene awareness and education in the overall youth work. The objective of the programme is to promote menstrual health & hygiene awareness, periods messages, attitudes, tools, resources, and policies through strategic cooperation and mutual learning to develop new approaches capable of challenging the myths, the stigma and the taboo around menstruation and periods to advocate for menstrual health education in schools, in youth work and in the society as a whole.

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The Menstrual Health Hub was invited to give a training workshop titled “Pathways to Empowerment in Menstrual Health Awareness”, to strengthen youth workers’ capacity to integrate Menstrual Health and Hygiene into new or existing programmes. Participants from Norway, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Belgium, India, Philippines, Uganda and Kenya gathered in Nairobi in October for a week-long boot-camp in which the Menstrual Health Hub gave two days of workshops.

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Objective 4: Awareness-raising: To increase collective awareness of menstrual health and its connection to female health

We believe it is important to increase awareness of and improve the collective consciousness around menstrual and female health. We do so through thought leadership expressed in our Menstrual Memo, blog, and events described in detail below:

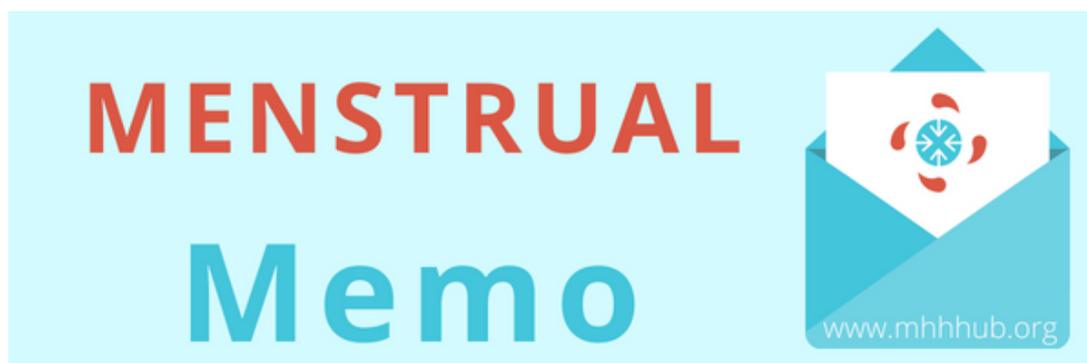
2019 Awareness-Raising Activities:

Thought Leadership Activities:

- **The Menstrual Memo:** is a monthly newsletter in which we collect victories from the world of menstrual health along with current job postings, events, campaigns and promotions of our

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supporters. The Menstrual Memo currently has 2,250 subscribers. In 2019, we sent 13 newsletters out



- On our blog (<https://mhhub.org/blog/category/blog/>) and Medium: (<https://medium.com/@MHHub>): we practice thought leadership and delve into the science behind different aspects related to female health that are otherwise often overlooked and/or stigmatized, such as the hymen, female pleasure, and birth control. In 2019, we produced the following 13 blogs, from 11 different contributors:
 1. **All menstrual experiences matter. Period.** (Inclusive language in the menstrual health space <https://mhhub.org/blog/all-menstrual-experiences-matter-period/>)
 2. **Inclusive & innovative period products designed & promoted by... MEN?** <https://mhhub.org/blog/inclusive-innovative-period-products-designed-promoted-by-men/>
 3. **How I gave fire fighters nightmares about menstrual cups** <https://mhhub.org/blog/how-i-gave-fire-fighters-nightmares-about-menstrual-cups/>
 4. **Seed Cycling: What is it, what does it do and is it worth it?** <https://mhhub.org/blog/seed-cycling-what-is-it-what-does-it-do-and-is-it-worth-it/>
 5. **The recipients of the 1st-ever 'Women-Centered Design Rising Star' Award** <https://mhhub.org/blog/announcing-the-recipients-of-the-1st-ever-women-centered-design-rising-star-award/>
 6. **To pill or not to pill: Is that even the question?** <https://mhhub.org/blog/to-pill-or-not-to-pill/>
 7. **Setting the record straight: Understanding the hymen and debunking the myths surrounding it** <https://mhhub.org/blog/understanding-the-hymen/>
 8. **Prepared for your daughter's period?** <https://mhhub.org/blog/prepared-for-your-daughters-period/>
 9. **Periods are political (here's why)** <https://mhhub.org/blog/prepared-for-your-daughters-period/>
 10. **Menstruation Matters: 4 ways Menstrual Health meets Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)** <https://mhhub.org/blog/4-ways-mh-meets-srhr/>

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11. **Menopause: The Ultimate Opportunity to Prioritize Oneself**
<https://mhhub.org/blog/menopause-the-ultimate-opportunity/>
 12. **Don't look away Deutschland (FGM/ C awareness-raising)**
<https://mhhub.org/blog/dont-look-away-deutschland/>
 13. **Menstrual health & hygiene is a matter of human rights, not a human right**
<https://mhhub.org/blog/a-matter-of-human-rights/>
- We started to cooperate with a group of film experts to produce a German short film "Mädchen", made here in Berlin. The film addresses the issues of period poverty, the need for fair access to sanitary products, and normalizing conversations around menstruation. You can watch the fundraising campaign here: <https://vimeo.com/362987405/description> In 2020 we will continue supporting the team with connections and promotion.

Events:

- **Monthly Berlin Female Health Collective events and Facebook group:** currently the group consists of 450 members created for open space discussions around female health in Berlin, whose concept has inspired similar initiatives to take place in London and Copenhagen. In Berlin we hosted 5 of our own Menstrual Meetups with the following themes:
 1. **Menstrual Meetup: Getting to Know Our Cycles & Each Other**
<https://www.facebook.com/events/801328233565898/>
 2. **Menstrual meetup: Exploring Alternative Menstrual Products**
<https://www.facebook.com/events/2380726148827526/>
 3. **Miscarriage: Let's talk about it**
<https://www.facebook.com/events/362789794374724/>
 4. **Periods are Political // MH Hub + Franka Frei**
<https://www.facebook.com/events/770252833390382/>
 5. **Menstruation IN, Taboos OUT!**
<https://www.facebook.com/events/2183562248440242/>
- **Menstrual Health Hub Information Sessions: Brazil:** Our team in Brazil presented the work of the Menstrual Health Hub in different events during the year to expand our presence in Latin America. During those events our team highlighted the importance of women's health and its impact during the life cycle.

23.Mach 2019: Women Techmakers: It is a program that provides visibility, community, and resources for women in technology globally.

14 April 2019: Festival Global de Inovação Social: First international learning festival focused on Social Innovation launched by the Impact Hub. A full day of the event with

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international and Brazilian speakers, workshops, lightning talks, and panels. This was a time for exchange between the global community and the Impact Hub network.

12 August 2019: UDESC: over 15 thousand students working in the fields of health, engineering, education, art and business administration with goals contributing to development of the Santa Catarina State and Brazil. The event was developed in connections with Public Administration Faculty, on a workshop to talk about women's public health policies in the region.

29 September 2019: The SGB Festival is Social Good Brazil's annual meeting: with its community, connections and reference people in technology, data and social impact in Brazil and worldwide. Ursula Maschette, is fellow on the organization throughout the year and during the festival she presented the issues around menstruation and social impact on a workshop to other fellows from all over the country.

16 October 2019: At Cheesecake Labs: the time works with passion and clarity on the design and development of full-stack software solutions for disruptive companies, providing support for decision making and developing systems that are true to the core ideas. The MH Hub presentation on Cheesecake Labs was part of an employee training on women's health, as in Brazil we celebrate the Pink October to raise awareness on women's health issues.

28 October 2019: The Regional Nursing Council of Santa Catarina (Coren / SC): uses a Federal Authority that supervises the professional practice of Nursing. The main objective of Coren / SC is to guarantee safe and quality assistance to users, provided by qualified professionals. The work with Coren and MH Hub was developing actions in schools and for the following year is to train nursing professionals on the importance of menstrual health in terms of public health and health promotion.



- **Giant Health, Europe's greatest festival of HealthTech innovation:** London, October 15-16. Milena spoke about the need to break taboos around menstruation and presented ideas
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around how Women-Centered Design give people working in health tech the opportunity to do just that.

- **Mainstreaming Sexual Wellness:** London, October 17, 2019. The MH Hub partnered with London based Vibio and PureEros to host an event at the Impact Hub Islington. Both Milena and Danielle were present as moderator and speaker to explore how sexuality is a critical part of our wellness and health. With 70 participants the event was incredible dynamic and successful with a panel of experts and open Q and A from participants.



- **“breaking blades”:** Berlin, November 2019. The objective of this project was to generate awareness about female genital mutilation / cutting. (FGM.C.). The event series included panel discussions, interviews with guest speakers, film screenings, a photo- and art exhibition and a vulva modeling workshop.

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events

02.11.2019 16.00 Uhr
 Workshop: Venus Anatomy.
 by Maria Villanueva coordinated by Karne Kunst
 Kochicuiatl e.V., Winsstraße 58, 10405 Berlin

09.11.2019 16.00 Uhr
 Workshop: Empowered women empower women
 by The Women in Economics Initiative e.V.
 Kochicuiatl e.V., Winsstraße 58, 10405 Berlin

14.11.2019 18 -19.30 Uhr
 Panel discussion: Terre Des Femmes with
 guests about FGM/C
 wework, Kurfürstendamm 11, 10719 Berlin

17.11.2019 11-14.30 Uhr
 Movies & talk, guests: Tostan (NGO)
 "Walk On My Own" (85min.) Ndeye Fatou
 "The Cut" (45 min.) Beryl Magoko
 Lichtblick Kino, Kastanienallee 77, 10435 Berlin

30.11.2019 16.00 Uhr
 Movie & talk:
 #femalepleasure (95 min.) Barbara Miller
 Lichtblick Kino, Kastanienallee 77, 10435 Berlin

Empowered by:




break off FGM·C breaking blades



portraits interviews

exhibition
04.11 - 30.11.2019
 bUm- Raum für die
 engagierte Zivilgesellschaft
 paul-lincke-ufer 21, 10999 berlin
 mo - fr 9.00 - 19 uhr

project by a.pohsegger

Exhibition: breaking blades - break off FGM·C, 04.11.2019 till 29.11.2019

Location: bUm - Raum für die engagierte Zivilgesellschaft

Photographer A. Pohsegger has processed the experiences of those affected with female genital mutilation, who live here in the German-speaking world, medially in order to make their story accessible to the public. The exhibition is accompanied with displays of the paper artwork on the theme of Andrea Moseler.

Venus Anatomy. Vulva Modeling Workshop, 02.11.2019

In this workshop coordinated by Karne Kunst, participants will create small sculptures and drawings of vulvas taking as a starting point of nature and human anatomy together with artist Maria Villanueva who works on the "body mapping" project. The workshop was in English and Spanish. 40 people attended the workshop.

Empowered women empower women, 09.11.2019

Interactive dialogue session, where participants will explore the rationale for strengthening professional women initiatives and networks and how we may all benefit from women empowering and advocating for other women in the workplace.

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Podiumsdiskussion mit Terre Des Femmes mit Gästen, 14.11.2019

A panel discussion with Terre Des Femmes & guests about female genital mutilation (FGM/C). TDF expert speakers, representatives of Berlin communities, and an award-winning filmmaker discussed the psychological consequences of FGM/C on stage.

Filme & Gesprächsrunde: Gäste Tostan (NGO), 17.11.2019

Film screening of the film 'Walk On My Own' (25 min.), where the 13 year old Ndeye Fatou Fall from Senegal talks about the positive social changes after the abolition of child marriages and FGM in her home village, followed by a panel discussion with staff members of the Tostan organization about the realization of the film. A second film 'the Cut' shot by Beryl Magoko about FGM in her home village is shown afterwards.

Film #femalepleasure & Gesprächsrunde, 30.11.2019

A film screening of Barbara Miller's documentary #Femalepleasure, focusing on five women that are devoted to breaking the taboo, shame and silence around female pleasure, and the price they pay for doing this. A discussion round with the Menstrual Health Hub and Ola Miedzynska (founder and CEO of sxtech.eu) Annett Tarnokova (advisor at The Case for Her) and Helen Hagemeyer (couple and sex therapist, life coach and hypnosis therapist) follows.

- **Menstruation at the Margins: How Can We Meet Unmet Needs as Menstrual Health Moves Center Stage?" at the Brocher Foundation:** Geneva, Switzerland, December 10th-14th. This workshop brings together 20 menstrual health researcher from across the globe to explore the research needs of unmet populations such as people living with disabilities, the homeless and non-binary menstruators. The 3-day workshop included working sessions to identify research gaps, identify key research questions and strategize how to increase investment in these research topics. On the last day a one day working session was also held around the upcoming release of the Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstrual Studies which the MH Hub Chief of Research and Innovation contributed to in great detail. This session focused on translating this academic text for a lay audience.
- **Sex Resolutions 2020:** London, UK, December 19th. Together with Vibio, the MH Hub will come together once more to create a space to discuss what sexual wellness and health can look like.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION:

This year we received the **POWER TOGETHER Award**, hosted by the Women Political Leaders in Reykjavik, Iceland, for our work in helping 'End Period Poverty'. Our Chief Policy Officer Mariana De La Roche accepted the honor on behalf of the Menstrual Health Hub. Together with 20 other organizations, we are proud to be recognized as a leader in helping bring together and accelerate progress within global menstrual movement.

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PREVIOUS AWARDS & RECOGNITION:

 <p>StartUp Cup</p>	<p>Second Place Winner - Ebay Startup Cup 2017 With this prize, we were able to finance our legal registration in Germany as a non-profit organization, Menstrual Health Hub gUG.</p>
<p>social digital innovation</p>	<p>Social Digital Innovation 2017: Thanks to this grant we got our first office space and we organized our ideas and created our current approach.</p>

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The Menstrual Health Hub Inner Circle

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