

# Poor Sanitation Among Women: A Comprehensive Research to Address Women's Inadequate Sanitation in a Sustainable Manner

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## Abstract:

Environmental, social, and health problems are frequent in the absence of sufficient sanitation infrastructure and become worse as it stagnates. Poor sanitation has a disproportionately negative impact on vulnerable people, particularly women. There is a health and social divide between men and women as a result of attitudes and ideas about gender and menstruation. When managing menstruation and exercising good hygiene, women face additional challenges. This article examines the social repercussions of the condition of sanitation and tales of women's experiences managing menstrual cycles in both rural and urban areas of India. On a personal level, young women don't understand menstruation. Young women encounter constraints on mobility and other activities during menstruation, as well as stigma surrounding menstruation and a lack of opportunities to discuss it. Young women in low- and middle-income nations typically face psychological, social, and health issues related to menstruation. It might be particularly challenging in nations where menstruation is stigmatized, like India. Nevertheless, even if education is crucial, knowledge on its own is probably insufficient. Interventions must also target societal practices that propagate stigma, shame, and silence surrounding menstruation that might cause internalized stigma about menses in young people. Overall, developing multilayered, culturally relevant interventions that prioritize wellbeing and comfort in addition to more conventional health, educational, and employment outcomes is necessary to support challenge free menstruation.

**Keywords:** Menstrual cycle, Stigma, Sanitation, Challenges, Health

## Introduction:

Everywhere throughout the world, menstruation has always been associated with various perceptions. Although there is some tolerance for menstruation these days, attitudes still vary across various ethnicities. Countries, cultures, religions, and ethnic groupings all differ from one another. Due to their "impurity" during menstruation, women and girls in many low-income nations are restricted in their movements and conduct. Menstruation is still associated with a number of cultural taboos, as well as emotions of shame and uncleanness, in many parts of the world. Menstruation is still a family secret for many mothers and daughters today. It is not openly discussed. In India, menstruation is regarded as a normal occurrence, a gift from God, and is seen as essential since it confers womanhood. Here, different cultures and faiths have varied views on how women should feel about their periods. There are various taboos, including the prohibition of menstruation women from entering temples, cooking, and attending weddings, among

others. Young women in India have little understanding and a lot of myths regarding menstruation, both before and even after the menarche. Usually, this results in excessive dread, anxiety, and bad habits. Menstrual behaviors and awareness are influenced by socioeconomic factors as well. Due to delayed childbearing and fewer children, many women are now experiencing normal menstrual cycles in emerging nations like India. However, many people may not have the social or economic resources necessary to adequately manage menstrual hygiene. Young women from low-income homes are a demographic that is especially vulnerable in this regard. Furthermore, a key component of creating effective education programs is comprehending the knowledge and habits of young women in relation to menstruation. Pre-menarche education for girls about menstruation was insufficient. Education initiatives after menarche mostly concentrate on the biological components of puberty and pay little attention to psychological requirements. The majority of awareness campaigns focus on product consumption, are restricted by ineffective facilitators, and hardly target influencers. In India, the vast majority of women and girls control their periods with homemade products. Limited-cost pads range in reach and quality, and commercial pads are pricey for consumers with limited incomes. Girls' use of existing restrooms is restricted by cultural norms, personal hygiene habits, and community views on menstruation, particularly during menstruation. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is not being prioritized in current national initiatives to enhance sanitation, and related community norms are unaffected. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is now a recognized public health issue on a worldwide scale. Academics, donors, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies, neighborhood women's groups, multinational feminine hygiene companies, and social entrepreneurs are mobilizing all over the world to draw attention to and mobilize resources to address the taboos, shame, and humiliation associated with menstruation that many girls in low- and middle-income countries experience. Menstrual waste disposal options are mostly unknown. Vulnerable people are not given priority in current programs.

**Objectives:**

1. To enhance teenage girls' knowledge of menstrual hygiene.
2. To bring awareness about access to menstrual products.
3. To emphasize the importance of menstrual hygiene management.
4. To engage men and boys to break gender stereotypes.

**Study Area:**

The whole territory of India, which is located in the southwestern section of the Asian continent, is included in the research area. The nation has a total land area of 3,287,263 square kilometers and is located to the north of the equator between latitudes 8° and 37° north and longitudes 68° and 97° east. India has a 7517 km long coastline, which is bordered by the Indian Ocean on the south, the Arabian Sea on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the south-east. Numerous diverse ecological habitats, including forests, grasslands, wetlands, coastal and marine ecosystems, and desert ecosystems, which house and maintain the enormous biodiversity, have developed as a result of the great variety of physical characteristics and climatic circumstances.

**Menstruation in Social Context:**

Every community has socio-cultural norms and guidelines for knowledge, preference, attitude, and behavior related to a variety of facets of daily life. For instance, considering a male kid as a financial

advantage to the family encourages couples to have a big family. Similar taboos exist in several sociocultural customs about menstruation. Menstrual cycle is one of the most important aspects of a woman's life, yet it is often overlooked and undervalued due to traditional beliefs and customs held by families and society at large. Women still do rituals that are detrimental to their personal hygiene and health in rural places. Menstrual hygiene awareness is particularly sensitive and important for them in settings where women do not participate in family decision-making or have any choice in birth spacing. The therapy the women get and administer to themselves render their bodies susceptible to deadly illnesses and infections rather than giving them the rest and nutrients they need. The government has made a number of amenities available to improve Anganwadis and raise awareness in rural regions. The degree of knowledge hasn't improved much, though, and as a result, there are more problems associated to menstruation and maternal health.

### **Health And Hygiene Practices In Low Resource Settings:**

The use of cloth pads as a menstrual hygiene product is becoming increasingly popular in rural India, replacing the scrap cloth that women typically use as an absorbent. This is beneficial for both women's health and the environment, as it is a sustainable option. Maternal hygiene is a fundamental aspect of a woman's health, and the government and NGOs have been pushing for women to adhere to safe menstrual practices during their period. These practices include the use of sanitary products, such as napkins, cups, and cloth pads, which are designed to provide protection during the menstrual cycle. The latest NFHS-5 data for 2019-21 shows that 89.4% of women between the ages of 15-24 in urban and rural areas, compared to 57.6% in rural areas.

### **Sustainable Menstrual Hygiene Management:**

The improvement of menstrual health and hygiene depends on access to inexpensive, sustainable menstruation products, but millions of women worldwide cannot afford them. The best way to promote excellent menstrual health hygiene and enhance developmental outcomes for women and adolescent girls is through a holistic strategy, which integrates education with infrastructure, products, and initiatives to combat cultural taboos and stigma surrounding the issue. In order to give women and girls access to cheap menstruation products and knowledge on reproductive health, social entrepreneurs from all over the world are developing innovative new solutions and igniting change in the industry. Poor menstrual health and hygiene are worsening social and economic inequality for generations of girls and women, having a detrimental effect on their education, health, safety, and human development. To improve menstrual health and cleanliness, more women need to have access to cheap, sustainable menstrual hygiene products, such as reusable pads, disposable pads, menstrual cups, and tampons. However, in underdeveloped nations, only a small percentage of women and girls utilize sanitary items when they are menstruating. Based on their availability (i.e. production), knowledge (i.e. awareness), income (i.e. affordability), and region (i.e. comfort level of usage resulting from the cultural environment), people utilize particular menstrual hygiene products. It is possible to create a society in which no girl or woman is prevented from achieving her full potential because of her period. However, it's a complicated project that calls for a broad variety of players, knowledge and cooperation, and a multi-level plan. Menstrual hygiene products and instruction alone are insufficient, according to studies. The best way to promote excellent menstrual health hygiene and enhance developmental outcomes for women and adolescent girls is through a holistic strategy, which integrates education with infrastructure, products, and initiatives to combat cultural taboos

and stigma surrounding the issue. The private sector is essential in achieving this goal. In order to benefit both the health and the environment, sustainable menstruation refers to the usage of alternate products throughout the menstrual cycle. In order to lessen the amount of plastic waste that ends up in our seas or landfills, sustainable menstruation involves being aware of the harmful consequences disposable sanitary items have on the environment. This movement also emphasizes the need of ensuring that all menstruating persons have access to sustainable menstrual products. Many people who find it challenging to buy healthy menstruation products view sustainable menstrual products as a better and more affordable alternative. According to research, more people in India are using sanitary napkins and other safe menstruation products. However, improper treatment of menstrual waste is a growing issue. One billion sanitary pads are produced monthly in India, according to estimates. A less expensive and more environmentally friendly choice is cloth pads. Since women have been using cloth, if not in the most secure manner, in rural regions, the switch to cloth pads is simpler. The best way to sustainably manage your menstrual cycle is to use reusable cotton pads and menstrual cups, as well as compostable pads. Compostable pads are made from farm waste and are easy to biodegrade in 90-180 days when properly disposed of. Biodegradable menstrual pads will change the way we manage our menstrual waste and drastically reduce pollution. However, it is essential that every girl or woman who menstruates is properly informed about how to use and dispose of these products, and has affordable and easy access to them.

**Current Works Regarding Hygiene:**

India has 1.3 billion inhabitants. Of those, 660 million or around 48 percent (estimated) are women. Only 12% of women had access to sanitary pads during their menstrual cycle, according to early and middle 2011 statistics. As a result of not having access to sanitary napkins, the remaining 88% of them used dry leaves, ash, newspaper, and other materials during their menstrual cycle. More than 70% of women get genital infections, which raises the possibility of developing related malignancies. Increased drive to address issues surrounding menstruation health from foreign funders, the national government, small and medium sized businesses, and NGOs. Up until now, the emphasis has mainly been on goods and raising menstruation awareness.

Organizations	Contributions
Goonj	Goonj uses underutilized resources as a means to spark growth with dignity in order to create an equal relationship of strength, nourishment, and villages. By involving the materially and financially poor in designing and implementing their own solutions with their own efforts, knowledge, and dignity, and by giving them material as a reward for their participation, we envision growing as an idea across regions, economies, and countries.
Jayashree Industries	Social entrepreneur Arunachalam Muruganatham is committed to addressing India's issues with menstruation health. He created a low-cost, locally made sanitary pad

	<p>as a novel product as a remedy. He reverse-engineered the industrial processes used to create sanitary pads in a model example of frugal innovation. The end result was a compact, inexpensive machine that could create high-quality pads and sell them for a retail price 20% less than the least expensive mass-produced brands. But nobody purchased his pads until his wife started to market them. Following that, the two were unable to meet demand. This made him realize how crucial it was to involve women as stakeholders in the project. The second thing he did was, devise a plan to make the pads more accessible and available. Jayashree industries was founded by Aruchalam Muruganatham.</p>
Menstrupedia	<p>A rapidly expanding firm called Menstrupedia provides instructional resources with a strong social impact in the form of comic books, seminars, and animated movies. More than 25,500 schools, hundreds of NGOs, corporations, and government agencies in India and other nations across the world use the resources created by Menstrupedia. Menstrupedia is a decisive step in starting the neglected debate about puberty and growing up.</p>
UNFPA India	<p>The main UN organization is UNFPA, or the United Nations Population Fund. The goal of UNFPA is to ensure that everyone has the right to make choices and that every pregnancy is desired, every delivery is safe, and every young person's potential is realized. Our work is governed by the ICPD's (International Conference on Population and Development) 1994 principles of a human rights-based approach, gender empowerment and equality, and the need to ensure that no one is left behind. By 2030, they strive to accomplish three transformational achievements that promise to improve the world for every man, woman, and child:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ending maternal deaths that can be prevented.</li> <li>• Ending unmet family planning needs.</li> <li>• Putting an end to destructive behaviors and gender-based violence.</li> </ul>
UNICEF India	<p>Through development and humanitarian programs, UNICEF is a world leader in menstrual health and hygiene efforts. They pledge to develop programs that help teenage girls, women, transgender people, and non-binary people manage their menstruation safely and respectably. These programs will also enhance access to materials and facilities. In order to promote menstrual health and cleanliness, they focus on four main areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social assistance</li> <li>• abilities and knowledge</li> <li>• Services and amenities</li> <li>• Availability of supporting materials and absorbent materials.</li> </ul>
WASH United India	<p>WASH United strives to create a society where everyone has access to clean water, proper sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), including menstrual hygiene. WASH United is an innovative hybrid of an NGO and a creative firm that focuses on issues in advocacy and education where our combination of WASH sector knowledge and creative skill can have the most impact.</p>
WaterAid India	<p>As a member of the international WaterAid network, WaterAid India works to increase everyone's access to clean water, functional restrooms, and hygienic conditions. Through partners, WaterAid works with both rural and urban people throughout India. With the help of our incredible donors, we have been able to provide clean water, decent toilets, and basic hygiene to millions of people, empowering communities to unleash their</p>



	potential to end the cycle of poverty and transform lives for the better.
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### Conclusion:

Menstrual hygiene is important because it affects women's health, confidence, and self-esteem and is associated with gender equality and fundamental human rights. Concerns are numerous, necessitating coordinated multisectoral inputs and interventions to dispel social taboos, myths, and misconceptions; support creative sustainable solutions to produce and distribute affordable, high-quality sanitary pads; and address the growing issue of disposing menstrual waste in an environmentally safe way. Girls and women should have access to menstrual hygiene, which demands for immediate and vigorous work from all key stakeholders to alter the menstrual hygiene situation in India. Indicators must be created in accordance with the Swachh Bharat Mission Guidelines in order to assess the level of MHM success in India. For delivering basic hygiene and reproductive care to girls and women, putting up realistic time-bound objectives to signal effective execution of existing policies and programs would be a welcome initiative.

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