

TECHNICAL NOTE N° IDB-TN-03301

Policies for Menstrual Hygiene Legislation in Latin America and Spain

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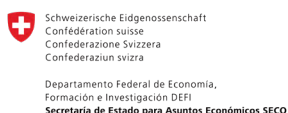


POLICIES FOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE LEGISLATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND SPAIN

March 2026



In the framework of Aquafund



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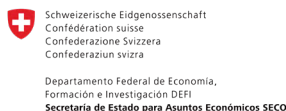
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Published by:

Human Right 2 Water
18 Avenue Louis Casar
1209 Geneva, Switzerland
ISBN No: 978-2-9701459-5-0
Published March 2026

The cover photo features women from *Periodo de Orgullo* ("Period of Pride") in Colombia, a WaterAid initiative. Source: IDB, 2024.

In the framework of AquaFund



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper examines the current state of menstrual hygiene policies, laws and regulations across selected countries in Latin America (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico) and Europe (Spain) with a particular focus on how human rights principles are being applied. It highlights the importance of recognising menstrual hygiene as a matter of fundamental human rights, intrinsically linked to dignity, equality, education, and full societal participation, which cannot be achieved without adequate access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. It will provide recommendations for the design and implementation of effective policies related to menstrual hygiene management (MHM). The report is structured around internationally recognised human rights standards and principles, including accessibility, availability, quality, affordability, and acceptability, alongside non-discrimination, participation, access to information, accountability, and sustainability (CESCR, 2020). It draws on legal examples and local initiatives from across the region, supplemented with examples from Spain, presenting both progressive policies and existing gaps in implementation.

While there is growing awareness of menstrual health in the region and in Spain, and important progress has been made - such as Colombia's Intersectoral Strategy, Brazil's National Programme for Menstrual Equity, and Catalonia's regional distribution of reusable products - significant disparities remain. These are often shaped by socioeconomic status, geography, and social or cultural norms, and they disproportionately affect Indigenous women, those with disabilities, and people living in poverty or rural areas.

Many national initiatives focus on the provision of free menstrual products but fail to address the wider requirements for managing menstruation safely and with dignity, including water, sanitation, and disposal infrastructure. In addition, policies often neglect the environmental impact of disposable products and lack coherent strategies for waste management.

The report identifies that many countries have yet to adopt a comprehensive, cross-sectoral approach to menstrual hygiene that embeds human rights principles throughout. Participatory policymaking remains limited, and data on menstrual health - especially disaggregated by income, location, or disability status - is scarce.

The paper concludes with a set of practical recommendations for governments and stakeholders, calling for stronger legislation, improved infrastructure, inclusive education, and sustainable product provision. It emphasizes the importance of treating menstrual hygiene as a critical and interconnected element of gender equality, environmental sustainability, and public health, and calls for urgent action to close the remaining policy and implementation gaps.

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	<i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</i>
CESCR	<i>Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i>
CRC	<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>
HR2W	<i>Human Right 2 Water</i>
HRBA	<i>Human-Rights-Based Approach</i>
HRWS	<i>Human Rights to Water and Sanitation</i>
ICESCR	<i>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i>
IDB	<i>Inter-American Development Bank</i>
MHM	<i>Menstrual Hygiene Management</i>
UN	<i>United Nations</i>
UNFPA	<i>United Nations Population Fund</i>
UNHCHR	<i>UN High Commissioner for Human Rights</i>
UNICEF	<i>United Nations Children's Fund</i>
WASH	<i>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</i>
WHO	<i>World Health Organization</i>

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**MENSTRUAL
HYGIENE AS
A HUMAN
RIGHT**



■ MENSTRUAL HEALTH AS A HUMAN RIGHT

The World Health Organization (WHO) and The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) introduced the concept of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in 2005 to highlight the challenges surrounding menstruation. These challenges mainly include adequate access to drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). This means having access to clean and safe water as well as soap for washing hands, body, and reusable menstrual products. Additionally, it is essential to ensure access to facilities that provide privacy for changing their pads and sanitary products as well as for disposing of them properly (World Health Organization [WHO] & United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF], 2012).

On July 26, 2021, the Human Rights Council passed Resolution 47/4, officially recognising the connection between menstrual hygiene and the right to the best possible physical and mental health. Then, on June 22, 2022, during a Human Rights Council discussion on menstrual health, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) emphasized that menstrual health is a fundamental issue of human rights and called on governments through a statement to take action (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [UNHCHR], 2022).

On the same day, WHO reinforced the message, stating that menstrual health should be recognized as both a health and human rights issue - not just a hygiene concern (WHO, 2022). This means acknowledging both the importance of hygiene and the physical, emotional, and social aspects of menstruation throughout life. Everyone who

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Figure I: Nicaraguan woman boiling water for sterilisation.

menstruates should have access to accurate information, education, menstrual products, clean water, proper sanitation, safe disposal options, and compassionate healthcare when needed. They should also be able to study, work, and participate in daily life without stigma or shame.

Ensuring access to proper menstrual care is essential because poor menstrual hygiene can lead to serious health issues, like infections, and can also harm mental well-being, reinforcing negative feelings about menstruation.

At its core, recognising menstrual hygiene as a human right is about bodily autonomy. Everyone who menstruates, including adults, children and adolescents, deserves dignity, choice, and protection in how they manage their cycles and live their lives. Clearly, women and girls are the main group that are impacted, but we cannot exclude other people who menstruate, as they are often in a more disadvantaged position, usually having no options for menstrual hygiene. This report refers to women and girls as the primary group, but it refers to all people who menstruate.

■ MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH WASH SECTOR STRATEGY

Menstrual hygiene is a key element of menstrual health, and to be able to achieve this, it is necessary for women and girls to have adequate and timely access to WASH, so that menstruation, a natural process, does not become a health issue. Access to WASH facilities for all people, at all times, helps to ensure that menstruating people can address their physical hygiene needs during menstruation with privacy and dignity, thus reducing the stress and shame that cultural stigmas have built around the issue.

According to a definition developed by the Terminology Action Group of the Global Menstrual Collective, “Menstrual health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle” (Hennegan et al, 2021).

While the concept of menstrual health refers to a state of overall well-being, it is essential to recognize that this definition must always be contextualized, considering the cultural diversity of the region. In Latin America, understandings and experiences of menstruation are deeply shaped by social, ethnic, and geographic factors. Therefore, any approach to menstrual health should take into account the specific realities of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and urban communities, acknowledging their distinct cultural practices, beliefs, and health systems.

Climacteric health covers the transition from perimenopause to postmenopause, when cycles change and bleeding ends, often with symptoms that affect daily life. Together, they form a life-course continuum: evidence-based education, services, and workplace/school accommodations should support people from menarche through the menopausal transition. Integrating climacteric care within menstrual health policies is an important factor in achieving total menstrual health, and it is as important as puberty with respect to management of changes (Crankshaw, 2025).

Achieving menstrual health means that women, girls, and anyone who menstruates can:

- Manage their periods in a way that supports their hygiene, comfort, privacy, and safety. This means having access to clean and supportive facilities, including water, sanitation, and hygiene services for washing, changing, and disposing of menstrual materials, which must also be affordable and effective. Access to clean water and sanitation ensures hand and body hygiene, as well as the cleanliness of reusable menstrual products.
- Live in an environment where menstruation is respected and free from stigma. People who menstruate should have the resources and support they need to confidently manage their health without facing shame or psychological distress. Access to clean water and well-maintained sanitation facilities allows for timely changes of menstrual products, thus preventing the staining of clothes and, consequently, the stress and embarrassment that accompany it.
- Access accurate, timely, and age-appropriate information about the menstrual cycle, menstruation, and the physical changes they experience throughout life. This also includes guidance on self-care and hygiene practices.
- Receive timely diagnosis, treatment, and care for menstrual-related discomforts and disorders. This includes access to appropriate healthcare, pain relief, and self-care strategies.
- Participate fully in all aspects of life - including civil, cultural, economic, social, and political activities - at all stages of their menstrual cycle. They should be free from exclusion, discrimination, coercion, or violence related to menstruation.
- Menstrual health must be guaranteed even in contexts of emergency or disasters related to climate change that affect the water sector. It should be treated as a priority in crisis situations caused by climate-related hazards—such as droughts, heavy rainfall, or floods—that disrupt access to water and sanitation. In these situations, it is essential to ensure the availability of menstrual products, safe spaces, and basic hygiene infrastructure, so that women, girls, and people who menstruate do not see their well-being, dignity, and participation in community life compromised.

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■ WHAT RIGHTS ARE INTERCONNECTED WITH MENSTRUAL HYGIENE?

Menstrual hygiene is closely connected to several fundamental human rights, reflecting the dignity, health, equality, and autonomy of all individuals who menstruate.

First and foremost, it is linked to the right to health, as recognized under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This includes not only access to healthcare services but also the ability to obtain clean water and adequate sanitation facilities. Clean and adequate facilities are fundamental for the proper management of personal hygiene, the cleaning of reusable menstrual products, and

the proper final disposal of disposable menstrual products. In a study conducted in a municipal school in Bahia, Brazil, girls reported the negative experiences they face when they have to go to school during their menstruation. These girls recounted how most of the time, toilets are not available (they are usually broken and dirty), they do not meet adequate hygiene standards, or they do not have toilet paper or sanitary products, which increases the likelihood of feeling embarrassed when they have no way to dispose of the waste and used products (Coswosk et al, 2019).

All these considerations are closely related to the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation (HRWS). To manage menstruation safely and with dignity, individuals require safe, sufficient, and affordable water as well as physically accessible and acceptable sanitation facilities. This right has been affirmed in various UN Human Rights Council resolutions.

The right to education is also directly affected by menstrual hygiene. When girls and other individuals who menstruate are unable to attend school due to inadequate facilities (such as poor management of wastewater, limited access to safe water and soap for handwashing and personal hygiene, as well as a lack of devices to dispose of menstrual products), their right to equal and uninterrupted education is compromised. An example of this is reported in a study conducted in rural schools in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where this situation placed girls in a position of self-exclusion, reduced participation, missing classes, absenteeism and stress (Long et al, 2013). This is particularly noted in international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

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Menstrual hygiene is additionally tied to the right to equality and non-discrimination. No one should be disadvantaged or excluded from public life, education, or employment because they menstruate. For example, for people with disabilities, access to WASH services cannot be adequate when there are insufficient toilets. This is especially true for students using wheelchairs, as reported by some girls in rural schools in Brazil (Coswosk et al, 2019). Discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status violates the principles enshrined in human rights frameworks and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The right to dignity is another core principle. When people are forced to manage menstruation in unsafe, unhygienic, or humiliating conditions, their personal dignity is undermined. When bathrooms do not have doors, or they do not close, girls need the support of their friends to achieve a certain level of privacy. The lack of availability of WASH facilities means that the break time is not long enough to change menstrual products, leading to the prolonged use of such products for several hours. This increases the likelihood of staining their clothes during the school day, which generates feelings of stress, anxiety, and shame, as reported by students from rural schools in the Colombian Pacific (Ariza-Ruiz et al, 2017). This right is a foundational element in many human rights declarations and national legal systems.

At work, the right to safe and equitable working conditions includes access to appropriate sanitation facilities and workplace accommodations for menstruating individuals. Some women choose not to work when the sanitary facilities at the workplace are not adapted to their needs during their menstrual periods, resulting in them being seen as unreliable workers or losing wages due to missed workdays. This affects their economic autonomy and that of their family (World Bank Group, n.d). This right to sanitation and MHM is supported by International Labour Office standards on 'WASH for Work' (International Labour Office, 2018) and broader economic and social rights instruments.

Nonetheless, most women continue to work while menstruating, even if the facilities are not appropriate. Some women have to find a way and a space where they can manage their menstruation (Campos, 2017), reinforcing the essential need to have access to appropriate and hygienic facilities.

Access to accurate and timely information about MHM is part of the right to information. Without information individuals may be unable to manage their health or challenge stigma and misinformation. It is important for girls and adolescents to have knowledge of their own biology regarding menstruation and how to manage it properly. This education should demystify taboos about the topic, including all the necessary adjustments they need to make during their period and the importance of hand and body hygiene. When this is not the case, they face challenges in managing MHM effectively and feel uncomfortable seeking help or guidance. They do not know how to handle the associated menstrual pains, and feel fear, frustration, and shame (Long et al. 2013, pg. 10), in the face of a bodily process that should be experienced as something completely natural. Human rights law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirms the importance of accessible information for all.

Finally, the right to privacy plays a crucial role. Individuals must be able to manage their periods in clean, private, safe, and supportive environments, especially in schools, hospitals, public places and emergency settings.

Together, these rights form the basis of a rights-based approach to menstrual hygiene management, ensuring that national policies and international efforts support equity, participation, sustainability, and accountability.

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■ WHICH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ARE RELATED TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Agenda 2030 are a global plan aimed at creating a more sustainable world - economically, socially, and environmentally. A key focus of this plan is achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

Although the SDGs don't specifically mention menstrual health and hygiene, addressing these issues is closely linked to several of them and plays a significant role in making them a reality. These include:

- [SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being](#)
- [SDG 4: Quality Education](#)
- [SDG 5: Gender Equality](#)
- [SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation](#)

For instance, WHO and UNICEF have recently introduced global indicators (UNICEF, 2020) to track progress on menstrual health and hygiene, ensuring it remains a priority in global development efforts. WaterAid has also started collecting data through indicators on girls in schools and their access to sanitation and hygiene (WaterAid, n.d.).

■ APPLYING HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AND SANITATION

Since menstrual hygiene is closely linked to the HRWS (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [CESCR], 2020), it is essential to apply relevant principles and criteria that guide the implementation of this right.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) publication on the HRWS integrates menstrual hygiene into the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) for water and sanitation by emphasizing dignity, privacy, and cultural acceptability. It underscores that menstrual hygiene management is not ancillary but fundamental, entailing access to safe water, sanitation infrastructure, and hygiene services tailored to women's needs, recognising MHM as one of the biggest challenges faced by girls, adolescents and adult women when they do not have access to a dignified, safe sanitation facility (ONGAWA, 2020, p.109). This approach frames menstrual hygiene as integral to realizing human rights, reinforcing that without adequate WASH services, menstrual needs, and associated rights, remain unfulfilled.

To ensure menstrual hygiene is properly addressed, key human rights criteria - including availability, quality, acceptability, accessibility, and affordability - should be considered. Additionally, human rights principles such as non-discrimination, access to information, participation, accountability, and sustainability play a crucial role in shaping laws, policies, and regulations across different countries (Human Right 2 Water [HR2W], 2020).

By evaluating these factors, we can better understand how menstrual hygiene is addressed globally and identify areas for improvement in ensuring equitable access to safe and dignified menstrual care.

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Figure II: Women washing clothes in a local river. Source: (IDB, 2023.)

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**MENSTRUAL
HYGIENE
PROGRESS
IN LATIN
AMERICA
AND SPAIN**



■ MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PROGRESS IN LATIN AMERICA AND SPAIN

MHM has gained increased attention over the past decade, with growing awareness of the challenges faced by women, girls, and other menstruating individuals. Despite some progress, MHM across the region remains uneven, with disparities influenced by socioeconomic status, urban-rural divides, education levels, and cultural norms (Oliveira, et al. 2023). Sanitation infrastructure also varies widely. In urban schools and workplaces, access to clean, private toilets and handwashing facilities is more common, but in rural schools or informal settlements, such facilities may be absent, shared, or unsafe. This lack of privacy and hygiene makes it difficult for menstruating individuals to manage their periods with dignity and safety (Montes & Cañedo, 2021), (Soeiro, et al. 2021). Additionally, waste disposal systems are not always equipped to handle menstrual waste, particularly in low-income or rural areas, leading to environmental and health concerns (Anand et al, 2022).

A critical issue in Latin America related to MHM is the growing problem of solid waste generated by disposable menstrual products. The widespread use of single-use pads and tampons - often made from plastic and synthetic materials - contributes significantly to non-biodegradable waste across the region (World Bank Group, 2022). In countries with limited waste management infrastructure, these products often end up in open dumps, water sources, or are incinerated in unsafe conditions, posing environmental impacts and public health risks (World Bank Group, 2017, p.3).

The problem is exacerbated by a lack of awareness and access to more sustainable alternatives like menstrual cups or reusable cloth pads (Cilley, 2024). Although some NGOs and grassroots movements have begun promoting eco-friendly options, uptake remains low due to cultural resistance, limited availability, and lack of education on their use and benefits. In contexts where WASH services are scarce, inadequate, or non-existent, this problem is further compounded, as there is no safe and stable access to clean water that allows for the proper cleaning of reusable menstrual products. Addressing menstrual waste will require coordinated policy action, improved sanitation systems, and public education campaigns to encourage both sustainable consumption and responsible disposal practices.

Period Poverty is a concept developed by the UN which explicitly states that menstrual hygiene includes not having sanitation and hygiene facilities: “Period poverty refers to the inability to afford and access menstrual products, sanitation and hygiene facilities and education and awareness to manage menstrual health. Simply put, period poverty costs women and girls too much and it doesn’t have to be this way.”
- (United Nations Women, 2025)

Education on menstruation is inconsistent. In some countries, school curricula have incorporated basic information about puberty and menstrual health, but this is often limited or not addressed until after menstruation has already begun for many girls. In conservative or indigenous communities, menstruation is frequently treated as a taboo subject, resulting in misinformation and shame (Soeiro et al, 2021). Many girls report being unprepared for their first period, which contributes to anxiety and confusion. Worldwide, it has been observed that only 2 out of 5 schools address education related to menstrual health (WHO, 2022). This education should include the importance of proper menstrual hygiene for health, as well as the proper use of WASH facilities, so that girls and adolescents can adequately manage their menstrual hygiene and disposable products.

There have been positive developments. Governments and civil society groups in several Latin American countries are beginning to address MHM more directly. Colombia and Mexico have seen initiatives to distribute free pads or menstrual cups in schools or health centres. Non-profit organizations have also played a key role in filling gaps, through education campaigns, product distribution, and advocacy. Still, there is a need to increase actions and awareness in the water, sanitation and solid waste sector.

Furthermore, regional and international attention to MHM is growing. The UN (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2021) and regional health bodies are working with Latin American governments to integrate menstrual health into broader public health and gender equality agendas. Activists continue to push for more inclusive policies that recognize the intersectional nature of period poverty (see definition in box), impacting not only cisgender women and girls but also trans and non-binary individuals.

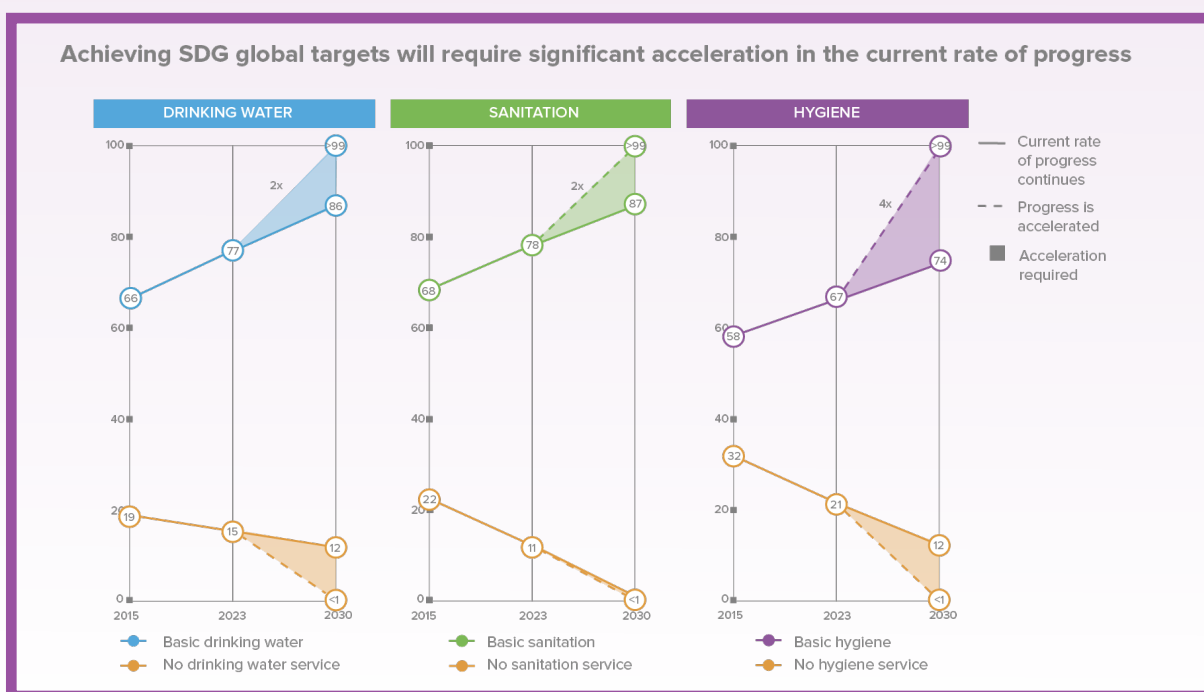


Figure III: Global coverage of WASH in schools 2015–2023 and acceleration required to meet targets by 2030 (%), demonstrates the lack of hygiene in schools globally, with over a third having no services at all, and nearly a quarter with no sanitation services (UNICEF & WHO, 2024).

3

HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS RELATED TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE



■ HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS RELATED TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

Each section will include an introduction to the legal requirements (summarised here below), with an outline of good practice example laws, and a case study from the region to explain how it can work in practice, and the benefits of such approaches.

ACCESSIBILITY AND AVAILABILITY

Availability is explained as universal coverage and continuity of service (ONGAWA, 2020). With respect to MHM, if women do not have guaranteed availability of WASH services, then it limits their participation in public spaces, leading to self-exclusion, especially in education. Furthermore, not having sufficient and continuous water affects their ability to maintain hygiene. It is therefore not enough to have private, dignified, and safe facilities, instead it is necessary to ensure a sufficient and continuous supply of water so that women, girls, and menstruating individuals can maintain their hygiene as needed.

It follows in this same publication that WASH facilities, and a choice of menstrual products must be accessible to all people, regardless of their age, disability condition, or chronic illnesses. It is a fundamental right, since without access to facilities, it is impossible to meet the other criteria to fulfil this right. Hence, accessibility is a key criterion to provide dignity, privacy and availability. Unless women are actively involved in the design of sanitation infrastructure investments, MHM-related considerations may be overlooked, preventing the optimal design of women's toilets.

When access to WASH facilities is not guaranteed, then access to water is neither assured nor reliable. It significantly hinders the ability of women, girls, and others who menstruate to fully participate in public life. This often results in self-exclusion, particularly from school and work environments. Providing safe, private, and hygienic facilities is essential - but not sufficient on its own. It is equally critical to ensure a reliable and adequate supply of clean water, so that individuals feel safe and empowered to manage their menstrual hygiene wherever and whenever needed. Without this, dignity, health, and equal participation remain out of reach.

Human rights law insists that accessibility must be guaranteed for all individuals -regardless of age, gender, disability, or chronic illness. This means menstrual hygiene facilities and resources must always be accessible, in locations that are safe, well-lit, easy to navigate, and close to where people live, study, or work. They should also be designed to minimize wait times and ensure that everyone can use them with dignity, comfort, and independence. It is also emphasized that WASH services must be reliably operated: when women do not have guarantees of this availability, they cannot guarantee their presence in a public space (United Nations Human Rights: Office of the High Commissioner, 2002).

Colombia

Example legislation in Colombia: Bill 124/24

The Bill No. 124 of 2024 in Colombia, titled “Through which measures are established to guarantee dignified conditions and the effective enjoyment of menstrual rights, and other provisions are enacted,” aims to ensure full access to and enjoyment of menstrual rights in the country. This initiative seeks to establish a comprehensive framework that guarantees dignified and equitable conditions for all individuals who experience menstruation in Colombia (Universidad de los Andes, 2021).

This bill represents a significant step forward in promoting the health and well-being of menstruating individuals in Colombia, aiming to eliminate taboos and ensure access to menstrual products and related services.

Bill No. 124 of 2024 aims to guarantee dignified conditions and the effective enjoyment of menstrual rights in Colombia. Key provisions related to water and sanitation include:

1. **Recognition of Menstrual Health:** The bill acknowledges menstrual health as a fundamental right, essential for gender equality and well-being.
2. **Educational Programs:** It mandates awareness campaigns to eliminate menstrual stigma and misinformation.
3. **Workplace provisions:** It encourages supportive environments in informal workplaces, including proper facilities for menstrual health.

While the bill emphasizes menstrual rights, it is essential to consider integrating provisions that ensure access to water for handwashing and facilities for the safe disposal of sanitary products. Such measures would align with global best practices on hygiene and sustainability, and address the comprehensive needs associated with menstrual health and hygiene.

LOCAL ACTIONS

In Colombia, efforts to improve access to safe sanitation and hygiene have been underway. The “Sanitation for Millions” program, for instance, focuses on enhancing sanitary facilities in schools and healthcare centres for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. It promotes hand hygiene and addresses MHM. This initiative highlights the importance of providing safe and private facilities equipped with water and disposal options to manage menstruation effectively (Sanitation for Millions, 2022).

Sanitation for Millions Colombia is dedicated to improving access to safe sanitation through a comprehensive approach. The program focuses on upgrading and ensuring barrier-free sanitary facilities, particularly in schools, to create safer and more inclusive environments. It also promotes hygiene practices among target communities, with a strong emphasis on hand hygiene and MHM.

To encourage engagement, the program organizes the ‘Toilets Making the Grade’ school competitions, fostering awareness and commitment to improved sanitation. Additionally, it provides training for staff to ensure the long-term operation and maintenance of facilities, equipping them with the skills needed to sustain these improvements.

Beyond infrastructure and education, the initiative offers advisory services to policymakers, helping to establish the necessary framework for sustainable sanitation services. It also works closely with private service providers to enhance the efficiency and quality of sanitation services along the entire sanitation chain.

SPAIN

Example legislation in Spain: Article V (Hygienic services and rest places) of Royal Decree 486/1997 of April 14, for the establishment of minimum requirements in Health and Safety in the workplace.

This Royal Decree establishes minimum health and safety standards for the workplace and requires employers to provide access to drinkable water and for toilet facilities to have running water (hot, if necessary), soap and towels, and toilets with automatic flushing and toilet paper; toilets intended for use by women shall have special, sealed containers; toilet stalls shall be equipped with a lockable door; toilets shall be separate for men and women, or their separate use shall be provided.

LOCAL ACTIONS

Organizations like Initial España offer comprehensive solutions, including dispensers for free menstrual products and sanitary waste disposal units, to help businesses enhance their facilities and support employees' menstrual health needs (Initial, n.d).

However, several key challenges hinder the creation of more acceptable and inclusive sanitation facilities for women in the workplace across Europe and Latin America. Cultural taboos and stigma around menstruation persist, limiting open dialogue and reducing visibility of women's hygiene needs in workplace policies (Holst et al, 2022). While basic sanitation is legally required, implementation is inconsistent, especially in small businesses and informal sectors. Many workplaces do not provide adequate disposal facilities, leaving women without essential support.

Employer awareness remains low, with limited understanding of how poor menstrual hygiene access affects well-being and productivity. In the UK, the lack of workplace policies (relating to MHM) is estimated to cost businesses over £6 billion per annum due to lower productivity (Cocker, 2024). Disparities are also evident across sectors, with women in low-income or precarious employment facing greater barriers. This is especially pertinent in some of the countries studied where there is a high proportion of informal employment, forcing women and people who menstruate to accept working conditions that do not meet basic health and safety standards. Workplace infrastructure often lacks gender-sensitive design, such as private restrooms, rest areas, or appropriate waste bins. Enforcement mechanisms are weak, and few systems exist for women to report concerns safely. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring hygiene, dignity, and equal participation in the workplace.

QUALITY

Sanitation and hygiene facilities should be safe and designed to prevent direct contact with human and biological waste.

Such facilities must therefore comply with proper management of wastewater; safe (germ-free) water and soap for hand and body washing, especially during the change of menstrual products; requirements for the disposal of menstrual hygiene products; regular cleaning of bathrooms, especially if they are shared public spaces; and promotion of hygiene, so that users' habits support the maintenance and cleanliness of places. This includes promoting MHM so that girls and adolescents know how to discard of disposable products without causing, for example, toilets to get "clogged."

Menstrual hygiene products should either be reusable (to reduce waste production) or treated and disposed of safely on-site (e.g. controlled, high temperature incineration, composting of biodegradable products, segregation from other waste), or temporarily stored, then safely transported to an off-site treatment facility.

While many Latin American countries are making strides in addressing menstrual health through various policies and initiatives, there is currently no specific legislation that directly targets water quality in relation to menstrual hygiene management, either with respect to handwashing and washing of reusable products, or to the management of the waste products in a safe way.

In many regions, menstrual waste is often disposed of alongside general solid waste, leading to environmental concerns due to the non-biodegradable nature of many menstrual products. The lack of specific guidelines can result in improper disposal practices, contributing to sanitation issues.

There remains a significant gap in policies specifically tailored to the disposal of menstrual hygiene product waste. Addressing this gap is crucial for environmental sustainability and the promotion of comprehensive menstrual health management.

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MEXICO

Example legislation in Mexico: The Mexican Official Standard NOM-230-SSA1-2002

The Mexican Official Standard NOM-127-SSA1-2021 establishes permissible water quality limits for human use and consumption, focusing on parameters such as heavy metals, microbiological content, and physicochemical properties. While the standard does not explicitly address menstrual health, its guidelines are crucial for ensuring safe water quality, which indirectly supports MHM.

Key aspects relevant to menstrual health include:

1. **Microbiological Quality:** The standard mandates that water must be free from pathogenic microorganisms, including faecal coliforms and *Escherichia coli*, with permissible limits set at zero in 100 millilitres. This ensures that water used for washing reusable menstrual products or for personal hygiene does not pose a risk of infections.
2. **Chemical Contaminants:** NOM-127-SSA1-2021 sets maximum permissible limits for various chemical substances, such as heavy metals (e.g., lead, arsenic, mercury) and other inorganic compounds. Compliance with these limits ensures that water used for menstrual hygiene is free from harmful chemicals that could cause skin irritation or other health issues.
3. **Physicochemical Properties:** The standard specifies acceptable ranges for properties like pH (6.5 to 8.5), turbidity, and total dissolved solids. Maintaining these parameters within the recommended limits ensures that water is suitable for personal hygiene practices, including those related to menstruation.

By adhering to the guidelines set forth in NOM-127-SSA1-2021, water quality is maintained at a level that supports safe and effective menstrual hygiene practices, thereby contributing to the overall health and well-being of individuals (Carbotecnia, 2023).

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Figure IV: Period Positive Workplace Testimonial: Dignifica Tu Vida.
Source: (Days for Girls, n.d.)

LOCAL ACTIONS

There are several initiatives in Mexico that are contributing to more sustainable use and disposal of menstrual hygiene products. The solutions include the provision of alternatives to single-use pads and products, and education around their management and disposal.

Ecopipo is a Mexican company based in Irapuato, initially known for manufacturing cloth diapers. They have expanded their product line to include reusable menstrual pads, offering sustainable alternatives to disposable products (Ecopipo, n.d.).

Days for Girls International is a global nonprofit organization that operates in Mexico, preparing and distributing sustainable menstrual health solutions. They provide washable, reusable pads and comprehensive health education, aiming to reduce reliance on disposable products and improve menstrual health management (Days for Girls, n.d.).

UNICEF Mexico has developed and used the Manual on Menstrual Health and Hygiene (UNICEF, 2024) as a key educational tool to promote menstrual health in the country.

This manual comes in two versions: one aimed at children and adolescents, and another for facilitators.

Its goal is to provide accurate information and encourage healthy practices related to menstruation, addressing biological, emotional, and social aspects from a human rights and gender perspective. The manual emphasizes the strong link between menstrual health and WASH (UNICEF, 2024, p.38), linking the importance of education on this issue, and the distinction between healthy menstruation and uterine bleeding (UNICEF, 2024, p.47). UNICEF also implemented a pilot program using these manuals in ten schools in Chihuahua in 2021/2022 with the aim of integrating MHM into the school curriculum (CADENA & UNICEF, 2024, p.13).

In addition, UNICEF Mexico has developed the mobile App Oky (Oky, n.d.) designed to provide relevant menstrual hygiene information to girls and adolescents, further supporting the educational efforts introduced through the manuals (Oky, n.d.).

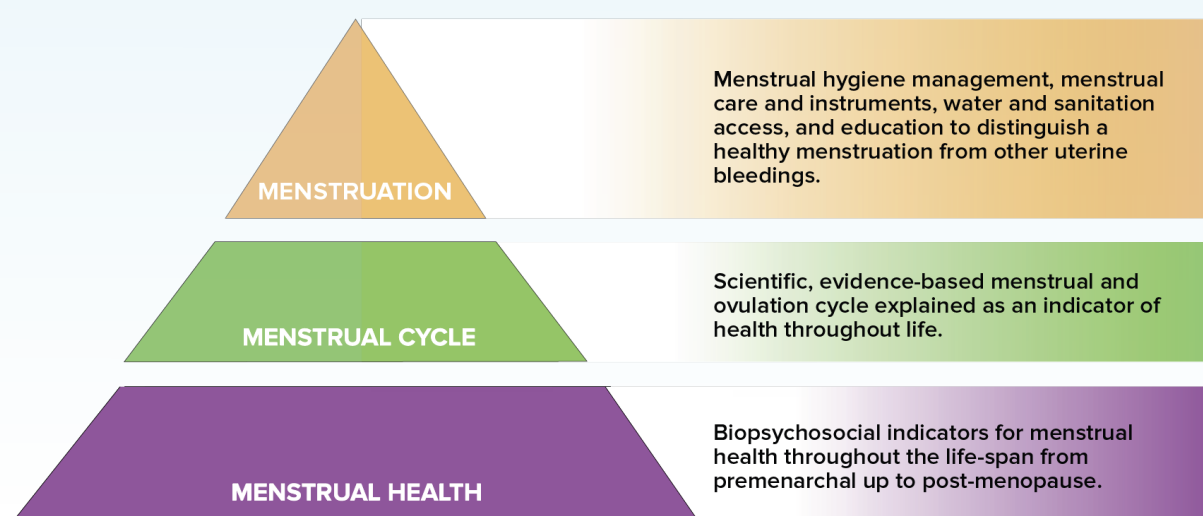


Figure V: Menstrual Health Definition Diagram. Source: UNICEF, 2024, pg.47

AFFORDABILITY

Affordability is not only related to the capacity to pay for any necessary products that allow good MHM, but it should also include affordable access to clean water for washing. Menstrual hygiene products include soap, menstrual products and suitable containers for their disposal. In addition, affordability can also extend to the capacity to be able to pay for and tend to any infections that may occur due to inadequate MHM.

Menstrual hygiene products and sanitation facilities should be affordable for everyone. This doesn't mean they should be completely free, but no one should have to sacrifice their dignity or miss out on work, school, or daily activities due to financial barriers during menstruation or menopause.

The services related to safe and hygienic menstrual care should therefore be provided without consideration of cost. At a minimum, the provision of water for handwashing, clean toilets for hygienic use, and a safe and discreet disposal method for product waste, should be provided without a deterrent.

Menstrual hygiene products and those related to the menstrual cycle, such as soap, body wash, and razors, should not be priced higher than similar everyday items. Many products marketed to women and girls are still unfairly priced higher, and may be taxed as luxury items, often just because they come in pink or purple packaging. This was certainly the case in the countries studied for this report, where there was no recognition of legislation to prevent menstrual hygiene products from being taxed as luxury items (HR2W, 2025, Section 4.3 in each country report). “The average woman of reproductive age in the Americas experienced a menstrual product tax rate of 5.8% in 2022”. In the same year, countries such as Costa Rica included an average tax rate of 1% for menstrual products, up to a tax of 22% in Uruguay (Calderón-Villareal, 2023). The financial pressures for Latin American women are exacerbated by their lack of earning power, with women earning on average only 90 cents on the dollar compared to men in 2022 (Berniell et al, 2025, p.243), thereby increasing the financial pressures of menstruating people.

Additionally, the financial burden of accessing clean water and sanitation services can be substantial for low-income families. For instance, in some areas, connecting a household to the municipal water supply or installing a basic sanitation system requires significant upfront investment, which may be unaffordable for many. This economic barrier limits the ability of individuals to maintain proper menstrual hygiene.

Relieving menstruating people of the “pink tax” would improve their quality of life and financial burdens. However, this would require political efforts which may not be of interest to some countries. Only five Latin American countries are approaching parity in the political gender gap, meaning that the political discussions and initiatives promoting gender-inclusive policies are also limited, see section 4.2 on Participation. This article declares that,

“Women’s participation in decision-making is key in the process to propose, adopt, and foster gender justice policies, particularly in legislative positions”
(Calderón-Villareal, 2023, p.5)

Without reliable access to clean water and private sanitation, women face heightened risks of infections and may experience disruptions in their education and daily lives. Addressing these challenges requires integrated approaches that not only focus on making menstrual products affordable but also prioritize investments in WASH infrastructure to ensure comprehensive menstrual health management.

To complicate matters, there are a number of incentives that seek to eradicate period poverty by providing free menstrual products (pads and tampons), without consideration of the waste disposal issues that can arise without appropriate (and separately managed) waste disposal. Not only does this waste create a biological waste hazard, but it can also deter women from using the toilet facilities when the bins are not provided in a private and hygienic manner (see Section 3.1 on Quality).

BRAZIL

Example legislation in Brazil: The Program for the Protection and Promotion of Menstrual Health (Law 14214/21, Decree 11432/23)

Brazil's Program for the Protection and Promotion of Menstrual Health, established by Law 14,214/21 and further detailed in Decree 11,432/23, March 2023, aims to combat period poverty by ensuring free access to sanitary pads and other essential menstrual health resources for vulnerable populations. The program specifically targets low-income public-school students, homeless women, incarcerated women, and others in extreme social vulnerability, reaching approximately 5.6 million Brazilian women aged 12 to 51.

This initiative addresses period poverty - a lack of access to menstrual hygiene products and facilities - which can lead to health issues and educational setbacks. In Brazil, one in four girls (Ministerio das Mulheres, n.d.) is absent from school during her menstrual period, and approximately four million (Moraes et al. 2025) suffer from inadequate hygiene in the school environment.

The Program primarily focuses on distributing free disposable menstrual pads to individuals in vulnerable situations. However, the available information does not indicate that the program provides specific guidelines or policies on the sustainable disposal of these menstrual products.

While the program addresses immediate menstrual health needs, the absence of directives on environmentally responsible disposal practices may contribute to increased solid waste challenges. Effective menstrual waste management is crucial to mitigate environmental impacts and ensure that women and girls feel comfortable using public facilities. Incorporating sustainable disposal guidelines into such programs can enhance their long-term effectiveness and ecological responsibility.

The current framework of Brazil's menstrual health program, like other countries, does not appear to include provisions for the sustainable disposal of menstrual products. Integrating such guidelines could be a valuable step toward addressing both menstrual health and environmental sustainability concerns.

LOCAL ACTIONS

Waste from sanitary pads can be reduced using reusable and washable products. These are also more affordable than single-use products and achieve the dual goals of affordability and sustainability. While reusable products can be more sustainable, they are counterproductive unless there is sufficient clean water available for hand washing and product care, sometimes creating other problems related to contamination and health.

Launched in 2021, EcoCiclo is a project that supports women in socially vulnerable situations, particularly those who are unemployed or living in rural areas, through the production of biodegradable sanitary pads. These pads are 100% biodegradable, hypoallergenic, non-toxic, and vegan. The initiative not only provides affordable menstrual products but also generates income for women involved in their production and resale. During the pandemic, EcoCiclo expanded its efforts by offering educational training on social entrepreneurship to over 200 women, covering topics such as marketing, sales, sustainability, finance, and public relations. The project also created a marketplace for women producing and selling sustainable products (World Justice Project, 2022).



Figure VI: Ecociclo Community Workshop. Source: (Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative, n.d.)

SPAIN

Example legislation in Catalonia: The universal and free distribution of reusable menstrual products begins in all pharmacies in Catalonia promoted by the Ministry of Equality and Feminisms, Press Release dated as of March 4, 2024 from the Government of Catalonia.

In March 2024, the Ministry of Equality and Feminisms and the Council of Pharmaceutical Colleges of Catalonia started the free and universal distribution of reusable menstrual products. This action is included in the Comprehensive Menstrual and Climacteric Equity Plan 2023-2025. All women in Catalonia can now go to the nearest pharmacy to request period underwear, a menstrual cup or two cloth pads.

LOCAL ACTIONS

Catalonia launched the “My period, my rules” program, offering free reusable menstrual products - including menstrual cups, period underwear, and cloth pads - to approximately 2.5 million individuals. This initiative not only addresses economic barriers but also promotes sustainable menstrual practices. This program addresses period poverty, as surveys indicated that 23% of women in Catalonia had to reuse single-use hygiene products for economic reasons. By offering durable, reusable products, the initiative reduces the financial burden associated with menstruation

Additionally, the program aims to reduce environmental waste, considering that Catalonia generates approximately 9,000 tons of waste annually from single-use menstrual products. While the initiative focuses on product distribution, comprehensive menstrual hygiene management also requires accessible sanitation facilities with clean water and private spaces for changing and washing. Ensuring such facilities are available in public areas and workplaces is essential for individuals to effectively utilize these reusable products (Government of Catalonia, 2024).

In summary, “My period, my rules” makes menstrual hygiene more affordable through the provision of free reusable products and highlights the importance of adequate sanitation facilities to support their effective use.

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Figure VII: A pharmacist with the advertisement for “My Period My Rules” Menstrual Hygiene Campaign by the Catalan Government. Photo by: Emilio Morenatti Source: (Wilson & Brito, 2024)

ACCEPTABILITY

Menstrual hygiene should be universally accepted - free from stigma and openly discussed as a natural part of life. Achieving this requires inclusive education for everyone in the community, including men and boys, on self-care, hygiene, and menstrual health.

It also means ensuring access to essential services that support both menstrual and menopausal care and fostering an environment where individuals can manage their menstrual health with dignity and respect.

In a practical sense, the design, location and usage considerations of sanitation facilities should take into account the culture, convenience and dignity of the individual. This implies separate facilities for men and women in public spaces, schools and workplaces, to ensure that menstruating individuals are able to feel comfortable using the facilities.

COLOMBIA

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Example legislation in Colombia: The Intersectoral Strategy for the Promotion of Menstrual Health and Care

Colombia's Intersectoral Strategy for the Promotion of Menstrual Health and Care, developed by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, is a comprehensive policy aimed at improving menstrual health through multisectoral collaboration. Recognizing menstrual health as a fundamental aspect of well-being and gender equality, the strategy emphasizes education, access to healthcare services, and social support to reduce stigma.

In the Introduction of the forementioned strategy, menstrual care is defined to include access to facilities, water, and soap needed for personal hygiene, material disposal, and dignity, reinforcing the critical need for water and WASH for menstrual care.

Another key component of the strategy, outlined in Section 5.3.2.4, mandates menstrual health education for women, men, girls, and boys in different institutional settings, including schools, healthcare institutions, and community spaces. By involving all members of society, this approach ensures that menstrual health is not solely a women's issue but a shared responsibility, helping to break down stigma and misinformation. The strategy also emphasizes the importance of coordination between key sectors such as health, protection, recreation, and culture. These sectors collaborate to design and implement programs that integrate menstrual health into broader public policies, ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach. This education section stresses that clean water and sanitation in safe facilities in central to dignified menstrual health.

A major focus of the policy is to empower menstruating individuals, particularly girls, adolescents, and women, by strengthening decision-making skills, autonomy, and life skills. The strategy promotes access to healthcare services while raising awareness

about sexual and reproductive rights, physical and emotional development, and menstrual cycle health. Through comprehensive sexuality education, individuals are better equipped to make informed choices about their menstrual and reproductive health.

The strategy aims to create a stigma-free environment by normalizing discussions around menstruation and promoting gender equality in schools, workplaces, and public institutions. Awareness campaigns are designed to challenge misconceptions and encourage open conversations involving all genders. By taking this inclusive and multi-sectoral approach, Colombia's menstrual health strategy represents a significant step toward ensuring menstrual dignity and equity. Through its integration into social policies and public health initiatives, the strategy enhances access to care, ensures access to WASH for handwashing and hygiene, strengthens education, and empowers individuals to manage their menstrual health with dignity and autonomy in a clean and safe sanitary environment.

LOCAL ACTIONS

Several educational initiatives are actively working in Colombia to break the taboo surrounding menstrual hygiene and promote the improvement of hygiene facilities. These efforts encourage better access to handwashing stations, dignified disposal facilities for sanitary pads, and clean sanitation facilities on-site. This issue is clearly explained through the storytelling from Yackeline Fuentes in the relevant episode from *Mujeres Aguas Arriba* (Inter-American Development Bank [IDB], 2024).

WaterAid Colombia has been actively working with the Wayuu communities in La Guajira to improve education on menstrual hygiene and handwashing. Their efforts focus on infrastructure development, culturally relevant hygiene education, community engagement, and targeted responses to public health challenges.

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Figure VIII: Yackelin Fuentes teaching children about Menstrual Hygiene. Source: (IDB, 2024)

CASE STUDY: *Period of Pride, Colombia*

Many young girls in Colombia, especially in rural areas, begin menstruating while still burdened by the stigma and taboo inherent in this natural process. Yackelin Fuentes, a student from La Guajira, recalls how menstruation was presented to her as something negative. Male classmates considered it repulsive, and even adults, such as her father, reinforced that perception. Her grandmother offered advice based on urban legends rather than facts. For Yackelin and her friends, menstruation became a source of embarrassment.

Yackelin's perspective was transformed through Workshops on MH. She became an advocate for the WaterAid initiative, *Periodo de Orgullo* ("Period of Pride"). This program promotes safe menstrual hygiene practices and educates menstruating people of all ages and backgrounds - covering everything from healthy habits to the importance of access to water. Yackelin, as well as other women from this community, participated in workshops where participants learn about MHM and create reusable pads, opening space to discuss practices that prevent infections and improve well-being.

Just as her life has changed, Yackelin is now an advocate for MHM and she helps others to shift their perspectives, normalize menstruation, and breaking taboos. Thanks to *Periodo de Orgullo*, over 2,500 women in La Guajira have received reusable pads, advancing menstrual dignity and health in her community (IDB, 2024).

To support better hygiene practices, WaterAid has built and rehabilitated water systems, toilets, and handwashing stations in schools and communities, ensuring that women and girls have private and safe spaces for MHM. Recognizing the need for culturally appropriate education, they developed the "Pathways to WASH" toolkit, which incorporates Wayuu ancestral symbols and art to make hygiene education more engaging and relevant (WaterAid, 2023). This approach has helped shift community perceptions, increasing the acceptance and use of sanitation facilities.

In addition to building infrastructure, WaterAid has implemented the 'Ponte Pilas!' hygiene education program, using interactive methods to promote healthy hygiene behaviours. They have also trained local professionals in maintaining and operating these facilities, ensuring long-term sustainability (Aqwalife, 2022).

As part of their COVID-19 response, WaterAid installed public handwashing stations that reached up to 7,000 people daily, prioritizing the Wayuu communities. They also developed hygiene communication campaigns in native languages to ensure effective outreach to rural populations. Through these comprehensive efforts, WaterAid Colombia is making significant progress in improving menstrual hygiene and handwashing practices among the Wayuu, fostering better health and well-being.



Figure IX: Period Pride Team. Source: (IDB, 2024)

4

**HUMAN
RIGHTS
PRINCIPLES
AS
APPLIED TO
MENSTRUAL
HYGIENE**



■ HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES AS APPLIED TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

The principles of the HRBA -including non-discrimination, participation, data transparency, accountability, and sustainability -are fundamental to ensuring equitable access to menstrual hygiene. These principles are particularly important in challenging the stigma and silence that frequently surround menstruation, which can limit open dialogue and effective policy responses.

This paper examines how the HRBA applies to the areas of water, sanitation, and solid waste management, highlighting the urgent need for more inclusive, informed, and rights-based approaches to menstrual health.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Non-discrimination in menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is essential to uphold the dignity, health, and rights of all individuals who menstruate. Unequal access to water, sanitation, hygiene facilities, and menstrual products disproportionately affects girls, Indigenous populations, people with disabilities, and those in rural or low-income settings. This deepens gender inequalities and can lead to school absenteeism, health risks, and social exclusion.

It is a particularly difficult challenge for people with disabilities when it comes to WASH facilities in public spaces such as schools, community centres and workplaces. Lack of physical access becomes a double barrier to accessing dignified, clean and hygienic services, and cannot be underestimated.

Under international human rights law - including CEDAW and ICESCR - states are obligated to ensure equal access to health, education, and sanitation without discrimination. Governments must address period poverty by improving infrastructure, promoting menstrual education, and respecting cultural practices. Recognizing MHM as a human rights issue is crucial to achieving gender equality and ensuring that no one is left behind because of their menstrual status.

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BRAZIL

Legal example from Brazil: Bill No. 1702/2021

This bill aims to establish the Policy for Awareness on Menstruation and Universal Access to Sanitary Pads within the Brazilian Unified Health System, called “Menstruation Without Taboo.”

The main objective is to combat period poverty through various actions, including hygiene and health education: Implementing educational programs to demystify menstruation and promote menstrual health, including handwashing and hygiene.

In general, 84% of Brazilians have access to drinking water and 56% to sanitation services, it is mainly rural areas who don't get these services (Almiro de Magalhães Melo et al, 2023). Consequently, a significant part of the menstruating population in Brazil lacks access to adequate means to manage menstruation, which can lead to the use of unsafe and harmful methods. Furthermore, the lack of access to sanitary pads and hygienic toilet and hand-washing facilities can result in school and work absenteeism, directly affecting the participation and development of girls and women in society.

The bill's goal is to ensure menstrual dignity and promote equal opportunities, contributing to the inclusion and full participation of girls and women in all areas of social life. While it addresses access to products as a main objective, it also refers to the necessary conditions that make water and sanitation facilities acceptable for people to use when menstruating.

LOCAL ACTIONS

Educational and community-driven programs play a crucial role in breaking down the stigma surrounding menstruation in Brazil. Two impactful initiatives, the Driving Force Initiative and, 'Nossos Ventres' (Our Wombs), work to empower women and girls through education, awareness, and access to knowledge about their reproductive health.

The Driving Force Initiative, supported by UNFPA and the Elas Fund, operates in Bahia state, where many women face barriers to reproductive health education. The program focuses on training female community leaders to become advocates for menstrual health and sexual education. These leaders provide essential information on menstrual hygiene and self-care, among other subjects, helping women and girls make informed decisions about their health. Additionally, the initiative actively combats harmful myths and taboos that contribute to menstrual stigma, promoting an open dialogue that fosters dignity and empowerment. By centring the voices of local women, the initiative ensures culturally relevant and community-driven solutions to menstrual discrimination.

Its associated project, 'Nossos Ventres', takes a media-based approach to menstrual education. Through documentaries, podcasts, and free e-books, the project disseminates accurate and accessible information about menstrual cycles and reproductive health. By making this knowledge widely available, it normalizes conversations about menstruation, encouraging young women to understand and embrace their bodies (UNFPA, 2021).

Together, these initiatives challenge deep-rooted stigma, ensuring that menstruation is seen as a natural and respected aspect of life, rather than a source of discrimination.



Figure X: Peruvian women by a lake.

Legal example from Chile¹: Menstrual Health Guide

The Menstrual Health Guide (Mieres Gonzalez et al, 2024), published by Chile's Ministry of Women and Gender Equity in collaboration with other institutions, includes a dedicated section on the menstrual health of Indigenous girls, adolescents, and women. This section offers guidance for professionals working with Indigenous communities, emphasizing the importance of respecting and valuing their traditional knowledge and practices.

1. **Respect for Indigenous knowledge:** The guide encourages the incorporation and appreciation of ancestral knowledge, such as the use of medicinal plants and other menstrual health practices rooted in Indigenous traditions.
2. **Promotion of Knowledge Exchange:** It recommends creating opportunities for dialogue between health professionals and Indigenous community representatives, fostering mutual understanding and approaches that align with Indigenous worldviews.
3. **Reflection on Personal Biases:** Professionals are advised to critically examine any biases they may hold toward Indigenous knowledge systems, recognizing their value and scientific basis.
4. **Use of Appropriate Language:** Understanding and using the terms that Indigenous communities use to refer to menstruation is emphasized, as language reflects diverse ways of understanding the world.
5. **Awareness and Respect for International Agreements:** The guide highlights the importance of respecting international agreements signed by Chile that recognize Indigenous communities' rights to live according to their cultural values and practice traditional medicine.

These recommendations aim to ensure an inclusive and respectful approach to menstrual health that acknowledges and supports the rights and traditions of Indigenous women in Chile (Mieres Gonzalez et al. 2024).

LOCAL ACTIONS

There is a growing recognition in Chile of the importance of menstrual health and the need for comprehensive strategies that include product accessibility, education, and improved sanitation infrastructure, including water for hygiene.

The Federación Nacional de Cooperativas de Servicios Sanitarios Ltda (FESAN, n.d.) is a non-profit organization comprising experts recognized by the Chilean government in community management of rural and peri-urban water and sanitation services. While their primary focus is on water and sanitation infrastructure, their work significantly contributes to improving sanitation facilities that benefit women in these communities.

Their approach includes participatory training programs aimed at improving operational management and governance of local organizations. By enhancing these capacities, FESAN contributes to the overall well-being of community members, including women. Improved sanitation facilities contribute to better health outcomes and provide women with greater dignity and safety.

¹ The 'Guía de Salud Menstrual' can be accessed from www.escuelatribu.com

There is another Chilean organization dedicated to addressing menstrual health and combating period poverty (La Mancha de Chile, n.d.). Their mission centres on eliminating societal indifference towards menstruation and advocating for menstrual equity through public policy reforms and educational campaigns.

La Mancha de Chile runs public awareness campaigns designed to break the stigma surrounding menstruation, with campaigns to encourage open conversation. They have played a leading role in advocating for legislative change, particularly through their support for the proposed “Ley Menstrual” (Menstrual Law) which remains as a bill in the second constitutional stage in the Senate. This legislation seeks to guarantee access to menstrual products and education, especially for individuals in vulnerable situations. Although the bill has faced legislative delays, the organization continues to push for its approval (Chamber of Deputies, 2021).

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Figure XI: Menstrual Health Guide. Source: (Mieres Gonzalez, et al. 2024)

PARTICIPATION

Participation is a cornerstone of effective MHM. Inclusive decision-making ensures that policies and programs reflect the diverse needs of those who menstruate - particularly girls, Indigenous women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. According to international human rights law, including Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the CRC, individuals have the right to participate in public affairs affecting their lives. This extends to health, education, and sanitation services related to menstruation.

Involving communities in the design, implementation, and monitoring of MHM policies helps dismantle stigma, fosters culturally appropriate solutions, and enhances accountability. In Latin America, where menstrual taboos persist and infrastructure is often inadequate, meaningful participation ensures that interventions are not only effective but equitable. Empowering those affected to speak and lead is essential for sustainable and rights-based menstrual health progress.

While there are progressive measures to address MHM in many countries, representing significant advancements in menstrual health policies, they do not appear to include formal mechanisms for involving women in the decision-making processes concerning MHM specifically. The development and implementation of these policies have been primarily government-led, with limited documented engagement of women's groups or civil society organizations in participatory roles.

By promoting the presence of women in public decision making roles, issues such as menstrual hygiene are far more likely to be included in the public policy agenda. It also becomes more likely that women will lead the design and implementation of menstrual hygiene policies and programs - ensuring that they receive appropriate resources and attention. Importantly, their leadership brings an intersectional perspective that incorporates considerations like those outlined in this report.

The following example from Mexico outlines their general policy for including women in public-decision-making roles, and although not specific to MHM, can be helpful.

MEXICO

Legal Example in Mexico: The Observatorio de Participación Política de las Mujeres en México (Observatory of Women's Political Participation in Mexico)

This collaborative initiative is aimed at enhancing women's involvement in public decision-making roles across the country, established through the coordinated efforts of the Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres, the Instituto Nacional Electoral, and the Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación. It works to ensure gender parity in political participation by monitoring progress, advocating for policy changes, and promoting best practices.

One of the primary functions of the Observatory is to promote and facilitate women's entry into political and leadership roles. By addressing gender gaps in decision-making positions, it seeks to achieve substantive equality between men and women in Mexico's political landscape. Additionally, it systematically tracks and evaluates the progress of women's political participation, collecting data to identify both achievements and ongoing challenges

The Observatory also focuses on increasing the visibility of women's political participation by sharing best practices and successful case studies. It disseminates information to encourage greater involvement and inspire more women to engage in politics. Furthermore, the initiative aligns with international commitments to gender equality, working to implement global recommendations and frameworks that support women's political empowerment.

Through strategic alliances and advocacy efforts, the Observatory has contributed to significant advancements. One of its major achievements was seen in the 2018 elections, where women achieved near parity in Mexico's Congress, with 49.2% representation in the Chamber of Deputies and 51% in the Senate. These milestones highlight the success of coordinated efforts in fostering a more inclusive and equitable political environment for women in Mexico (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres et al, n.d.).

LOCAL ACTIONS

The Mexico WASH Citizen Science Project, a collaboration between the Stockholm Environment Institute and the Mexican civil society organization El Caracol, engaged individuals experiencing homelessness in Mexico City to co-create a citizen science initiative. This project aimed to comprehensively understand and address the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs of marginalized communities, with a particular focus on the unique challenges women face in managing menstrual hygiene in unsanitary and unsafe environments.

While the project broadly focused on individuals experiencing homelessness, it recognized the disproportionate impact of inadequate WASH facilities on women and girls, particularly regarding MHM. Women experiencing homelessness often struggle to access clean water, safe and private toilets, and menstrual products, which severely affects their dignity, health, and overall well-being.

The project's participatory approach ensured that women's specific needs - including access to menstrual products, private washing facilities, and disposal methods for sanitary materials - were addressed. Discussions around stigma, safety concerns, and the lack of menstrual hygiene education were also incorporated into the research, providing a more gender-sensitive perspective on WASH challenges.

Hygiene was a core focus of the project, particularly in identifying gaps in menstrual hygiene services. By involving community members - especially women - in mapping and evaluating WASH facilities, the project highlighted critical issues such as the lack of menstrual-friendly restrooms, limited access to soap and water, and the absence of disposal bins for sanitary products.

The citizen science approach ensured that the data collected reflected real-life experiences, offering valuable insights to advocate for policy improvements and resource allocation for menstrual hygiene needs. The project also sought to challenge taboos surrounding menstruation, fostering an open dialogue on the importance of inclusive and gender-sensitive WASH policies.

Through this inclusive methodology, the project not only gathered crucial data to inform policy but also empowered women to voice their needs regarding MHM. By fostering a sense of ownership and advocacy, the initiative helped drive more gender-equitable solutions to improve public health, dignity, and hygiene access for women experiencing homelessness (Pateman, et al. 2024).

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND TRANSPARENCY

Menstrual literacy and knowledge are fundamental for enabling informed decision-making - both for those who experience menstruation and for those responsible for ensuring that workplaces, schools, and public spaces provide safe and dignified sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Under international human rights law, everyone has the right to seek, receive, and impart information about menstrual hygiene. It is the responsibility of states to ensure that this information is accessible to all, reaching individuals and communities with clear, inclusive, and practical guidance.

Accessibility of information refers to how data is communicated - ensuring that people can receive it in their own language, that it is shared in a way that is free from discrimination or stigma, and that individuals feel safe and comfortable engaging with it. The issue of timeliness is crucial with reference to MHM as young girls need to know this information before their first periods.

Information must be made available in formats that are easy to access, understand, and use by all, including those with visual or hearing disabilities (for example) or limited literacy.

Certain members of society, particularly those from marginalised groups, may require tailored approaches to ensure MHM information is communicated in ways that are culturally appropriate, accessible, and respectful of their specific needs and preferences.

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SPAIN

Legal Example in Spain: Organic Law 1/2023 of 28 February amending Organic Law 2/2010 of 3 March on sexual and reproductive health and the voluntary interruption of pregnancy (Sexual Health Law)

Spain introduced significant legislative measures concerning MHM through reforms to its sexual and reproductive health laws via Organic Law 1/2023. It reformed its sexual and reproductive health laws to incorporate comprehensive menstrual education into the national curriculum (Article 10). This reform aims to provide students with accurate information about menstrual hygiene, thereby reducing stigma and promoting informed practices.

This article mandates that educational administrations ensure the inclusion of comprehensive menstrual health education within the affective-sexual education framework across various educational stages. The approach must incorporate gender perspective, intersectionality, and human rights, with particular attention to dispelling myths, prejudices, and gender stereotypes that contribute to menstrual stigma.

LOCAL ACTIONS

In Spain, local communities are increasingly recognizing the importance of menstrual hygiene education in schools. For instance, the organization Zero Waste Europe has implemented educational programs in primary and high schools aimed at breaking taboos surrounding menstruation. These programs provide clear information about menstrual experiences and products, empowering students who menstruate and raising awareness about the environmental, economic, social, and health impacts of conventional single-use menstrual products, as well as the benefits of reusables (Guardiola & Capello, 2022).

Significant progress is being made in Spain - particularly in the Catalonia region - toward achieving menstrual equity and sustainability, largely thanks to the New Period project and campaign led by Rezerø, a member organization committed to waste reduction and social change, as also reported by Zero Waste Europe.

The New Period campaign operates at both individual and governmental levels. It delivers menstrual education in primary and secondary schools, aiming to break taboos, share accurate information about menstruation and products, and empower those who menstruate. The campaign also raises awareness about the environmental, economic, social, and health impacts of single-use menstrual products, while promoting sustainable alternatives. To increase access, it maintains a directory of local and eco-friendly reusable product brands. Although not stated directly in this article, it is made clear that Zero Waste and its partners organized online webinars and in-person workshops with gynaecologists and other experts to explain the benefits and usage of reusable products. It is well established that the use of water for washing the products is absolutely essential to avoid health issues (Guardiola & Capello, 2022).

Rezerø also advocates for public policies that support safe, reusable menstrual products, addressing the fact that 4 in 10 women in Spain cannot afford their preferred product. Safe, in this case, refers to products that can be used hygienically, and that have access to clean water for washing products and hands. In collaboration with the Catalan Government's Department of Feminism and Equality, this organisation has contributed to the development of a Menstrual Equity Plan - part of the region's broader strategy on sexual and reproductive rights. This includes initiatives to expand access to reusable menstrual products and to promote menstrual education across the population (Rezerø, n.d., a).

At the local level, Rezerø also partners with municipalities in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands to provide menstrual health training for public officials, lead awareness campaigns, and pilot initiatives such as the first "period-friendly" toilet network in Barcelona, which now features nearly 100 designated facilities (Rezerø, n.d., b).

ACCOUNTABILITY

Fulfilling human rights obligations related to menstrual hygiene requires responsive and accountable institutions, with clearly defined responsibilities and effective coordination across all relevant stakeholders. States have a duty to uphold these obligations and must also ensure that non-state actors comply with the same standards of respect, protection, and fulfilment.

Furthermore, strong monitoring mechanisms are essential to track progress and address gaps in implementation. Equally important is the availability of effective legal and non-legal remedies, so individuals can protect and assert their rights. Menstrual hygiene must be fully recognized and enforced as a fundamental human right, with mechanisms in place to guarantee accountability and redress where rights are violated.

The human rights concepts of progressive realization and non-regression constitute an essential framework for monitoring the progress of States' commitments, consolidating the achievements made. Progressive realization compels governments to take measures, making the most of available resources, to gradually improve access to rights over time. For its part, non-regression prevents these advances from being weakened without adequate justification. Together, these principles form a robust system for protecting achieved gains, ensuring sustained progress, and preventing setbacks.

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BRAZIL

Legal Example from Brazil: The Regulatory Impact Analysis Report for menstrual health outlines how the Law integrates multiple federal entities - health, education, social assistance, and public security - into collective implementation and oversight. It explicitly mandates educational campaigns about menstrual health and authorizes budget allocation by educational managers (Ministerio de Saúde, 2022).

Anyone facing menstrual health challenges or experiencing violations of menstrual dignity can access support and file complaints through the following channels:

- **Menstrual Dignity Violations:** Report concerns or find information at www.gov.br/mulheres or www.canalajuda.org.br.
- **Legal Support:** Assistance is available through local Public Defender or Prosecutor's Offices. Additional resources can be found at <https://www.unicef.org/brazil/dignidade-menstrual>.

These resources are in place to uphold the rights, health, and dignity of those affected.

LOCAL ACTIONS

In Brazil, addressing menstrual hygiene challenges is integral to upholding women's health and dignity. While there isn't a specific national grievance program exclusively for menstrual hygiene issues, several channels are available for women to seek assistance and report related concerns:

- **Ligue 180:** This is a nationwide hotline dedicated to supporting women facing violence or rights violations, including issues related to menstrual health. By dialling 180, women can access information and report grievances pertaining to menstrual dignity.
- **Human Rights Hotline (Dial 100):** Managed by the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights, this service allows individuals to report human rights violations, encompassing health-related grievances. By dialling 100, women can voice concerns about inadequate access to menstrual hygiene products or facilities.
- The Ministry of Health provides various contact channels for the public to communicate health-related issues, including those concerning menstrual hygiene. Information on these channels can be found on the official Ministry of Health website, www.gov.br/saude.

SPAIN

Legal Example from Spain: National Surveys for monitoring access to MHM for different groups of menstruating people, including disaggregation by age, income, location, education or occupation.

Although there is no known national survey specifically dedicated to monitoring access to menstrual products in such detail, several government bodies and non-profit organizations in Spain regularly collect data on broader aspects of women's sexual and reproductive health, which may include references to menstruation and MHM.

LOCAL ACTIONS

Key institutions involved in this work include the Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Sanidad), the Institute for Women (Instituto de la Mujer), and the Spanish Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (Sociedad Española de Ginecología y Obstetricia).

While these surveys may not provide disaggregated data focused solely on menstrual hygiene, they offer valuable insights that can inform menstrual health policies and highlight areas where more targeted data collection is needed. For example, a survey in BMC Women's Health (Sánchez López, S, 2023) found that many individuals did not receive sufficient information about how to physically manage menstruation before their first period, and that negative emotions like shame, worry, and fear were commonly experienced.

Accurate data and information gender-related continues to be very scarce and can be an important challenge to the elaboration of adequate public policies.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability in MHM is essential for protecting both human health and the environment. Every year, billions of single-use menstrual products are discarded, contributing to environmental pollution and posing health risks due to chemical exposure. Promoting sustainable alternatives - such as menstrual cups, reusable pads, and period underwear - not only reduces waste but also ensures long-term affordability and dignity for those who menstruate.

SDG Targets 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 focus on the conservation and protection of water resources, maintaining the natural systems that regulate, replenish, and ensure the quality and quantity of freshwater. Protection of freshwater systems is only achieved if waste is treated properly, and it is not able to contaminate the soil and aquifers below.

International human rights law, including the right to health and the right to a healthy environment, supports the shift toward sustainable menstrual hygiene. States have a duty to ensure access to safe, effective, and environmentally friendly menstrual products while promoting public education on their use.

Human rights obligations related to menstrual hygiene must be fulfilled in a sustainable manner, ensuring long-term economic, environmental, and social viability. This approach guarantees that future generations will have equal access to these rights without compromising resources or opportunities.

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COLOMBIA

Legal Example from Colombia: The Intersectoral Strategy for the Promotion of Menstrual Health and Care, Section 5.3.2.3. Institutional management activities.

The Intersectoral Strategy for the Promotion of Menstrual Health and Care in Colombia emphasizes sustainable policies within its Section 5.3.2.3: Institutional Management Activities. This section outlines the responsibilities of various institutions in implementing and promoting menstrual hygiene initiatives. By assigning clear roles and fostering collaboration among sectors such as health, education, and environmental agencies, the strategy ensures a coordinated approach to menstrual hygiene. This intersectoral collaboration is crucial for developing sustainable policies that address the multifaceted aspects of sustainable menstrual health, including education, access to reusable products, handwashing with clean water, and environmental considerations related to waste (Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social, 2023).

The strategy advocates for the integration of menstrual health into existing public health and education programs, promoting the use of environmentally friendly menstrual products, and ensuring proper waste management systems. These measures contribute to the sustainability of menstrual health initiatives by reducing environmental impact and promoting the well-being of individuals who menstruate.

By embedding menstrual health into institutional frameworks and promoting eco-friendly practices, Colombia's strategy aligns with broader SDGs, ensuring that menstrual health initiatives are effective, inclusive, and environmentally responsible.

LOCAL ACTIONS

Colombia has implemented several sustainable practices to address the disposal of menstrual hygiene products, aiming to reduce environmental impact and promote public health.

Promotion of Reusable Menstrual Products

To minimize waste from disposable menstrual products, Colombia has initiated programs promoting the use of reusable options such as menstrual cups and cloth pads. For instance, workshops organized by Sanitation for Millions, in Colombia have introduced female waste pickers, migrants, and their daughters to reusable menstrual products. These sessions not only educate participants on sustainable MHM but also address societal and cultural barriers to accessing menstrual supplies. The adoption of reusable products offers environmental benefits by reducing waste and provides a cost-effective alternative to disposables (Sanitation for Millions, 2023).

Integration of Menstrual Health into Waste Management Programs

Colombia's waste management initiatives are increasingly incorporating menstrual health considerations. By aligning MHM with waste disposal infrastructure, the country aims to enhance sustainability. This integrated approach ensures that menstrual waste is handled appropriately, reducing environmental contamination and promoting public health.

To address the waste management challenges associated with menstrual hygiene in migratory contexts, UNICEF and its partners have implemented "Hygiene Corners" in countries like Honduras, Colombia, and Mexico. These spaces allow for the personalized



Figure XII: Awareness session on proper hand washing in early childhood centres. Source: (Sanitation for Millions, n.d.)

distribution of hygiene supplies (dignity kits) alongside water and handwashing facilities for sanitation hygiene improving access to WASH and health, while also reducing the environmental impact of discarded items from traditional hygiene kits. This approach aligns with the humanitarian principle of ‘do no harm’ by minimizing waste accumulation along migratory routes and promoting sustainable practices. It is important to note that the sustainable supply of reusable products is only made possible with a secure supply of clean water (UNICEF, n.d.).

Educational Initiatives on Sustainable Menstrual Practices

Grassroots organizations in Colombia are actively working to provide resources and education on sustainable menstrual practices. These initiatives aim to address economic barriers that prevent some women from accessing menstrual hygiene products, promoting alternatives that are both affordable and environmentally friendly.

Through these multifaceted efforts, Colombia is advancing sustainable practices in the disposal and management of menstrual hygiene products, reflecting a commitment to environmental stewardship and women’s health.



5

**THE WIDER
ISSUE OF
MENSTRUAL
HEALTH**



■ THE WIDER ISSUE OF MENSTRUAL HEALTH

In this paper, we have dealt with menstrual hygiene issues related to the provision of improved water and sanitation, and the management of waste resulting from menstrual hygiene. It cannot be discussed without reference to the wider issues of menstrual health and the cultural taboos surrounding this issue, which by necessity have been included to provide a fuller understanding of the general situation.

Menstrual health covers the whole picture of menstrual hygiene plus women's health and well-being. While good health is seen as an outcome of good menstrual hygiene, there are also a variety of female reproductive medical health issues that are associated with the monthly cycle, and which cannot be separated from hygiene, for example pain management connected with a variety of potential causes. This is a wider issue, and not covered in this paper, but it is worth mentioning in brief, as an understanding of these issues is critical to management of women's ability to function in a sensitive manner.

The provision of period products, other than reusable ones, has also not been covered fully in this paper, other than mention from the angle of sustainability and waste management. Affordable products, that are also responsibly disposed of, and/or reusable, are part of the wider issues relating to overcoming period poverty.

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Figure XIII: Umamama woman from Bolivia by a stream. Source: IDB, 2023.

5

CONCLUSIONS



■ CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has demonstrated that menstrual hygiene is not simply a matter of health or sanitation, but a cross-cutting human rights issue central to gender equality, education, dignity, public participation and self-care. Progress is being made in Latin America and in Spain, but it is not consistent. Countries like Colombia, Brazil, Chile and Mexico have begun to adopt policies recognising the need for menstrual equity. Spain has recently introduced progressive policies, particularly in the area of reusable products to increase equity and reduce environmental impact in Catalonia. However, major challenges remain - particularly in affordability, infrastructure, social stigma, and environmental sustainability.

An additional consideration is the situation of rural water and sanitation systems, as well as urban areas shaped by rural-to-urban migration processes. In these contexts, ensuring the cultural relevance of menstrual health policies and interventions is crucial to address diverse beliefs, practices, and access conditions across territories.

Despite increased regional attention, many laws and policies still treat menstruation as a hygiene concern rather than a broader issue of health and rights. There is a pressing need to move beyond token measures - such as product giveaways - and toward holistic approaches that integrate menstrual hygiene into water, sanitation, education, and healthcare systems.

The evidence presented shows that effective MHM must be guided by international human rights principles. Access, affordability, quality, acceptability, and sustainability must all be embedded into national policy frameworks. The widespread use of disposable products also poses a serious environmental challenge, which few governments have addressed comprehensively.

These principles apply to any water and sanitation infrastructure project that aims to provide an inclusive and sustainable solution. Failure to consider MHM considerations will jeopardize the acceptability and efficiency of projects. If women and disabled people are not considered thoughtfully into the design, then there are likely to be issues related to their ability to use the facilities, undermining the purpose of the project, and/or creating health, environmental impacts and resulting in a lack of equity.

This is clearly evident in the design of disposal facilities for sanitary towels or other disposable menstrual products, leading to solid waste issues from blocked toilets and rural pits filling quickly.

The safety and hygienic quality of the facilities is important to enable menstruating people, adolescents and girls to feel comfortable in using them. Improved MHM is not only important from a health perspective, but also to protect the psychosocial wellbeing of women and girls and to reduce levels of stress, fear and shame and self-exclusion from school.

And finally, the access to adequate WASH facilities for MHM is critical for all users at all times, whether at home, school, work or out in the community. It is not right to exclude any person from dignified sanitation, whatever their circumstances, including MHM.

■ KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Legal Recognition of Menstrual Health as a Human Right:

Governments must enact legislation that recognises menstrual health and hygiene as fundamental human rights, linked to the rights to water and sanitation. This will ensure access to sufficient, clean and affordable water and adequate sanitation services. It will also support comprehensive health benefits related to physical, mental and social well-being, and to education, supporting safe, accessible and inclusive educational establishments that allow for proper MHM. The recognition of this integration strengthens a holistic approach to dignity, equity and empowerment, essential for the well-being, of women, girls and adolescents.

2. Improved Infrastructure for Water, Sanitation and Waste Management:

Investments should be prioritised in safe, gender-sensitive water and sanitation facilities, with appropriate disposal systems for menstrual waste, especially in public bathrooms, schools, workplaces, and rural areas. Operators and other key actors in the water, sanitation and solid waste sector should integrate MHM consideration and design into infrastructure projects and maintenance. To this end, more protocols and how-to guidelines for MHM implementations should be readily available, with information and data relevant to the region.

3. Access to Affordable and Sustainable Products:

Reusable products should be promoted through public awareness and supported with proper infrastructure for washing and drying. Without this emphasis on hygiene, reusable products become disposable or unhygienic, therefore useless. Public programmes therefore should ensure that menstrual products are sustainable, affordable, and free where necessary.

4. Environmental Considerations:

Countries must regulate the environmental impact of menstrual products by supporting innovation in biodegradable alternatives, incentivising sustainable production, and integrating menstrual waste into broader waste management systems. While reusable products can be a good solution in some situations, there are many women who will continue to use disposable products through necessity or preference, highlighting the need to invest in made-for-task disposal systems in public lavatories. The recognition that environmental waste disposal will also protect water resources by reducing contamination (SDG 6) is also an important factor in relation to the security of water resources in future.

5. Accountability and Monitoring:

Governments and institutions should implement mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, including the collection of disaggregated data, to track progress and address gaps in MHM and access to WASH for supporting this. Complaint and redress systems must also be accessible to individuals who consider that they are not able to access the water and sanitation services that they require.

6. Inclusive Policy Frameworks:

National and local governments must adopt cross-sectoral menstrual health strategies that address the needs of all individuals who menstruate - including girls, women, transgender, and non-binary people - throughout their lives. To achieve this outcome, the provision of improved sanitation and clean and safe water for handwashing and hygiene are an essential element in all situations.

7. Comprehensive Menstrual Education:

Menstrual hygiene should be embedded in school curricula, public health campaigns, and community training - delivered in culturally appropriate and inclusive ways that challenge stigma and taboos.

8. Participation of Vulnerable Populations:

The design and delivery of menstrual health policies must involve the meaningful participation of different communities - especially mothers, Indigenous women, migrant women, people with disabilities, and those living in poverty or rural areas.

By treating MHM and access to water and sanitation in relation to MHM not as a side issue but as a central component of programmes and projects related to WASH, governments in Latin America and the Caribbean can make significant strides in creating more opportunities to all, achieving gender equality, and environmental sustainability.

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