

# Empowering change: Sustainable menstrual solutions to end period poverty

A recent article titled “*An Epidemiological Study of Period Poverty among Females of Reproductive Age Group in Lucknow (U.P.)*”<sup>[1]</sup> revealed an alarming prevalence of period poverty and discussed the factors causing it. Building on this discussion, we aim to discuss the government initiatives and provide insight into the ways to deal with period poverty.

Period poverty—a critical issue affecting millions of women and girls globally—restricts access to affordable menstrual products, hygienic facilities, and education, leading to significant socio-economic and health challenges. Sustainable menstrual products, such as menstrual cups, reusable cloth pads, and period panties, present an innovative and pragmatic solution to mitigate these burdens. These products, designed for extended use, drastically reduce the financial strain associated with traditional disposable products. For example, menstrual cups crafted from medical-grade silicone can last up to a decade with proper maintenance, replacing the need for hundreds of tampons or pads over their lifespan. This longevity translates into substantial economic savings for users, particularly in low-income regions where the cost of disposable menstrual products can consume a significant portion of monthly income. Additionally, reusable cloth pads and period panties offer similar financial relief by minimizing recurring costs and providing durable, comfortable, and sustainable alternatives to single-use products.<sup>[2]</sup>

Beyond the economic benefits, sustainable menstrual products significantly mitigate environmental impact and enhance menstrual health. Traditional disposable menstrual products contribute to substantial environmental waste, with estimates suggesting that a single woman may use approximately 11,000 disposable products in her lifetime. Sustainable alternatives, such as menstrual cups and reusable pads, reduce this waste, promoting environmental conservation. Furthermore, these products often lack the chemicals and fragrances found in many disposable options, reducing the risk of allergic reactions and irritations. The adoption of sustainable menstrual products also promotes better menstrual hygiene practices through regular cleaning routines, further enhancing health outcomes. Educational initiatives accompanying the distribution of these products, like those conducted by Ujaas in India, empower women and girls by providing comprehensive knowledge on menstrual health and sustainable practices, fostering confidence and reducing societal

stigma surrounding menstruation.<sup>[3]</sup> However, overcoming barriers such as the initial cost and cultural acceptance requires targeted subsidies, community programs, and robust educational campaigns to ensure that these sustainable solutions are accessible and embraced universally.

## Government and Corporate Initiatives

The Indian government has launched several initiatives to improve menstrual hygiene, including the Shuchi Scheme, the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme, and the SABLA program by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Additionally, the National Rural Livelihood Mission supports self-help groups and small manufacturers to produce affordable sanitary pads. Incorporating menstrual hygiene management into broader initiatives, the Swachh Bharat Mission aims to improve sanitation infrastructure. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation’s Guidelines further emphasize the importance of safe and effective menstrual hygiene practices. Despite these efforts, the affordability of menstrual products remains inadequately addressed. Programs like Whisper’s #KeepGirlsInSchool campaign and UNICEF’s #RedDotChallenge have focused on raising awareness and changing behaviours, but they have not sufficiently tackled the economic barriers preventing many women from accessing menstrual products.<sup>[4]</sup>

To effectively combat period poverty, the Indian government should consider adopting approaches similar to Scotland’s, where menstrual products are made freely available or offered at substantial discounts.<sup>[5]</sup> Moreover, addressing this issue goes beyond governmental actions; it requires societal, community, and familial interventions. Menstrual health should be recognized as a social issue, necessitating community involvement and support to eliminate stigmas and ensure sustainable solutions. Collaborative efforts from governments, NGOs, and communities are vital in driving change and making sustainable menstrual products accessible to all, ultimately promoting menstrual equity and empowering women and girls worldwide.

## Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

**Shweta Gangurde,  
Divya Madamanchi**

*Department of Community Medicine, Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical college, Hospital and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Pimpri, Pune, Maharashtra, India*

**Address for correspondence:** Dr. Divya Madamanchi,  
Department of Community Medicine, Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical  
College, Hospital and Research Centre, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth,  
Pimpri, Pune, Maharashtra, India.  
E-mail: divyamadamanchi@gmail.com

## References


1. Singh S, Kunwar R, Sengar M, Gupta A. An epidemiological study of period poverty among females of reproductive age group in Lucknow (U.P.). *J Family Med Prim Care* 2023;12:2602-7.
2. Foundation BS. Why period poverty in India needs a proper discussion?. 2023. Available from: <https://www.smilefoundationindia.org/blog/why-period-poverty-in-india-needs-a-proper-discussion/>. [Last accessed on 2024 May 30].
3. Period Poverty in India. Understanding the Issue and Solutions. 2024. Available from: <https://www.ujaas.in/blogs/period-poverty-in-india-understanding-the-issue-solutions>. [Last accessed on 2024 May 30].
4. Pavna: A unique community-based menstrual hygiene programme. Available from: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/pavna-a-unique-community-based-menstrual-hygiene-programme>. [Last accessed on 2024 May 30].
5. Diamond C. Period poverty: Scotland first in world to make period products free. *BBC News*; 2020. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-51629880>.

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

**Received:** 31-05-2024

**Accepted:** 02-08-2024

**Published:** 18-11-2024

Access this article online	
<b>Quick Response Code:</b> 	<b>Website:</b> <a href="http://journals.lww.com/JFMPC">http://journals.lww.com/JFMPC</a>
	<b>DOI:</b> 10.4103/jfmpe.jfmpe_944_24

**How to cite this article:** Gangurde S, Madamanchi D. Empowering change: Sustainable menstrual solutions to end period poverty. *J Family Med Prim Care* 2024;13:5444-5.

© 2024 Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care | Published by Wolters Kluwer - Medknow