

# Practices and Intervention on Dignified Menstruation in Africa<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction:

Menstruation is a natural fact of life and a monthly occurrence for the 1.8 billion girls, women, transmen and non-binary persons of reproductive age. Yet millions of menstruators across the world are denied the right to manage their monthly menstrual cycle in a dignified, healthy way.<sup>2</sup>

Menstruation remained heavily undermined and subject of silence till 2014 in development/human right discourse globally. In October 2, 2014, the UN resolution A/HRC/RES/27/7 not only explicitly used the word menstruation associated with human right to safe drinking water and sanitation but also expressed concerned menstrual hygiene management including stigma and its reversed impact on gender equality and human rights of girls and women.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding Menstrual Hygiene Health within the context of human rights requires a holistic approach to women's and girls' human rights. The biological fact of menstruation, the necessity of managing menstruation, and society's response to menstruation is linked with women's and girls' human rights and gender equality.<sup>4</sup>

Even after getting space in Human Right Council in 2014, menstruation is confined with hygiene which positively negative notion that reinforces the menstrual blood as dirty. Most of the funds are limited towards hygiene or products like menstrual blood are crisis for 21 century though hygiene/products are an important element of dignified menstruation.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/wash/files/UNICEF-Guidance-menstrual-health-hygiene-2019.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Concept-Note\\_May-2020\\_15-Nov-2019-converted.pdf](https://dignifiedmenstruation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Concept-Note_May-2020_15-Nov-2019-converted.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/wash/files/UNICEF-Guidance-menstrual-health-hygiene-2019.pdf>

Dignified Menstruation, is simply the state of free from any kinds of abuses, stigma, discriminations, violence associated with menstruation. Menstruation defined as three 'P' ; principally human rights concern, practically the life long process and psychologically reconstruction of power.<sup>5</sup>

Africa has been organizing several programs on menstruation. Are these programs compatible with the needs of the menstruators? This review just an attempt to understand the menstrual practices and programs in Africa so far.

## **2. Objectives:**

The objectives of this study are:

- To understand perceptions of people and cultural and traditional beliefs on menstruation
- To explore the initiatives and works on menstruation at Africa

## **3. Rational of the study:**

Menstruation, despite, having an imperative role in the existence of humans on the earth, millions of people who menstruate undergo disguised misogyny during their periods. It is often regarded as a taboo covered with silence and myths. Menstrual blood has been considered as impure or unclean. Many people around the globe on their menstrual days are bounded with religious and cultural beliefs violating their human rights to live a non-discriminated dignified life. There are several disbeliefs, cultural and traditional constriction. There are few networks, organizations, individuals who have been working and advocating on menstruation. It has been found that most of the funds on menstruation go to Africa. This study was conducted to find out types of constraints people are facing, initiatives taken to alleviate those, know if those projects, research and initiatives are only limited to hygiene and products.

## **4. Methodology:**

The study is a desk review search report. Keywords used for searching information were: menstruation taboos, menstruation practices, menstruation tradition and cultural belief, menstrual hygiene management. The research was conducted from May 1, 2020- May 18, 2020. The total number of searches made was 208. Secondary source of information such as journals, articles, books, newspaper, organizations report, blog were used to collect the necessary data.

## **5. Key Findings:**

### **5.1 . Problems and Cultural and Traditional Beliefs/Constraints:**

The countrywide details are mentioned in Annex. Here, the key issues highlights. Restrictions grouped in to touch, eat and mobility though there are many overlapping and interconnected.

#### **Restriction on Eat**

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<sup>5</sup> [avis.wvu.edu/faculty-staff/directory/robert-burns](http://avis.wvu.edu/faculty-staff/directory/robert-burns)

- Restriction from talking and discussion about menstruation

### **Restriction on Touch/Use**

- Restriction from cooking (Burundi people refuse to eat cassava bread, a traditional food, if it has been prepared by a woman on her period, Egypt, Eswatini)
- Restriction from using menstrual products (such as Sierra Leone myths that sanitary pads can cause infertility revolves)
- Restriction to bathing and washing clothes (Burundi, Nigeria, Eritrea, South Sudan)
- Restriction from grooming self and others such as a woman in periods of menstruation should not braid her sister
- Restriction from nature and agricultural related activities such as in Niger it is believed a woman in periods of menstruation touches the seeds, the harvest will not be abundant, touching water, plants.

### **Restrictions on Mobility or Participation**

- Isolation (staying away from people or being unseen)
- Restriction from visiting certain section of village and/or streams (communal water pump or toilet in Congo, women on her menstruation are not allowed to cross river in Ghana)
- Restriction from cultural and tradition practices (entering cultural sites such as mosque or church and traditional gathering, restriction from fasting during Ramadan, restriction to praying)
- Restriction from socializing, sleeping in same room with their husband, and isolated
- Restriction Animal (In Western parts of the Ugandan country, cattle owners do not let menstruating women attend to their cows for fear that the milk may turn bloody)

In addition, African menstruators experienced the issues related with lack of proper menstrual products, proper disposal area, separate bathrooms, fear of leakage, bad odor, calling names, humiliation from fellow students, girls in Africa miss school during menstruation. UNICEF has estimated that roughly 1 in 10 girls in Africa miss school because of their periods each year. 6

## **5.2. Initiative/Programs on Menstruation:**

### **Related with products and Awareness Raising**

- Work on menstrual products such as distribution of menstrual products such as tampons, menstrual cups, pads to school children and marginalized communities, making of reusable menstrual products from local products, teaching to make menstrual products to local women

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/menstrual-hygiene-day-education/>

- Campaign and advocacy on menstruation such as petition to reduce tax, menstrual leave for working women, girl education, social media campaign: Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritius, South Africa, Senegal
- Menstruation Hygiene Management Education/ Initiatives: Open dialogue or workshop on menstruation, formation of school club, volunteer teaching about menstruation to school children both boys and girls
- Construction of separate or period friendly toilet
- Research and case studies by individual researcher and Non- profit organizations on women' knowledge and understanding on menstruation, menstrual hygiene management, role of menstrual hygiene interventions in reducing absenteeism.
- African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management to share experiences and evidence, and coordinate efforts to address MHM issues in Africa. The vision of the coalition is that by 2030, all women, girls, and people who menstruate are empowered to address the MHM challenges from menarche to menopause in development and humanitarian settings.<sup>7</sup>

### **Related with dismantle of rumors, mal practices**

The total 208 documents do not reflect the range of rumor, stigma, mis practices regarding menstruation. In general, the entire focus on menstrual hygiene, products and education programs around it. In Kenya, 14 years girl committed suicide due to harassed her by teacher and boys against her first menstruation at school.<sup>8</sup> This is very perfect example of how much silence and ignorance prevail in community as silent war. Albeit, in Kenya, government has been distributing the sanitary pads in school since 2017. Therefore, the menstrual talk, dignity first (the slogan of Dignified Menstruation for 2020) is urgent and crucial.

The most of the programs focused on blanket way directly products, hygiene

### **Menstrual Intervention amidst COVID-19:**

Daniel Karanja, Guest blogger at IRC wash suggest “interventions for increased MHM awareness that interface poverty, gender and education need to move beyond individual social variables and determinants of good health to developing culturally sensitive responses that factor dynamism, diversities and complexities within communities including the ability to cope during emergencies.”<sup>9</sup>. Since most of the girls on Africa rely on free pads to manage their period, the shutdown of schools due to outbreak of Corona Virus have left them with no access to menstrual products. As a result, they will be using old tradition method i.e. use of rugs, newspaper, sand,

<sup>7</sup> <https://rubycup.com/blogs/news/get-to-know-the-african-coalition-for-menstrual-health-management>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/sep/13/kenyan-schoolgirl-14-kills-herself-after-alleged-period-shaming-by-teacher>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ircwash.org/blog/keep-focus-menstrual-hygiene-management-also-during-covid-](https://www.ircwash.org/blog/keep-focus-menstrual-hygiene-management-also-during-covid-19)

dirty clothes to manage their period. The pandemic restricting them to stay inside home also increase the risk of domestic violence and their access to social networks and protection services.

### **Discussions:**

African community is not exceptional regarding the stigma, taboos, restrictions during menstruation. They have varieties of restrictions related with touch, eat, mobility and participation. These are the forms of violation of human rights to live with dignity and respect. However, most of the activities are focused on sanitary products such as distribution of pads, making of pads, building toilets. Few initiatives or activities have been undertaken regarding imparting knowledge about menstruation to the school children and teachers. All these are aiding to live the life of young girls and women more safely, however, still menstruating group in Africa undergoes constant turmoil of discrimination and restrictions which comes with menstruation. Though, there is no enough evidence, it is concluded that increment of gender violence and other difficulties among menstruators ensures lack of dignity surrounding menstruation due to pandemic COVID-19. There still exist significant gaps where people openly discuss about menstruation amongst each other without getting hesitant and menstruating people are restrained to perform their basic.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions:**

Menstruation is a natural and essential phenomenon to continue the existence of human life on the earth. People who menstruate should be treated with equal dignity and respect like other. Albeit, in many countries around the globe menstruation is regarded as dirty, impure and contaminated. Similar is the case in the continent Africa where menstruation is regarded as a taboo. As a result, people who menstruate are surrounded with numerous restrictions and myths making their life worst to live in those days. Another problem that is prevalent is the accessibility to sanitary products and proper menstrual hygiene management at school such as separate toilets, disposal bins; this has resulted in increased of absenteeism. Impressive number of initiatives and program on menstrual hygiene management has been done. However, most are limited to sanitary products followed by teaching school children, construction of toilets. So, to alleviate the problem clouded with menstruation discussion and dialogue on dignified menstruation should be undertaken<sup>10</sup>. Menstruators during their period should be treated as normal without imposing any cultural or traditional barrier or any form of discrimination. If any woman suffers from severe pain or any symptoms that considered illness and deserved treatment without compromising any dignity due to menstruation.<sup>11</sup> Menstruators should be allowed to pursue their life with dignity.

### **Limitation of the study:**

The search study was performed based on the keywords mentioned on the methodology. Hence, it might not incorporate all the taboos and initiatives and works done on menstruation on the study area. Any additional updates on the document regarding the topical issue are highly appreciated.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://researchopenworld.com/missing-the-menstruation-amidst-covid-19/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2019/12/25/urgency-dignified-menstruation/>

## Annex:

Details about understanding and practices on menstruation of each African country are given below:

S.N.	Country	Understating, practices, menstruation	Remarks
1.	Algeria	Menstruation is regarded as a taboo topic in Islamic teachings since females are considered vulnerable, weakened, polluted and impure. Therefore, they are not allowed to pray, fast, read Quran or have intercourse because menstrual blood is 'najis': 'dirty' since Allah values people who are clean and pure. <sup>12</sup>	
2.	Angola	In Angola, a woman during menstruation is considered to be "impure and remains concealed from all eyes. She must be shut up for six days without being seen by anyone." These stigmas can keep women and girls from touching water or cooking, attending religious ceremonies or engaging in community activities, which leads to confidence issues and gender-based discrimination. <sup>13</sup>	
3.	Benin	No information found	
4.	Botswana	The older women around us would treat it as a secret, something to be spoken about with other women only. Women whisper about it and men distance themselves from it. We called it Aunty Flo or the visitor – anything other than what it actually was. In fact, to hear someone say the word "menstruation" could cause shudders of embarrassment. <sup>14</sup> Botswana parliament had backed a motion to provide free sanitary pads to girls in state and private schools. <sup>15</sup>	
5.	Burkina Faso	Very often, there is no communication between mothers and daughters about what is happening to the girls. This exacerbates the problems girls face if they are in public or outside of the home <sup>16</sup> Local organization <i>Actions pour les besoins des femmes</i> (Action for the needs of women) makes a new	

<sup>12</sup> <file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/293.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/period-poverty-in-angola-jennifer-philipp-tbs/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/05/menstruation-myth-why-are-african-women-still-paying-for-it/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.wellbeingwomen.org/report-from-the-frontline-bold-move-by-botswana-parliament>

<sup>16</sup> <https://wedc-knowledge.lboro.ac.uk/resources/conference/40/Kabore-2637.pdf>

		cotton pad with multiple advantages. They promote these pads throughout the region and their initiative has increasingly persuaded women to choose reusable pads instead of the single-use pads sold in the market. <sup>17</sup>	
6.	Burundi	In Burundi, menstruation is often discussed in secret, if at all. In some areas in Burundi, women are viewed as cursed when they are menstruating. Across the country, people refuse to eat cassava bread, a traditional food, if it has been prepared by a woman on her period. In the western region, adolescent girls are forbidden from bathing or washing clothes while menstruating. <sup>18</sup>	
7.	Cabo Verde	No information found	
8.	Cameroon	No information found	
9.	Central African Republic (CAR)	No information found	
10	Chad	Menstruation has always been a taboo subject in Chadian society. In Chad, eight out of ten students do not have access to water, sanitation and hygiene services, putting at risk more than 800,000 girls. To this is added the taboo of menstruation, as it continues to be defamed, discussed with hesitation and poorly known. <sup>19</sup> In Chad, as well as in many other countries around the world, <b>girls miss school during their menstrual cycle.</b> <sup>20</sup>	

<sup>17</sup> <https://wire.farmradio.fm/farmer-stories/burkina-faso-women-save-money-and-protect-the-environment-with-reusable-sanitary-pads/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://news.care.org/article/meet-the-burundian-nun-fighting-period-stigma/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://medium.com/@UNICEFChad/https-medium-com-unicefchad-menstruation-is-not-a-curse-411e8d45bcd5>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.laluzdelasninas.org/en/blog/on-menstrual-hygiene-day-refugee-girls-make-their-voices-heard-in-chad-for-their-right-to-education/>

11	Comoros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The girls didn't even know about the existence of Menstrual Hygiene pads, and so didn't know how to use them. SRHR still a taboo in Comoros, and as such, many young people do not have adequate access to information or knowledge sharing around SRHR issues, issues surrounding menstruation, etc<sup>21</sup></li> </ul>	
12	Congo, Democratic Republic of the	<p>In eastern Congo, though, the stigma is far more powerful. A menstruating girl does not go to the communal water pump or the communal toilets. She doesn't prepare food and often doesn't go to school. She doesn't pray with her family.</p> <p>Tradition says she is impure, someone to be kept at bay lest she contaminates water or a meal. Rags – and sometimes even straw – are used for sanitary protection. Urinary tract infections are commonplace.<sup>22</sup></p>	
13	Cote d'Ivoire	No information found	
14	Djibouti	<p>Djibouti School Hygiene and Sanitation Survey (SHSS 2009) is the first national-level school survey to be conducted in Djibouti</p> <p>“WASH in Schools” toolkit incorporates key messages into a set of teachers guidebooks, story cards, songs, word cards, posters, cartoon booklets and games<sup>23</sup></p>	<p>No clear mention about the menstruation practices. However, the practices female genital mutilation has caused problems during menstruation. As the blood is not evacuated fully leading to infections and infertility.<sup>24</sup></p>
15	Egypt		

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.sexrightsafrika.net/action/imara-holds-first-ever-educational-fair-in-comoros/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.huckmag.com/perspectives/activism-2/how-women-in-congo-are-beating-period-stigma/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://washinschoolsmapping.com/projects/djibouti.html>

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[https://books.google.com.np/books?id=CR\\_Ry83iEBsC&pg=PA8&lpg=PA8&dq=menstruation+in+Djibouti&source=bl&ots=2h12dQ6YcK&sig=ACfU3U0L\\_PSj1OHw\\_bUOHKOcl3AP4WsQgg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwicgP\\_rmp7pAhXYxDgGHeTDA88Q6AEwCHoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=menstruation%20in%20Djibouti&f=false](https://books.google.com.np/books?id=CR_Ry83iEBsC&pg=PA8&lpg=PA8&dq=menstruation+in+Djibouti&source=bl&ots=2h12dQ6YcK&sig=ACfU3U0L_PSj1OHw_bUOHKOcl3AP4WsQgg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwicgP_rmp7pAhXYxDgGHeTDA88Q6AEwCHoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=menstruation%20in%20Djibouti&f=false)

		<p>In Ehyptian Society, women have traditionally kept silent about their periods, viewing them as a private matter.<sup>25</sup></p> <p>In the distant past, a woman on her period who walked near a wheat field was feared to leave behind insects and worms. Some men would even refuse to cook food made by their wives if she was menstruating.-<sup>26</sup></p> <p>Egyptian women launched a campaign on social media asking that women be granted leave during menstruation, because of the psychological toll caused by the pain they feel, menstrual cycle is not shameful.<sup>27</sup></p>	
16	Equatorial Guinea	No information found	
17	Eritrea	<p>Findings from a Study on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) shows that</p> <p>Key challenges that prevented girls from effectively managing their menstruation included poor MHM practices (including limited preparation for managing their menstruation in school), menstrual pain, teasing and gossip, and odours.</p> <p>Cultural practices and beliefs also contributed to challenges for girls' on MHM. These included negative perceptions of menstruation and menstruating women; restrictions against bathing; norms against leaving the house while menstruating and of deep shame if women or girls were observed with stains; and taboos or discomfort with talking about menstruation.</p> <p>Many girls had limited access to their preferred MHM material such as pads, due to financial constraints as well as limited access to pain management solutions<sup>28</sup></p> <p>pilot programme promoting open dialogue on menstruation to break the taboo and help the girls address the many challenges they face. Amongst many things, this study and pilot has encouraged school directors and teachers to make changes in schools including provision of sanitary products for girls.<sup>29</sup></p>	

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.jpost.com/health-science/a-shift-in-egyptian-attitudes-toward-menstruation-589135>

<sup>26</sup> <https://egyptindependent.com/egyptian-women-confront-stigma-against-menstruation/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://egyptindependent.com/egyptian-women-confront-stigma-against-menstruation/>

<sup>28</sup>

[www.wins4girls.org/resources/2017%20Eritrea%20Findings%20from%20a%20study%20on%20MHM%20in%20Eritrean%20Middle%20Schools.pdf](https://www.wins4girls.org/resources/2017%20Eritrea%20Findings%20from%20a%20study%20on%20MHM%20in%20Eritrean%20Middle%20Schools.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.communityledtotalsanitation.org/blog/breaking-silence-menstruation-eritrea>

18	Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)	<p>Recounting her experience with periods invokes sad emotions for Mkhalihi. She had three significant moments at school where her periods put her at the centre of gossip, bullying and humiliation.</p> <p>When a woman is on her periods, she is said to be in ‘cleansing’ something that portrays her as dirty. That’s why in other families a menstruating woman is not allowed to cook, while in some churches they’re not allowed to come closer to the pastor<sup>30</sup></p>	
19	Ethiopia	<p>In Ethiopia, 25% of girls do not use any menstrual health products during their periods, often due to the high cost of disposable pads. many Ethiopian girls use rags, newspapers and sometimes cow dung as homemade alternatives to pads, which result in discomfort and vaginal infections.</p> <p>Schools often don’t have private bathrooms, running water or trash facilities, making it difficult for girls to wash and dispose of their menstrual products. Because they are unable to manage their periods while at school and must return home, 17% of girls in Ethiopia have reported missing class while on their periods. <sup>31</sup></p> <p>With child marriage prevalent in rural areas, local beliefs link menstruation to sexual activity, and so an accidental blood stain could see girls relentlessly teased by their classmates. <sup>32</sup></p>	
20	Gabon	No information found	
21	Gambia	<p>An article on A rite of passage: a mixed methodology study about knowledge, perceptions and practices of menstrual hygiene management in rural Gambia</p> <p>In The Gambia, menstruation is not only a taboo subject for public discussion, but also rarely spoken of in the private. This often leads to misconceptions and lack of preparedness among adolescent girls.</p> <p>Majority of participants, including mothers, did not know why women menstruate, while others linked menstruation to a religious folklore. None of the</p>	

<sup>30</sup> <https://africa.com/ending-bullying-and-humiliation-over-menstruation-in-conservative-eswatini/>

• <sup>31</sup> <https://assembly.malala.org/stories/normalising-menstruation-in-ethiopia>

<sup>32</sup> <https://theirworld.org/news/ethiopia-menstruation-club-keeps-girls-in-school-education-sanitary>

		<p>accounts linked menstruation to changes in hormonal levels.</p> <p>The concept that “menstruation is a disease” was seen during the FGDs with girls as well as interviews with mothers and teachers.</p> <p>Menstruation was considered to be a period of time when a girl/woman was impure and unclean, which is why a girl must adhere to the religious restrictions while she is menstruating.</p> <p>Religious restrictions for menstruating women such as praying, touching the Quran, entering the mosque, and fasting during Ramadan were emphasized in all discussions.</p> <p>These religious and social restrictions prevent girls/women from undertaking their daily activities including attending school.<sup>33</sup></p>	
22	Ghana	<p>Ghanaian schoolgirls have been banned from crossing a river while they are menstruating<sup>34</sup></p> <p>Menstrual practices are still clouded by socio-cultural and religious constraints in Ghana and this accentuates the need for adequate menstrual hygiene education.<sup>35</sup></p>	
23	Guinea-Bissau	<p>Over 83 per cent of girls do not know the biological significance of menstruation and mostly have no knowledge about menstruation until their first menstruation occurs<sup>36</sup></p> <p>“When I was in grade 5, one of my female classmates stained her skirt in class. She was a smart student. Because she had stained herself in the classroom, our teacher told the male students to go outside while the girls cleaned up the entire classroom. That female student went home and never came back to school. If we and the teacher had been more respectful and supported her, she wouldn’t have left school. She was a very bright student, but that experience discouraged her from ever coming back to school.”<sup>37</sup></p>	
24	Kenya	<p>Findings of Experiences and problems with menstruation among poor women and schoolgirls in Nairobi, Kenya:</p>	

<sup>33</sup> <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-6599-2>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42652314>

<sup>35</sup> <https://ghana.unfpa.org/en/news/menstruation-natural-process-not-taboo-becca-hearts-foundation-educates-young-people>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/guineabissau/stories/unicef-breaks-ground-promotion-sustainable-menstrual-hygiene-products-guinea-bissau>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/png/stories/lets-talk-about-menstruation>

		<p>Many adolescent girls and women in Kenya experience problems with menstruation due to limited knowledge and poor access to safe and affordable methods and materials, with consequences in terms of poor self-esteem and infrequent school attendance, among others. Almost all research participants, including women and girls of all ages, described menstrual blood as “unclean”, and many said that they perceived it to be a “harmful” substance. “I have never gone to church and I know it is not right to go to church when you are menstruating. Even if it is my third day and the pain is no longer there, I cannot take dirt to church,” said a woman during an in-depth interview.<sup>38</sup></p>	
25	Lesotho	<p>The menstruation is still a taboo to some parents to their young girls and this end up impacting negatively to their normal schooling as they miss classes or end up dropping out of school<sup>39</sup> sanitary towels will no longer be charged value added tax (VAT) <sup>40</sup></p>	
26	Liberia	<p>More adolescent girls in Liberian schools miss classes because of their menstruation; some don’t have the money or proper sanitation to protect blood from seeping through their uniforms while they are in school. Therefore, they stay home for a week while using pieces of torn lappa, tissues, sheets, and whatever they can lay their hands on until their periods stop. . The first day when it came, I thought it was a witch so I told my mother and she ties the towel and put it there, I was only given a special lappa to tie. It went for 4 days and sometimes one week. <sup>41</sup></p>	
27	Libya	<p>Book On Change Within Tradition Among Jewish Women In Libya states that” The Libyan Jewish husband was not allowed to touch his wife when she was in a state of impurity and was not even supposed to throw things to her. <sup>42</sup></p>	

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[https://www.communityledtotalsanitation.org/sites/communityledtotalsanitation.org/files/Policy Brief Mooncups Kenya.pdf](https://www.communityledtotalsanitation.org/sites/communityledtotalsanitation.org/files/Policy%20Brief%20Mooncups%20Kenya.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/lesotho-provision-free-pads-gets-thumbs/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://genderlinks.org.za/casestudies/lesotho-government-scraps-tax-from-sanitary-wear/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-teens-want-sanitary-pads-to-avoid-medical-complications/>

<sup>42</sup>

<https://books.google.com.np/books?id=id0UvY0o4MMC&pg=PA69&lpg=PA69&dq=menstruat>

28	Madagascar	In Madagascar, menstruation is considered a shameful and dirty subject, leaving millions of women unaware of what is happening to them, or how to manage their periods efficiently and hygienically. A young Malagasy girl is always isolated during her menstrual period because it is the girl's business The other members of the family do not even talk about it <sup>43</sup>	
29	Malawi	Parents do not talk to their children about menstruation – Menstruation is seen as ‘strictly secret’ Often it is the Aunts who provide advice on how to make the local sanitary pad (from old clothes), to stop playing with non-menstruating friends and not talk/chat with boys. <sup>44</sup> <b>they learn how to make sanitary pads using locally available materials. They also listen to information on sexual and reproductive health, including where to access services, and learn communication and interpersonal relationship skills.</b> <sup>45</sup>	
30	Mali	An article on Uncovering the challenges to menstrual hygiene management in schools in Mali states that: Girls had few discussions with mothers, sisters, or friends about how to practically manage menstruation. Only half of the girls reported having knowledge of menstruation before menarche Many girls did not have further conversations about menstruation after their first period. All but a few said that they were ashamed to talk about it. Practices and beliefs around cleanliness, maintaining secrecy, and the power of menstrual blood influenced girls to miss class during their periods. <sup>46</sup>	
31	Mauritania	No information found	
32	Mauritius	sanitary bins specifically designed to be placed alongside any type of toilet, offering a subtle way for sanitary disposal <sup>47</sup>	

[ion++in+Libya&source=bl&ots=4kvtEq8UuQ&sig=ACfU3U2eER7B1SuVXJNc1zWA6dY8aVEgHA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjWpL-kp57pAhUSyDgGHTrNDkAQ6AEwC3oECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=menstruation%20%20in%20Libya&f=false](https://www.france24.com/en/20170207-video-menstruation-periods-women-health-taboo-madagascar)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/20170207-video-menstruation-periods-women-health-taboo-madagascar>

<sup>44</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/Malawi\\_MHM\\_Conf.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/Malawi_MHM_Conf.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> <https://angola.unfpa.org/en/news/celebrating-menstruation-menarche-menopause-2>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.developmentbookshelf.com/doi/pdf/10.3362/1756-3488.2015.004>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.hardyhenryservices.com/spotlight-on-menstrual-hygiene/>

		<p>an NGO created to talk about menstrual hygiene and poverty. Hygiene packs are being distributed to women all around the country, campaigns are being made on Social media platforms campaign on Facebook called the Period Ambassador which encourages people to send a picture with a little saying, and since its launch, there has been many participants, both male and female. Gender Links Mauritius provided a full day training to Mauritian media houses <sup>48</sup></p> <p>Petition to reduce menstruation tax <sup>49</sup></p>	
33	Morocco	<p>A book stated “Women, gender and Language in Morocco” stated following things about menstruation: The taboo Surrounding menstruation is related to unclean state</p> <p>Women are forbidden from praying, entering the mosque, touching the quaran or fulfilling the requirement of haj ‘pilgrimage’ during their menstruation</p> <p>In Moroccan society, many linguistic strategies are used amongst women as euphemisms and metaphors to refer to menstruation; illness, the right of month. These euphemisms generally carry negative connotation.</p> <p>Many Moroccan men and women react strongly to modern advertisements of sanitary towels as these expose a taboo area in Moroccan society<sup>50</sup></p>	
34	Mozambique	<p>The PRONASAR [1] period-friendly school toilet is a model developed by SNV <sup>51</sup></p> <p>opening up dialogue about menstruation and menstrual health management, as these are healthy phases and issues women encounter throughout their lives and distributed over 3,000 dignity kits <sup>52</sup></p>	

<sup>48</sup> <https://genderlinks.org.za/casestudies/mauritius-journalist-takes-up-menstrual-health-campaign/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/the-government-of-mauritius-remove-tax-on-sanitary-pads-and-tampons-female-hygiene-is-a-vital-basic-right>

<sup>50</sup>

[https://books.google.com.np/books?id=yOyHWEtePycC&pg=PA82&lpg=PA82&dq=menstruation+taboo+in+Morocco&source=bl&ots=aSfII5\\_AnO&sig=ACfU3U2qKxMrqQe8urK5IdPFwwqEpg3nGQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi38N7tq57pAhXaxzgGHaxuBbwQ6AEwC3oECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=menstruation%20taboo%20in%20Morocco&f=false](https://books.google.com.np/books?id=yOyHWEtePycC&pg=PA82&lpg=PA82&dq=menstruation+taboo+in+Morocco&source=bl&ots=aSfII5_AnO&sig=ACfU3U2qKxMrqQe8urK5IdPFwwqEpg3nGQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi38N7tq57pAhXaxzgGHaxuBbwQ6AEwC3oECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=menstruation%20taboo%20in%20Morocco&f=false)

<sup>51</sup> <https://snv.org/update/inauguration-new-period-friendly-school-toilet-mozambique>

<sup>52</sup> <https://mozambique.unfpa.org/en/news/managing-menstrual-health-after-losing-everything-cyclone-idai>

35	Namibia	<p>Monograph on Beliefs and Attitudes towards Gender Sexuality and Traditions amongst Namibian Youth : In some of the cultures, girls did not learn about menstruation until it occurred<sup>53</sup></p> <p>In many societies menstruation is discussed in hushed tones . "Unfortunately, the ripple effect is that young girls across the country are forced to go out of school because they cannot deal with it <sup>54</sup></p>	
36	Niger	<p>If a woman in periods of menstruation touches the seeds, the harvest will not be abundant, a woman in periods of menstruation should not braid her sister, otherwise she will lose her hair; menstruation is a women's affair and a man should not talk about it'</p> <p>For many adolescent girls living in the country, menstruation is a big problem — a source of stress, shame, embarrassment, confusion and fear. Many girls do not attend school during their monthly cycles. Parents felt too embarrassed to talk about menstruation with their daughter, they feel shame talking about it.<sup>55</sup></p>	
37	Nigeria	<p>Hausa women don't usually go out during their period until it's over.</p> <p>Muslims usually don't have women attend mosque, or participate in religious things such as fasting, as they are considered unclean.<sup>56</sup></p> <p>Article on Menstruation in Rural Igbo Women of South East Nigeria: Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices presents : (12.2%) considered themselves dirty or were just indifferent to menstruation</p> <p>19.2% avoided particular foods, 13.55 strenuous activities, 10.6% social visits, 5% markets and 4.1% churches.</p> <p>Menstruating women were not allowed to visit a particular section of the village stream for fear of contamination of the stream or to attend traditional gatherings especially where village court trials were in session and judgment were pending.</p> <p>Menstruating women were barred from sleeping in the same room with their husbands especially in the polygamous setting</p>	

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.lac.org.na/projects/grap/Pdf/mono5beliefs.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/201809170605.html>

<sup>55</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/breaking-taboos-around-menstruation>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.hart-uk.org/blog/urgent-need-break-nigerias-menstruation-taboo/>

		Younger females were barred from the traditional ‘moonlight’ merriment with their age mates, and menstruating women were discouraged from carrying female newborn babies as this was believed to attract menorrhagia to the growing girl in later life that fertility would be restored to an infertile woman who bathed in a particular river during her menstrual period <sup>57</sup>	
38	Rwanda	65% of women in Rwanda cannot afford sanitary products and girls often skip school when they have their period. <sup>58</sup> Social and cultural norms that lead to women and girls’ exclusion during menstruation; these norms vary widely between and within countries, and may range from not being allowed to touch water and plants, cook, clean, socialize, or sleep in one’s own bed while having their period <sup>59</sup>	
39	Sao Tome and Principe		
40	Senegal	A research on Menstrual Hygiene Management And Female Genital Mutilation: Case Studies In Senegal depicts Periods are a taboo subject in a Senegalese society that is strongly marked by beliefs, myths and religious and community prohibitions that influence the management of menstrual hygiene Menstrual blood is considered “an impurity, dirt, an evil substance” which is consequently managed with great discretion. 27 per cent of girls and women said the bad practices had a negative effect on their sexual and reproductive health. <sup>60</sup>	
41	Seychelles	No information found	
42	Sierra Leone	WASH in Schools Empowers Girls’ Education in Freetown, Sierra Leone: An Assessment of Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools presents:	

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.bioline.org.br/pdf?rh08016>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/news/support-for-women-in-rwanda/>

<sup>59</sup> <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/368761488446710301/pdf/113129-WP-WeBook-PUBLIC.pdf>

<sup>60</sup>

		<p>Menstruation is a taboo topic in Sierra Leone. It is not discussed openly and makes people, especially young girls, uncomfortable when talking about it. When discussed, menstruation is considered to be a female only topic.</p> <p>Both Christian and Islamic girls reported not being able to touch the Bible or Koran, to pray or to enter the church or mosque while menstruating – and indicated that they were “dirty” during menstruation <sup>61</sup></p> <p>Article by one girl presents:</p> <p>There are myths abound that sanitary pads can cause infertility, they’re expensive, and they’re hard to get. She’ll have to manage her period with small scraps of fabric or old cloth called ‘pieces’ – which can be unreliable and unsanitary.</p> <p>Many girls stay home from school rather than dealing with all potential embarrassment and shame. Girls lose weeks of school a year simply because they don’t have a reliable way to manage their period</p> <p>Myths like once a girl gets her period: · it’s the end of her childhood; · she’s mature and ready to have sex or become a lover; · she’s already started having sex; or · she should drop out of school and get married. <sup>62</sup></p>	
43	Somalia	<p>Many women lack sufficient or accurate knowledge on menstruation. Many women do not understand how menstruation happens in the body, what causes it and what exactly happens in their bodies during menstruation.</p> <p>Menstruating girls are exempted from participating in Islamic activities, for example they are not supposed to fast or pray during menstruation and they are prevented from going to the quran school.</p> <p>A menstruating girl is generally expected to make less movement and not doing so would be frowned upon. <sup>63</sup></p>	
44	South Africa	<p>An Intervention Study on Menstruation and School Girls in South Africa presents the following:</p> <p>In South Africa, It has been observed that women and girls often don’t have enough money to buy female hygiene products. The adolescent girls struggling to</p>	

<sup>61</sup>

[https://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/Sierra\\_Leone\\_MHM\\_Booklet\\_DM\\_15\\_Nov\\_1020\\_si\\_nle-Sierra\\_Leone.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/Sierra_Leone_MHM_Booklet_DM_15_Nov_1020_si_nle-Sierra_Leone.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.onegirl.org.au/blog/talking-periods-changing-lives>

<sup>63</sup> <https://genderissuesinsomalia.wordpress.com/2014/06/04/the-effects-of-menstruation-on-the-education-of-girls-in-somalia/>

		buy female hygiene products must turn to rags, socks, even notebook paper, and often lack access to clean water and private toilet facilities. Young girls can therefore experience shame and embarrassment when they are menstruating <sup>64</sup>	
45	South Sudan	<p>Findings of baseline report on Menstrual Hygiene Management of Schoolgirls by SNV is presented below:</p> <p>52% of the girls reported restrictions on their movements during their periods.</p> <p>23% felt that they are seen as unclean by the community Responses as to how boys behave towards them during menstruation included: laughing at them (52.6%); abuse (35.2%); name calling (21.3); humiliation (20.8%); and isolation (16.9%). 26.4% reported being approached for sex at that time of the month “since they have a high attraction to the opposite sex during that time”</p> <p>48.7% thought that it is harmful to the body and 28.4% that menstruation a disease.</p> <p>19.2% thought that pregnant women menstruate</p> <p><b>Some Perceptions and Beliefs about Menstruation in South Sudan stated on the report:</b></p> <p>Women should not bathe in the river during menstruation because they will lose their womb</p> <p>Women should not bathe until the flow is over</p> <p>Menstruating girls must stay isolated from their peer groups</p> <p>Women are not supposed to use family or community latrines during their menstrual periods</p> <p>Menstruation should be kept a secret</p> <p>Women are not allowed to sit amongst men during menstruation</p> <p>Women are not supposed to visit a certain culturally significant sites<sup>65</sup></p>	
46	Sudan	No information found	
47	Tanzania	<p>Compiled Findings from Studies on Menstrual Hygiene Management of Schoolgirls :</p> <p>Menstruation is secret and shameful.</p>	

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.ssa.uchicago.edu/menstruation-and-school-girls-south-africa-intervention-study>

<sup>65</sup> [https://snv.org/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/snv\\_girls\\_in\\_control\\_baseline](https://snv.org/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/snv_girls_in_control_baseline)

		<p>It is forbidden to discuss menstrual issues with their husbands and during their menstruation they sleep separately. In some areas only grandmothers or aunts are allowed to discuss menstrual issues with girls,</p> <p>Girls in Focus group discussions in Tanzania also mentioned that boys tease and embarrass them during menstruation.</p> <p>82% of them lack sufficient knowledge to manage their menstruation well.<sup>66</sup></p> <p>It is a taboo for girls and women from the Kuria tribe to reveal anything concerning their personalities, especially their menstrual cycles as it is against our cultural beliefs<sup>67</sup></p>	
48	Togo	<p>Many young girls in Togo have no information about menstruation before their first period. Without access to sanitary menstrual pads, they use old cloths or dirty rags instead.<sup>68</sup></p> <p>Kwassi Dominique Edoh of <u>EDEN Togo</u>, organized a workshop attended by over 60 girls in Koblatame town around the theme: “<i>Sexual health for young women.</i>”<sup>69</sup></p>	
49	Tunisia	<p>A book on The Rough Guide to Tunisia states that Women are not supposed to enter a mosque during menstruation<sup>70</sup></p> <p>ongoing hygiene promotion project includes activities on menstrual hygiene management. Manuals and sanitary napkins are distributed in high schools. The</p>	

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[https://snv.org/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/snv\\_girls\\_in\\_control\\_baseline\\_report.pdf](https://snv.org/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/snv_girls_in_control_baseline_report.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/201901100373.html>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.compassion.com/donate/menstrual-education.htm?referer=603438>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.wsscc.org/2018/08/31/wsscc-members-disseminate-awareness-of-menstrual-health-issues-on-global-menstrual-hygiene-day-2018-far-and-wide/>

<sup>70</sup> [https://books.google.com.np/books?id=k2By-NdV93AC&pg=PP64&lpg=PP64&dq=Menstruation+in+tunisia&source=bl&ots=imxghlQBoi&sig=ACfU3U11Sihp3vH8A\\_VSeDQCeYvXp61a-Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwit4MH7-aDpAhWQILcAHZ8ACOO4ChDoATAJegQIChAB#v=onepage&q=Menstruation%20in%20tunisia&f=false](https://books.google.com.np/books?id=k2By-NdV93AC&pg=PP64&lpg=PP64&dq=Menstruation+in+tunisia&source=bl&ots=imxghlQBoi&sig=ACfU3U11Sihp3vH8A_VSeDQCeYvXp61a-Q&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwit4MH7-aDpAhWQILcAHZ8ACOO4ChDoATAJegQIChAB#v=onepage&q=Menstruation%20in%20tunisia&f=false)

		sanitary napkins are produced locally to support rural women's employment <sup>71</sup>	
50	Uganda	<p>Practicing Muslims consider menstruation to be dirty, and they are not allowed to worship at their mosques when menstruating<sup>72</sup></p> <p>In Western parts of the Ugandan country, cattle owners do not let menstruating women attend to their cows for fear that the milk may turn bloody.</p> <p>Over half of Ugandan schoolgirls asked stated that the lack of a place to wash or change was affecting their school attendance.<sup>73</sup></p> <p>Girls in rural Uganda miss up to eight days of study each school term This was due to lack of washrooms, lack of sanitary pads and bullying by peers</p> <p>Most of the girls in the study said they used a piece of cloth called a kitenge which they got from their mothers, while others improvised with the cloth nappies used by their younger siblings. Some girls even used dry leaves to try to soak up the blood in emergency situations. <sup>74</sup></p> <p>Afripads, a local partner of Plan International, produce washable, cloth sanitary pads that last for up to a year and cost a fraction of an equivalent supply of disposable pads. As a result, girls are feeling confident enough to go back to school during their periods.<sup>75</sup></p> <p>WoMena and CARE have started to address this gap, implementing a pilot project in the Rhino refugee camp in Northern Uganda which provided menstrual cups and reusable pads. leaving many displaced and refugee women without access to sanitary products or even basic, private facilities<sup>76</sup></p>	
51	Zambia	Traditionally, torn cloths, cow dung, dirty rags or mattress pieces, newspaper or even sand and leaves are used as a soaking medium. Due to the discomfort of	

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/mena/stories/here-why-we-need-stop-stigmatizing-menstruation-period>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.omprakash.org/blog/uganda-the-taboo-of-menstruation-and-an-exploration-of-womanhood>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.period.media/global/menstruating-in-uganda/>

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/may/28/menstruation-girls-education-uganda-sanitation>

<sup>75</sup> [international.org/case-studies/periods-no-longer-pain-school-girls](http://international.org/case-studies/periods-no-longer-pain-school-girls)

<sup>76</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/201903110495.html>

		<p>using these materials, girls prefer to discontinue their studies and stay back home. <sup>77</sup></p> <p>Study on Advancing Girls' Education through WASH Programs in Schools:</p> <p>Girls prefer to stay home during menstruation for fear of staining their dresses, interacting with and being teased by boys.</p> <p>Girls were asked what they experienced and how they felt about menstruating while attending classes. They reported feelings of fear, embarrassment, discomfort and seclusion while on menstruation.</p> <p>The reasons given for these negative feelings were:</p> <p>Menstruation is secret and no one should know (especially males) that you are menstruating.</p> <p>Male teachers cannot be approached for help if a girl needs to go home .Boys tease girls when they know that they are menstruating or they stain their dresses/skirts.</p> <p>Menstrual material used is not absorbent and feels wet leading to feelings of discomfort.</p> <p>Bad odor<sup>78</sup></p>	
52	Zimbabwe	<p>Report on Compiled Findings from Studies on Menstrual Hygiene Management of Schoolgirls:</p> <p>Openly talking about menstruation makes people uncomfortable, especially young girls. It is seen as a private issue, which is rarely discussed because of religious/ cultural beliefs and does not involve men at all.</p> <p>54% of girls had experienced mocking or stigmatisation,</p> <p>26% reported isolation</p> <p>13% that boys call them names during menstruation.<sup>79</sup></p> <p>We have managed to raise resources to enable us get sanitary wear for the poor women and girls, especially in rural areas. <sup>80</sup></p>	

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health-in-africa/lack-of-access-to-sanitary-products-privacy-drives-girls-away-from-schools-in-zambia-64775>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/zambia/media/826/file/Zambia-menstrual-hygiene-management-schools-report.pdf>

<sup>79</sup>

[https://snv.org/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/snv\\_girls\\_in\\_control\\_baseline\\_report.pdf](https://snv.org/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/snv_girls_in_control_baseline_report.pdf)

<sup>80</sup>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-zimbabwe-women-menstruation/too-poor-for-periods-zimbabwes-girls-rely-on-rags-paper-leaves-idUSKBN1KD0MR>

		<p>“As female teachers we interact with girls on sexual health, so in one of these discussions we had a girl whose menstrual health was affected after she used leaves which caused some pain during her monthly periods. With the assistance of the school we managed to help her and the programme has helped many girls who cannot afford to buy pads”- Ndanga- a female school teacher <sup>81</sup></p>	
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<sup>81</sup> <https://genderlinks.org.za/news/zimbabwe-tackling-the-period-poverty-in-zimbabwe/>