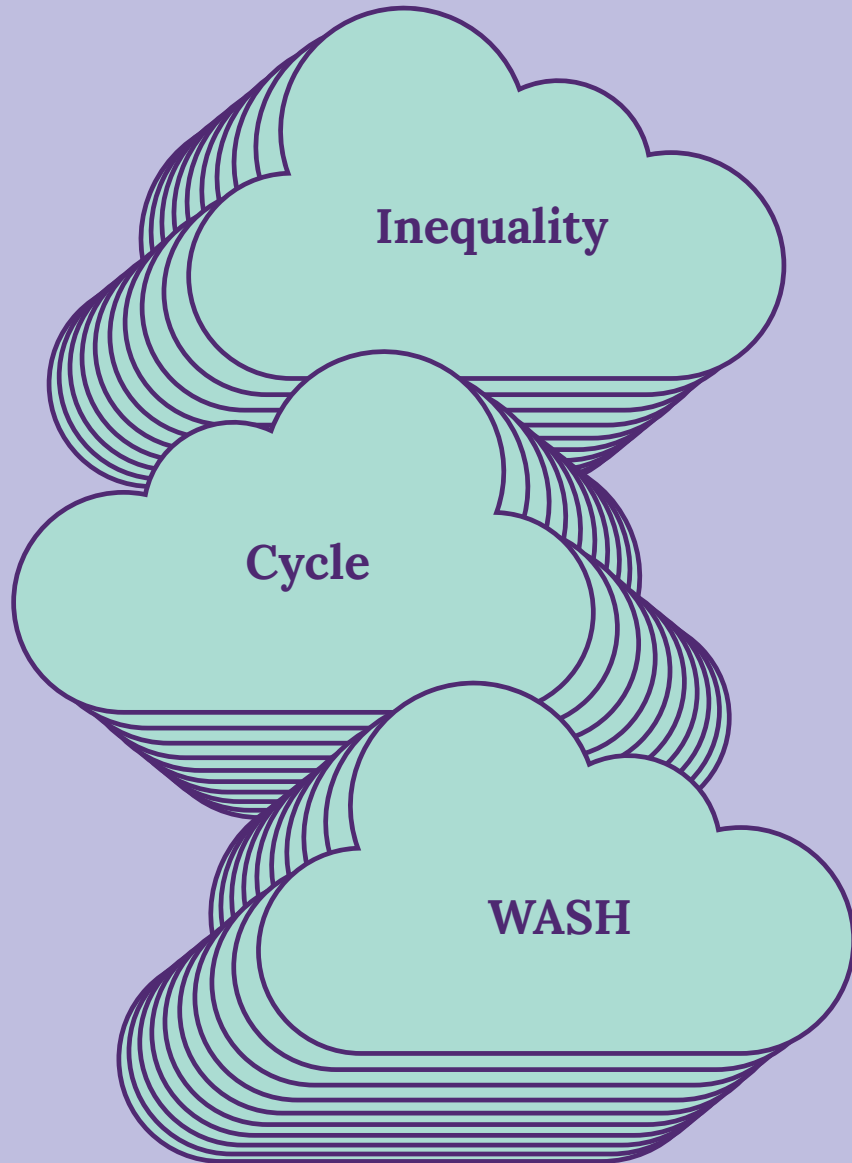
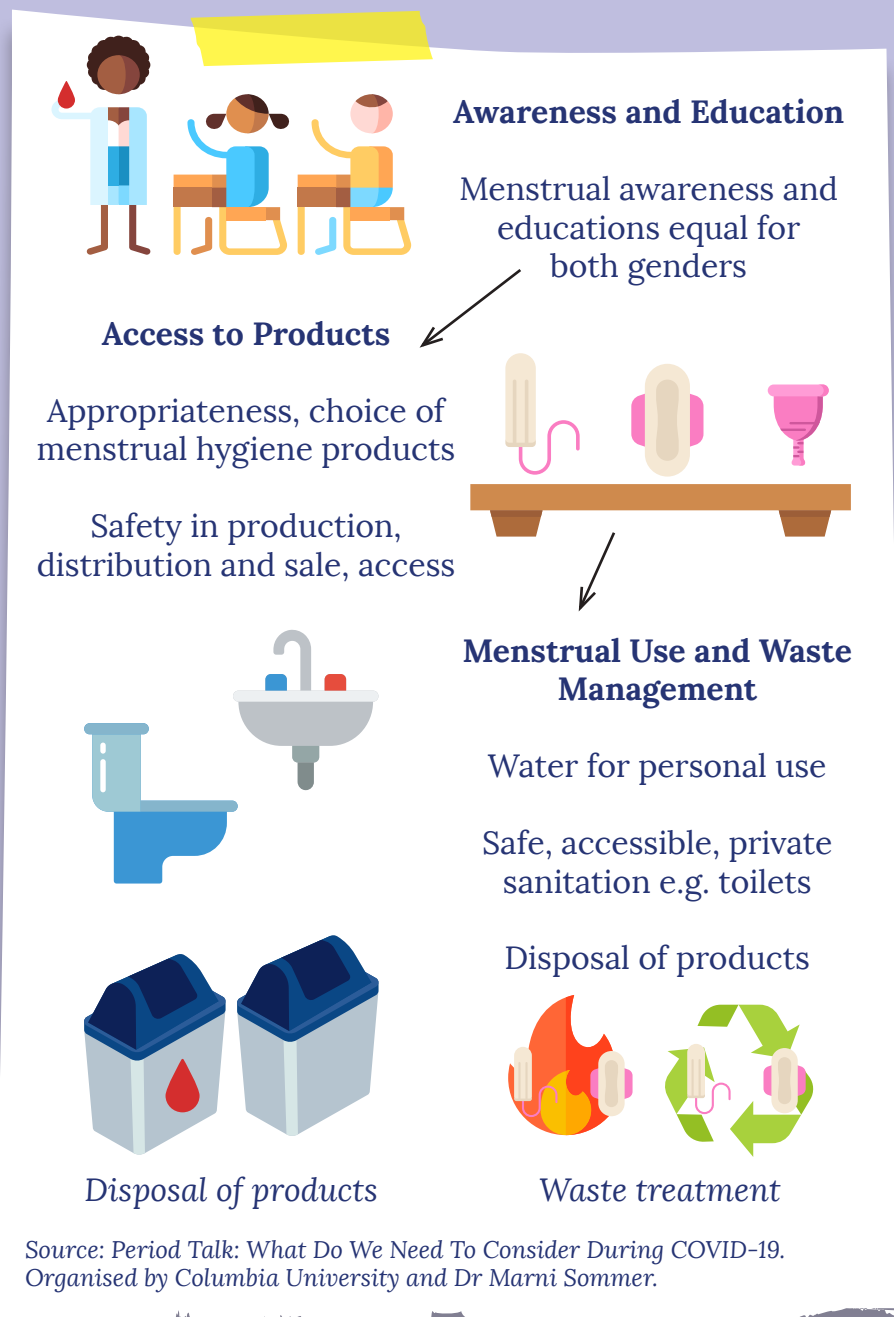


# Period Poverty



# Menstrual Value Chain



# WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)

When it comes to period poverty, millions of people continue to be denied their rights to WASH, health, education, dignity, and gender equity.

## Menstrual hygiene requires access to:

- Water for washing hands, body, reusable menstrual cloths.
- Private and hygienic sanitation facilities for changing and disposing sanitary protection materials and for bathing.
- Hygiene information.
- Waste management for disposing cloths and pads.

## Incorporate menstrual hygiene:

- At different levels, including service delivery, capacity development, and policy.
- Within approaches to WASH - e.g community led total sanitation, social marketing, WASH in schools, participatory hygiene, and sanitation transformation.

## Challenges for cross-sector collaboration

The ministries and departments responsible for water, sanitation, and hygiene are often separate, and can vary by context. Different departments are responsible for construction and maintenance.

## Features of menstrual-hygiene friendly water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities in the household:

- There is somewhere secure and private for waste disposal, changing sanitary products, and bathing.
- Facilities (e.g. toilet facility, water supply, and bathing units) are near to the house and accessible for all members of the household, including those with mobility limitations.
- Toilet facility and bathing units have covered walls and a door with an internal lock.



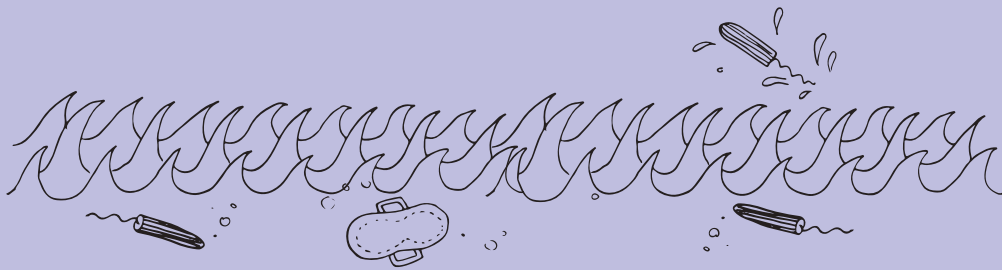
- Water is available inside the toilets (from a tap or container).
- The toilets and bathing units are cleanable.
- A washable container with lid for collecting sanitary materials is located inside the toilets and/or bathing units.
- There is somewhere private for washing sanitary cloths and drying them in the sunlight, using a charcoal, or other iron.
- There is a mechanism for final disposal of sanitary materials, such as a pit or incinerator.



### **Benefits of good menstrual hygiene in school:**

The benefits of good menstrual hygiene in school (available sanitary protection materials, clean and safe toilets, bathing or changing facilities with locks on the inside of doors, discrete disposal facilities, understanding and supportive staff, and information on menstrual hygiene) are considered to help students in ways such as:

- More time spent in school (for those who menstruate).
- Increased concentration.
- Higher self-confidence.
- Increased comfort, good hygiene, less irritation from sanitary materials, and less risk of related infections.
- Greater participation.
- More confidence to stand up to answer questions and ask to leave the classroom to use the toilet.
- No exclusion from sports due to discomfort, concern over leakage, or because of cultural restrictions.



## Homelessness

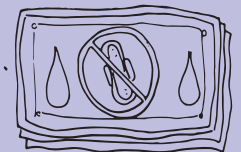
### **How does homelessness impact periods?**

Anyone can experience homelessness. There are many reasons why people lose their homes: family break-up, unemployment, domestic violence, mental illness, poor physical health, substance abuse, and physical/sexual/emotional abuse - to name just a few.

For people without housing or with limited income, managing their periods is complicated and often expensive, but unavoidable. For many people living on the streets, getting their period is more than just a hassle - it's a matter of comfort, cleanliness, and dignity. Spending money on menstrual supplies means not taking public transit or going without food. They might use any menstrual product that they can afford or are given longer than they should.

For example, there are 50,000 women living on the streets of America with limited access to pads and tampons and no steady, comfortable place to shower. They are forced to get creative with ways to keep clean when they have their periods. Some are forced to steal products. Others wait for homeless outreach crews to come by with pads. Some use socks, paper towels, plastic bags, toilet paper, towels, cotton balls, or clothing in place of menstrual products.

When you experience homelessness, getting your period can lead to stress, embarrassment, missing meals, and missing opportunities. So please donate period products to people going through homelessness as often as you can.



**DEAR BIG SISTERS,**

I left Chile in 1987, I went back in 1988 and since 1989, I haven't seen my family. My period finished when I was 36 because when I was 28 years old, I had a daughter - she's 27 today, she was born 6th of December 1993. Immigration could not find my status to remain. Because I got involved in drugs, they took my daughter away and put her for adoption with a family in Spain and I didn't even know the type of family they were... A woman is under pressure since she has her first child. And somehow I can never forgive the people that took my child away and that was 27 years ago.

In Chile when you start your period it's like a celebration, you are no longer a child anymore. You are a woman. In my time my mother and father never talked to me about this - my parents died when I was 11. They don't teach about it enough in schools as well - I don't know today but when I went to school, no they did not teach you anything about it.

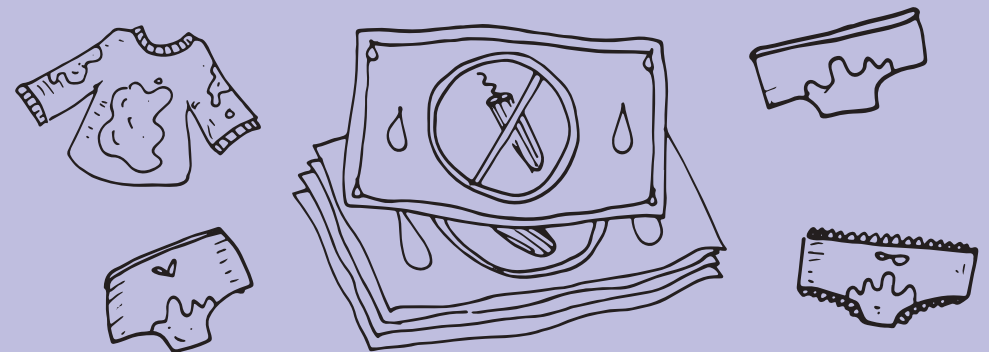
**SUBMISSION BY  
ANONYMOUS, UK**

**DEAR BIG SISTERS,**

My periods have become really irregular since I have become homeless. When I bleed, I bleed really heavy - it's a bit awkward. I manage it with difficulty - lots of tissue! I would feel pissed off or embarrassed if I leaked onto my clothes. I don't have a home, so I can't wash them. So I have to walk around, being messy, with my jumper tied around my waist, it's just awkward. I really try not to leak.

And I get a lot of pain which I try to manage with pain killers. I'm quite old, almost 50 now. I think I'm starting to go through 'the changes' and starting to get hot flashes now. I've not got a doctor so everything is all up in the air at the moment. But it will settle down, I'm sure. I've got housing support that I am meeting tomorrow so that is a start.

**SUBMISSION BY  
SOPHIE, 47, UK**



# Refugees, Migrants, and Asylum-Seekers\*

*Because they were forced to leave their country*

Refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers are a “forgotten community” when it comes to period poverty. People all over the world make one of the most difficult decisions of their lives: to abandon their homes in search of safety or for a better life in another country. Millions are forced to leave everything behind. Refugees flee from armed conflicts, oppressive governments, or human rights violations. Migrants leave to reunite with their family, due to the lack of educational and employment opportunities, or even natural disasters in their home countries.

For example in the UK, asylum-seekers receive just £37.75 a week and are not allowed to work before they can be registered as a refugee and obtain legal employment status. Therefore, they must rely entirely on the state for support. It is estimated that a heavy period could cost upwards of £10 a week. This being more than a quarter of the allowance, asylum-seekers are sometimes forced to go without food and other basic needs in order to purchase period products. Some folks resort to using tissue, strips of clothing, and/or bath towels in place of appropriate period products. This has a negative impact on a person's physical and mental health, which can cause further damage and stress. Being able to hygienically and safely deal with your periods shouldn't be a luxury. Period poverty is preventing asylum-seekers from rebuilding their lives with dignity, and is part of the hostile environmental policy against people seeking safety.

\*To know the difference between refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers, visit the glossary at the end of the book.



# Living With Challenges



*Challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities:*

- **Lack in menstrual hygiene** since people in rural areas face more challenges maintaining adequate hygiene because clean water supply is often a long way from home.
- **Additional support and carers** are often needed for those with disabilities to help them deal with menstruation and to learn social norms.
- **Difficulties with travelling** since there are risks such as the menstrual cloth moving when rushing to get on the bus, causing leaks.
- **Greater risk of infection** because people with physical disabilities or are visually impaired often have to crawl or sit on dirty toilet seats to change their pads or cloths.

*Challenges faced by school girls and female teachers:*

- **Lack of sanitary products** can cause stress due to leakage, smell, and teasing.
- **Lack of clean water supply** and private facilities for washing and drying soiled clothing, cloths, or hands.
- **Fear of using toilets** cause by the worry of others seeing menstrual blood.
- **Exclusion from sports** due to discomfort, worrying about leaking, or because of cultural restrictions.
- **Lack in concentration/participation**, such as not standing up to answer questions due to worrying about leaking.
- **Absence** due to the lack of facilities and services at school to manage menstruation.