



Period Poverty

For Prelims: Period Products Act, Government's Initiatives

For Mains: State of Menstrual Health in India, Issues related to women, Gender

Why in News?

Scotland has become the first nation in the world to legally protect the **right to access free period products** and have made **period products free for all** by passing the **Period Products Act**.

- Period poverty is when those on low incomes can't afford, or access, suitable period products.

What do we know about the Development in Scotland?

- **About:**
 - Under the **Period Products Act**, schools, colleges and universities as well as local government bodies must **make a range of period products available for free in their**

bathrooms.

- **Every council in Scotland** is required with local communities to determine the best access point for menstrual products.

▪ **Accessibility:**

- A mobile phone app (**PickUpMyPeriod**) also helps people find the nearest place — such as the local library or community center — where they can pick up period products.
- The period products would be available at libraries, swimming pools, public gyms, community buildings, town halls, pharmacies & doctor's offices.

What has been the state of Menstrual Hygiene in India?

▪ **According to a [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) study conducted in 2011:**

- Only 13% of girls in India are aware of **menstruation** before menarche.
- 60% of girls missed school on account of menstruation.
- 79% faced low confidence due to menstruation and 44% were embarrassed and humiliated over restrictions.
- Thereby, Menstruation adversely impacts **women's education, equality, maternal and child health.**

▪ **[National Family Health Survey 5:](#)**

- **Women aged 15-24 years using period products:**
 - **Seventeen states and [Union Territories \(UTs\)](#)** had 90% or more of their women using period products.
 - In Puducherry and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the fraction was 99%.
 - Tripura, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar – had 70% or fewer of their women using period products.
 - Bihar was the only state to report a figure lower than 60%.
- **Top three states that reported an increase in the percentage of women using period products from NFHS-4 to NFHS-5:**
 - Bihar: 90%
 - Odisha: 72%
 - Madhya Pradesh: 61%

What Initiatives has the Indian Government taken for Menstrual Hygiene?

▪ **Shuchi Scheme:**

- **[Shuchi Scheme](#)** aims aimed at **instilling awareness about menstrual hygiene** among adolescent girls.
- It was started in 2013-14 initially as a **Centrally-sponsored one.**
 - However, the **Centre asked States to take over the scheme from 2015-16.**

▪ **Menstrual Hygiene Scheme:**

- **[Menstrual Hygiene Scheme](#)** focuses on promotion of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls (10-19 years) in rural areas of selected districts in 2011.

▪ **SABLA programme:**

- It was implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- It focuses on **nutrition, health, hygiene and reproductive and sexual health** (linked to rural mother and childcare centres).

▪ **National Rural Livelihood Mission:**

- It supports **[self-help groups](#)** and small manufacturers to produce sanitary pads.

▪ **Swachh Bharat Mission and Swachh Bharat: Swachh Vidyalaya (SB:SV):**

- Menstrual hygiene management is also an integral part of the **[Swachh Bharat Mission.](#)**

▪ **Guidelines for Gender Issues in Sanitation (2017):**

- These have been evolved by the **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation** to ensure **gender equality and [empowerment of women and girls](#)** with respect to sanitation.
- Safe and effective menstrual hygiene management is a trigger for better and stronger development for adolescent girls and women.

▪ **The National Guidelines on Menstrual Hygiene Management:**

- It was released by the **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in 2015.**
- It seeks to address every component of menstrual hygiene ranging from, raising awareness, addressing behaviour change, creating a demand for better hygiene products,

capacity building etc.

Way Forward

- The Government of India should also consider the approach as of Scotland's and make the period products available or at reasonable concession/discount.
- The government can also promote small-scale sanitary pad manufacturing units to make low-cost pads more easily available, it will also help in generating income for women.
- The government needs to provide, efforts directed at awareness and education about menstruation and menstrual hygiene, and access to safe products, and responsive **water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure.**
- However, menstrual health cannot be achieved only through governmental efforts without addressing it as a social issue, requiring interventions at societal, community and familial level.

Source: TH

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