



POSMUN 2022

UN WOMEN

Menstrual Poverty: Unfolding strategies to deal with the difficulty of access to basic hygiene products to low income women during monthly menstruation

Jordana Veronese and Victória Accurso

SUMMARY

01.	Greeting letter.....	3-4
02.	Committee history.....	5-6
03.	Topic overview	
a)	Introduction to the topic	6-8
b)	Current situation	8-10
c)	Challenges	11
d)	Numbers, dates and facts	12
e)	Past actions by the UN	13-14
f)	Possible outcomes	15
g)	Key terms	16
04.	Position of involved countries.....	16-36
05.	Purpose of the council	36
06.	Guiding questions	37
07.	Bibliography.....	37-42

01. Greeting letter

Honorable Delegates,

We welcome you to POSMUN 2022! We are extremely honored to be your chair and vice chair for the United Nations Women Committee at this very special event.

My name is Jordana Veronese and I am delighted to be your Chair in the UN Women this year, a committee which I greatly appreciate and respect. I am currently in the 4th year of German highschool at Colégio Visconde de Porto Seguro with strong ambitions to study at a German university next year. I have already taken different roles in four Model United Nations. I started as an usher and later participated as a delegate twice, as well as, as a member of the press in the last POSMUN. I have never had the experience of being a Chair, so this moment is as important to me as it will surely be to you. Even more, knowing that I will be representing a committee whose importance is as paramount as UN Women. I want you to know that this will be a moment of partnership and fellowship between us, moderators, and you, debaters. Feel free to expose your points and ask when you have questions, we will always be there to help you. With all things considered, I wish you all a rich preparation and a prosperous debate!

I, Victória Accurso, am 17 years old and I am also an Abitur student. I have always been interested in learning about different cultures and solving world-wide conflicts. In addition, I think it is very important to participate in these simulations to understand the ways in which countries can contribute to overcoming various obstacles, such as period poverty. This is going to be my first time at an MUN as a Chair and I am really excited to help organize the debate, especially



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

representing UN Women, a relatively new committee that aims for gender equality!

Appreciatively,

Jordana Lanfredi Veronese, Chair of UN Women

Victória Helena Santos Accurso, Vice-Chair of UN Women

Feel free to contact us:

veronesejordana@gmail.com / +55 (11) 94542-9494

vickyaccurso@gmail.com / +55 (11) 99916-2407

The chair and vice-chair strongly recommend the delegates to read this guidebook thoroughly and use it as an initial research tool, but also to research and find information beyond it, seeking a better and more complete understanding of every delegation's position in this matter.

It should also be noted the importance of mutual cooperation, respecting the morals and values of all countries present and always bearing in mind that the U.N. was created to collectively make the world a better and safer place. Lastly, they urge the elaboration of a resolution that aims at a consensus between the majority of delegations present in the council.



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

02. Committee history

UN Women was created in 2010 to unite, strengthen and expand global efforts to defend women's human rights. It is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and it is headquartered in New York, United States. Furthermore, it has regional offices in countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe.

This organization works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. Besides that, it works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities:

- Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems;
- Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy;
- All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence;
- Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action.





The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in 2015, embody a roadmap for progress that is sustainable and leaves no one behind. Thereby only by ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the goals will we get to justice and inclusion, economies that work for all, and sustaining our shared environment now and for future generation.

03. Topic overview

a) Introduction to the topic

The term “period poverty” is currently assigned to the insufficient or nonexistent access to menstrual products, education, hygiene facilities, waste management, or a combination of these. This obstacle affects about 500 million people worldwide. The victims of period poverty include students, low-income and homeless women and girls, transgender and nonbinary individuals.

Due to the social stigma that surrounds menstruation topics, period poverty was until recently not widely recognized as a serious and



and imminent problem. As a consequence of this, a serious lack of information regarding this issue began to increase. Thus, the foundation of the Global Menstrual Collective in 2019 was a milestone for the fight against period poverty, the central question of this council. Currently relying on the collaboration between NGOs, UN agencies, academic institutions, private sector organizations and networks, one of the collective's main aims is to drive and guide improved investment in menstrual related needs through evidence-based advocacy.

As stated in the organization's official website, scholars on the subject warn that menstruation is a biological process experienced by approximately half of the world's population and for this reason, measures to make the passage through this process humane and dignified should be on the agenda in the government of every nation. The fact that women, girls and transgender people still face economic and social barriers throughout their lives as discriminatory practices, for example inadequate menstrual health and hygiene services that prevent them from participating fully in their daily lives only proves that measures still need to be taken to address this problem.

Despite menstrual poverty being a topic only recently added to the list of topics to be debated by governments and NGOs, the solution of this problem could lead to a significant improvement of old and world-renowned central issues. For instance, quality education, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, responsible consumption and production, good health and well-being are examples of problems that would be positively affected by the good management of world menstrual poverty.



PSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

In this context, it is also important to mention that the UN Human Rights Council presented in September 2018 a possible solution related to this problem, which consisted of saving drinking water and sanitation specifically including menstruation. This settlement indicates serious concern that the unavailability of adequate water and sanitation services, including menstrual hygiene management in schools, workplaces, health centers and public facilities negatively affects gender equality and the achievement of women's and girls' human rights. It includes the right to education, health, safe and healthy working conditions, as well as the right to participate in public affairs. An UN approach to menstrual health and hygiene also prioritizes those most vulnerable human rights violations, such as refugees, the homeless population, transgender people, people with disabilities and sex workers, whose menstrual needs are often threatened.

b) Current situation: updated data

Period poverty in the world today

As we look at the most recent statistics published related to this issue and its consequences, the 2021 BMC Women's Health studies attest that almost 500 million people experience daily difficulties associated with the lack of access to menstrual products and hygiene facilities. Furthermore, the problem intensely affects young people, of whom about 14.2% of college-aged individuals who menstruate have already experienced period poverty in 2020. 10.0% of them suffer from lack of access to menstrual hygiene products every month.



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

Taking into account the North American geopolitical influence on the politics and society of several world nations, we can use the country as a specified example of the alarming situation caused by this problem. Approximately 16.9 million people suffer from menstrual poverty in the USA, including almost two-thirds of North American women with a low income, who were not able to afford menstrual products in 2020. Half had to make a choice between buying food or menstrual hygiene products.

Analyzing each state in the country in greater depth, in June 2019 35 U.S. states taxed menstrual products at rates between 4,7% in Hawaii and 9,9% in Louisiana.

Physical and mental health

In the same way that period poverty directly affects people's physical health, it can also represent a serious threat to the mental well-being of people who face this type of problem on a regular basis. A study carried out among female students showed that 68.1% of those who had experienced menstrual poverty before, developed symptoms of moderate or even severe depression. Besides that, they also had more symptoms of depression than women who had never suffered from this type of social and financial problem.

Other health problems that can also be triggered by menstrual poverty are linked to infections caused by the use of inappropriate materials as a substitute for menstrual goods, inaccessible to part of the world's population. Some examples of that are the use of rags, toilet paper and children's diapers during the menstrual period. Some people also use menstrual products they do have for longer than



recommended, as they do not have enough of that product to replace them properly. This practice and the use of alternative products put individuals at a higher risk of urogenital infections, namely urinary and genital complications. It can also increase a person's risk of developing toxic shock syndrome, a rare but dangerous infection.

Work

Menstrual poverty can directly affect the economy and movement of a country's labor market, as it prevents individuals from being able to work in the proper conditions of hygiene and dignity. A study in Bangladesh showed that 73% of women missed an average of 6 days per month. However, absenteeism dropped when HERproject provided sanitary pads and implemented work-based behavior change interventions.

Education

Individuals who menstruate are likely uncomfortable or even unable to attend classes due to lack of access to products that prevent discomfort during menstruation, such as odor, possible pain and specific hygiene to deal with this period. Over time, this experience can have long-term effects: low attendance can affect a person's future earning potential, self-esteem and health.



c) Challenges

Menstruation stigma and prejudice

It is an already known fact that menstrual poverty is a global public health crisis, but the stigma surrounding menstruation represents a face of the problem not yet debated in enough depth. Society considers menstruation to be dirty and something people should hide. In current times, it has been realized that this reality needs to be changed. For this reason, activists want to shift the focus to the fact that menstruation is biologically normal and healthy. The shame associated with periods keeps people from talking about them. This has led to a lack of dialogue on access to menstrual products, the taxation of those products, and even the ingredients they contain.

There is also a stigma surrounding the menstrual experience as a transgender person. Many sources still describe menstruation as an experience unique to women, but this is not the case. Many people who are not women menstruate, and not all women menstruate. Being aware of using the correct language to discuss menstrual poverty is critical to identifying all menstruating individuals.

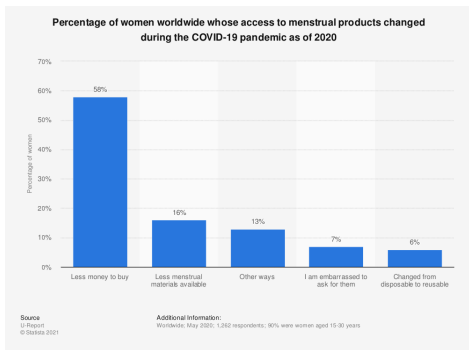
This belief that only women menstruate means that trans people often encounter additional challenges. For example, they may find that there are only plug-in products in public toilets, no litter boxes in bathroom cubicles, and no free menstrual products in schools. It is important to speak openly and inclusively about menstrual poverty to improve everyone's menstrual experience.



d) Numbers, data and facts

When we talk about numbers, data from UN Women states that 12.8% of women and girls worldwide live in poverty. At the same time, 1.25 billion women and girls don't have access to a private toilet while 526 million don't have a toilet at all.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has directly and negatively affected the already alarming situation of world period poverty. Check out the graphic below provided by Statista:



e) Past actions by the UN

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, is the UN's international development agency dealing with population issues. Since its creation in 1969, it has been a key player in populational development programs related to sexual and reproductive health and gender equality.

The entity has four broad approaches to promoting and improving menstrual health around the world:

First, UNFPA reaches women and girls directly with menstrual requirements and safe sanitation. For instance, in humanitarian emergencies, UNFPA distributes Dignity Kits, which contain disposable and reusable menstrual pads, underwear, soap and similar items. In 2017 alone, 484 thousand Dignity Kits were distributed in 18 countries.

The organization also helps to improve the safety of toilets and bathing installations in displacement camps (temporary facilities for displaced persons, whether refugees or internally displaced persons) by working with camp officials, distributing flashlights and installing solar lights. Furthermore, it promotes menstrual health information and skills-building. For example, some programmes teach girls to make reusable menstrual pads and others raise awareness about menstrual cups.

Alternately, UNFPA works to enhance education and information about menstruation and related human rights concerns. Through its youth programmes and comprehensive sexuality education efforts, such as the Y-Peer programme, which helps both boys and girls understand that menstruation is healthy and normal. The institution



also helps raise awareness that the onset of menstruation (menarche) does not signify a physical or psychological readiness to be married or bear children. For illustration, the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, teaches girls and communities about reproductive health and the harms caused by child marriage. In addition, programmes to end female genital mutilation, including the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate FGM, raise awareness of the negative consequences the practice can have on menstrual health.

Third, UNFPA supports national health systems, which can promote menstrual health and provide treatment to girls and women suffering from menstrual disorders. This includes promoting adolescent- and youth-friendly health services, which can help girls and young women better understand and care for their bodies. It also supports the hiring and training of health workers, particularly midwives, who can provide care for, and information about, menstrual health complaints. Moreover, it procures reproductive health commodities that can be useful for treating menstruation-related disorders. For example, hormonal contraceptive methods can be used to treat symptoms of endometriosis and reduce excess menstrual bleeding.

Eventually, the organization is helping to gather data and evidence about menstrual health and its connection to global development, a long-overlooked topic of research. The UNFPA-supported surveys provide critical insight into girls' and women's knowledge about their menstrual cycles, health and access to sanitation facilities. For instance, a recent publication of the institution provides a critical overview of the menstrual health needs of women and girls in the Eastern and Southern Africa region.



e) Possible outcomes

What would happen if the situation remained the way it is or got worse?

HEALTH: Period shaming, poverty and discrimination affect women and girls' physical and mental well-being.

EDUCATION: Fear of stigmatization along with limited access to menstrual hygiene supplies, water, disposal facilities and private, clean bathrooms negatively impact girls' school attendance and performance.

EMPLOYMENT & LIVELIHOOD: Policies that perpetuate stigmas, poor workplace conditions, and unsupportive labor laws, such as inflexible working hours or menstruation leave, can impact not only women's economic opportunities, but also the country as a whole.

What could happen if they continued to invest in solutions to menstrual poverty?

- Affordable and tax-free sustainable sanitary products;
- Wider access to menstrual hygiene management and sanitation facilities;
- Better workplace policies inclusive of menstruating and menopausal women;
- Increased access to information and education to help break the silence, stigma and taboos surrounding menstruation.



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

e) Key terms

- Menstrual dignity
- Period shaming and discrimination
- Period poverty around the world
- Menstrual hygiene management in resource poor countries
- The impacts of period poverty
- “Pink tax”
- Prejudice towards transgender individuals regarding period poverty

04. Position of involved countries

United States of America:

When we talk about menstrual poverty in the United States, it is necessary to mention the exorbitant prices for menstrual hygiene facilities found in all 35 states of the country. For this reason, these products are seen by most of the North American population as “luxury items”, especially because of the so-called “tampon tax”. Along with that, more women than men live in poverty in the United States, estimating a number of approximately 42 women according to the 2014 Shriver Report.

Furthermore, period products cannot be purchased with food stamps, Medicaid or health insurance accounts. In 2019, a study showed that



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

two-thirds of the low-income women did not have enough money to buy the necessary menstrual facilities at least once a year, while one-fifth of the interviewed struggle to buy these products every month. This problem usually prevents individuals from taking care of themselves during the period of menstruation, keeping them from participating in social life, including attending school, colleges or work, for example. In addition, menstrual poverty directly affects the mental, physical health and self-esteem of those who experience it.

Beyond that, public spaces do not take into account menstrual poverty and its consequences for the homeless population. These people must take extra precautions: they often don't know if there's room to wash at night, or if shelter staff will be generously handing out pads and tampons. Incarcerated women, who make up 13 percent of the total incarcerated population, also suffer from limited and inconsistent access to menstrual products.

Despite the current alarming situation, more and more individuals and communities are working to bring about change. Congresswoman Grace Meng introduced the Menstrual Equity for All Act in March 2019. The legislature would ensure access to menstrual products for incarcerated and homeless women and allow schools to spend federal funds on menstrual products. If the bill passes, Medicaid will also have to pay for menstrual products.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

In January 2019, NHS England committed to providing free sanitary products to women and girls in hospitals. Menstrual hygiene is a basic requirement for dignified care. Local authorities across England have



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

begun providing free hygiene items for staff and users. Local authorities are receiving funding to help tackle period poverty in the most deprived areas, whilst further funding is being invested to improve facilities and equipment in schools and to ensure access to good sanitary facilities for all children and young people who need them.

Furthermore, the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Bill requires local authorities to ensure that anyone who needs sanitary articles can obtain them free of charge. The country's 32 councils will decide what practical arrangements will be made, but they must make it "reasonably easy" and with "reasonable dignity" for "everyone who needs them" to access different types of period products.

Additionally, in September 2019, Derry City & Strabane District Council became the first local authority in Northern Ireland to offer free sanitary products in some public buildings. Besides that, in December 2020, the Northern Ireland executive, confirmed access to free sanitary products for all schools.

Finally, that about 10% of girls in the UK have been unable to afford period products; 15% have struggled to afford them; and 19% have changed to a less suitable product due to cost, according to research.

New Zealand:

According to BBC News, all schools in New Zealand started to offer free period products from June 2021, in an attempt to fight directly against the barriers provided by menstrual poverty to vulnerable social groups. The initiative began when authorities became



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

concerned that some female students were skipping classes because they could not afford products such as tampons and pads. The move follows a successful pilot program in 15 schools last year.

New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said in an interview to BBC News: "Young people should not miss out on their education because half of the population lives a normal life." Still, according to the politician, one in 12 young people in the country was out of school because of period poverty, meaning people on low incomes could not afford or have access to suitable period products.

She also stated that offering free period products was a way for the government to tackle poverty, increase school attendance and "make a positive impact on children's well-being". The scheme will cost the New Zealand government NZ\$25 (£13m, \$18m) between 2021 and 2024.

People's Republic of China:

Very low prices have already been noticed in Chinese physical and online markets that sell menstrual hygiene products. In 2020, a viral post by a Chinese resident showed a pack of 100 brand-less package free sanitary napkins being sold in Taobao, a very influential shop in the country, for just 22 yuan (approximately \$3), one-fifth of the standard market price. In the comments, questions were raised regarding the dubious quality possibly presented by the product due to its ultra-low cost. The user who shared her experience stated that she would like to have the option of purchasing menstrual facilities whose quality is adequate, but she did not have the necessary financial conditions to do so.



The discussions of Taobao's supplies confirmed that its buyers include rural women in remote areas, cancer patients and young students with financial disabilities. Therefore, this already fragile population is exposed daily to the use of products whose quality can pose risks to their health, this is because they do not have the money to invest in a better supply.

Research made by the School of Journalism at the People's University of China concluded that Chinese women spend up to 1,040 yuan (\$160) a year on sanitary napkins, considering a 13% sales tax already included. This can be seen as a very high cost, especially for the 610 million people in China (as of 2020) who still earn less than 1,000 yuan (\$154) per month

Last year, China declared victory in eradicating extreme poverty. However, it is important to discuss menstrual poverty in the context of relative poverty, where some people are unable to participate actively in society or benefit from activities and experiences that most people take for granted. Viewers of many social media posts admitted that they had never questioned the cost of menstrual products, but after reading the discussion realized that these products were out of reach for many. Some discussions have focused on whether hygiene products should be tax-free or free for women in need, as in some other countries.

United Mexican States:

Of the 127 million people in Mexico, 44% or 56 million live below the poverty line. Poverty often means a lack of shelter and food and not having the necessary resources to manage monthly menstruation.



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

Without adequate sanitation to manage menstruation, girls miss school and women miss work, along with other opportunities to overcome poverty.

In addition to lack of menstrual products, missing school, work, and other opportunities, girls who suffer from menstrual poverty may also experience poor mental health. The limited ability to obtain menstrual products can lead to anxiety, depression, and feelings of shame.

In March 2021, the lower chamber in Mexico approved a law (the Menstruación Digna Law) to provide female sanitary products, such as tampons, pads and menstrual cups, free of charge in schools. The law still requires the Mexican Senate's approval and the intention is to strengthen menstrual education to fight misinformation and bullying against menstruating people.

Beyond this law, in January 2021, the ban on plastic applicators in Mexico further exacerbated the issue of period poverty for girls and women. For those in the lowest income level in Mexico, menstrual health accounts for up to 5% of their monthly expenses and a large group of women in Mexico City also say that they cannot purchase tampons on e-commerce sites.

Last but not least, pinning menstrual health against environmentalism is dangerous to overall reproductive health and may have the adverse effect of worsening period poverty in the city. A month before Scotland became the first country to make menstrual products free, Mexico struck down a bill to eliminate the 16 percent tax on menstrual products, one of the highest of its kind in the world. The sustainable menstrual products such as the cup, reusable pads and



period underwear have higher upfront costs, which can put a burden on families, and they may not work for everyone.

Republic of Iran:

Period poverty in Iran is the result of many factors, including misunderstandings, lack of training and education, stigma and traditions, conservative religious beliefs. As "millions of women and girls continue to be denied their rights to water, sanitation, hygiene, health, education, dignity and gender equality", some are turning their attention and resources to the menstrual equality campaign.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, taboos, misunderstandings, and social and cultural restrictions affect many women's menstruation. A study of female students in western Iran found that "41.2% of girls understood that menstruation is a normal physiological process in women", which led to the inaccurate view of this normal bodily function in most adolescent girls in this study. In a similar study, 48 percent of Iranian girls said they considered menstruation a disease.

Federative Republic of Brazil:

Menstrual poverty affects Brazilian women who live in conditions of poverty and vulnerability in urban and rural contexts, sometimes without access to basic sanitation services, resources for hygiene and minimal knowledge of the body. The results demonstrate negligence and lack of access to rights in much of the country.

In addition to deprivation of showers in their homes, 4 million girls



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

suffer from at least one deprivation of hygiene in schools. This includes lack of access to sanitary pads and basic facilities in schools, such as toilets and soap. Of these, almost 200,000 students are totally deprived of the minimum conditions to take care of their menstruation at school.

Brazilian girls are also in a situation of great vulnerability involving other basic services that are essential to guarantee menstrual dignity: 900,000 do not have access to piped water in their homes and 6.5 million live in houses without connection to the sewage system.

The phenomenon is affected by other variables involving racial, social and income inequality. A family with greater vulnerability and lower income tends to dedicate a smaller fraction of its budget to menstrual hygiene items, since the priority is food. According to the study, the chance of a black girl not having access to toilets is almost three times the chance of finding a white girl in the same condition. In addition, while about 24% of white girls reside in places assessed as not having sanitation services, nearly 37% of black girls live in these conditions.

Finally, the survey that covered a total of 15.5 million Brazilian girls evaluated access to water, sanitation and hygiene (known as Wash) as fundamental items to guarantee rights during the menstrual period.

Republic of India:

According to Megha Desai, president of the Desai Foundation and women's rights advocate, menstrual poverty and the stigma surrounding menstruation affect women and girls around the world, especially in India.



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

71% of Indian girls do not know what their period is until they start, and 75% of those who bleed are at risk of infection due to lack of resources. False stigma and taboos keep bloodshed from cooking, going to school or work, or even entering houses of worship. These barriers prevent girls from living lives that foster dignity for themselves and those around them. It also has a huge impact on their ability to complete school and earn a living: 23 percent of girls in India drop out of school after puberty begins.

Desai's flagship Asani Sanitary Pad program takes a unique and integrated approach, addressing all issues surrounding the period: awareness, production and distribution. The program was created by women for individuals who struggle with inequality and fragile social and financial situations, especially those who for these reasons suffer daily from menstrual poverty.

Republic of Turkey:

According to a study by support group Deep Poverty Network (DYA), eighty two percent of women in poverty in Turkey cannot access menstrual hygiene products. Besides that, The Turkish Language Institute (TDK) recently updated the definition of the word “dirty” translated as “kirli” in Turkish) to include “a woman who is menstruating”.

Consequently, menstruation is seen as a taboo. There are thousands of young women and girls in rural Turkey who work as seasonal agricultural workers. During the year, they migrate throughout the country for different harvest seasons. They work under harsh conditions while having their periods and most of them don't have



access to clean and safe sanitary products or, sometimes, not even clean water.

In conclusion, periods can be tough to deal with every month. But for those who don't have access to clean sanitary products and who are told menstruating is dirty, periods can be even tougher.

Japan:

Although Japan is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, many women struggle to obtain sanitary products for menstruation. Some women cannot afford menstrual products and the social stigma on the topic of menstruation causes women suffer in silence exacerbating the problem of menstrual poverty.

In Japan, people normally do not discuss menstruation openly, so families and the government often do not address the challenges women face related to their periods. There is also a large gender pay gap in Japan, women earn “only 73% as much as men.” Besides that, The World Economic Forum ranked Japan 120th out of 156 countries on the gender gap report. Women also face employment inequality. Overall, significantly lower wages mean women have even less money left over from the costs of rent or food to buy sanitary products.

In addition, mothers, especially single mothers, do not receive full benefits if they work part-time, making them financially insecure. With children, women must spend any extra money toward the needs of their children instead of purchasing sanitary products.

But in recent years, there have also been small steps toward ending period poverty in Japan. In March 2021, the Japanese government



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

budgeted 1.3 billion yen to help women in need of menstrual products. The government also helped local municipalities by distributing sanitary pads and tampons to the public free of charge. Moreover, there is a growing awareness of menstruation in pop culture and social media.

Furthermore, there are movements online to sign petitions to reduce the taxes. Some are hopeful that implementing menstrual education in schools will facilitate easier and more frequent conversations, thereby improving period poverty in Japan.

Lastly, according to Hikaru Tanaka, a sociologist who studies the history of menstruation, “Issues surrounding menstruation have been widely overlooked in Japanese society as women have kept quiet about their periods”. But the expert said that while the pandemic has “certainly highlighted” the issue of period poverty, it is important that “the end of the pandemic should not be the end of efforts to eliminate the problem”.

French Republic:

Topics related to period poverty and menstruation shame have gained progressively more strength and attention among the French in recent years. The high monthly costs of sanitary pads and tampons, menstruation pain and medications can pose a threat to the already extremely restricted income of individuals who find themselves in situations of poverty or even on the streets. According to Règles élémentaires, a leading charitable association fighting against period poverty in France, an estimate indicates that a woman has to spend around €10,000 to €20,000 on menstrual products throughout her life.



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

Several campaigns were launched in the early 2010s, mainly calling for lower tampon taxes in order to call for more affordable hygiene products. At the time, tampons were taxed as a luxury item at a rate of 20 percent. In 2016, France became the first country in Europe to reduce the tampon tax to 5.5%. This aligns menstrual products with other basic needs products like shampoo or toilet paper.

Republic of Guatemala:

Period poverty in Guatemala weighs heavily on the country's women and girls. The lack of access to hygiene management education and proper sanitation tools forces young girls out of school for days at a time.

However, as technology evolves and resources are found, many organizations are working to end period poverty in Guatemala and beyond, some of them are:

- *Days For Girls*: it is an organization that provides a Days For Girls Kit, education on proper self-care, training and general support for girls. Additionally, the group spreads awareness through global partnerships, mobilizing volunteer networks and working toward normalizing menstruation. The DFG Kit consists of many necessary items for a woman's period. All the products are reusable, easily washable and durable. Lastly, the impact of this institution is felt by many. Thus far, Days For Girls has touched the lives of more than 1.7 million females.



- *GRACE Project (Guatemalan Rural Adult and Children's Education)*: it is a project that aims to educate, train and help employ the Guatemalan women. The organization develops and performs workshops and home visits in which educational materials on reproductive health and local resources are provided.

In addition to education, the GRACE Project creates handmade menstruation kits. All the products are reusable, washable, and long-lasting. Last but not least, this organization continues to grow production and delivery methods through workshops in Guatemala.

- *SERniña*: it is an educational support program that works with already established educational organizations to educate young women and help end period poverty in Guatemala. The organization teaches a range of topics such as:

- Understanding Your Human Rights
- Sexual & Menstrual Health
- Financial Literacy
- Goal-setting

Ultimately, the program allows for conversations and participation in a safe space with specific lessons focused on self-advocacy, self-care and overall self-love. As a result, the program has delivered more than 400 hours of workshops to 180 girls and counting.



Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia:

In Ethiopia, menstruation is still considered highly taboo and the topic is rarely discussed or taught in schools. This leads to stigma and shame for many girls that are worsened by the difficulty of obtaining sanitary products such as pads and tampons. In fact, 75% of Ethiopian women and girls do not have access to proper menstrual products and 25% cannot afford to use any sanitary products during their period, often resorting to using makeshift products such as dry grass or newspaper.

This social stigma and poor hygiene surrounding menstruation create a barrier for young women receiving their education in Ethiopia. Throughout the country, 17% of girls have been forced to miss school due to the inability to properly manage their periods, although this number is closer to 50% in some impoverished rural areas.

To combat period poverty in Ethiopia, local organizations are stepping up to fight the stigma and develop affordable menstrual hygiene products, some of them are:

- *Mariam Seba Sanitary Products Factory*: this factory trains and employs local women to create washable, reusable sanitary pads that cost up to 90% less than average disposable pads. With proper care, the pads can last up to two years, making them more environmentally and financially sustainable for impoverished Ethiopian women.
- *Dignity Period*: it is an organization that works to increase access to menstrual supplies and education in the Tigray and Afar regions of northern Ethiopia. This organization works in



partnership with the Mariam Seba Sanitary Products Factory to create greater accessibility to menstrual products. They also work with Mekelle University in northern Ethiopia to hold menstrual health training and workshops for both male and female students.

- *Noble Cup*: it is the first Ethiopian menstrual cup brand and provides a safe, affordable option for women suffering from period poverty in Ethiopia. These products can last up to five years even with limited access to water or sanitation, making them financially sustainable in the long term. Noble Cup distributes these menstrual products and holds workshops with the slogan “Every Queen Bleeds” that teach girls about menstrual health and safety as well as female biology.

Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

In Pakistan, menstruation is seen as making women impure and dirty. As a result, period poverty there extends beyond just the financial discrepancies that hinder women from having access to proper menstrual products and extends into a “social period poverty” wherein women are deprived of education about menstruation.

U-Report found that 49% of young women in Pakistan have little to no knowledge of periods before their first period. Moreover, many women use rags and share these rags and menstrual clothes with family members, but sharing these rags can increase the risk of urinary infections and other health conditions.



Recently, many people have taken the initiative to work toward mitigating period poverty in Pakistan. One such tool has been apps like Girlythings, an app that allows women with disabilities to get period products delivered straight to their door. Their products include an “urgent kit,” which contains essentials such as disposable underwear, pads and bloodstain remover.

Another such tool to fight period poverty in Pakistan has been initiatives like the Menstrual Hygiene Innovation Challenge. This project, launched by UNICEF WASH and U-Report, plans to encourage young men and women to pitch their projects to educate their local communities on menstruation.

Lastly, period poverty is a prevalent problem in Pakistan, affecting women from both a financial and a social point of view. That is why, people must begin to change the conversation around periods to ensure that all women in Pakistan can access menstruation information and menstrual products.

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela:

Women and girls fleeing Venezuela's economic and political crisis are forced to manage their periods without basic hygiene products. As many as 2 million Venezuelan teenage girls and women may not be able to afford dignified menstruation, with serious consequences for their health and well-being. Most also travel long distances before reaching neighboring countries such as Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, without adequate clean water, sanitation and, in many cases, toilet paper.



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

The situation in Venezuela is alarming for those earning the minimum wage: a pack of sanitary pads can cost more than 25% of a month's salary, while a box of 40 tampons can cost as much as three months' salary. According to official Venezuelan government data, the minimum monthly salary is 400,000 Venezuelan bolivars (about \$150). Lack of clean water also directly affects girls' school attendance: according to the Venezuelan National Institute of Statistics, 28% of schoolchildren had to miss classes because of this reason.

Republic of Peru:

Indigenous girls in rural areas live in the most extreme poverty and are the least educated group in Peru. These girls face many constraints in accessing education. Girls in rural areas have lower enrollment rates and higher repetition rates than boys. Adolescence is especially difficult because girls face many risks during this time: once menstruation begins, completing primary education is a daunting challenge, with limited opportunities to progress to secondary school.

Considering the promotion of the right to education without stigma in educational centers, the Peruvian Ministry of Education invested 165 million soles in school hygiene kits, including menstrual hygiene products, to raise awareness and reduce demand for these essentials.

Lebanese Republic:

Lebanon's financial downfall, which began in late 2019, has seen the local currency lose around 90 percent of its value. The UN estimates that around three in four of Lebanon's 6.8 million people are living in



poverty, a drastic increase from around 50 percent in 2020.

Moreover, those who have periods shoulder an extra burden: the price of sanitary pads. With no other options in sight, many have been forced to find alternatives, such as using newspapers, old cloth or tissue paper. All are very unhygienic and cause health issues that they cannot afford to treat, according to the co-founder of the Dawrati initiative Line Masri.

Finally, reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the deadly Beirut port explosion, and a dire economy, Lebanese women have now been forced to deal with a 500 percent increase in the prices of menstrual products, according to the Lebanese non-governmental organization (NGO) Fe-Male.

Russian Federation:

When looking at an overview of poverty in Russia, recent data published by Statista indicate that in the second quarter of 2021, approximately 18 million people in the country lived under the poverty line. Additionally, the Russian females represent 54% of the total population, circa 78.8 million people. It is important to note that the country has a very conservative policy and does not recognize the transgender population as existing and dignified.

Even today, Russia deals with the absence of an accessible procedure of legal gender recognition. For this reason, it is difficult to estimate how many individuals in general suffer from period poverty in the country, but analyzing the facts just mentioned, it is correct to say that a large part of the Russian population lacks menstrual facilities.



Besides, the female labor force participation rate in the country consisted of almost 55% in 2019. Taking into account the social and financial barriers that period poverty can lead to, it is possible to affirm that menstrual poverty directly affects the dynamics of the Russian economy in recent years, which has been especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Republica of Kenya:

For many young girls in Kenya, properly managing a menstrual cycle with adequate sanitary products is a luxury. Roughly one million Kenyan girls miss out on education each month because they are unable to afford menstrual products. Girls and women are unable to work or participate in education for days at a time, placing them at a disadvantage in comparison to their male peers.

Besides that, research shows that 65% of Kenyan women and girls are unable to afford basic sanitary pads. Consequently, girls often rely on the men in their lives for period products and some girls engage in transactional sex in order to secure sanitary products, perpetuating a patriarchal cycle of reliance and exploitation.

Some solutions to fight period poverty in Kenya are:

1. Increasing the access to sanitary products;
2. Proper policy implementation (the government must properly implement policies that aim to combat period poverty);
3. Involving the private sector (what would also help the Kenyan government implement its policies better);



PSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

4. More education initiatives (breaking the silence by educating pubescent teens and adolescents on the importance of menstrual health will encourage them to approach their teachers, parents and guardians for further guidance);
5. Support During the COVID-19 pandemic, which had indirect effects on period poverty.

Lastly, by focusing on such solutions to fight period poverty in Kenya, the Kenyan government and nonprofit organizations can empower and uplift impoverished Kenyan women. Reducing period poverty in Kenya ensures that the lives of girls and women are not disrupted simply due to the inability to afford menstrual products.

Swiss Confederation:

There are no statistics on period poverty in Switzerland, but, according to an investigation carried out by RTS in February 2020, the cost of menstruation was estimated at around CHF 4,500 over a lifetime. This is a major expense and comes on top of other forms of economic discrimination affecting women specifically, such as wage inequality and the “pink tax”. Some groups in the population, such as young people, those on low incomes and/or who are homeless, female migrants and LGBTIQ+ people, are particularly affected because they tend to suffer from several discrimination factors. The reasons behind period poverty are clearly economic, but not exclusively, since access to information and social context (menstrual taboos) also play a part.



In Switzerland, some projects are being planned, particularly around menstruation and menstrual taboos. For example, the City of Geneva has launched a pilot project with vending machines containing free menstrual products, primarily targeting those most at risk of period poverty: young people and those on a low income.

This will see 53 vending machines with organic cotton sanitary towels installed in early September at 30 sites in the city. Various community centres, libraries, sports centres, facilities for people in need and women's and LGBTIQ+ groups are involved in the pilot scheme, which will be reviewed after a year to decide if it should be extended and possibly made permanent.

05. Purpose of the council

According to the Global Menstrual Collective, menstrual health can then be defined as “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”. In this sense, UN Women aims, in terms of the threat posed by menstrual poverty for a large part of the world's population, that the pillars that sustain menstrual dignity are achieved. As examples of these, can be listed: access to information about menstruation and related topics; the ability to care for themselves during menstruation; access to water, sanitation and hygiene services; the ability to receive a diagnosis for menstrual cycle disorders and access to healthcare; a positive, supportive environment in which to make informed decisions and the ability to participate in all aspects of life, such as going to work and school.



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

06. Guiding questions

- What causes period poverty?
- What are the impacts of period poverty on the life and health of people who menstruate (girls, women, transgender men...)?
- How to fight period poverty? Which projects already exist and are implemented?
- How to help the most unequal countries?
- Why does period poverty increase gender inequality?
- Why is period poverty a public health problem?
- How important are public policies to resolve issues related to period poverty?
- Are menstrual products considered luxury items in your country? What justifies this taxation?

07. Bibliography

Tip for first timers: <https://bestdelegate.com/>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2019/10/infographic-periods>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development>



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs>

<https://www.unfpa.org/menstruationfaq#What%20is%20UNFPA%20doing>

<https://borgenproject.org/period-poverty-in-mexico/>

<https://www.thelily.com/a-city-without-plastic-tampons-mexico-citys-new-policy-could-make-period-poverty-worse/>

<https://borgenproject.org/fighting-period-poverty-in-ethiopia/>

<https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/media/3096/file/MenstrualHygieneManagementinEthiopia.pdf>

<https://borgenproject.org/tag/period-poverty-in-guatemala/>

<https://borgenproject.org/period-poverty-in-pakistan/>

<https://ahvalnews.com/turkey-women/period-poverty-upwards-80-percent-turkey-report?amp>

<https://assembly.malala.org/stories/menstruation-rural-turkey>

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/9/9/lebanese-women-fight-period-poverty-with-eco-friendly-alternatives>

<https://english.alarabiya.net/amp/features/2021/07/07/Lebanese-women-struggle-to-afford-menstrual-products-as-economic-crisis-worsens>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-51629880>

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/womens-health/promoting-menstrual-wellbeing/period-poverty>



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

<https://borgenproject.org/period-poverty-in-japan/>

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/04/841c8bb9edcc-focus-efforts-underway-to-end-period-poverty-in-japan-despite-hurdles.html>

<https://www.geneve.ch/en/actualites/period-poverty-city-geneva-takes-action>

<https://borgenproject.org/fight-period-poverty-in-kenya/>

<https://borgenproject.org/period-poverty-in-kenya/>

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/period-poverty-everything-you-need-to-know/>

<https://policylab.chop.edu/blog/period-poverty-public-health-crisis-we-dont-talk-about>

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/period-poverty>

<https://bmcmenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5>

<https://www.globalmenstrualcollective.org>

<https://menstrualhygieneday.org/global-menstrual-collective/>

<https://thecaseforher.medium.com/the-global-menstrual-health-and-hygiene-collective-joint-statement-for-csw-64-7f4b2985d630>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2020/02/09/to-reduce-poverty-russia-must-ensure-more-inclusive-growth>

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-un-goodwill-ambassador-wants-to-end-taboo-and-stigma-of-menstruation/31121005.html>



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24357827>

https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global_POVEQ_RUS.pdf

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1033016/russia-number-of-people-under-poverty/>

<https://www.rbth.com/lifestyle/330062-why-are-there-so-many-women-in-russia>

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CESCR/Shared%20Documents/RUS/INT_CESCR_CSS_RUS_28825_E.pdf

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/publication/rer>

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/ending_period_shame_and_poverty_in_asia

<https://www.nursing.upenn.edu/details/news.php?id=1545>

<https://plan-international.org/news/2021-02-08-venezuelan-girls-and-women-crisis-due-period-poverty>

<https://healtheducationresources.unesco.org/library/documents/menarche-and-its-implications-educational-policy-peru>

<https://girlup.org/voices/say-it-like-it-is-menstrual-poverty-in-latin-american-countries>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56107816>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-55150671>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-51629880>



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/desai-foundation-period-poverty-india-covid-19/>

<https://www.unicef.org/brazil/comunicados-de-imprensa/no-brasil-milhoes-de-meninas-carecem-de-infraestrutura-e-itens-basicos-para-cuidados-menstruais>

<https://borgenproject.org/period-poverty-in-iran/>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1243493/period-poverty-worldwide-covid/>



POSMUN 2022
Porto Seguro Model
United Nations