



## 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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