

Why Can't They Just "Go With The Flow?"



Girls, Women and Menstruation

More than 800 million women and girls menstruate every day – yet menstruation remains shrouded in silence and myths making females seem inferior to males. Women and girls miss out on education, work, and other opportunities when they cannot manage their cycles with dignity and normalcy.

Around the world, nearly 90% of girls and women lack access to affordable, sustainable hygiene products:



In many countries, these products cannot be found in the traditional marketplace

When products are available, many women cannot afford them (in some countries cost is equal to two weeks' salary)



Safe disposal for manufactured products is not readily available and presents environmental challenges

During their flow, girls and women may experience:

reduced performance in school (if a student)



lost employment, wages and productivity (if a worker)



school absences (up to 5 days monthly - more than a month a year)



lack of sanitary products



increased rates of dropout (direct correlation with school missed)



prejudice based on menstruation taboos, including that girls and women:



whose menstrual cloth is seen are cursed and that such cloth can make another person sterile

are not allowed to touch or milk cows for fear that the cows will get sick and die

cannot be near shared utensils as menstrual blood is believed to cause death of family members

are not allowed to drink milk from cows for fear they will contaminate the herd

can't plant groundnuts or other crops for fear that their touch will result in a poor crop

who are known to own a menstrual cloth will become cursed

When a girl or woman in a developing country has a "typical" flow, she may still suffer a weeklong absence from school or work due to:



Lack of sanitary products



Lack of toilet facilities or privacy to address personal hygiene needs



Only 17% of girls in Burkina Faso have a place in school to change their sanitary materials



When a girl or woman tries to stop her flow using rudimentary materials (soil, leaves, sand or dirt), she may become ill and further experience:



chronic pain and susceptibility to infection, including bacterial vaginosis



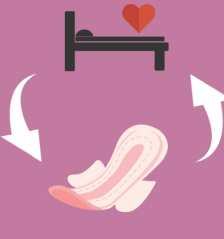
an inability to ward off sexually transmitted infections



sterility, miscarriage and pre-term labor

When girls and women try to "go with the flow" they may:

Have to engage in transactional sex to pay for expensive hygiene products



Face safety challenges while seeking private spaces to address hygiene needs

We Can Change This: What Do Women and Girls Need for Their Health and Protection?



Clean and private places with water and soap at school, in the workplace, and at home



Affordable, accessible, sustainable hygiene products, created for women and girls of limited resources



Access to health-related programming and education



www.UhuruPad.org