

## Menstrual hygiene: A human rights issue and a barrier to gender equality

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### Abstract

Menstruation, which is a normal biological process for most women and girls, should not, in theory and in practice, act as a barrier to gender equality; and yet menstrual hygiene has emerged as an under-recognised barrier to human rights. Inadequate water and sanitation, and the taboos and shame associated with menstruation not only affects the way in which women and girls feel about and react to menstruation, but it also makes it difficult to cope with it openly on a practical level. By approaching menstrual hygiene management as a human rights concern impacting various aspects of a woman and girls' life, this paper seeks to set out the necessity of effectively managing menstrual hygiene in the realisation of their human rights. This paper further explores how the biological fact of menstruation, the necessity of managing menstruation and society's response to both is linked with women and girls' human rights and gender equality. It further explains how by ensuring that women and girls enjoy certain human rights it can in turn help ensure that they can manage their menstrual hygiene adequately, with normalcy and dignity. By focusing on human rights and gender equality, the research, conclusions and recommendations can be used to support policy arguments as to why governments should give MHM the importance it deserves.

**Keywords:** discrimination, equality, gender equality, menstruation, menstrual hygiene, stigmas, sanitation, water equality, wash.

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