



PRESS RELEASE

28TH MAY 2023- MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY

The Women's Probono Initiative joins the rest of the world in commemorating Menstrual Hygiene Day (MHD). This is an annual awareness day celebrated on May 28th to raise awareness about the importance of menstrual hygiene, to break the silence and stigma surrounding menstruation, and to engage decision-makers in increasing the political priority and catalyzing action for Menstrual Health at global and national levels. May 28th was intentionally selected to commemorate menstrual hygiene day because most women on average get their periods in 5 days, represented by the fifth month of the year (May) and their cycles tend to last 28 days (28th). In this way, May 28th is especially iconic.

Each year, a specific theme is chosen for World Menstrual Hygiene Day to focus on different aspects of menstrual hygiene management. Women and girls are still stigmatized, excluded, and discriminated against because of menstruation. This year's global theme is "**Making menstruation a normal fact of life by 2030.**" The overarching goal is to build a world where no one is held back because they menstruate by 2030. This necessitates concerted efforts from all stakeholders and against this background, the global hashtag is **#WeAreCommitted**.

While campaigning in Lango sub-region in 2015, President Museveni pledged that if elected back into power, the government would provide school-going girls with sanitary pads. This and many other commitments have been made by the government of Uganda but we are still yet to see the actualization of these commitments. Under **Article 33** of the **1995** Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, the State is obligated to give women equal status with men in society; to provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realize their full potential and advancement; to protect women and their rights, considering their unique status and natural maternal functions in society.

A review of the district development plans revealed that Menstrual Health and Hygiene is not prioritized and therefore budgeted for. However, menstrual hygiene and health are implied in different programs and therefore lose the adequate attention it would deserve from sectors. Under **Article 21(4)** of the said Constitution, the Parliament of Uganda is obligated to implement policies and programs aimed at addressing social, economic, educational, or other imbalances in society. The Government must therefore invest in menstrual health as Menstrual Health and Hygiene remains a neglected component that affects many girls and women, especially those still in school.

The Women's Probono Initiative (WPI) being an organization that promotes access to justice for women and girls in Uganda through the use of legal tools leverages on addressing challenges that hinder the realization of girls' rights by offering free legal aid services to different women in our communities and carrying out advocacy initiatives aimed at ensuring that women's participation in their social lives is not restricted. Some of the highlighted challenges that squarely fall with this year's theme are the issues of teenage pregnancy, stigma, and taboos on menstrual health management.

We hereby continue to call upon the government to honor their pledge to avail free sanitary pads to girls in schools and also remove taxes on menstrual products. Making sanitary materials affordable and accessible for women and girls will help alleviate the inequality perpetuated by period poverty in Uganda. Ending period stigma and shame requires eradicating harmful cultural norms such as taboos that depict menstruation as dirty, shameful, and as something which should be hidden. Failure to prioritize Menstrual Health as a human right has far-reaching negative impacts on the lives of young women and girls. These negative impacts include restriction of women and girls' mobility, freedom, and choices; affecting attendance and participation in school and community life; compromising their safety, and causing stress and anxiety.

We are committed to making menstruation a normal fact of life by 2030.

#WeAreCommitted
#MenstrualHygieneDay23
#Endperiodpoverty

For further enquiries kindly contact us on our toll-free line at +256(0) 800 220645 or write/email us at info@womenprobono.org