

Draft Menstrual Hygiene Policy 2023

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Consultation Feedback → Report



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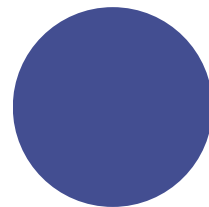
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Introduction → *& Summary*

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has released the Draft National Menstrual Hygiene Policy 2023 and invited public feedback on the draft till 30th October 2023.

As an independent non-profit organisation working to support the government in conducting public consultations, Civic Innovation Foundation worked to gather feedback from a diverse stakeholder group - on the policy.

This report captures the feedback gathered through the Foundation's web platform Civis, and it's WhatsApp channels, across diverse stakeholder groups.

69

Respondents from across the country engaged with the policy in the brief consultation period.

Policy Background & Summary:

The draft policy discussed the importance of menstrual hygiene management and the need for a comprehensive policy to address the challenges faced by those who menstruate in all rural, urban and tribal areas.



The main aims of the draft policy are:

- To ensure access to affordable and safe menstrual hygiene products
- To promote quality standards and regulatory frameworks, and provide clean and dignified menstrual hygiene facilities
- To emphasize the importance of education and awareness on menstrual hygiene
- To promote collaboration with the non-government sector and foster research and innovation

The draft outlines roles and responsibilities of a number of stakeholders to fulfill the aim and goals of the policy. It also aims to establish a National Menstrual Hygiene Committee at the National, State and District Level, to track progress and ensure the policy is implemented effectively.

The Committee would also be tasked with monitoring and regulating manufacturing and supply chain of menstrual hygiene products including procurement of products, distribution, quality and safety check of products and disposal mechanisms.

The Committee will also be responsible for regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure accountability, promote learning and drive continuous improvement in menstrual hygiene management.

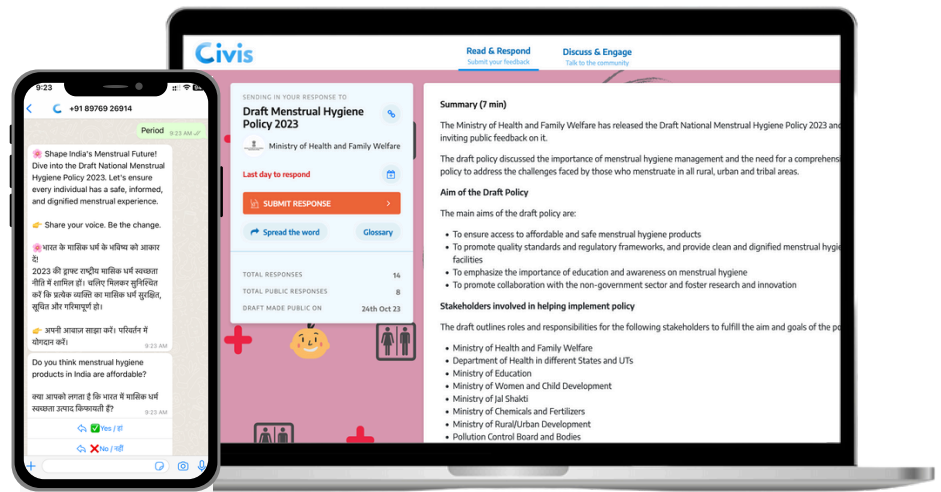
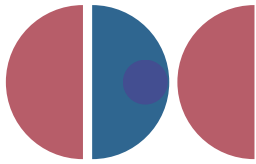
The draft recognizes the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing good menstrual hygiene, keeping in mind constraints imposed by limited mobility, cognitive capacities on self-care and the socio-cultural implications of being a menstruator with a disability.

The draft also recognises how emergencies and humanitarian take a heavier toll on those menstruating and encourages the National Disaster Management Authority to guide the development of effective relief strategies that include menstrual health management during such emergencies.

Some of these measures include allocation of adequate funds, ensuring continued supply of menstrual hygiene products, access to water and sanitation, disseminating accurate information and building capacity of relevant stakeholders like frontline responders and service providers to deal with effective menstrual hygiene management during emergencies.



Methodology



Given the nature and importance of the Policy, our team was keen to ensure maximum outreach on the draft, through an extensive, multi-channel approach.

The policy document was simplified, to ensure stakeholders with limited knowledge of law and policy were able to understand and engage with it. This summary was disseminated through Civis' website and a WhatsApp chatbot was designed to gather feedback on the policy in a simple and engaging manner. In both Hindi and English, the chatbot gathered feedback from a range of age groups and respondents across geographies.

To build greater awareness on the policy, and engage stakeholders - a video was created to build awareness about the policy.

An article about the policy was published in YouthKiAwaaz to engage youth stakeholders on the policy, and solicit their feedback. Given its relevance to the audience, this article was featured on the YouthKiAwaaz platform - garnering ample engagement.

To ensure that feedback gathered was nuanced, our team also conducted an Instagram Live conversation with Neeru Mulhotra, Country Director, Uninhibited - an organisation working closely to provide menstrual health support in 3 states of India.

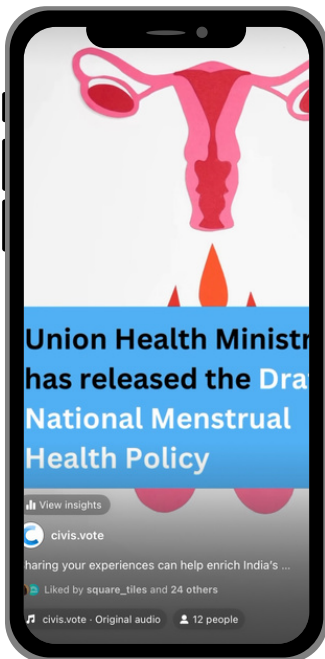
Broadening the reach to grassroots organisations, emails were also sent to community organisations and smaller brands producing menstrual health products, with the request to engage their communities on the Policy.



● Civis' WhatsApp Bot ● Civis' Platform

WhatsApp was the predominant channel for feedback collection

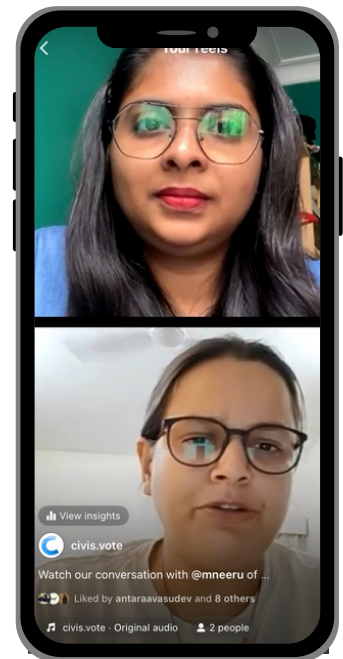
While, as pictured above - Civis' platform and WhatsApp bot were the main channels for feedback collection, a wide variety of outreach was conducted, including:



Reels made on Instagram



A featured article on YouthKiAwaaz



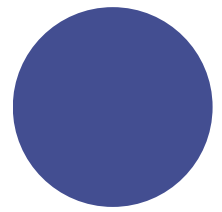
An Instagram live with experts

“ आज भी पिछड़े इलाकों व गांवों में महिलाएं इस विषय पर संकुचित है। आज भी पुरुष प्रधान लोग महिलाओं के साथ मासिक धर्म में दूरी बनाकर चलते हैं इनका रसोईघर में प्रवेश वर्जित है। महिलाएं आज भी फटे पुराने कपड़ों, घासफूस व पतियों का ही उपयोग करती हैं आज भी महिलाएं व युवतियां मासिक धर्म को लेकर स्वस्थ व चिंतित नहीं हैं। 80 फीसदी महिलाएं गुप्त समस्याओं से ग्रस्त हैं शादी के बाद पति द्वारा ही उनकी सुध ली जाती है। आज भी हमारे गांव में जब सुबह तालाब की ओर सैर पर जाता हूं तो थोच जाती महिलाएं सुबह के वक्त ही औसतन मासिक धर्म में उपयोग किए कपड़ों को झाड़ी में फेंकती नज़र आती हैं। उस रास्ते में सैकड़ों कपड़े पड़े हुए दिख जाते हैं। इन सबको खुली आंखों से मैं रोज देखता हूं। स्कूलों और आंगनबाड़ी में भले ही निःशुल्क इनका वितरण हो मगर पुराने ख्यालात की महिलाएं आज भी इस धर्म को अपनी नियति मान कर ही बोझ के रूप में ढों रही हैं। सरकार को आज भी इनके बारे में सोचकर फैसले लेने चाहिए, अभी भी बदलने और बदलवाने की बहुत जरूरत है। धन्यवाद”

A respondent reacts to the policy



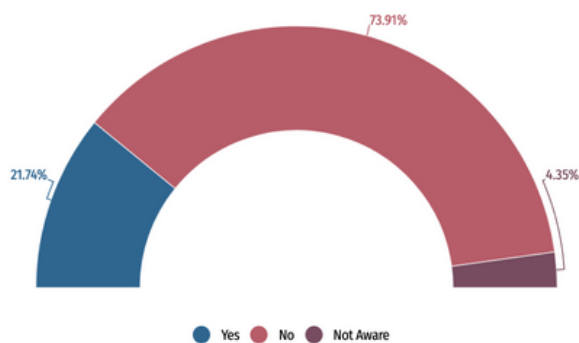
Social media posts and emailers



Quantitative → feedback

A number of questions were asked to respondents on key themes in the policy document, these responses were characteristic of trends currently prevalent, and gaps which needed to be addressed:

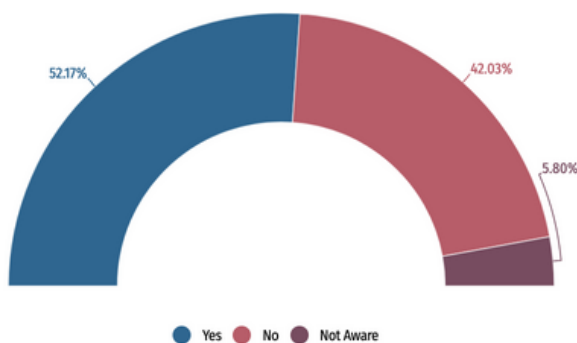
Question: Do you think menstrual hygiene products in India are affordable?



Question: Do you know if there are any safe modes of disposing of menstrual hygiene products in the area that you live?



Question: Have you or anyone you know had to miss school or work due to lack of access to menstrual hygiene products or facilities?



Question: Do you feel there is sufficient awareness and education around menstruation and menstrual hygiene in your community?



Insights → *& Findings*



The 69 responses cover a range of issues relating to menstrual health and hygiene.

The broad areas of feedback include: Dealing with social taboos like non-entry of women into temples and the kitchen during their period, improving access to traditional as well as alternative products like menstrual cups, improving education and awareness about menstrual health and hygiene, among others.

39/65 responses said that access to affordable or even free menstrual products is necessary.

Some responses suggest interesting policy measures like subsidizing menstrual products, and making them tax-free to do so. Free menstrual products can also be made available at public places, events, educational institutions etc. according to 11 respondents, with a special focus on making it available to economically weaker sections of society.

11 responses also specifically stated that there was a need to focus on 'Green Menstruation' and promote access to as well R&D in environmentally sustainable period products like menstrual cups, etc. Here an important point raised by one respondent was that such products are not available as widely as their non-sustainable counterparts. Therefore, they stated that sustainable products need to be made commercially accessible.





Another important addition is building better infrastructure including access to sanitation. 12 respondents highlighted that they thought access to clean bathrooms and water was inadequate and needs to be improved, while 17 respondents want to see an improvement in the disposal methods available for menstrual hygiene products like pads and tampons. One respondent pointed out that menstruators in their village usually throw their menstrual pads in the bushes and do not access safe disposal methods due to both lack of availability and social taboos.

Addressing social taboos was also seen as important by a total of 19 responses, with 3 raising the issue of non-entry into temples during a menstrual period as something to be dealt with specifically.

28 responses emphasised on the importance of education about menstrual hygiene and health, particularly in schools as well as rural areas across the country. Some also thought awareness campaigns should be for the public at large, along with focusing on menstruation for persons with disabilities. Respondents particularly stressed on it being gender-inclusive and that education needs to be provided to both menstruators and non-menstruators.

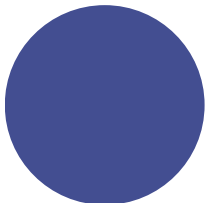
Some other suggestions included having more inclusive HR & Leave policies that include menstrual leaves (5 responses), however an interesting observation was made by one respondent on how menstrual leave could potentially deter organisations from hiring women. Instead the respondent suggested that instead a duty can be imposed on employers to provide proper menstrual hygiene products and sanitation facilities.

Other suggestions include having free period products dispensers in public bathrooms (3 responses) and public places like schools, events, etc. (3 responses), penalties for educational institutions who don't have accessible toilets and other basic amenities (1 response), and having better safety facilities for waste pickers who deal with menstrual waste (1 response).

In addition to their suggestions on the draft policy, respondents were also asked about their experiences related to being a menstruator or knowing any.

On the affordability of menstrual hygiene products, 15 respondents think the products are currently affordable, 51 think they're unaffordable and 3 are not aware.

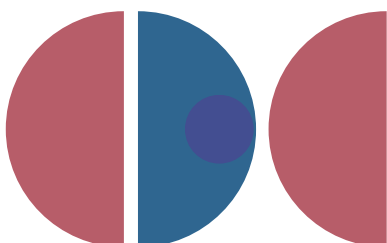




40 respondents said there were no safe disposal methods around their locality, 16 said there were and 13 were not aware.

When asked if them or anyone they knew had to miss school or work due to lack of access to menstrual hygiene facilities, 36 said yes, 29 said no and 4 said they weren't aware.

56 respondents think there is not enough awareness and education about menstrual hygiene in their communities, while 13 believe the status quo has sufficient awareness.



Feedback collated with support from:

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