

Health

starts with hygiene

**Comparative
analysis of
feasibility and
accessibility of
MHM products
in low-income
communities
of Bangladesh**



In Bangladesh, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) remains a significant challenge, especially for low-income communities. This study examines the feasibility and accessibility of various MHM products and offers actionable recommendations for ensuring equitable menstrual health.

➔ **47% consider pads affordable, while cloth is the primary choice for 91% of low-income women for its negligible cost.**

➔ **Average monthly expenditure on MHM is highest among rural adolescents (BDT 117 / SEK 11), and lowest among urban low-income women (BDT 100 / SEK 9).**

Current practices

Product usage trends

- Sanitary pads are used by 71% at least once in last three cycles, with higher adoption amongst rural women (69%) than urban (60%), and slightly more by urban adolescents (87%) than rural (85%).
- Prevailing reliance on cloth: 44% of urban women, 39% of rural women, 40% of RMG workers, 21% of urban adolescents, and 16% of rural adolescents still using it for MHM.
- Very few people use menstrual cups (0.17%) and reusable pads (0.4%).

Awareness and education

- 98% of respondents are aware of disposable sanitary pads and cloth, but awareness of reusable pads (27%) and menstrual cups (13%) remains low.
- Families dominate information channels for pads, while NGOs and media play key roles in introducing reusable options and menstrual cups.

Health and hygiene

- 18% of cloth users reported concerns of skin irritation and infections, while a few of sanitary pad users experienced mild discomfort or odour. Menstrual cups, although minimally adopted, reported no adverse health effects.



Scan the QR code

to learn more about the project

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Recommendations

Improving accessibility and affordability

- Subsidise products and mandate lower MRP:** Increase subsidies for MHM products, and reduce upfront costs instead of the current practice of increasing the quantity of pads for the same maximum retail price (MRP).
- Promote sustainable alternatives:** Expand NGO campaigns to distribute reusable pads and provide demonstrations on their use.
- Support local manufacturing:** Offer grants to local producers for developing affordable and eco-friendly products, like banana fiber-based pads.

Infrastructure and workplace support

- Develop community facilities:** Build private, ventilated spaces for washing and drying menstrual hygiene materials, particularly in rural and factory settings.
- Enhance waste management:** Establish biodegradable disposal systems to reduce environmental harm.
- Advocate for factory policies:** Ensure that ready-made garments (RMG) factories provide MHM products preferred by employees, and comfort facilities such as warm compress for cramps.

Health and hygiene

- Align initiatives with national strategies:** Align current MHM initiatives with Bangladesh's national menstrual hygiene strategy.
- Public-private partnerships:** Collaborate with NGOs, manufacturers, and government bodies to expand coverage and resources.
- Monitor implementation:** Introduce mechanisms to evaluate the impact of policies and programmes.