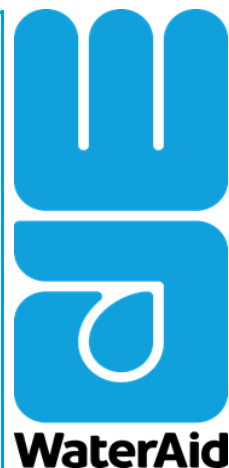


## Period poverty in the UK and around the world

### Background:

WaterAid is an international not-for-profit organisation, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. Every month, 1.8 billion people across the world have a period – but millions have to manage theirs without essential clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene knowledge. Not having access to these can be both embarrassing and unsafe – and can have far-reaching impacts for women and girls, acting as a disadvantage in their lives as they are forced to stay home every month, missing vital chances to go to school, earn a living, and to take control of their futures.



### Time needed:

15 minutes

### Learning Objective:

To understand that people all over the world have periods in common and to think about how period poverty prevents people living a fulfilled life.

### Materials:

A printed copy of the statistics from the UK and the stories from the rest of the world.

### Aim:

To help students understand that period poverty is something that affects both the UK and abroad.

### What to do:

1. Split students into small groups (3 or 4) and give each group a period poverty story from somewhere in the world.
2. Explain that people around the world have periods with the same questions and symptoms, and have to overcome taboos and myths. In order to do this, it is important to talk openly about periods and ensure everyone has access to period products and decent toilets, and understands how to stay clean and healthy during their period. When people have these things they are able to continue with their everyday life as normal, wherever they live in the world.
3. Ask for a show of hands if students think that period poverty is a problem here in the UK.
4. Following this ask students to sit with their eyes closed.
5. As you read the UK statistics, after each fact, ask students to put their thumbs up if they think the statement is true, and thumbs down if they think it's false. Tell students the proportions of the class with their thumbs up, or thumbs down.
6. After reading all the statements, explain that they are in fact all true.  
Top tip: If the group struggles to understand what number of people they represent, this could be done by asking 1 in 4 of the group to stand to explain 1 in 4 people.
7. Explain that their voices matter and they can take action to improve the situation for people in the UK and abroad, this is called social action. Social action is taking practical action in the service of others.
8. Explain that if they want to take social action to tackle period poverty in the UK, they could do a collection of period products for local foodbanks. They could also help tackle period stigma by trying to break the taboo and stigma of periods.

# UK Period Poverty - Statistics



**Almost 1/4 of people (24%) in the UK say they or their family have struggled to afford period products.**

**2 in 5 (41%) of menstruating students worry about their period being a financial burden to parents or caregivers.**

**1 in 5 (20%) cope by using makeshift materials, such as loo roll or sponges.**

**1 in 4 (26%) are wearing period products for longer than they should, risking their health.**

**1 in 6 (15%) have missed school or work during their period.**

**Nearly 1/3 of people worry they won't be able to afford them in the future.**

# Global stories

Afsana



Period poverty is not just about not having money to buy period products. For some students across the world, they don't have the basics of clean water and toilets to help them to stay clean on their periods.

Afsana is 14 years old and lives in a village in Bangladesh. Her school didn't have access to clean water or decent toilets which made it difficult for her to manage her period. This meant she often had to stay at home when she was on her period and so she missed lessons every month.

Can you imagine how difficult it would be to manage your period with no clean water or a toilet available? Here she talks about how access to clean water and decent toilets has made life easier when she has her period as she can stay clean and not miss out on her education.

"It's been 3 years since I started studying here. We had no clean toilets before, and no facilities for drinking safe water or washing our hands. My classmates and I always avoided the only toilet, which was unhygienic and many students, including me, did not come to school regularly because of our periods.

Now we have a hygienic toilet, we regularly attend class. WaterAid built two separate spaces for boys and girls, which is very helpful and helped get rid of many diseases. We no longer worry about using the toilet and so school attendance rate and grades have increased dramatically. It will be good if all schools have these facilities, so they can continue their education without interruption or sickness."

# Global stories

At Soumiata's school in Burkina Faso WaterAid helped refurbish a latrine block at the school, built a menstrual hygiene management cabin (place for students to change their protective materials during menstruation) and taught teachers and students about good hygiene, reproductive health and good sanitation. The students started a hygiene club. Soumiata, aged 9, is the president of the club which works to share lessons with their school, families and community so everyone could benefit from improved health, education and wellbeing.

"This year I am the president of the hygiene club. I'm glad I was chosen. As president, my role is to be in charge of the hygiene, sanitation and menstrual hygiene management in school. Every last Wednesday of the month, we clean the school, toilets and borehole. All the pupils help, with the support of the teachers and the headmaster."

"I know what periods are. I attended a class on them with my club. When your period happens, you protect yourself with protective materials so that the blood doesn't spill. After the training I told my parents and at school we talked to the other students who did not go to the training. We told them about menstruation and let them know what to do if their period comes and who to go to for support."

"I use the new school toilet. It is good. There is a place set up for students who have their periods to go there to change. It will be good for the students because instead of going home during their periods they can change and come back to class quickly so they don't miss class."

**Soumiata**

