

# PERIOD POVERTY

## WHAT IS IT AND HOW CAN YOU HELP?

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### **What: is period poverty?**

Period poverty is a less talked-about, but important type of poverty. It affects women and those who menstruate across the globe, who cannot access necessary period products because they simply do not have the financial or educational means.

## Why: is this an issue?

Period poverty at its worst is both life ruining and entirely dangerous for those with periods all over the world. Without access to the proper products, many women have to **miss out on their education** for the duration of their periods, as they have no means to contain the bleeding while at school. Lack of the proper sanitary / period products, as well as lack of education on the area, can also result in **illnesses and infections** developing due to not having the means to remain hygienic during a period.

## Where: Is this happening?

All over the world! According to Benenden Health, in the UK **one in ten women are affected by period poverty** <sup>1</sup>. That means a massive 10% of those who menstruate are being massively affected monthly for something completely out of their control. In many African countries, only **27% of women have access to sanitary products**, meaning the vast majority of them are victims of period poverty with no means of help otherwise. It has even been reported that in countries such as Kenya, women have been forced to trade sanitary products such as pads and tampons for **sexual favours against their will**. However, it is not just these countries that period poverty is a mass issue. In highly developed countries such as the US, **one in five girls have missed school because of period poverty**. This means that to no fault of their own, these girls are having to miss out on their education due to not having access to what should be a basic human right. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Benenden health, Period poverty in the UK: Bloody Big Problem. Accessed at: [https://www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/womens-rights/period-poverty?gclid=CjwKCAjw14uVBhBEEiwAaufYx03OxEpDTF8xTpgq5APwf4wNvcnUH\\_bMhR4rQy7HjGohXuA6A24HdhoCEIoQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/womens-rights/period-poverty?gclid=CjwKCAjw14uVBhBEEiwAaufYx03OxEpDTF8xTpgq5APwf4wNvcnUH_bMhR4rQy7HjGohXuA6A24HdhoCEIoQAvD_BwE)

<sup>2</sup> Global citizen, 4 Questions About Period Poverty: Answered, Accessed at: <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/period-poverty-mental-health-covid-19-solutions/>

## How: can you help?

In countries such as Scotland, period products are finally free, meaning period poverty has significantly decreased, causing a large step towards gender equality across the country.<sup>3</sup> Our goal universally should be to make period products free to everyone with periods globally, and to help those without free products to gain access to them where needed. This can be done in a numerous ways:

### Awareness

Despite the concept of “poverty” being commonly known to many, period poverty is rarely discussed. This could be for numerous reasons, including:

- It being viewed as a lesser issue due to biases against women
- The stigma around period poverty and periods in general. Periods are still considered to be a taboo subject amongst any who see it as “gross” or who believe it should not be discussed publicly despite it being a natural and common occurrence
- Lack of education on the issue

In order to change this however, it is crucial to make as many people aware of the issue as possible. By talking to who you can, whenever you can about the issue of period poverty, the stigma surrounding it can be reduced, and more people can start helping the fight against period poverty.

Even helping yourself become more aware of period poverty by learning the facts and stats can help further others' understanding of the issue and cause more people to help contribute to ending it.

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<sup>3</sup> BBC: Period poverty: Scotland first in world to make period products free. Accessed at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-51629880>

## Protest

By participation in protest or even direct contact to the government through pressure groups, there's a chance the issue of period poverty could be tackled on a governmental level. With Scotland having already made period products free, the rest of the UK could easily follow this precedent with a push from its citizens.

Protests on small levels, even within schools, can also be largely effective for people with periods on a smaller level. "Free periods" offer template letters for students to send to their school boards, requesting free products from the government, as they have every legal right to do so. Many schools in the UK sell period products in toilets, yet don't know they can get them for free from the government, or simply refuse to do so. This template can be accessed here: <https://www.freeperiods.org/>

## Donation

Although not everyone has the means to do so, a small donation where you can go a long way. Charities such as "Action Aid", "Period poverty" and "Bloody good period" all use donations to provide period products to those who are unable to buy them themselves. By donating to these charities, you can help pay for these products for those who don't have the financial means to do so.

**Where to donate:**

<p><b>Action Aid</b></p>	<p><a href="https://www.actionaid.org.uk/donate">https://www.actionaid.org.uk/donate</a></p>
<p><b>Kind Direct (partners of always sanitary products)</b></p>	<p><a href="https://www.justgiving.com/inkinddirect">https://www.justgiving.com/inkinddirect</a></p>
<p><b>IRRF</b></p>	<p><a href="https://www.irff-uk.org/girlhealth?gclid=CjwKCAjw14uVBhBEEiwAaufYx0GiAr8SD-wUa22jYg36Mtr-COPZd2YkNBiK2PylwDTIstqh4rIxPhoCFyIQAvD_BwE">https://www.irff-uk.org/girlhealth?gclid=CjwKCAjw14uVBhBEEiwAaufYx0GiAr8SD-wUa22jYg36Mtr-COPZd2YkNBiK2PylwDTIstqh4rIxPhoCFyIQAvD_BwE</a></p>
<p><b>Period poverty</b></p>	<p><a href="https://periodpoverty.enthuse.com/donate#!/">https://periodpoverty.enthuse.com/donate#!/</a></p>
<p><b>CBloody good period</b></p>	<p><a href="https://actions.bloodygoodperiod.com/d/donate">https://actions.bloodygoodperiod.com/d/donate</a></p>

Please help in ending the battle against period poverty.

Even if it is just by explaining the issue to a friend, taking these small steps towards ending this struggle are **essential** and **needed urgently**.



*Written as part of the René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights, Ambassador Programme*