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## **Key Takeaway: Policy Developments in Menstrual Health Management in India with a special focus on Delhi and Assam**

*The discussion brought together legal, policy and health experts to discuss the definition and current status of menstrual hygiene Management. Further the discussion shed light on where we currently stand with regard to access to safe menstrual hygiene products? Critically, policy frameworks were covered including what is the Government of India doing? Going beyond, we looked at what is happening on the ground in states such as Assam with a focus on women in tea gardens and an understanding of challenges.*

### ***Menstrual Health Management***

- Women and adolescent girls are using a **clean menstrual management material** to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be **changed in privacy as often as necessary** for the duration of a menstrual period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having **access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials**. They understand the **basic facts** linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort or fear.

### ***Access to Hygienic Menstrual Products***

- As per the Fourth National Family Health Survey, girls between the age of 15-24, 42 percent use sanitary napkins, 62 percent use cloth, and 16 percent use locally prepared napkins. Overall, 58 percent of women in this age group use a hygienic method of menstrual protection. Locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins, and tampons are considered to be hygienic methods of protection. Across age and residence 0.1% of the women use other types of menstrual protection. A woman may use multiple methods of menstrual protection, the survey captures the same.
- In Assam, 79 percent use cloth, 29 percent use sanitary napkins, 14 percent use locally prepared napkins, and 3 percent use tampons. Overall, 45 percent of women age 15-24 use a hygienic method of menstrual protection.
- In Delhi, total of 90.7% of women use hygienic methods of protection during their menstrual period.

### ***Policy Interventions by the Government of India***

#### ***Menstrual Hygiene Scheme***

- The Scheme focuses on access to safe, menstrual absorbents;
- Under the scheme, a pack of 6 sanitary napkins for 6 rupees is distributed through door to door sales, schools and Anganwadis by ASHA workers;
- Since 2016-17, the Scheme is operational in all districts. States may cover 25% of rural adolescent girls of all districts in the Initial Phase.
- As per a Parliamentary answer, 288.62 lakh rupees were approved for Assam and 72.96 lakh rupees were approved for Delhi;
- Under the scheme, over 2.1 crore adolescent girls have been reached till November 2019-20.

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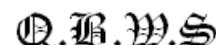


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### ***Samagra Shiksha***

- Under Samgra Shiksha, State specific projects for varied interventions on menstrual health and hygiene are sanctioned by the Project Approval board as per the Annual Work Plans proposed by the State/UT concerned which include **installation of sanitary pad vending machines and incinerators**.
- Framework norms for intervention for infrastructure development and maintenance under Samagra Shiksha provide for **separate toilets and provisions for environmentally safe incinerator**

### ***Suvidha Napkin Scheme***

- The Scheme focuses on access to safe, menstrual absorbents;
- Under the Scheme, Janaushadhi Suvidha' Oxo-Biodegradable Sanitary pads are sold for rupees 1 per pad at the Janaushadhi Kendras;
- As per a Parliamentary answer, 15810 suvidha napkin packs have been sold in Assam and 108914 packs have been sold in Delhi.

### ***School Health Promotion Activities under Ayushman Bharat***

- The school health promotion activities will be implemented in all the government and government aided schools in the country.
- Under the scheme, there will be wellness officers in each school.

### ***Menstrual Hygiene Management under Swacch Bharat Abhiyan (Gramin)***

- Funds available under the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) component may be used for IEC in this matter and to raise awareness and skills on Menstrual Hygiene Management in all places and specifically amongst adolescent girls in schools.

### ***State Schemes: Delhi***

- Delhi government runs "UDAAN" for non-school going adolescent girls for providing sanitary napkins by Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA's) at a subsidized rate of ₹6/-. For the FY 2020-21 Packs containing ten napkins will be given "Free of Cost" and the additional financial burden will be borne by the State;
- Nearly 3,90,000 packs of sanitary napkins have been procured by the State till date;

### ***State Schemes: Assam***

- In the budget announcement for FY 2020-2021, the Assam Government announced that it will provide free sanitary napkins to girls studying in Classes 6 to 12 in government and government-aided schools.
- Under the scheme, every girl student in these classes will receive 18 beltless sanitary napkins per month. A total of Rs 25 crores have been allocated for this scheme.
- In 2019, by a cabinet decision, Sanitary napkins were made mandatory in factories and industries in Assam.

### ***Challenges and Key-Takeaways***



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- There is a need to effectively disperse information about menstruation. Access to knowledge is integral to menstrual hygiene management;
- In spite of laws mandating toilets and sanitation facilities in factories, most establishments do not have proper facilities;
- There is a need for women to adopt environmentally friendly menstrual hygiene products;
- There is a need to actively discuss measures such as menstrual leave.

**For further information, please reach out to us at [info@borbhag.com](mailto:info@borbhag.com)**

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