11 WAYS TO REDUCE PERIOD POVERTY

100%
FOR THE CHILDREN

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This report outlines practical recommendations to reduce period poverty in informal settlements jointly developed by

- **100% for the Children & Kenya Alliance for the Advancement of Children (KAACR)**
- **Specialists and representatives from key organizations in the field (listed under "Acknowledgements")**

It builds on evidence from an intersectional study carried out by the Kenya Alliance for the Advancement of Children (KAACR), 100% for the Children, and Daystar University, with support from CISU – Civil Society in Development. The study examined how girls and young people aged 12–17 in Kibera manage their periods, water and sanitation needs in intersection with climate change.

The study has highlighted an urgent need to move beyond general calls for "better access" or "safer facilities." What is required are practical, climate-resilient, and low-waste solutions that make reusable menstrual products both accessible and acceptable.

Reusable products reduce costs, limit waste, and lessen dependence on unstable donor or government supply chains, providing a foundation for climate-smart menstrual health systems that can withstand future disruptions.

Drawing on both research findings and the experience of different organizations, this report outlines how these insights can be turned into concrete, scalable action. The recommendations are organized around three themes:

1. **Strengthening Market Systems and Policy Frameworks**
2. **Improving access and Affordability of Reusable Menstrual Products**
3. **WASH infrastructure and Hygiene Solutions**

The recommended actions range from improved market regulation, building a national policy & market convergence framework, influencing national policy reform through Social Return on Investment and implementing schoolbased soap production. Each recommendation identifies key barriers, suggests practical actions, and considers both climate and operational feasibility.

By consolidating these findings, the report aims to inform national policy discussions, guide local implementation, and contribute to broader learning on sustainable Menstrual Health Management (MHM) in climate-affected urban communities.

Ultimately, these recommendations represent a shared commitment to ensuring that every girl and woman in Kibera can manage her period safely, with dignity, and in ways that protect both health and the environment, advancing equality, education, and community resilience.

Acknowledgements

These recommendations are the result of a collective effort by members of an Advisory Board on Menstrual Health in intersection with climate change, representing civil society, academia, and private-sector partners. We thank the following members for their invaluable input and collaboration:

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Strengthening Market Systems and Policy Frameworks

1. Strengthening market systems and policy frameworks

BARRIER

Although reusable menstrual products are increasingly accepted by women and girls, inconsistent product quality and weak market regulations continue to undermine confidence and uptake. In many settings, substandard or counterfeit products enter the market without proper certification or monitoring, leading to discomfort, leakage, or health risks. The absence of robust oversight and consumer protection frameworks erodes trust and limits the potential of reusable products as a sustainable and climate-resilient solution. Poor-quality reusable products not only compromise users' health and dignity but also weaken broader efforts to promote sustainable menstrual health management (MHM).

When users experience negative outcomes, misinformation spreads rapidly, reinforcing stigma and discouraging others from trying reusable options. Weak enforcement of existing standards and limited collaboration between government, producers, and civil society create an uneven playing field where quality and safety are not guaranteed. Addressing these regulatory and coordination gaps is critical to ensuring that reusable products are both safe and trusted, paving the way for long-term adoption and reduced environmental waste.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Strengthen Community Engagement and Local Leadership:

To promote menstrual health management (MHM) that is inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient, it is essential to strengthen community engagement and local leadership. Many communities already have existing structures such as women's groups, youth associations, religious councils, and local governance committees that can serve as effective entry points for MHM initiatives. Mapping and strengthening these groups allows them to act as menstrual health champions, implementing awareness activities, facilitating product distribution, and supporting behavior change efforts. When adequately supported, these networks can become critical drivers of menstrual health promotion and resilience at the local level.

Promote Open and Informed Dialogue
In parallel, there is a strong need to promote open and informed dialogue about menstruation within families and communities. Structured sensitization campaigns and community dialogues should engage men, traditional elders, teachers, and religious leaders to challenge taboos and normalize menstruation as a public health, gender equality, and human rights issue. Addressing stigma directly helps dismantle barriers that prevent girls and women from accessing products, facilities, and information, and builds the social support necessary for sustained behavioral change.

Identify and Train Male and Faith-Based Champions:
A crucial step is the identification and training of male and faith-based champions who can advocate for menstrual health in public and private spaces. These champions play a pivotal role in transforming social norms by reframing menstruation as a shared community concern rather than a women's issue. Their engagement also helps reduce resistance to reusable menstrual products, promotes empathy, and encourages positive male involvement in supporting menstrual health at home and in schools.

Support Grassroots Organizations:
Finally, targeted financial and technical support should be made available to grassroots organizations that lead menstrual health outreach and advocacy. Providing micro-grants or capacity-building opportunities enables these organizations to expand peer-to-peer education, conduct awareness campaigns, and pilot small-scale social enterprises that combine menstrual product access with hygiene promotion. Such locally anchored initiatives foster ownership, sustainability, and adaptability, ensuring that menstrual health efforts continue even amid climate or funding challenges.

Confidence and promote the safe adoption of reusable menstrual products, national and subnational authorities should establish coordinated quality assurance and market surveillance mechanisms. Relevant agencies—such as standards authorities, ministries responsible for health, gender, and trade, and local governments—should collaborate to ensure compliance with approved specifications for reusable pads and menstrual cups. Regular inspections and certification systems should be introduced to monitor production, importation, and distribution channels, ensuring that all products meet required safety and hygiene standards. Partnerships between regulators, private manufacturers, and women-led enterprises can facilitate training, joint audits, and technical support for small-scale producers seeking certification. Public awareness campaigns highlighting approved products and quality marks can further strengthen consumer trust.

At the same time, governments and development partners can incentivize compliance by linking certification to eligibility for public procurement or social enterprise support programs. This dual approach—enforcement coupled with capacity building—will encourage producers to meet standards while maintaining affordable prices for consumers.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

Quality regulation ensures the production and circulation of safe, durable, and long-lasting reusable products, reducing reliance on single-use disposables that generate plastic waste. By preventing low-quality imports and promoting regulated local production, Kenya can minimize environmental degradation, strengthen sanitation systems, and ensure that menstrual health solutions remain accessible during climate or economic disruptions.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

This recommendation builds on existing institutional frameworks for product regulation and trade. Implementation is feasible through partnerships between government agencies, private sector actors, and NGOs already engaged in menstrual health initiatives. Sustainability can be achieved through cost-recovery mechanisms within certification systems, inclusion of menstrual products in national quality assurance budgets, and collaboration with consumer associations and women's cooperatives to maintain oversight and accountability.

2. Building a National Policy & Market Convergence Framework for Climate-Resilient MHM

BARRIER

Kenya's Menstrual Health Management (MHM) sector operates within a fragmented policy, procurement, and implementation landscape. Progress in accessing menstrual products is often sustained primarily through donor aid and public subsidies. The absence of a coherent policy link between menstrual product access, environmental sustainability, and market development exposes the system to funding shocks and environmentally unsound disposal practices.

Current frameworks treat menstrual health largely as a consumable welfare service rather than a resilient and self-sustaining system. Without mechanisms that connect local innovators, youth enterprises, and circular market models, Kenya risks perpetuating dependency on external supply chains and undermining long-term menstrual health equity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The recommendation is to develop a Policy and Market Convergence Framework that embeds menstrual health within Kenya's climate-resilient development agenda. This framework positions menstrual health as a sector that drives gender equity, green innovation, and local economic opportunity.

A "Green Procurement for Dignity" clause should be introduced in both national and county-level menstrual health policies. This clause would require or incentivize all public institutions including schools, health centers, and county offices to procure menstrual products that are locally produced, reusable, and environmentally safe. Such a measure would stimulate domestic markets, encourage innovation in sustainable materials, and reduce Kenya's reliance on imported, disposable products.

The government should establish an accreditation pathway for youth- and women-led menstrual health enterprises, officially recognizing them as Community MHM Solution Providers. Accreditation would enable these enterprises to participate legally in public procurement processes and policy implementation, thus fostering inclusivity, job creation, and youth entrepreneurship. The Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), the Ministry of Health (MoH), and the State Department for Youth Affairs would play central roles in developing this mechanism, supported by NEI and partner NGOs.

Menstrual health innovation should be integrated into Kenya's climate adaptation policies specifically the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP). Recognizing menstrual health as a climate resilience indicator would enable access to adaptation financing and strengthen policy coherence between public health and environmental sustainability objectives.

Public-private collaboration platforms should be created to connect youth-led MHM enterprises with private-sector actors such as manufacturers, plastic recyclers, and social investors. These platforms would serve as incubators for co-designing and piloting circular MHM products that align with both economic and environmental goals. County economic departments can support coordination, innovation, and scale-up of these pilot initiatives.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

By embedding MHM within Kenya's climate adaptation and green growth agenda, this framework ensures long-term system stability, promotes circular economy principles, and supports youth-driven, locally led innovation. It reduces dependency on external funding, prevents waste accumulation, and positions Kenya as a leader in integrating menstrual health into national sustainability commitments.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

The framework builds on existing procurement laws, KEBS standards, and devolution structures. It requires coordination and alignment rather than new institutions. Financial sustainability can be achieved through blended financing models, combining public procurement funds, climate adaptation finance, and social-impact investment. Social sustainability will depend on community participation, gender inclusion, and youth leadership, ensuring long-term local ownership and behavioral acceptance.
The recommendation complements existing government and donor roles, promoting shared accountability and system integration.

3. Integrate Community Health Promoters (CHPs) into Kenya's Menstrual Health Strategy

BARRIER

Kenya's menstrual health interventions predominantly target school-aged girls, leaving out-of-school adolescents, married teens, girls with disabilities, and women living in informal settlements or crisis-affected areas underserved. Community Health Promoters (CHPs)—who are the backbone of community-level service delivery under the Ministry of Health—are not yet systematically integrated into Kenya's Menstrual Health Strategy.

CHPs already provide essential reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH), gender-based violence (GBV), and WASH services. They are trusted by households, understand cultural and gender norms, and are uniquely positioned to address stigma, misinformation, and menstrual exclusion at the grassroots level. Without integrating menstrual health into CHP training and outreach, Kenya risks continuing with fragmented, donor-dependent interventions that overlook the most vulnerable and fail to achieve equitable coverage.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

To ensure menstrual health equity reaches all women and girls, Kenya should formally integrate CHPs into the national Menstrual Health Strategy.

Policy Integration and Training: The Ministry of Health should include menstrual health education, re-usable product awareness (with emphasis on climate-friendly options), and stigma reduction modules in the national CHP curriculum. This should be institutionalized through a circular or directive, ensuring that MHM becomes a mandatory component of community health outreach nationwide.

Formal Recognition: Recognize CHPs as core implementers of Kenya's menstrual health and hygiene agenda. Define their specific roles in outreach, education, product referral, and data collection to ensure consistent, measurable engagement.

Household-Level Outreach and Monitoring: CHPs should lead household-level education on menstrual hygiene, monitor product access and safe use, and collect community data on menstrual health practices and perceptions. Such data would be valuable for national policy evaluation, planning, and adaptation.

Partnership with Women-Led Enterprises: CHPs can act as local distribution and information agents for women-led social enterprises that produce reusable menstrual products. This collaboration would expand product reach, promote community trust, and strengthen local economies.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

Integrating menstrual health into the CHP framework strengthens community resilience by reducing dependency on school-based or donor-driven programs that are prone to funding or climate shocks. Through regular engagement with households, CHPs can promote reusable and locally produced products, reducing plastic waste and the environmental burden caused by disposable pads.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

The CHP system is fully institutionalized within Kenya's public health infrastructure, making this integration both feasible and cost-effective. This model builds on Kenya's proven community health platform and aligns with its decentralized governance structure, enabling broad coverage and long-term continuity.

4. Conduct a Social Return on Investment (SROI) Report to Influence Policy Change

BARRIER

The current Menstrual Hygiene Management Policy (2019–2030) provides free sanitary pads to school girls through the Ministry of Health. While this is an important commitment, it relies heavily on external funding and faces frequent delivery disruptions. In addition, disposable pads are more expensive in the long term and significantly more harmful to the environment than reusable products.

However, despite global and regional evidence suggesting the economic and social benefits of reusable products, Kenya still lacks comprehensive financial and cost-effectiveness evidence to guide policy reform. The absence of a credible Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis limits political motivation to transition from disposable pad distribution to sustainable, reusable alternatives.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Commission an SROI Study: Conduct a robust, Kenya-specific SROI analysis comparing reusable menstrual products (e.g., cups and pads) with disposable pads. The analysis should assess financial savings for both households and the state, as well as indirect benefits such as improved school attendance, reduced absenteeism, fewer infections, and increased productivity.

Use Evidence for Policy Advocacy: Present the results to key decision-makers within the Ministry of Health, the National Treasury, and the Ministry of Education to advocate for inclusion of reusable products within national procurement and distribution programs. The evidence should highlight potential savings and positive externalities, including environmental impact reduction and educational gains.
In parallel, the SROI findings should be used to **mobilize private capital** by demonstrating the financial viability of investing in reusable menstrual products. This could open doors to partnerships with impact investors, social enterprises, and financial institutions.

Community-Based Distribution: To improve delivery reliability, a woman-to-woman distribution model should be piloted, leveraging existing social networks. Local women would be trained to deliver menstrual products efficiently, ensuring accountability and building local ownership. The model can include monitoring, sanctions for non-delivery, and “train-the-trainer” mechanisms to ensure scale and sustainability.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

Shifting to reusable menstrual products will significantly reduce waste generation and plastic pollution. On average, a woman produces approximately 150 kilograms of menstrual waste in her lifetime, primarily from disposable pads. In informal settlements, these products often clog toilets or end up in open drains and landfills, leading to costly repairs and environmental degradation. Reusable products directly contribute to a circular, low-waste economy and reduce reliance on environmentally damaging supply chains.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

The feasibility of this recommendation depends on the strength and clarity of the SROI findings. If the study demonstrates compelling financial, social, and environmental benefits, it will provide a powerful foundation for policy change, blended finance and large-scale integration of reusables into Kenya's national MHM framework.

To sustain this shift, government funding should gradually replace donor dependency, supported by public-private partnerships and ongoing hygiene education.

5. Integrate Menstrual Health into County and Emergency Planning

BARRIER

Despite growing recognition of menstrual health as a public health and gender equality issue, it remains largely absent from urban planning and emergency preparedness frameworks. As a result, menstrual health needs are often neglected during floods, droughts, displacement, or other crises leaving women and girls without essential products or safe sanitation facilities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Mainstream MHM in County Planning: Advocate for the inclusion of menstrual health management within county WASH and health plans, especially in highly urbanized and climate-vulnerable counties such as Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu.

Integrate MHM in Emergency Response: Ensure that menstrual hygiene products preferably reusable and sustainable options are included in emergency kits, humanitarian logistics, and disaster response protocols.

Evidence-Based Budgeting and Planning: Utilize community-generated data from endline and pilot studies to guide local planning, budgeting, and prioritization of menstrual health interventions in both regular and emergency contexts.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

Embedding menstrual health in urban development and emergency systems ensures continuity of access even during climate-induced crises. Integrating reusable products into preparedness and response strategies reduces waste, logistical burden, and cost while enhancing dignity and protection for women and girls.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

This recommendation is highly feasible through collaboration among the Ministries of Health, Education, and Water, alongside county governments, NGOs, and development partners already active in WASH and health sectors. Sustainability will depend on coordination mechanisms and institutional commitment to include menstrual health indicators within ongoing monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Improving Access and Affordability of Reusable Menstrual Products

6. Community Based Supportive Production

BARRIER

Women and girls in informal settlements continue to face unreliable and inconsistent access to menstrual products. Dependence on irregular state pad distribution and donor contributions limits menstrual equity and imposes recurring financial strain on low-income households. At the same time, women's opportunities for sustainable, safe, and dignified participation in menstrual health initiatives remain limited due to a lack of local production capacity and income-generating options.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

To strengthen women's health, economic empowerment, and climate resilience, the recommendation is to support local women's groups and community-based enterprises to produce menstrual by-products, such as storage bags for reusable menstrual cups.

Under this model, high quality menstrual products are supplied by institutions, companies or NGOs, while local women are supported with entrepreneurial skills in producing complementary items that enhance product usability and hygiene. The institution, company or NGO can then purchase these by-products for distribution, providing women with a reliable market and stable income source. Training should focus on technical skills in textile work and quality control, alongside hygiene and safety standards

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

Local production of reusable storage and accessory items supports circular economy practices by reducing waste and reliance on imported, single-use materials. By sourcing sustainable fabrics and promoting eco-friendly production methods, communities reduce their environmental footprint while enhancing adaptive capacity to climate-related and economic disruptions. The model links women's economic empowerment directly with climate smart livelihood opportunities.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

The initiative can start with small production groups equipped through start-up kits and revolving seed funds for local materials and basic sewing equipment. As production scales, cost recovery mechanisms and cooperative ownership structures can sustain operations. Guaranteed purchase agreements from institutions, companies or NGOs create a predictable income stream, enabling producers to reinvest in their enterprises.

By engaging women as producers of menstrual by-products rather than the products themselves, this recommendation supports safety, strengthens local economies, and promotes sustainable livelihoods, linking women's economic independence with improved menstrual health and climate resilience.

7. Community Based Menstrual Cup Pilot to Address Affordability and Stigma

BARRIER

Adolescent girls and women living in informal settlements such as Kibera continue to face significant affordability barriers, stigma, and limited uptake of reusable menstrual cups. Disposable sanitary pads remain the most widely used menstrual product, despite being expensive, environmentally damaging, and dependent on unreliable government or donor distribution.

Findings from the study conducted by KAACR, Daystar University and 100% for the Children indicates that economic barriers, stigma surrounding menstrual cup use, and limited access to clean water and soap still restrict menstrual health outcomes. These barriers contribute directly to school absenteeism of three to five days per month, undermining both menstrual dignity and reproductive health. Addressing these barriers is essential to advance gender equality, improve educational continuity, and strengthen climate-resilient community health systems.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

To address these challenges, it is recommended to implement a community-based pilot program that combines affordable product distribution with stigma reduction and local capacity building.

Partnership with suppliers: Collaborate with a reliable menstrual cup supplier (average unit cost ~500 KSh, lifespan 5–10 years) to ensure consistent access to high-quality and safe products.

Culturally appropriate training: Use bilingual and contextually relevant learning materials, such as 100% for the Children's and Positive Life Kenya's "Breaking the Silence" toolkit, to address misconceptions, stigma, and fears associated with menstrual cup use.

Local female leadership: Train four to six local women as community educators and distributors. These women will conduct information sessions, demonstrations, and follow-up visits to provide ongoing guidance on use, hygiene, and maintenance. This localized and trust-based approach strengthens community acceptance, user confidence, and long-term sustainability.

Budget and Cost Efficiency
Each menstrual cup (including storage bag) costs approximately 500 KSh, totaling 100,000 KSh (≈ USD 770) for 200 participants.

A menstrual cup lasts for approximately 5 years. A 5-year cost comparison demonstrates clear cost-effectiveness:
Disposable pads: ~7,200 KSh
Menstrual cup: 500 KSh

Savings of approximately 6,700 KSh per girl, with a total of 1.34 million KSh (~USD 10,300) saved across the pilot.

The estimated cost of approximately 7,200 KSh for disposable pads over a five-year period corresponds to roughly 700–900 pads per consumer. This calculation is based on the average market price of sanitary pads in Kenya and reflects a typical menstrual pattern of around one dozen pads per month.
This approach not only reduces household costs but also lowers dependence on irregular donor or government supplies.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

Promoting reusable products reduces waste generation and dependency on volatile external supply chains that are vulnerable to climate or funding shocks. Disposable pads often end up in drainage systems or landfills, contributing to pollution, flooding, and maintenance costs. The adoption of menstrual cups strengthens both local environmental resilience and community self-sufficiency.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

This pilot builds on existing community structures and partnerships in Kibera, ensuring scalability and sustainability. Initial implementation may rely on donor funding, but a community co-financing model, with small contributions of 20–50 KSh per participant, can be introduced to enhance ownership and long-term sustainability.

The project also contributes to local employment by engaging women as educators and distributors, reinforcing both economic empowerment and social inclusion. Once successfully tested and evaluated, the pilot can serve as a blueprint for wider adoption across informal settlements in Kenya and similar contexts.

8. Strengthening Community Engagement and Tackling Stigma through Local Champions

BARRIER

Community engagement in menstrual health programming remains inconsistent and fragmented. Examples from Kilifi County where there are active women's groups, Beach Management Units (BMUs), religious networks, and the "Triple Threat Army," these groups often lack coordination, resources, and structured capacity to sustain menstrual health initiatives. At the same time, persistent stigma and cultural misconceptions surrounding menstruation, particularly among men and religious leaders, limit open discussion and acceptance of reusable products. Together, these social and institutional barriers prevent inclusive, equitable, and sustainable community-level menstrual health management (MHM).

Weak community structures and prevailing taboos perpetuate silence and misinformation around menstruation. As a result, MHM efforts are concentrated in more accessible areas, leaving remote and marginalized communities underserved. Cultural beliefs associating menstruation with impurity or shame discourage girls from participating in school or community life and limit men's involvement in menstrual health advocacy.

Building community capacity and addressing stigma simultaneously is essential for creating a supportive environment where women and girls can access safe, sustainable menstrual products and information without fear or embarrassment. Community-driven change will also help normalize reusable products and strengthen collective resilience to climate-related disruptions.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

To promote menstrual health management (MHM) that is inclusive, sustainable, and climate-resilient, it is essential to strengthen community engagement and local leadership. Many communities already have existing structures, such as women's groups, youth associations, religious councils, and local governance committees, that can serve as effective entry points for MHM initiatives. Mapping and strengthening these groups allows them to act as menstrual health champions, implementing awareness activities, facilitating product distribution, and supporting behavior change efforts. When adequately supported, these networks can become critical drivers of menstrual health promotion and resilience at the local level.

In parallel, there is a strong need to promote open and informed dialogue about menstruation within families and communities. Structured sensitization campaigns and community dialogues should engage men, traditional elders, teachers, and religious leaders to challenge taboos and normalize menstruation as a public health, gender equality, and human rights issue. Addressing stigma directly helps dismantle barriers that prevent girls and women from accessing products, facilities, and information, and builds the social support necessary for sustained behavioral change.

A crucial step is the **identification and training of male and faith-based champions** who can advocate for menstrual health in public and private spaces. These champions play a pivotal role in transforming social norms by reframing menstruation as a shared community concern rather than a women's issue. Their engagement also helps reduce resistance to reusable menstrual products, promotes empathy, and encourages positive male involvement in supporting menstrual health at home and in schools.

Providing micro-grants or capacity-building opportunities enables organizations to expand peer-to-peer education, conduct awareness campaigns, and pilot small-scale social enterprises that combine menstrual product access with hygiene promotion. Such locally anchored initiatives foster ownership, sustainability, and adaptability, ensuring that menstrual health efforts continue even amid climate or funding challenges.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

Community-led, stigma-free MHM systems build stronger social networks and local ownership, ensuring continuity of menstrual health practices and education during climate shocks. By embedding MHM knowledge and advocacy within existing community structures, this approach enhances adaptive capacity and sustainability even in the face of water scarcity or disaster displacement.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

The feasibility is high as it leverages existing networks (women's groups, youth associations, religious leaders) and county RMNCAH structures. Sustainability is ensured through local ownership, ongoing peer learning, and low-cost communication approaches. Modest start-up funds or donor seed grants can catalyze long-term community-driven engagement.

9. Voucher-Based Access Model for Reusable Menstrual Products in Informal Settlements

BARRIER

Adolescent girls and women in informal settlements such as Kibera continue to face affordability barriers to menstrual products. Disposable pads remain the dominant option though they are short-term, waste-generating, and reliant on inconsistent external supply. Studies indicate that while reusable menstrual products offer significant long-term benefits, their safe and consistent use requires prior training in hygiene, cleaning, and maintenance. Without adequate instruction, consumers face uneasiness, mistrust in the product and eventually abandonment. Therefore, any large-scale distribution of reusable products must be integrated with a structured training component that ensures girls and women acquire the necessary skills and confidence before receiving the product.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

To make reusable menstrual products both affordable and safely usable, this recommendation proposes an electronic voucher-based distribution model directly linked to structured training on safe use and maintenance. Reusable products provide long-term value, but their effectiveness and safety depend on users receiving practical guidance on hygiene, cleaning, and storage. Linking distribution to training ensures that every recipient is equipped with the skills and confidence to use the product correctly and consistently.

Under the proposed model, eligible adolescent girls and women will first participate in training sessions facilitated through schools, community centers, or women-led enterprises. These sessions will combine practical demonstrations with information on menstrual health and product care. After completing the training, participants will receive a digital voucher redeemable for a reusable menstrual product at accredited, preferably women-owned community shops or schools. The voucher serves both as a financial enabler and a compliance mechanism, ensuring that training completion precedes product access.

The digital system can be implemented through several adaptable and locally relevant models. For instance, vouchers can be integrated into existing mobile wallet platforms such as M-Pesa or Airtel Money, allowing redemption and digital tracking through familiar interfaces. Alternatively, QR code or smart card systems can be used, enabling easy verification and data collection at the point of distribution. Schools

and NGOs can also manage voucher issuance and redemption through secure online dashboards, linking attendance records with product delivery. These approaches strengthen transparency, accountability, and real-time monitoring, while providing data to assess product uptake and impact.

This model represents a shift from one-off donations toward a market-integrated, community-driven system that builds menstrual literacy, supports local women entrepreneurs, and enhances accountability. By embedding training and traceability into the process, it ensures quality control, user safety, and empowerment.

To secure long-term sustainability, the model can be complemented by Menstrual Health Savings Schemes, inspired by Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). As awareness and product acceptance increase, participating schools and families can gradually contribute through small co-payments, ensuring shared responsibility and continued access beyond the initial subsidy phase.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

This recommendation strengthens both environmental sustainability and climate resilience by promoting a locally anchored, low-waste menstrual health model. Integrating menstrual product distribution into community-based retail and social enterprise networks reduces dependency on external supply chains and donor-driven interventions—both highly vulnerable to climate and economic disruptions.

Reusable menstrual products significantly reduce solid waste generation from disposable pads, which often clog drainage systems or end up in open waste sites, worsening pollution and health risks. By empowering women-led cooperatives to distribute and support reusable products, the model simultaneously strengthens adaptive capacity, creates livelihood opportunities, and promotes environmental awareness at the community level.

Using an electronic rather than paper-based voucher system also eliminates unnecessary waste in implementation.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

Long-term feasibility relies on strong multi-sectoral coordination and innovative financing mechanisms. The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, local NGOs, and school-based health programs can collaborate to identify beneficiaries and manage the digital voucher distribution process. Partnerships with national telecommunications companies, such as Safaricom, will be essential for system integrati-

on and transparency. Local partnerships with female-led businesses will anchor distribution and create income opportunities.

Financially, a blended model is recommended: initial donor or government subsidies for pilot cycles, followed by gradual introduction of cost-sharing and co-payments to build ownership and continuity. Over time, the program can evolve from a fully subsidized initiative into a revolving, community-driven voucher scheme, reducing external dependency and fostering local sustainability.

ADDITIONAL
A recent study from Oxfam (Kenya, July 2025) provides a successful example of electronic voucher use for WASH and non-food items in humanitarian settings. See: Oxfam WASH E-Voucher Paper, 2025

WASH Infrastructure and Hygiene Solutions

10. Design a 'Nyumba Kumi' Community-Run Rainwater Harvesting System Pilot

BARRIER
Access to clean and affordable water continues to be one of the most pressing challenges in informal settlements such as Kibera. Limited infrastructure, high population density, and poor drainage systems force residents to rely on irregular and costly water vendors. Prices fluctuate sharply, from 20 to 100 KES per jerrican, depending on supply, placing a disproportionate burden on low-income households.

According to the study conducted by KAACR, Daystar University and 100% for the Children, City Council taps were the main source of water for 54% of respondents. During dry seasons, scarcity drives up costs and constrains hygiene practices, reducing the availability of safe water. As a result, even though 77.1% of respondents reported maintaining good hygiene during water shortages, 55,4% said they were unable to access clean water during periods of heavy rainfall. When asked whether they have problems getting enough water to wash during their period, 55,8% reported no, while 23,1% reported yes, and 21,1% reported sometimes.

At the same time, rainwater, an abundant but underutilized resource, often goes to waste through unmanaged runoff, contributing to both flooding and contamination risks. Strengthening community-level water management could address this dual challenge. The Nyumba Kumi Initiative, Kenya's neighborhood collaboration model, offers an existing social framework that could be adapted for collective rainwater harvesting, shared storage, and maintenance of local water points.

Harnessing this model could reduce costs, improve reliability, and enhance community resilience against climate-related disruptions, transforming water from a persistent barrier into a shared resource for sustainable menstrual health and hygiene.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

To address water scarcity and promote collective ownership, it is recommended to establish community-managed rainwater harvesting systems at the Nyumba Kumi (ten-household cluster) level.

Cluster-Based Design: Each cluster of approximately ten households installs a shared rainwater harvesting system using existing tin roofs as collection surfaces. The installation requires only gutters, a storage tank, and a simple filtration mechanism. This setup uses minimal space and capitalizes on existing infrastructure.

Community Management: The Nyumba Kumi group governs maintenance, distribution, and equitable access to harvested water. Regular meetings and clear by-laws can ensure transparent management and accountability.

Integration with County Policy: Advocate for rainwater harvesting to be incorporated into Nairobi County's informal settlement development plans as a low-cost climate adaptation measure.

Technical and Financial Support: Mobilize resources through public-private partnerships (PPPs) to provide start-up materials, training, and basic technical assistance.

Community Education: Integrate WASH education into existing Nyumba Kumi baraza sessions, using these meetings to teach water safety, hygiene, and system maintenance.

Monitoring and Scale-Up: Establish a participatory monitoring system to assess performance and impact, documenting lessons learned for replication across other settlements.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK:
This initiative directly contributes to environmental and social resilience by transforming rainwater from a wasted resource into a shared community asset. It:

Diversifies local water sources, reducing reliance on overstressed municipal systems.

Mitigates flooding through controlled water collection and reduced surface runoff.
Strengthens adaptive capacity by fostering collective responsibility for resource management.

Reduces exposure to contaminated water and lowers risks of waterborne diseases.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY
The recommendation is technically simple and cost-efficient, requiring modest start-up funding due to the use of existing housing structures. Ongoing maintenance can be financed through small household contributions. Embedding management within existing community policing and social frameworks reduces administrative costs and enhances sustainability.

Once proven successful, this model can be scaled to multiple clusters and settlements, contributing to Kenya's Vision 2030 goals and SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and 13 (Climate Action).

11. School-Based Soap-Making Scheme Financed Through Small Parental Contributions

BARRIER
Soap availability in schools remains inconsistent and insufficient to meet hygiene needs. The endline study conducted by KAACR, Daystar University and 100% for the Children showed that while 67% of students wash their hands or menstrual products with bar soap, access is unreliable, particularly in house-

holds. Students reported frequent shortages of soap both at school and home, forcing them to rely on water alone for handwashing and menstrual hygiene. Given the critical importance of hand and product hygiene for preventing infections and maintaining menstrual dignity, ensuring a steady supply of soap is non-negotiable.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

To ensure sustainable access to soap in schools, it is recommended to establish school-based soap-making schemes managed by teachers and students.

School Production Units: Each participating school should set up a small soap-making unit that produces liquid soap for school use. This should be included in educational structures such as Health Clubs.

Capacity Building: Teachers and students will be trained in simple soap production techniques, building on 100% for the Children's and APDK's Youth WASH Champions Programme, which has already demonstrated success in similar school settings in Kibera.

Low-Cost Model: The cost of producing 5 liters of liquid soap is approximately 500 KSh, which can be covered through small parental contributions.

Distribution and Incentives: Any surplus soap can be distributed to participating households as an incentive for parental engagement and to reinforce hygiene practices both at school and home.

CLIMATE-RESILIENCE LINK

Local soap production strengthens climate resilience by reducing dependence on external supply chains that may be disrupted by funding shortages or environmental shocks. Ensuring soap availability supports consistent hygiene even during periods of water scarcity or economic hardship.

FEASIBILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

The recommendation has already proven feasible and scalable based on successful pilots under the Youth WASH Champions initiative. Minimal parental contributions ensure continuity without imposing financial strain. The training materials can be easily replicated and shared across schools, creating a self-sustaining system that promotes both education and hygiene resilience.

CONCLUSION

New findings from Kibera show that menstrual health is both a matter of (climate) resilience and equity. Despite progress in access, persistent gaps in affordability, product quality, community awareness, and WASH infrastructure continue to compromise girls' education, health, and dignity.

The recommendations in this report outline practical, scalable actions to close these gaps focused on reusable, long term menstrual products, from voucher-based access to reusable products and local manufacturing, to stronger market regulation, policy alignment, and integration of Community Health Promoters.

By implementing these recommendations, Kenya can move beyond short-term distribution toward a future where menstrual health is a right, not a privilege, integrated across health, education, and climate agendas, and accessible to every girl and woman.

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