

Breaking the Taboo: Talking Openly About Period Waste

For generations, menstruation has been treated as something to hide—a "women's issue" best kept behind closed doors. Whispers in classrooms, hidden packets from pharmacists, and the uncomfortable silence around period-related topics have reinforced this taboo across cultures and communities. But menstruation is not a problem—the stigma is. And this silence doesn't just affect self-esteem. It has real consequences for the health of millions of girls and women, for our environment, and for public sanitation systems. We've made great strides in recent years to break the silence around menstruation. Campaigns, conversations, and awareness drives are helping women and girls speak more openly about their periods. But even now, one critical part of menstrual health continues to be ignored: what happens after a pad is used.

Yes, we're talking about period waste—and why it's time to stop treating it like a dirty secret. Menstrual hygiene doesn't end with access to sanitary products or clean restrooms. It includes:

- Comprehensive education on menstrual health
- Safe and private spaces for managing periods
- Proper disposal infrastructure, especially in public spaces like schools, offices, and transport stations.

Without facilities like sanitary bins or incinerators, girls and women often resort to unhygienic methods: wrapping used pads in plastic, flushing them, or burning them in open spaces—all of which carry serious health and environmental risks. Sanitary pads contain plastic and synthetic materials that take hundreds of years to decompose. When discarded improperly, they not only damage the environment but also put sanitation workers at risk—many of whom handle waste manually, without proper protection.



When we speak openly about periods—in our homes, schools, workplaces, and policy-making spaces—we begin to shift the narrative. We move from silence to understanding, from stigma to support. Talking about menstruation normalizes it, making space for better education, healthier attitudes, and stronger advocacy. And yet, there's another layer to the conversation that still remains under-addressed: menstrual waste. When we open up the conversation about menstruation, we do more than just talk—we transform. We challenge deep-rooted myths. We build more supportive communities. And when we extend that conversation to menstrual waste, we create space for innovation, environmental justice, and human dignity.

Let's keep talking. Let's keep pushing. Because changing the culture around menstruation isn't just about hygiene—it's about equity, environment, and empowerment.

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