



Human Rights Council**Fifty-sixth session**

18 June–12 July 2024

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development****Gambia:* draft resolution****56/... Menstrual hygiene management, human rights and gender
equality***The Human Rights Council,**Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,*

Recalling that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families include guarantees to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by women and men, and girls and boys, on an equal footing,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which the Assembly adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative goals and targets, and reaffirming also the commitment to leave no one behind,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 78/206 of 19 December 2023, in which the Assembly called upon States to ensure access to safe and affordable drinking water and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all women and girls, as well as for menstrual hygiene management, including for hygiene facilities and services in public and private spaces,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 71/222 of 21 December 2016, in which the Assembly proclaimed the period from 2018 to 2028 the International Decade of Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 74/141 of 18 December 2019, in which the Assembly expressed deep concern that the lack of access to adequate water and sanitation services, including for menstrual hygiene management, especially in schools, workplaces, health centres and public facilities, negatively affected gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and their enjoyment of human rights, including the right

* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States.



to education and the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 78/181 of 19 December 2023 on the improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas, in which the Assembly recognized that the lack of safe and adequate sanitation facilities, including for menstrual hygiene, prevented girls' equal enjoyment of their right to education,

Recalling also the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, in which it is reaffirmed that all human rights, including the right to development, are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

Recalling further all previous resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council relevant to the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and to menstrual hygiene, including Assembly resolutions 70/169 of 17 December 2015, 72/178 of 19 December 2017 and 74/126 of 18 December 2019 and Council resolutions 33/10 of 29 September 2016, 39/8 of 27 September 2018, 45/8 of 6 October 2020 and 51/19 of 6 October 2022, as well as resolution 47/4 of 12 July 2021, in which the Council underscored the interlinkages between menstrual hygiene and human rights and gender equality,

Welcoming initiatives, including joint efforts between States, civil society and the United Nations system, to address menstrual hygiene management, including for women in rural and remote areas,

Recalling that the human rights to safe drinking water and to sanitation are derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and are inextricably related, inter alia, to the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the right to life and human dignity,

Noting that the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health includes access to health care and medicines to identify and treat menstruation-related health issues or pain, as well as access to health-related information within the framework of menstrual hygiene management,

Expressing concern at the adverse effect of health issues relating to menstrual hygiene and the lack of access to appropriate information and treatment in this regard, particularly in rural and remote areas,

Deeply concerned that the lack of access to adequate water and sanitation services, including in rural and remote areas, especially for menstrual hygiene management, in public and private spaces, particularly in households, schools, workplaces, health centres and public facilities and buildings, negatively affects gender equality and women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to education, to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, to safe and healthy working conditions and to participate in public affairs,

Recognizing that the attendance at school, university and work and the professional development of women and girls, including those in rural and remote areas, are affected by negative perceptions of menstruation and discrimination and the lack of means to maintain safe personal hygiene, such as water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools and work environments that meet the needs of female students, teachers and workers, and that this has a severe impact on their dignity and well-being, as well as on their right to education and to employment,

Recognizing also that the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women in rural and remote areas of all ages in all fields and at all levels of decision-making in the public and private sectors is essential for the full realization of their human rights and the full and complete economic, political, social and cultural development of a country and for achieving lasting solutions to global challenges and the realization of peace,

Noting with regret that a large number of women and girls in rural and remote areas, particularly women and girls with disabilities, who face compounding forms of discrimination, and those in vulnerable situations continue to face discrimination based on

harmful social norms and stereotypes, as well as inaccessible water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, making it difficult for them to manage their menstrual hygiene safely and with dignity,

Recognizing that progress on the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, in particular in rural and remote areas, has been held back owing to the persistence of historical and structural barriers and unequal power relations between women and men, poverty and inequalities and disadvantages in access to resources and opportunities that limit women's and girls' capabilities, growing gaps in equality of opportunity, discriminatory laws, policies, attitudes, harmful customary and contemporary practices, gender stereotypes and negative social norms, and women's and girls' unequal distribution of unpaid care work and the precarious working conditions experienced by many women engaged in paid care work, and taking into consideration the impacts of armed conflicts on women and girls in rural and remote areas and the spiralling effects of the cost-of-living crisis, climate and environmental emergencies and the continuing effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which have compounded underlying and persistent gender gaps and inequality,

Expressing concern that many women living in rural and remote areas continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged because of their limited access to economic resources and opportunities and their limited or lack of access to quality education, in particularly dropping out of school, owing to menstruation-related burdens, and expressing concern also about their limited access to decision-making bodies, as well as to information on menstrual hygiene management, conveyed through extension services and new technologies,

Noting with deep concern that, while women and girls in rural and remote areas contribute enormously to global food production, they are disproportionately affected by hunger, food insecurity and poverty, partly as a result of gender inequality and discrimination stemming from negative perceptions of menstruation,

Deeply concerned that the lack of adequate and accessible sanitation and hygiene facilities, including in rural and remote areas, increases women's and girls' exposure to all forms of violence, including sexual violence and harassment, as well as to child, early and forced marriage, which prevent the full realization of their potential in all aspects of life and undermine the realization of their human rights,

Aware that all harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, when perpetrated on girls, have consequences and pose particular problems with regard to the management of menstrual hygiene that are particularly detrimental to health and growth, and recalling in this regard the need to guarantee the right of girls to be free from all forms of violence, and to address the root causes of such violence,

Deeply concerned that the silence, stigma, misconceptions and taboos around menstruation, particularly in rural and remote areas, the lack of adequate access to menstrual hygiene products or to health-care services and medicines to identify and treat health issues relating to menstrual hygiene and the absence of appropriate information and education on menstrual hygiene management undermine the dignity, rights and well-being of women and girls and constitute therefore an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality,

Stressing that situations of economic, humanitarian and health crisis exacerbate existing challenges to menstrual hygiene management, especially for women and girls with disabilities,

Noting that recyclable and biodegradable products are often not available or affordable in rural and remote areas and that means of safe disposal are not provided, forcing women and girls to dispose of sanitary products in the open air, in waterways or in toilets or latrines, resulting in inappropriate and dangerous disposal practices and leading to unhealthy living conditions, air and water pollution and other environmental damage, as well as to environmental degradation, thereby creating health risks,

Noting also that none of the core international human rights instruments deals explicitly and directly with the issue of menstrual hygiene, and expressing regret that, despite the efforts made by relevant bodies and mechanisms within the United Nations human rights

system, including in particular the treaty bodies and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, this issue continues to receive limited attention in policy, research, programming and resource allocation,

Welcoming the holding, at the fiftieth session of the Human Rights Council, of a panel discussion on the management of menstrual hygiene, human rights and gender equality, and taking note of the report on that panel discussion by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,¹

Underscoring that States have the primary responsibility to ensure the full realization of all human rights, including those relating to menstrual hygiene, and must take steps, nationally and through international assistance and cooperation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of their available resources, to respond fully to menstrual hygiene and other health care-related needs by all appropriate means, including in particular through the adoption of relevant legislative measures,

Stressing the importance of an effective remedy to violations of human rights, including those relating to menstrual hygiene management, and in this regard of judicial, non-judicial and other appropriate remedies, including procedures initiated by or on behalf of individuals or, as appropriate, groups of individuals, and also of adequate procedures to avoid infringements of such rights,

1. *Calls upon* States to ensure that women and girls, including those living in rural and remote areas, have access to available, accessible and affordable facilities, information and products for optimal and effective menstrual hygiene management, including by taking measures to:

(a) Ensure that women and girls, including in particular those in vulnerable situations and those with disabilities, have equitable access to affordable, safe and clean water and adequate sanitation, hygiene and washing facilities with soap, including a choice of menstrual hygiene products, such as sanitary pads that are clean, available, accessible, acceptable, good quality and environmentally friendly;

(b) Eliminate or reduce all taxes on menstrual hygiene management products, including sanitary pads, and provide support to women and girls in situations of economic vulnerability;

(c) Promote national social protection policies, initiatives and partnerships that seek to achieve the regular and free distribution of menstrual hygiene products, including reusable (where feasible), safe, culturally appropriate and environmentally friendly sanitary pads, and teach women and girls in rural and remote areas how to make, use and follow the hygiene rules for these sanitary pads;

(d) Develop safe and efficient infrastructure and transport for the delivery of sanitary protection and other menstrual hygiene products to rural and remote areas, including in humanitarian contexts, reduce the digital divide between and within countries and the gender digital divide to improve access to information about menstrual hygiene in these areas, provide training for women and girls living in rural and remote areas in digital skills and promote digital literacy courses for women and girls;

(e) Ensure that women and girls, including those with disabilities, have access to separate and adequate basic sanitation facilities in public and private spaces, including affordable and accessible disposal options for used menstrual hygiene management products;

(f) Ensure that women and girls and those in rural and remote areas have free access to health-care services and medicines to prevent, identify and treat health issues relating to menstruation;

(g) Conduct publicity and awareness-raising campaigns, in the vernacular, where relevant, including establishing national menstrual hygiene days, to tackle the stigma, shame, taboos, stereotypes and negative social norms surrounding menstruation and menstrual hygiene, such as the requirement that women and girls isolate themselves during

¹ A/HRC/53/40.

menstruation or wear dark school uniforms, in order to foster a culture in which menstruation is recognized as healthy and natural, and ensure that men and boys, as well as religious and community leaders and the family unit, are also included in all awareness- raising initiatives;

(h) Design and implement national policies, programmes and legal mechanisms to promote and protect the full exercise by all women and girls, including those in rural and remote areas, of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and establish an environment that does not tolerate violations, abuses and non-respect of these rights, including all forms of violence against women and girls in rural and remote areas in public and private spaces, as well as harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and address the related root causes that contribute to the violation of their rights and to perpetuating the neglect of their needs;

(i) Integrate menstrual hygiene management into relevant national policies, including water, sanitation and hygiene programmes, and promote women's and girls' access to adequate and accessible information and education on menstrual hygiene management, including within family units and out-of-school settings;

(j) Ensure that universal health coverage includes the prevention and treatment of the health risks and complications associated with menstruation, including through access at the primary health-care level;

(k) Ensure that all relevant duty bearers, such as health-care providers, teachers, religious leaders, traditional authorities, politicians and public and private employers comply with and uphold laws and regulations relating to menstrual hygiene and health care, in order to prevent and act against abuses or violations of the rights of women and girls and respect their dignity;

(l) Ensure a more holistic and coordinated approach to the humanitarian-development nexus by integrating measures related to menstrual hygiene and health care into humanitarian preparedness and response plans and link them to longer-term investments, with particular attention to the protection needs of refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants and internally displaced women and girls, including by ensuring access to menstrual hygiene products, such as through the distribution of menstrual kits and products to improve access to products and supplies, including the United Nations Population Fund global programme for the distribution of "dignity kits" in the context of humanitarian crises;

(m) Provide information on progress made and challenges encountered in the management of menstrual hygiene in relevant periodic reports submitted to the human rights treaty bodies and the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, as well as in the context of regional and other human rights review processes, as appropriate;

2. *Urges* States to ensure access to infrastructure and public services, including access to safe and affordable water and sanitation, as well as menstrual hygiene management, for all women and girls and safe and affordable transportation, inter alia during humanitarian emergencies, including in rural and remote areas and informal settlements, settlements for internally displaced persons, refugee camps and migrant shelters;

3. *Requests* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with States, United Nations agencies, within their respective mandates, regional organizations, national human rights institutions, human rights experts and civil society organizations, including women's rights organizations, youth-led organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities and other relevant communities, to prepare a report on good practices identified and problems encountered on menstrual hygiene management and to submit it to the Human Rights Council at its sixty-second session,

4. *Decides* to continue its consideration of the question of menstrual hygiene management in accordance with its programme of work.