

Period poverty campaigners to host menstrual rights march this Women's Month

Protesters will demonstrate through Cape Town and Pretoria this Friday, 26 August, calling on government to enshrine menstrual rights into law. Led by the Gauteng-based Team Free Sanitary Pads and Cape-Town-based FemConnect, the organisations believe urgent action is needed to completely eradicate period poverty.



Source: www.pexels.com

"It is shocking that even in 2022, more than seven million South African women and young girls are being severely hindered, almost punished, due to a natural biological process - their period. Not having the right hygiene products for your period has a huge impact on a woman's mental health and self-esteem.

"In many households, young girls unable to afford menstrual products miss out on school due to period shaming and some even put their life in danger by using leaves or bark of trees to manage their period. This is simply not acceptable.

"Furthermore, we see the effects on university students and working-class menstruators. This is not just a girl-child issue, it's a societal issue," says Asonle Kotu, founder and CEO of FemConnect.



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Lindiwe Nkuna 24 Jun 2020



Making periods the law

According to head of Team Free Sanitary Pads, Nokuzola Ndwandwe, South Africa needs menstrual rights laws to develop and implement national policies together with provincial policies in a coherent manner on menstrual health and hygiene management.

Thanks for tireless mobilising, VAT on period products was scrapped in 2018 and then again in 2020. Former minister of finance Tito Mboweni also made further financial provisions to provide free menstrual products in schools for the financial years 2021 to 2023.

“While this is progress, our call is for free menstrual products for all because period poverty does not discriminate. The menstrual rights law calls for fixed determinable amounts from National Treasury budgets to be allocated indefinitely towards menstrual health and rights. We also call for transparency reports on the spending of funds for menstrual health to see where the funding is going per the budget for period poverty in South Africa,” says Ndwandwe.



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SA has a long way to go

Compared to the menstrual rights policies in countries like Scotland and Spain, South Africa has a long way to go. Scotland has become the first country in the world to legally require local authorities to provide everyone with free period products, regardless of age and income. Spain on the other hand, boasts one of the most comprehensive menstrual health leave policies in the world, with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Zambia also adopting some form of menstrual leave plan.

During the upcoming march, protesters will deliver a 27,000-strong petition to the government, demanding that South Africa also follow suit and recognise menstrual rights into law.

Some of the organisations joining in support of the march include the Kathrada Youth Activism Programme, Bleed Free Girl Child, Pads R Us, Unicef UWC, University of Cape Town, Women's Health Ekklesia NPO, Mama Flo, HIV/TB Solutions, Women's Health by Fatima Kathrada, Change.Org, Floww, and the Human Nature Project.

“Not every household in South Africa can afford feminine hygiene products. As a mother, when you have a teen daughter and you have to choose between buying bread and electricity or buying a pack of pads, it can become a very difficult thing to navigate,” says Nicola Malgas, who is representing Unicef UWC in the march.



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Protecting and prioritising women's rights

Kotu concludes: “The only way to ensure women’s basic rights are both protected and prioritised is to have them

prescribed into law. We believe a menstrual rights law would form a solid foundation for transformative policy in our country. Solving period poverty encompasses all socioeconomic spheres - from developing a menstrual health framework in education to fostering economic female empowerment in business and industry.”

For more info on the march through Cape Town and Pretoria, click [here](#). Sign the petition, [here](#).

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>