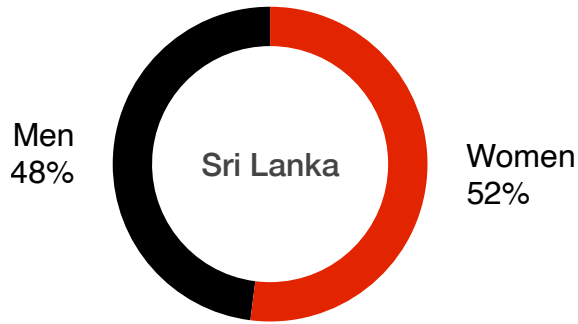




## facts & figures



- Out of the above 52%, **5.2 million are menstruating women** (*DCS Mid-Year Population Age Group 2019*)
- On average, women menstruate for approx. **5 days per month** and use approx. **4 sanitary napkins per day** (*Advocata Policy Brief Series No. 1*)

### Average cost?

LKR 750 per month



## What is Period Poverty?

A situation where an individual is unable to afford or has no access to menstrual products. It includes increased economic vulnerability they face due to the financial burden posed by menstrual supplies including pain medication and underwear.

### Why is it a concern?

**School Absenteeism:** According to a UNICEF study, **half of menstruating students miss school.**

**Health issues:** Affordable and/or makeshift replacements instead of proper sanitary products may **affect reproductive health & hygiene.** **Mental health challenges** such as depression associated with period poverty may arise.

**Impact on Employment:** Persons experiencing difficulty in accessing period products are **likely to miss work.**

## Period products

- Disposable menstrual pads (sanitary napkins/towels)
  - Reusable menstrual pads
  - Tampons
  - Menstrual cups
  - Clean, absorbent fabrics or cloths
  - Period underwear
  - Pain medication
- (UNFPA, 2022)



\*An initiative by the Sri Lanka WPC, with technical support from NDI

It's time to  
cycle out  
period  
poverty.

Bucks Students' Union

## Women Parliamentarians' Caucus (WPC): Towards Ending Period Poverty

- Debated the issue of Period Poverty during the Parliamentary Budget Debate of November 2020.
- Held round table discussions on the issues surrounding Period Poverty and addressed the State Minister in charge to protest taxation.
- Proposed that sanitary napkins be provided free-of-charge for all school girls, of whom at least 65% hail from low-income families, as an alternative.

The Government accepted the policy recommendation made by the WPC, and announced that, from 2021 onwards, sanitary napkins for school girls will be provided free-of-charge, benefiting at a minimum 1.2 million girls between the ages of 10 -19 years → Not fully implemented yet.



## Period Taxing

The existing cumulative tariff rate on menstrual products comprises, **10% Port and Airport Levy (PAL) and 15% CESS**, which is far too high!

**Note: Social Security Contribution Levy (SSCL) of 2.5% is also applicable**

## Recommendations

- **Educate** children, the general public, and law and policymakers;
- Raise **awareness** to tackle the stigma and misinformation;
- **Slash current taxes** on period products, including the 15% VAT, 10% PAL and the 15% CESS rate (as approved in the Import CESS Schedule of 2021);
- Provide **free menstrual products** for school students;
- Create a **distribution strategy** for free menstrual products;
- Make **budget allocations** to address Period Poverty;
- Protect the right to **Water and Sanitation** by addressing the lack of adequate facilities in schools;
- Provide **concessions for local producers/manufacturers** of eco-friendly sanitary products; and
- Promote **sustainable menstrual products**.

*\*An initiative by the Sri Lanka WPC, with technical support from NDI*