



**United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of
Women
(UNWOMEN)**

**Topic:
Menstrual Leave: Advancing Gender Equality in the Workplace**

**Chairs:
Daniela Galindo Paulin
Camila Altamirano Osorio**



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Introduction:

UN Women, officially known as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was established on July 2, 2010, by the United Nations General Assembly. This landmark creation marked a significant step towards intensifying global efforts to eradicate gender inequality and promote women's empowerment.

UN Women is the primary United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. The organization is central to championing women's rights, advocating for policy changes, and fostering initiatives that contribute to gender parity worldwide.

The overarching mission of UN Women is to address and eliminate the structural causes of gender inequality while promoting an inclusive and gender-responsive agenda. The entity works collaboratively with governments, civil society, and other stakeholders to advance women's rights in economic participation, political representation, education, and healthcare.

With a focus on promoting gender-responsive policies, UN Women plays a pivotal role in driving sustainable development that recognizes and addresses the unique challenges women and girls face. The committee consistently works towards creating a world where gender equality is an aspirational goal and a tangible reality.

Background:

Menstrual leave, also known as menstrual cycle leave, is a workplace policy designed to address the unique health challenges faced by individuals experiencing severe menstrual symptoms. These symptoms, including cramps, pain, fatigue, and nausea, can significantly impact an individual's ability to work, leading to decreased productivity and increased absenteeism.

Main Causes:

- **Menstrual Cramps:** Severe pain and discomfort associated with menstruation.
- **Fatigue:** Overwhelming tiredness that often accompanies menstruation.



- **Nausea:** Some individuals experience nausea during their menstrual cycle.
- **General Discomfort:** Various symptoms such as headaches and mood swings contribute to discomfort.

Consequences:

- **Decreased Productivity:** Severe menstrual symptoms can impair an individual's focus and efficiency at work.
- **Increased Absenteeism:** Employees may need to take time off to manage their symptoms.
- **Decline in Employee Morale:** Failure to address menstrual health needs can contribute to a negative work environment.

Timeline of Events:

- 1947: Japan pioneers menstrual leave by introducing it to female factory workers.
- 1948: Indonesia enacted a menstrual leave policy, allowing female workers experiencing menstrual pain to take the first two days of their cycle off.
- 2022: Spain takes a significant step by becoming the first European country to introduce menstrual leave legislation.
- 2023: The United Nations Model on Menstrual Leave is launched, marking a global initiative to provide a framework for menstrual leave policies.

The implementation of menstrual leave policies varies widely. Some policies grant employees the flexibility to take up to three days of leave per month, while others may have different timeframes. Documentation requirements also vary, with certain policies necessitating a doctor's note and others not.

Despite the potential benefits of menstrual leave policies, challenges persist, including the stigmatization of menstruation in many cultures and workplaces. The normalization of discussions around menstrual health and the adoption of inclusive policies contribute to fostering workplace equality and creating environments that support the well-being of all employees.



Key terms:

1. **Menstrual Leave:** Workplace policy providing time off for employees experiencing severe menstrual symptoms.
2. **Gender Equality:** Ensuring equal rights, opportunities, and treatment irrespective of gender.
3. **Workplace Inclusivity:** Creating an environment where diverse individuals feel welcomed and valued.
4. **Human Rights:** Fundamental rights inherent to all individuals, emphasizing equal treatment.
5. **Stigmatization:** Assigning negative stereotypes to individuals or groups based on certain conditions.
6. **Global Adoption:** Widespread acceptance and implementation of policies or practices globally.
7. **Equitable Workplace:** Ensuring fair access to opportunities, resources, and benefits for all employees.
8. **Employment Discrimination:** Unfair treatment of employees based on characteristics such as gender.
9. **Inclusive Policies:** Workplace measures considering and accommodating diverse needs and backgrounds.
10. **Women's Health:** Addressing health concerns specific to women, including menstrual health.
11. **Productivity Impact:** Influence on work efficiency due to factors like menstrual symptoms.



12. **Legislation:** Enacted laws or regulations related to workplace policies and gender issues.
13. **Cultural Taboos:** Societal restrictions or prohibitions related to cultural beliefs and practices.
14. **Health Accommodations:** Workplace policies providing flexibility for health-related needs.
15. **Professional Advancement:** Opportunities for career growth and progression within the workplace.

Guiding questions:

1. Workplace Implementation:

- How has your country implemented menstrual leave policies in workplaces to address gender equality?
- What measures are in place to ensure that menstrual leave is easily accessible and respected by employers?

2. Legislation and Compliance:

- Could you elaborate on existing legislation or regulations supporting menstrual leave in your country?
- How does your country ensure compliance with such legislation and prevent discrimination against individuals using menstrual leave?

3. Public Perception:

- What steps has your country taken to address societal stigmas and misconceptions surrounding menstrual leave?
- How is public awareness being raised to foster understanding and acceptance of menstrual health challenges?

4. Economic Impact:

- How does menstrual leave impact workforce productivity and the overall economic landscape in your country?



- Are there specific industries or sectors where the implementation of menstrual leave has proven more challenging or successful?

5. Global Cooperation:

- Has your country participated in international collaborations or discussions concerning menstrual leave policies?
- How does your country contribute to global initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality in the workplace, specifically regarding menstrual health?

6. Employee Support Systems:

- What support systems are in place for employees who face challenges in exercising their right to menstrual leave?
- Are there counseling or healthcare services provided to ensure the mental and physical well-being of employees?

7. Intersectionality:

- How does your country address the intersectionality of menstrual health challenges with other factors, such as age, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status?
- Are there targeted initiatives to support vulnerable groups facing compounded challenges related to menstrual health in the workplace?

8. Education and Awareness:

- What educational programs are implemented to inform employers and employees about the importance of menstrual health in the workplace?
- How does your country ensure that educational efforts extend beyond workplaces to reach the wider community?

9. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- How is the effectiveness of menstrual leave policies monitored, and what evaluation mechanisms are in place?
- Are there periodic reviews to assess the impact of such policies on workplace dynamics and gender equality?

10. Employer Engagement:



- How are employers encouraged to actively engage with and promote menstrual health in the workplace?
- Are there incentives or recognition programs for companies that demonstrate commitment to gender equality through supportive policies?

11. Policy Evolution:

- How has the menstrual leave policy evolved in your country, and what future changes are envisioned?
- Are there plans to expand the scope of benefits of menstrual leave policies to further support gender equality?

12. Employee Advocacy:

- How does your country ensure that employees feel empowered to advocate for their rights related to menstrual health?
- Are there avenues for collective bargaining or employee representation in shaping workplace policies?

13. Challenges and Solutions:

- What challenges has your country faced in implementing menstrual leave policies, and how have these been addressed?
- Are there innovative solutions or best practices that have emerged from overcoming challenges related to menstrual health in the workplace?

14. Reporting Mechanisms:

- How are cases of discrimination or non-compliance related to menstrual leave reported and addressed?
- Are there whistleblower protections in place to encourage individuals to come forward with workplace concerns?

15. Corporate Social Responsibility:

- To what extent do companies in your country incorporate menstrual health initiatives as part of their corporate social responsibility efforts?
- How are companies encouraged to contribute to broader societal efforts aimed at addressing menstrual health challenges?

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