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Menstrual health matters :states' obligations under international human rights conventions

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Abstract

Women make up 52 percent of the world's population and yet a normal body function, such as menstruation, often interrupts the ability of women or girls to take part in daily activities. This is a long overdue problem that needs to be addressed. Menstrual health management (MHM) is a new theme for education, health, hygiene and sanitation. MHM has emerged as an under-recognized human rights barrier. Activism and research have highlighted the different challenges faced by women in managing their menstruation in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs). Fortunately, MHM is beginning to emerge as a norm that is taking place within domestic and international spaces. Due to the broad and open language of International Law which has been left open to interpretation, has thus created an opportunity for norm entrepreneurs to realize the implementation of MHM as a human right. The paper seeks to stress the importance of how when menstruation is not prioritized, it will thus have socio-economic consequences on women's and girls' fulfilment of their human rights, especially within LMICs.

By understanding this opportunity for MHM, the research report will conduct a document analysis of the core international treaties on human rights to investigate the extent to which menstruation is mentioned within the human rights regime. This report will illustrate that due to the allusions contained within the treaties and the socio-economic consequences that menstruation leaves on women and girls, there exists an opportunity for the emergence of MHM as a norm to be granted as a human rights agenda, and this is evident seen in the case studies of policies and commitments of certain states that are ensuring good MHM in their respected countries.