



FREE FLOW CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE

**Innovations in Menstrual Health: Bridging the Gaps in Education & Stigma, Policy, WASH,
and Innovation**



FEBRUARY 21, 2026
ACCRA, GHANA
YOUTH ARISE ORGANIZATION

PREAMBLE

We, the participants of the Free Flow Conference (FFC)—comprising youth-led organizations, civil society, educators, health advocates, innovators, policymakers, community leaders, students, media, and development practitioners—convened in Accra, Ghana, under the theme: **“Innovations in Menstrual Health: Bridging the Gaps in Education & Stigma, Policy, WASH, and Innovation.”**

We recognize that menstrual health is a fundamental human right and a critical issue for public health, education, gender equality, and national development. We acknowledge the persistent challenges faced by menstruating girls and women in Ghana, including deep-seated stigma, inadequate education, weak policy implementation, poor WASH infrastructure, the high cost of menstrual products, environmental harm from non-biodegradable materials, and the exclusion of vulnerable groups.

Guided by evidence, lived experiences, and collective dialogue across four thematic tracks, we hereby issue the following Communiqué and recommendations.

Cognizant of:

- The continued impact of inadequate knowledge and menstrual stigma on school attendance, dignity, health, and psychosocial wellbeing.
- The gaps between menstrual health policies and effective grassroots implementation, alongside the rising cost and taxation of sanitary products which render them a luxury.
- The inadequate WASH infrastructure in schools, mining communities, markets, and workplaces.
- The environmental and economic burden of plastic-based products and the over-reliance on imported sanitary pads.

We affirm that menstrual health must be addressed through integrated, inclusive, and sustainable systems driven by youth leadership, community ownership, innovation, and accountability.

TRACK-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. EDUCATION & STIGMA

We recommend that stakeholders:

- **1.1 Integrate male-inclusive menstrual health education into school health programs:** Incorporating menstrual education into life skills and general health curricula will ensure holistic understanding for both boys and girls, reducing boy-related menstrual stigma. *(Action: National Commission for Civic Education)*
- **1.2 Develop a Comprehensive Nationwide Menstrual Education Curriculum:** Review teaching content to ensure it covers hygiene, reproductive health, nutrition, myths, and psychosocial wellbeing. *(Action: Ministry of Education)*
- **1.3 Nationwide Training for Teachers and Educators:** Build the capacity of both male and female educators to deliver culturally sensitive, inclusive, and age-appropriate menstrual health education. *(Action: Ghana Health Service)*
- **1.4 Improve Access for Persons with Disabilities:** Integrate menstrual education into disability services, tailoring materials for visual, hearing, and intellectual disabilities, and training educators in special schools to provide support for both in-school and out-of-school individuals. *(Action: Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations)*
- **1.5 Strengthen Public Education and Community Dialogues:** Utilize dramas, TV series, and edutainment involving parents, religious leaders, and traditional authorities to dismantle cultural taboos. *(Action: Government and NGO collaboration)*

2. POLICY & BUDGET

We call on government and policymakers to:

- **2.1 Set National Infrastructure and WASH Policies:** Establish clear national standards for schools and public institutions, ensuring washrooms are consistently stocked with sanitary products.
- **2.2 Ensure Equitable Access:** Extend the distribution of sanitary products beyond school-going girls to include non-schooling girls, women, and persons with disabilities.
- **2.3 Lower Costs and Taxes:** Reduce tax rates on menstrual products and form public-private partnerships with local manufacturers to increase affordability.
- **2.4 Promote Community-Owned WASH Facilities:** Shift from over-reliance on central government provision to shared responsibility models at the community level.
- **2.5 Ensure Transparency in Distribution:** Implement independent auditing, public accountability reports, journalist involvement in monitoring, and digital/biometric tracking of expenditures.

- **2.6 Invest in Local Manufacturing:** Allocate an annual budget toward local production to create jobs, improve economic productivity, and ensure sustainable access.
- **2.7 Initiate Innovation Competitions:** Establish local challenge competitions to find sustainable solutions for Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) gaps.
- **2.8 Fast-Track Regulatory Approval:** Reduce bureaucratic barriers for local innovators to encourage home-grown manufacturing.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE & WASH (WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE)

We note with concern the poor state of WASH facilities, particularly in artisanal mining communities and rural schools, where girls are often forced to use unsafe spaces. We recommend:

- **3.1 Public Sanitation Facilities in Every Town:** Especially in mining communities, equipped with reliable water, waste disposal systems, and hygiene materials.
- **3.2 Upgrading School Washrooms:** Facilities must include stored sanitary products, private bathrooms, water storage, and disposal shelves.
- **3.3 Construction of Boreholes:** Through partnerships with NGOs and the private sector, including mining companies operating in host communities.
- **3.4 Modular Solutions:** Providing Veronica buckets and poly tanks for water-scarce schools, markets, and workplaces.
- **3.5 Regular Maintenance and Sensitization:** Employing janitors and using signage to promote washroom etiquette and hygiene.
- **3.6 Media Advocacy:** Using mass media to expose WASH gaps and advocate for the dignity and health of girls and women.

4. INNOVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

We recognize innovation as the primary pathway to addressing affordability and environmental impact. We recommend:

- **4.1 R&D in Biodegradable Products:** Exploring locally available materials such as plantain and banana fibers.
- **4.2 Support for Start-Ups:** Providing structured incubation, mentorship, and professional guidance for menstrual health innovators.

- **4.3 Environmental Sensitization:** Educating the public on the harms of non-biodegradable products and the safety of eco-friendly alternatives.
- **4.4 School-Based Product Testing:** Distributing locally produced biodegradable samples in schools to build credibility and user trust.
- **4.5 Strengthening Existing Companies:** Providing incentives and market-expansion partnerships for established local innovators.
- **4.6 Multi-Stakeholder Innovation Body:** Establishing a body of government, CSOs, and investors to coordinate research and market access.

CALL TO ACTION

We further call on:

- **Government Institutions** to prioritize menstrual health as a core development and health issue.
- **Civil Society** to champion stigma-free conversations and community ownership.
- **The Private Sector** to invest in sustainable and affordable local products.
- **Media Organizations** to amplify evidence-based advocacy and accountability.
- **Youth** to continue leading through dialogue and grassroots action.

We affirm our collective commitment to advancing menstrual dignity, equity, and innovation. We believe these recommendations will significantly improve health outcomes, education, and social inclusion across Ghana and beyond.

Issued by:

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