

One in five women and girls in Poland experience lack of funds to access appropriate sanitary products

Ahead of Menstrual Hygiene Day 2020, new research from Kulczyk Foundation reveals severity of period poverty, lack of knowledge, taboos and superstition surrounding menstruation in Polish society.

26 May 2020 – New research looking into [taboo, stigma and superstition surrounding menstruation in 21st century Poland](#), conducted by Kulczyk Foundation, reveals that **1 in 5 women experience inadequate financial resources to buy appropriate sanitary products in Poland, and live in a society where common taboos and myths exclude and humiliate women during their monthly cycle.** The research follows a number of shocking period poverty statistics revealed in other EU countries in the last year or so.

In 2007, the European Union allowed countries to amend the so-called Tampon Tax, but only half of its member states have considered this change. Although the Polish government has followed the directive and made an important step to reduce the VAT on sanitary products from 8% to 5%, for many low-income women it does not go far enough.

Despite economic growth, the struggles of Polish women and girls to access appropriate sanitary products and quality health education prove yet again that period poverty is not restricted to the developing world. Period poverty does not only mean lack of access to sanitary products, but also poor knowledge of menstruation due to financial constraints or, as in the case of Poland, a generally negative environment composed of harmful taboos and misconceptions about periods.

Kulczyk Foundation research shows that menstruation is still an area of cultural and social taboo. Despite menstruation being a natural fact of life and a monthly occurrence for women and girls globally, **42% of women who took part in the study admitted that menstruation has never been discussed in their family home.** For most, it is considered an embarrassing or inappropriate topic.

These attitudes reinforce myths and inadequate knowledge, which affect women's understanding of their bodies and ultimately negatively impact their menstrual and reproductive life. The study found that **almost 30% of Polish women believe that they cannot get pregnant during their period, and more than 20% believe that periods negatively affect culinary activities, such as baking cakes and pickling cucumbers.**

This failure to create a positive period environment means young girls are often scared of getting their first period, associating menstruation with shame, anxiety and



loneliness. **1 in 3 teenage girls feel unprepared for menstruation** as school and home education do not provide enough information or use negative and discouraging language to describe it.

Dominika Kulczyk, President of the Kulczyk Foundation, commented on results of the study: “All we have to do is give a girl a sanitary pad and you can change her life. She is more likely to go to school without missing classes, get better grades, and end up with a better job. We need to change menstrual taboos and myths in Poland to end period stigma. Menstruation, which means readiness for new life, should be a moment of celebration. Unfortunately, instead it becomes humiliation for women around the world.”

Ends

Notes to the Editor

About Dominika Kulczyk – an entrepreneur, investor, philanthropist. President of Kulczyk Foundation, an organisation tackling discrimination against women and girls globally. Through her philanthropic activities and based on sustainable solutions, which she calls ‘Domino Effect’, Dominika works with NGOs around the world to improve the lives of those affected by poverty.

Author of more than 60 documentaries broadcast by CNN International (as part of the CNN Freedom Project) and private Polish TV station TVN. An activist and ambassador for the Sustainable Development Goals and Member of the UN Global Compact Advisory Board in Poland. Chair of the Kulczyk Holding Supervisory Board and Polenergia SA, Co-founder of The Values Consulting Group. Awarded Order of the Smile, an international award given by children to adults distinguished for their love, care and aid for children.

About Kulczyk Foundation – a private family foundation established in 2013 by Grazyna Kulczyk, Dr Jan Kulczyk, and Dominika Kulczyk, in Warsaw, Poland. The Foundation fights against discrimination and inequalities affecting women and girls around the world. It aims to build a world free from gender discrimination and works with partners to prioritise sustainable solutions. So far, Kulczyk Foundation has implemented projects in 63 countries on six continents. It also conducts educational and informational activities through the production of documentary films, paying attention to social issues. Kulczyk Foundation’s programmes have more than 600,000 beneficiaries around the world.

About the research on taboo, stigma and superstition: menstruation in 21st century Poland

The study employed qualitative and quantitative research methods and was carried out in February 2020 in Poland by Difference. The quantitative analysis was based on survey responses of nearly one and a half thousand participants, including



teenagers, adult women, and men. The qualitative analysis was based on the opinions of over 90 participants, including experts, teenagers, and adult women. The study presents an analysis of period poverty and period exclusion from an economic, social, and educational perspective.

More information:

https://kulczykfoundation.org.pl/en/news/events/Taboo_Stigma_And_Superstition_Menstruation_In_21st_Century_Poland

Full report:

<https://kulczykfoundation.org.pl/uploads/media/default/0001/05/727d015466d688fc8dao97673678200ac8188b4.pdf>

Kulczyk Foundation online

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