

Our Blood Boils

Manifesto of the Period Coalition

for counteracting the problem of period poverty and menstrual exclusion

Today is International Women's Day – a time when public opinion, the media, as well as local and international authorities are paying special attention to social issues affecting women. That is why today, we, the undersigned, members of non-governmental and humanitarian organisations, experts and activists dealing with the topic of menstruation, are establishing the Period Coalition. A coalition that will actively work to achieve our common goal: preventing period poverty and removing taboos regarding the natural phenomenon of menstruation. We would like to announce the next 12 months as the YEAR OF MENSTRUATION.

In Poland, menstruation remains a taboo subject. It is perceived as an awkward, inappropriate, even invisible subject. Menstruation, even though it is a natural and cyclical process, is often accompanied by shame and humiliation. People at risk of social exclusion, who do not always have the means to take care of hygiene and comfort during their periods, face an even greater challenge. According to studies commissioned by the Kulczyk Foundation, at least 1 in 5 women in Poland at some stage in their lives has not had or does not currently have access to sanitary products.

The serious effects of period poverty have finally begun to be noticed by governments around the world, including Scotland, New Zealand, and France. It has been noted that period poverty can lead to physical health problems, including infections that impair fertility or the lack of diagnosis of dangerous diseases, such as endometriosis or cancer. It can also result in mental health problems: a feeling of fear and shame related to an attempt to hide menstruation, difficulties in performing daily duties (or even an inability to do so) or participate in events. Thus, period poverty can have a negative impact on education and work, and consequently on the level of education and the possibility of finding a good job.

Lack of access to knowledge, to sanitary products or the unfavourable, stigmatising attitudes of the environment directly affect people who menstruate, but also indirectly affect the quality of life of the entire society. The changes in the access to sanitary products and to knowledge about health and menstrual hygiene, observed all over the world, show that this is a common issue that should be addressed by the authorities and society as a whole. Only system changes can bring real effects. We believe it's time to introduce such changes in Poland as well!

As part of our goal, we will undertake the following initiatives:

- providing access to sanitary products for people who menstruate, in, among others, schools, orphanages, single mother's homes, centres for the homeless, and prisons;
- spreading knowledge about menstruation by distributing educational materials for parents that will support them in conversations with children;
- breaking the menstrual taboo as part of awareness-raising campaigns, meetings and debates;

- **spreading knowledge** about the ecological aspect of sanitary products through publications and conversations with producers to introduce both health-friendly and environmentally-safe sanitary products;
- **publicising the problem of limited access to gynaecological care** for teenagers and lobbying for changes in this area.

On March 8, 2022, we will publicly summarise the effects of the activities undertaken by us during the entire YEAR OF MENSTRUATION. We believe that this year will be the beginning of comprehensive changes in public and social life in Poland in the field of fighting period poverty and menstrual exclusion, and that the following years will bring the long-term effects of our actions.

We appeal to participants in public life, members of organisations, and all citizens to support this Manifesto and to start activities to prevent period poverty and menstrual exclusion. **We also ask the authorities at all levels to join the action.** At the same time, we are calling on companies to produce sanitary products in a more eco-friendly way.

Only together can we change the reality that surrounds us, because periods are everyone's business.

Ignoring the topic of menstruation makes our BLOOD BOIL! Let's change it together!

The Manifesto was signed by:

- 1) Akcja Menstruacja
- 2) Therapist, sex educator, Dr Alicja Długołęcka
- 3) Fundacja One Day
- 4) Fundacja Pokonać Endometriozę, Lucyna Jaworska-Wojtas
- 5) Grupa Ponton, Patrycja Wonatowska
- 6) Kulczyk Foundation, Dominika Kulczyk
- 7) miesiaczka.com, Natalia Miłuńska
- 8) moonka, Ewa Pietruszczak
- 9) Pani Miesiączka / moonka, Barbara Pietruszczak
- 10) Polish Red Cross, Urszula Okoń
- 11) Różowa Skrzyneczka
- 12) "Pogotowie Społeczne" Association, Beata Benyskiewicz
- 13) Szajn, Karolina Kosecka
- 14) Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań / Fundacja Ja, Nauczyciel, Dr Iwona Chmura-Rutkowska