

Joint press statement on Increasing Access to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and Promoting Gender-Responsive Public Services.

27 May 2022

RE: INCREASE ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY OF SANITARY DIGNITY KITS.



Joint statement by Civil Society Organizations, Movements, Networks and INGOS issued on behalf of the girls and women in Liberia.

ACCESS TO SANITARY AND DIGNITY KITS IS A HUMAN RIGHT!!

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and friends, members of the media fraternity and allies, we the women of Liberia are honored to issue this statement as we call for increased commitment from the government to safeguard the rights of women and girls through making sanitary and dignity kits affordable and accessible.

Women and girls are confronted with an exceptional threat of lack of access to sanitary and dignity kits across the universe. The majority of women and girls have difficulties in accessing dignity kits thereby resorting to using cloths and other materials that have created a devastating impact on their health due to lack of proper menstrual hygiene management, Liberia is not an exception to this setting. Creating an environment where sanitary dignity kits are accessible and affordable for every woman and girl in Liberia, requires solidarity and cooperation from the government, public and private institutions, churches, mosques etc. While we appreciate the assistance of civil society actors (CSOs, INGOs) and some in the private sector, we note that this is the government's

obligation. Gender Responsive Budgeting which must increase allocation towards health to facilitate the accessibility and affordability of these kits in health centers and public spaces in Liberia needs to be prioritized. It is imperative that government ensures taxes and duty free on the importation of sanitary and dignity kits to make them accessible and affordable to every woman and girls.

Menstruation is a normal part of women and girls life cycle. It is not by choice, but by nature, it is neither a sickness nor a disease, therefore access to sanitary dignity kits and safe hygiene facilities is part of basic needs and Human Rights and should therefore be provided for all in need. To note is that; based on religious and traditional beliefs women and girls are most of the time left behind, be it at schools religious attendance and political gatherings, they are seen as unclean and therefore should not come among people when they are menstruating.

The current Russia – Ukraine conflict is also a cause of concern that has economically affected the prices of all basic commodities including access to sanitary and dignity kits, therefore contributing to the economic crisis for women living under difficult circumstances. The economic crisis has contributed to exacerbation of inequalities especially for women and girls, as well as discrimination of other marginalized groups such as women with disabilities and those in extreme poverty. We believe that accessibility and affordability of sanitary dignity kits will promote participation of women in the local socio-economic and political development. Increased access to affordable quality sanitary and dignity kits will increase girls' enrolment, retention and completion rates in Liberia.

Therefore, as a collective, we call on the government of Liberia to action the following;

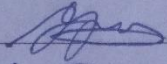
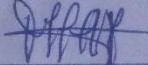
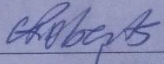
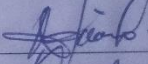
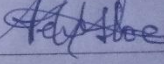
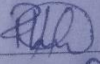
- Increase gender budgeting with a special focus on the provision of sanitary dignity services
- Government of Liberia to make importation of sanitary pads duty free and completely remove all related taxes on sanitary and dignity kits for women.
- Make sanitary pads accessible and affordable for all in public spaces (Banks, Religious and traditional institutions, schools, marketplaces, tax ranks, along the roadsides for distance routes, prisons facilities etc).
- Ensure the provision of adequate safe spaces with clean and hygienic washing facilities where women and girls can safely change themselves during the menstrual period.
- Make a MUST- LAW for all offices, companies, and organizations in Liberia to put sanitary and dignity kits, including male and female condoms in all bathrooms. This aligns with the fulfillment of Gender Responsive Public Services (GRPS) promised by the Liberian Government.
- Encourage inclusiveness of sanitary pads disposal bags by the manufacturers. (The disposal bags should be included in the sanitary pads box) which will promote proper disposal, therefore encouraging a clean and safe environment.

We remain committed to supporting all procedures that will promote the accessibility and affordability of sanitary dignity kits for girls and women therefore, promoting our freedom of movement and ability to clean ourselves at all levels in health centers, public spaces at national and community levels, through our movements, networks, and organizations. To ensure that efforts and responses are gender-responsive and will not further discriminate and exclude those most at risk.

[1] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-water-and-sanitation/menstrual-hygiene-day#:~:text=Menstruation%20is%20a%20natural%20and,toilet%20particularly%20during%20her%20period.>

[2] <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/21/from-food-to-inflation-the-russia-ukraine-war-has-a-global-impact.html>

SIGNED THIS DAY OF 27, MAY 2022

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