

Terms of Reference for Global Status of Menstrual Justice Report

Background:

Irise International, Irise Institute East Africa, and the Global Menstrual Collective recently co-hosted a concurrent session at Women Deliver 2023. Diverse stakeholders created a new global call to action for Menstrual Justice For All¹. The session aimed to capture learning from the ecosystem working on the issue, from youth activists and community-based organisations to UN agencies and international donors. This report will build on this conversation, aiming to accelerate Menstrual Justice For All in line with the call to action produced by these diverse stakeholders.

We have made significant progress over the last decade toward a world where no one is constrained by menstruation, discriminated against, or stigmatised. Menstruation is now part of public discourse. There has been a groundswell of grassroots action, particularly among young people. However, despite consensus among global stakeholders working on this issue that the issue is an integral part of gender equality agendas, that it is intersectional and driven by harmful social norms and stigma, the majority of policies have focused on meeting material needs.

Members of our advisory group describe a two-track narrative focused on free period products in schools and ending taxes on period products. Although they stress the importance of moving beyond these policies, members shared challenges articulating what this should look like in practice. Members highlighted that significant progress in the Global South was frequently overlooked. Governments in the Global North are developing policies without learning from their Global South counterparts, where menstrual health policy has been in place since as early as 2011.

Menstrual health has been defined as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle.” Detailed standardized indicators now exist to track global progress in line with this globally recognised definition of menstrual health. However, our advisory group identified challenges defining what actions we should expect of states and other stakeholders in realising menstrual health for all² in reference to the widely accepted human rights frameworks and the principles of social justice.

Advisory group members frequently raised limited funding as a barrier to progress. There were tensions between frustrations around menstrual health always being considered an add-on issue on the one hand and recognition of the need for integration of menstrual concerns across different policy areas. Members reflected on their limitations in creating change and recognised that the movement’s communication about the issue did not always lead to the desired action or instill responsibility for making menstrual health a reality in governments, donors, and other key stakeholders. There was also tension between the desire to make more rapid and radical progress and fears of the issue becoming intensely politicised like other reproductive justice issues. Our advisory group questioned whether a softer, incremental approach was the most effective. They were also keen to be strategic and pragmatic when considering a justice-focused framing.

Purpose:

This report will create a framework for holistic and intersectional menstrual health policies, assess progress, and recommend further action. The report will equip the grassroots movement and the

¹ <https://www.bmj.com/content/382/bmj.p2079>

² <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2023.07.017>

international community to advocate for practical commitments from states and other stakeholders for Menstrual Justice for All that goes beyond material provision.

Principles:

- *A Global Report*- The report must capture impressive progress and leadership of Global South actors. Producing the report must involve genuine co-leadership and co-production between Global North and Global South stakeholders.
- *Inclusive of everyone held back by the issue*- The final framework or principles must spark the inclusion of all rather than supporting further or ongoing marginalisation of particular groups affected by the issue.
- *Globally connected, locally relevant*- We want the final outputs to provide a shared reference point for the global ecosystem working on menstrual health but for it to be flexible enough for local actors to contextualise it within their cultural contexts.
- *Be action-focused*- A strong conceptual framing that supports practical action.

Key Audiences:

The report aims to equip the global menstrual movement to advocate for a broader set of legislative and policy changes that align more closely with the movement's holistic vision of menstrual health and draw on the full diversity of global learning and policy work experience on this issue. Key audiences include grassroots advocacy groups, national and international charities, and UN agencies already advocating for menstrual health needs and broader gender equality agendas.

Questions:

The report sets out to answer the following questions:

- 1) What constitutes menstrual injustice, i.e., what aspects, degrees, and impacts of poor or inadequate menstrual health can be considered the state's and wider society's responsibility? What is the potential scale and impact of menstrual injustice globally?

Under this question, we would expect the consultant to consider different framings of 'justice' and help us explore which approach will be most useful to achieving the goals of the menstrual movement. We would welcome efforts to explore understandings of justice rooted in Western and non-Western philosophies.

- 2) What are the obligations of the state and wider society to address menstrual health via a justice lens in reference to established human rights frameworks? What legislative and policy changes would enable Menstrual Justice?

Under this question, we welcome the consultant contacting our Advisory Group members and the GMC's wider network to collect evidence of current policy actions worldwide.

- 3) What examples are there of State progress towards Menstrual Justice around the world? How was progress made? What were the mechanisms of change?

Under these questions, we would welcome the consultant contacting our Advisory Group members and the GMC's wider network to collect case studies or evidence of this work.

- 4) What actions should be taken globally to accelerate progress towards Menstrual Justice For All? How can progress be made? What mechanisms of change should the movement focus on?

We would expect the consultant to work with the Advisory Group to generate recommendations based on the work of points 1), 2), and 3).

Outputs:

A Global Status of Menstrual Justice Report that:

- Compliments and builds on work that has already been done to define and measure menstrual health globally
- Provides a framework/set of principles/other output that:
- Applies a justice lens to define more clearly the responsibilities of the state and other stakeholders to improve menstrual health
- Attempts to quantify/demonstrate the cost of global menstrual injustice in some way
- Defines the kinds of legislative and policy changes that would enable Menstrual Justice
- Assesses or demonstrates where progress has been made
- Engages grassroots networks to understand progress in their context and ultimately equips them to campaign or advocate for change more effectively
- Builds global consensus about what Menstrual Justice means and how it could be achieved through policy and legislative changes.

Key Stakeholders:

The report is being jointly commissioned by Irise International and the Global Menstrual Collective (GMC). The consultant will be able to engage an Advisory Group of key stakeholders within the GMC and the wider global network of GMC members in collecting data and information from around the world. The consultant will be expected to engage the Advisory Group in generating the report's recommendations.

Irise International is an award-winning international charity working globally towards a world where no one is held back by their period.

The Global Menstrual Collective is a global platform for civil society working to drive and guide investment into menstrual health.

Members of the Advisory Group include:

- Lillian Bagala, Irise Institute East Africa and The Period Equality Network
- Halima Lila, UNFPA East and Southern Africa, African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management
- Inga Winkler, Associate Professor in Human Rights Law
- Professor Sivakami is a specialist in the impact of programs and policies related to health with a gender focus.
- Professor Margaret Johnson is an expert in menstruation, law, and justice.
- Camilla Rostvik, period inequality in the Nordic region
- Arundati Muralidharan, Co-founder of Menstrual Health Alliance India
- Sumaira Lokhandwala, HER Pakistan, period inequality in Pakistan
- Flávia Castelhana and Brazil's National Menstrual Health Collective and Menstrual Dignity Research Observatory
- Hannah Tamata and The Pacific Menstrual Health Network
- Bahar Aldanmaz Fidan, We Need To Talk, period inequality in Turkey
- Days for Girls, period inequality in the US and globally
- Irise International, period inequality in the UK
- Deborah Maufi, Population Services International, period equality in multiple country contexts

- Jan Schlenk, GIZ, GMC Global Advocacy Group
- Dr Jennifer Martin, Pandemic Periods

Technical Expertise:

We are looking for a consultant or group of consultants with the following expertise:

- Confident working in a multidisciplinary, multicultural setting
- Broad expertise in the application of human rights and social justice lens to gender equality issues
- Broad experience in global policy and advocacy work
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Evidence of having completed similar work
- A commitment to feminist leadership principles i.e., to share power and use it in a way that challenges harmful power structures and biases. We welcome examples of how you have practically led, worked creatively, or co-produced with others in a way that demonstrates these values.

We welcome bids that question the assumptions and approach laid out in this Terms of Reference or that further refine the focus of the piece of work. We strongly encourage bids from Global South-based consultants and groups and would expect at least one of the lead consultants to be from the Global South in collaborative bids.

Budget:

£10,000 for the consultant’s time. Irise will provide an additional budget of £7,000 to support research activities and stakeholder engagement. Graphic design, editing, and any translation of the final report do not need to be covered by this budget and will be organised separately by Irise International. We anticipate any new data or evidence collection to be desk-based and do not require travel. We expect the consultant(s) to spend roughly 20 days on this work.

Timing:

We expect this work to be completed in the first half of 2024. We anticipate a meeting of the Advisory Group in May 2024 to review the findings and help generate recommendations.

Procurement Timeline:

Deliverable	Date
Request for proposals deadline	Monday 22 nd Jan midnight GMT
Interview of shortlisted candidates	w/c 29 th Jan
Decision made	w/c 29 th Jan
Inception meeting, contract award, and sign-off	w/c 5 th Feb

To Apply:

Please send a short bid (max 10 pages) outlining your experience and how you would approach the piece of work. Please include examples of similar work either as links or attachments.