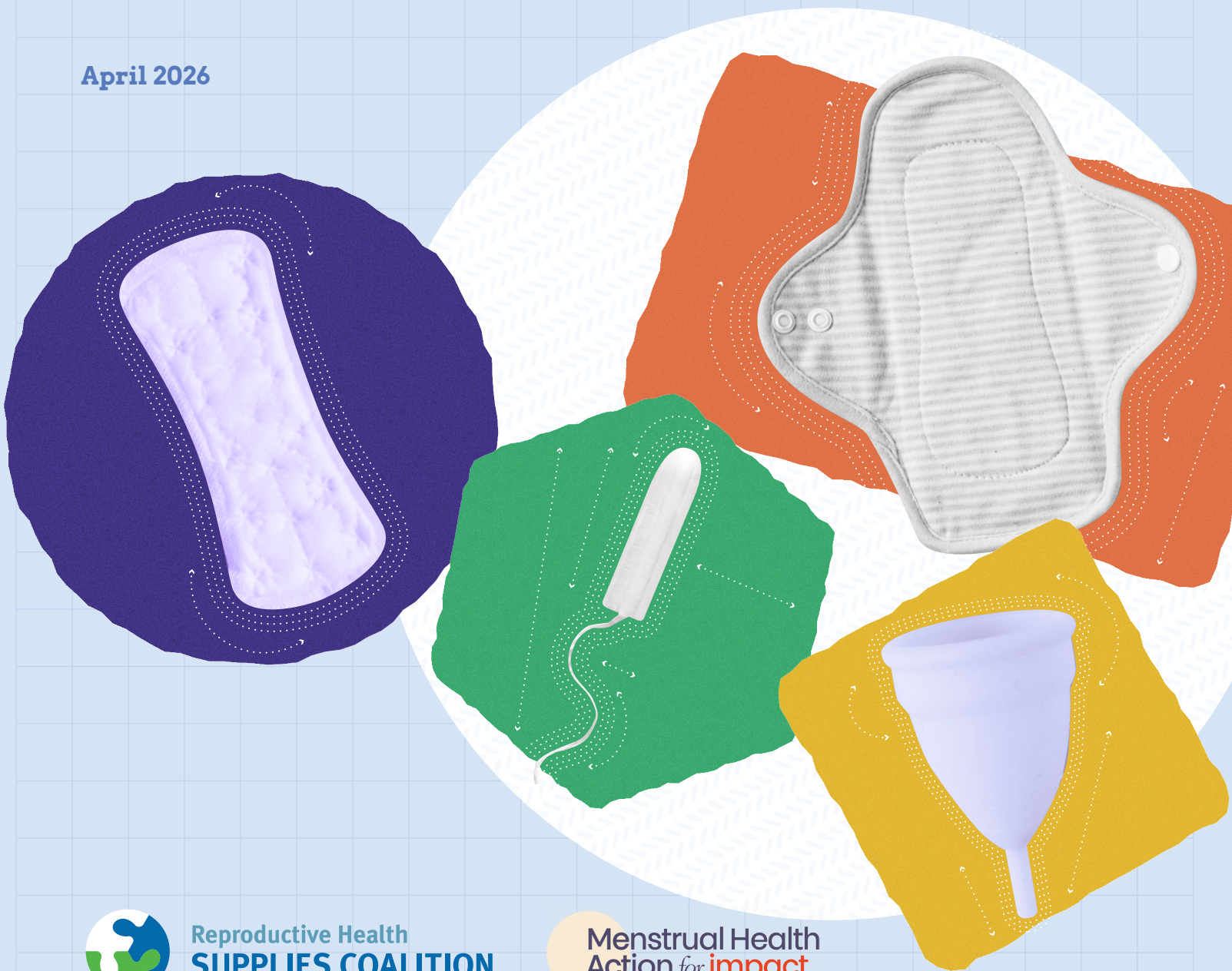


Menstrual Product Standards Advocacy Toolkit

Enabling the development and adoption of menstrual product standards in LMICs & advancing participation in ISO TC 338*

April 2026



Reproductive Health
SUPPLIES COALITION

Menstrual Health
Action *for impact*

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*LMIC, low- and middle-income country; ISO TC 338, International Organization for Standardization Technical Committee 338 on Menstrual Products.

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Acronyms

ACRONYM	FULL FORM
ABIHPEC	Brazilian Association of Personal Hygiene, Perfumery, and Cosmetics Industry
ARSO	African Organisation for Standardisation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEN	European Committee for Standardization
CENELEC	European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization
CSO	civil society organization
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
EAC	East African Community
EDANA	European Disposables and Nonwovens Association
GSA	Ghana Standards Authority
HIC	high-income country
INGO	international nongovernmental organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISO TC 338	ISO Technical Committee on Menstrual Products
LEAP	Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs
LMIC	low- and middle-income country
MHAI	Menstrual Health Action for Impact

ACRONYM	FULL FORM
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MSMEs	micro, small, and medium enterprises
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NMC	national mirror committee
NSB	national standards body
O-member	observing member (ISO)
P-member	participating member (ISO)
RHSC	Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition
SARSO	South Asian Regional Standards Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIS	Swedish Institute for Standards
SITRA	South India Textile Research Association
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
TC	technical committee
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WASH	water, sanitation, and hygiene

Terms of Relevance

Menstrual health

is 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 ([Hennegan et al., 2021](#)).

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Women, girls, and people who menstruate (also referred to as menstruators)

includes all individuals who experience menstruation, regardless of gender identity. This encompasses cisgender women and girls, as well as transgender men, nonbinary people, intersex individuals, and others who have menstrual cycles. Anyone who menstruates has menstrual health needs that deserve recognition and support, regardless of their gender identity.

The term “people who menstruate” or “menstruators” encompasses everyone who menstruates and has a menstrual cycle, acknowledging that not everyone who menstruates identifies as female, and not all women and girls menstruate. Some cisgender women don’t menstruate due to menstrual suppressants, contraceptive use, medical conditions, reproductive health issues, or menopause. The term “women and girls” can exclude or overlook the menstrual health needs of those who do not identify as cisgender women.

When to use different terms:

- “People who menstruate” is inclusive and gender-neutral, appropriate to use when all those who menstruate are acknowledged.
- “Women, girls, and people who menstruate” emphasizes the specific needs of women and girls when they represent the majority of those affected.
- Specific identity terms (e.g., “transgender men who menstruate”) can be used when addressing the particular needs of a specific group.

This document uses the terms “people who menstruate” and “women and girls,” while acknowledging that not all women experience menstruation and that some people who do not identify as female also menstruate.

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Menstrual products

are manufactured articles intended for the collection and/or absorption of menstrual fluid during the menstrual cycle. In some contexts, these products are also referred to as “sanitary products,” “feminine hygiene products,” or “feminine care products.” This toolkit adopts the term menstrual products to reflect their functional purpose—namely, the management of menstrual discharge through absorption or collection—rather than any implication of cleansing, sterilization, or hygiene of the menstruating body. The use of the term “sanitary” is therefore approached with caution, as it may inadvertently reinforce stigmatizing or medically inaccurate assumptions about menstruation.

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Purpose-made products

refer to products that have been specifically manufactured for the purpose of collecting or absorbing menstrual discharge, including single-use pads and tampons, as well as reusable pads, reusable menstrual underwear, menstrual cups, and discs ([RHSC LEAP](#)).

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Non-purpose-made materials

are those that include cotton wool, cloth, tissue, or other materials that are not specifically made to collect or absorb menstrual discharge ([RHSC LEAP](#)).

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Market-based approaches to menstrual health

are interventions that use the interplay of supply and demand to support market actors to create a well-functioning, competitive market for menstrual products and supplies ([RHSC](#), 2025).

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International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

is an independent, nongovernmental organization that develops and publishes international standards for a wide range of sectors, defining requirements for products, services, and processes. The ISO is a decentralized and member-driven organization. National standards bodies send representatives to the technical committees within ISO that develop the standards. ([Website](#))

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Technical committee (TC)

is a formal body within ISO composed of a group of experts from different countries who come together to develop international standards on a specific topic. The committee studies evidence, drafts standards, reviews comments from member countries, and reaches consensus before a standard is published.

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**ISO Technical Committee
338 (ISO TC 338)**

is a technical committee that was established by the ISO in 2022 for menstrual product standardization. The committee is jointly administered by a secretariat from the [Swedish Institute for Standards](#) (SIS) and [Ghana Standards Authority](#) (GSA) and reports to ISO's Technical Management Board. ([Website](#))

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**National standards
body (NSB)**

is the officially recognized organization in a country responsible for developing, publishing, and maintaining national standards across various sectors and industries. The NSB is most often a government agency located within a particular government ministry. The NSB is the official representative to ISO in the standards-setting process for any product, service, or process. NSBs create national standards, facilitating stakeholder participation in standards development; harmonize national standards with international ones; represent national interests in global standardization efforts; and support trade, safety, quality, and innovation through standardization.

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**National mirror
committee (NMC)**

is a group of national experts established by the NSB to monitor, review, and provide input on international standards development work, “mirroring” the activities of an ISO technical committee, in this case ISO TC 338. The NMC for menstrual products will ideally comprise national stakeholders, including government representatives, industry experts and manufacturers, development partners/civil society representatives, academics and technical experts, consumer groups, testing organizations, and other interested parties.

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**Micro, small, and
medium enterprises
(MSMEs)**

are entities engaged in economic activity irrespective of their legal form ([European Commission](#)). An enterprise can qualify as an MSME if it fulfills certain criteria related to number of employees, annual turnover, or balance sheet. As per the European Commission, a micro enterprise has less than 10 employees, with less than or equal to euro 2 million annual turnover. A small enterprise has less than 50 employees, with annual turnover of euro 10 million or less. And a medium enterprise has up to 250 employees, with up to euro 50 million turnover. Countries or regions may have different criteria for classifying enterprises as micro, small, and medium, and should be referred to.

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Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)

are classified into four income categories as per their gross national income (GNI) per capita (in US dollars) by the [World Bank](#): low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high. This income classification aims to reflect a country's level of development, drawing on Atlas GNI per capita as a broadly available indicator of economic capacity. Countries that are classified as low, lower-middle, and higher-middle income are together referred to as low- and middle-income countries or LMICs. This is the term that is adopted in this toolkit. However, the ISO has a broader classification of developing countries as approved by the ISO council based on the United Nations (UN) list of Member States of the Group of 77 (G77), as well as ISO members in the UN Eastern European Group of countries that asked to be added. Details can be found [here](#).

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Background for the Advocacy Toolkit for Menstrual Product Standards

Context

A VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE—1.72 BILLION—LIVE IN LMICS.¹

By 2035, this number will grow by 10 percent to 1.89 billion people.² On average, this large and growing population will experience menstruation from menarche (approximately age 12–13 years) until menopause (any time between age 40–50 years in LMICs). Menstrual health requires this population will need quality and affordable purpose-made menstrual products throughout their menstruating lives, along with comprehensive information; supportive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities and health services; and a stigma- and discrimination-free environment that enables their participation in all aspects of life.³

1.72 BN

people who menstruate live in LMICs

36%

or 613M, are unable to use purpose-made products to fully support their needs

1 Weinberger M, Eva C, Bellows N, Reidy M, Sanders R, Ahsan S. LEAP: Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs. Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2024.

2 Weinberger M, Eva C, Bellows N, Reidy M, Sanders R, Ahsan S. LEAP: Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs. Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2024.

3 Hennegan, J., Winkler, IT, Bobel, C., et al. Menstrual health: a definition for policy, practice, and research. Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters. 2021;29(1):31–38. doi.org/10.1080/26410397.2021.1911618.



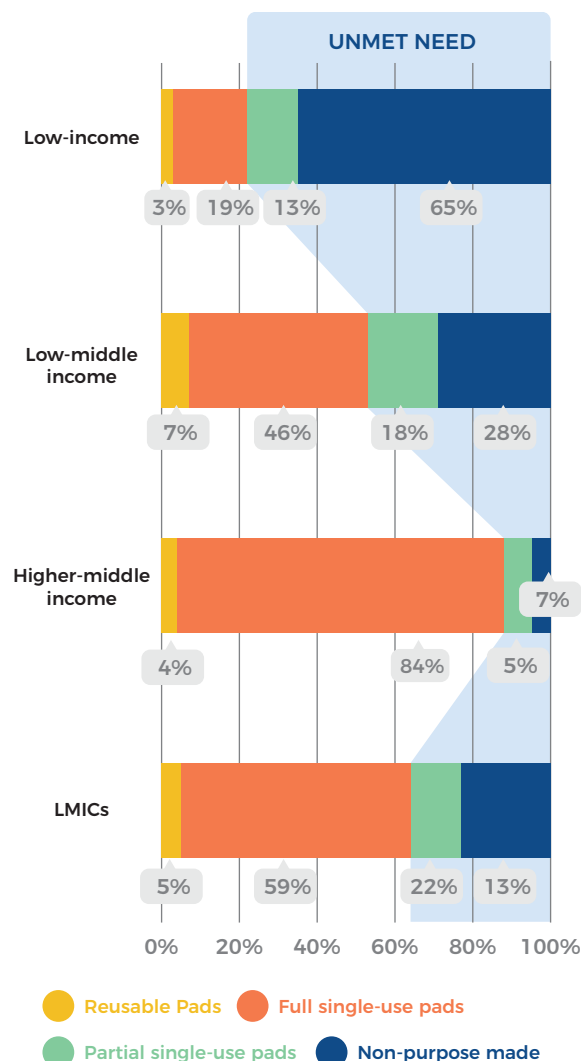
OF THE 1.72 BILLION PEOPLE IN LMICS WHO NEED MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS, 36 PERCENT (613 MILLION) ARE UNABLE TO USE PURPOSE-MADE PRODUCTS TO FULLY SUPPORT THEIR NEEDS.

Among those who menstruate, 387 million rely entirely on non-purpose-made materials, like old clothes or cloth and tissue paper, while 226 million partially use such materials, as they may not have enough purpose-made products to meet their requirements.⁴ The unmet need is particularly acute in low- and lower-middle-income countries compared to higher-middle-income countries (Figure 1). Of those who use purpose-made products, the majority rely on single-use products due to lack of availability of other product categories and limited informed choice.^{5, 6}

A MARKET-BASED APPROACH CAN ENSURE SUSTAINED ACCESS TO A RANGE OF QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS FOR ALL THOSE WHO MENSTRUATE.

Governments and development partners have made notable efforts in free and subsidized distribution of menstrual products. However, this approach is limited in its ability to cover the menstrual needs of such a large population year after year. It is also limited in its capacity to offer product choice to people who may prefer more than one type of product or change their product preferences, as most free distribution programs are able to offer only a specific type of product. Consequently, the majority of the consumers using purpose-made products in LMICs are reliant on markets—which are currently fragmented and limited by widespread systemic barriers like supply chain challenges, inefficient taxation, and lack of global harmonized standards. These barriers make commercially available products like single-use pads expensive, and they limit the availability of other options (like menstrual cups or reusable pads) and future innovations that can offer reduced costs to consumers over time and even environmental benefits.⁷ Hence, sustained access to a range of quality and affordable menstrual products requires a market-based approach that can systematically address these barriers.

Figure 1: Proportion of menstruators using purpose-made products and non-purpose-made materials by LMIC status



Source: Data for the graph is sourced from [RHSC LEAP data](#)

4 Weinberger M, Eva G, Bellows N, Reidy M, Sanders R, Ahsan S. LEAP: Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs. Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2024.

5 Weinberger M, Eva G, Bellows N, Reidy M, Sanders R, Ahsan S. LEAP: Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs. Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2024.

6 Progress on household drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene 2000–2024: special focus on inequalities. Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2025. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. <https://washdata.org/reports/jmp-2025-wash-households>

7 Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (2025). Market-Based Approaches to Menstrual Health Theory of Change. Available at: https://www.rhsupplies.org/uploads/tx_rhscpublications/user_upload/Market-Based_Approaches_for_Menstrual_Health_Brief.pdf

LACK OF HARMONIZED GLOBAL STANDARDS IS A CRITICAL MARKET BARRIER.

Most countries have either no quality standards for menstrual products or highly varying quality standards for only one or two product categories. These limitations put consumers at risk of unsafe products and lead to higher costs of local production and imports—leading to reduced affordability and limited choice for consumers. Product standards are also an important tool for product manufacturers or suppliers, since they facilitate consumer trust in menstrual products, allow manufacturers or suppliers to demonstrate product quality, and facilitate different regulatory approvals needed to enter new markets. Harmonized global standards for menstrual products can contribute to sustained access to quality, affordable products for all people who menstruate when and where they need them.

Recognizing this need, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) established Technical Committee 338 (TC 338) for menstrual product standardization in 2022 as a result of a request made by the Swedish Institute for Standards (SIS). Global national standards bodies (NSBs) voted to formally approve the creation of ISO TC 338. ISO's Committee on Consumer Policy, [COPOLCO](#), played a pivotal role in advocating for menstrual product standards, in addition to growing global agreement that menstrual product standards are vital for consumers' health and well-being. ISO TC 338 is currently working toward publishing the first set of global harmonized standards for menstrual products by 2027.

LMIC PARTICIPATION IN ISO TC 338 IS ESSENTIAL.

Developing truly global standards requires engagement from relevant stakeholders worldwide to provide input on technical requirements, challenges, and considerations across all product categories and diverse contexts. LMIC participation is vital—a majority of the world's menstruators live in these countries. Furthermore, market growth for menstrual products is significant and poised to grow in these contexts. While LMIC stakeholder involvement has increased through ISO TC 338's outreach efforts, there is still a need to reach several countries and even regions that are under-represented in the process. The rationale for why and the process of how LMIC stakeholders can participate in this global harmonization process is unclear for many. This in turn limits their engagement and contribution to this landmark process and standards development.



Purpose & Objectives

To address the gap highlighted above, [Menstrual Health Action for Impact \(MHAi\)](#) and the [Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition \(RHSC\)](#) have developed this Advocacy Toolkit to equip country-level stakeholders to advocate for their countries' participation in ISO TC 338—and subsequently adopt and enforce the resulting product standards.

This toolkit seeks to empower stakeholders to:

- 1 Secure NSB engagement with and membership in ISO TC 338.**
- 2 Foster collaboration between stakeholders and NSBs to participate in ISO TC 338 and simultaneously establish or strengthen national standardization processes.**
- 3 Engage consumer groups and menstrual health advocates/organizations in product standardization efforts.**

This toolkit empowers individuals and organizations to champion national and regional engagement by:

-  **Equipping stakeholders with relevant advocacy messaging to make the case for product standards and engagement in standardization processes.**
-  **Clarifying the ISO standardization process, ISO TC 338's mandate, and the critical need for LMIC participation.**
-  **Promoting equitable representation of LMIC perspectives in global standards discussions.**
-  **Mapping pathways for stakeholder and NSB engagement in ISO TC 338 at national and regional levels.**
-  **Building alliances among menstrual health advocates, consumer groups, researchers, and public institutions.**

By supporting stakeholders with the knowledge and tools to drive LMIC participation in ISO TC 338, and in standards development more broadly, this toolkit advances menstrual product standards that meet health and safety requirements, reflect diverse contexts, and reduce barriers to product access.

Methodology

To meet the objectives outlined above, MHAi gleaned valuable insights from 22 LMIC experts through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Experts included representatives from:

- National standards bodies
- Small and medium menstrual product businesses
- Civil society/development sector organizations
- ISO TC 338 secretariat and members
- Menstrual health experts

These experts represented LMICs in East Asia and Pacific; Europe and Central Asia; Latin America and the Caribbean; Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; North America; South Asia; and sub-Saharan Africa. See Appendix I for the list of experts interviewed and who contributed to the development of this toolkit. Key documents reviewed for the purpose of developing the Advocacy Toolkit are also included as Appendix II.

Intended audience

This toolkit is relevant for the following stakeholders:



International and country-level nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), United Nations agencies, academic and research institutions, and coalitions and networks who:

- Work on menstrual health or allied areas like education; adolescent health; women's health; sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); WASH and waste management; women's livelihoods, empowerment, and workforce participation; and even climate change.
- Provide technical support to government departments on menstrual health and allied areas (listed in the above point).
- Convene stakeholders or support a network of organizations working on menstrual health and allied areas (listed above).



Industry representatives, including large manufacturers; micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs); multinational companies; importers; and exporters. As well as industry associations associated with single-use and reusable products, including the non-wovens, textiles, medical-grade silicone, and any other related industries.



National ministries/departments of health, education, WASH, livelihoods, and others for whom menstrual product access can contribute to the achievement of other primary outcomes like girls' education, female workforce participation, improved sexual and reproductive health, and poverty reduction.



National ministries of trade, finance, and commerce who may find the issue relevant from an economic perspective. National standards bodies also coordinate with these ministries on creation and enforcement of regulations related to quality of relevant products.



National standards bodies and ministries/departments related to technical textiles and medical devices for whom menstrual products are of concern from a regulatory and economic standpoint.



Testing laboratories and technical institutes that have expertise related to menstrual products and their safety or performance.

This Advocacy Toolkit was developed for use by stakeholders in LMICs; however, the advocacy messages and ISO engagement processes are equally relevant in high-income settings. Users are encouraged to adapt the toolkit to their specific advocacy objectives and geographic contexts.

The Advocacy Toolkit

What are standards?

A STANDARD IS A DOCUMENT, established by a consensus of subject-matter experts and approved by a recognized body, that provides guidance on the design, use, or performance of materials, products, processes, services, systems, or persons.⁸

STANDARDS REFER TO THE NORMS, GUIDELINES, OR RULES THAT OFFER ACCEPTABLE, EFFICIENT, AND SAFE PARAMETERS for manufacturing a product, managing a process, or delivering a service. Creation and adoption of standards is an important pathway for ensuring access to quality products and informed choice for the management of menstruation.⁹

STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT IS A CONSULTATIVE AND ITERATIVE PROCESS distilling the wisdom of experts who know the needs of the organizations they represent and populations they serve; these experts include manufacturers, sellers, buyers, customers, trade associations, regulators, and users.¹⁰

MENSTRUAL PRODUCT STANDARDS¹¹ ARE TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS THAT OBJECTIVELY DEFINE THE QUALITY OF MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS IN TERMS OF:

1 SAFETY

- **Microbiological safety**
(e.g., microbial load, pH)
- **Material safety**
(e.g., exposure-based risk assessment, biocompatibility, chemicals of concern)
- **Environmental safety**

- ### 2 PERFORMANCE OR FITNESS FOR PURPOSE
- through parameters such as absorption, retention, re-wet, dispersion, etc.

“Standards are a formula that describes the best way of doing something.”

International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

⁸ ISO: https://www.iso.org/sites/ConsumersStandards/1_standards.html.

⁹ Menstrual product standards: A pathway to quality product access. https://www.rhsupplies.org/uploads/tx_rhscpublications/Menstrual_product_standards_%E2%80%93_a_pathway_to_quality_product_access.pdf.




¹⁰ International Organization for Standardization. <https://www.iso.org/standards.html>.

¹¹ EDANA Guidelines for Testing Feminine Hygiene Products. 2018. <https://www.edana.org/hubfs/Docs/default-source/absorbent-hygiene-products/femcare-testing-guidelines-final.pdf?hsLang=en>.

Why do menstrual product standards matter?

The **absence** of quality standards for menstrual products:



-  Puts millions of **consumers** at health risks due to poor-quality and unsafe products, creates economic burdens through the purchase of expensive and substandard* products, and undermines consumer choice, agency, and dignity.
-  Creates obstacles for **industry** players due to unclear market-entry requirements and inefficient trade barriers that increase the cost of product provision, especially across borders and for small and medium enterprises.
-  Limits **governments'** ability to achieve key development targets relevant for girls and women, such as health, education, and workforce participation.

*In this context, substandard products indicate poor performance necessitating the use of more products to meet menstrual needs.



Documenting how countries can be impacted by the lack of standardized menstrual products helps make the case for governments and stakeholders to participate in International Organization for Standardization Technical Committee 338. Refer to *Appendix II* for data sources that can support the same.

The **presence** of global harmonized quality standards for menstrual products:






-  Safeguards the health and safety of **consumers** and expands informed choice, agency, and dignity for girls and women. It also supports their participation in all spheres of their lives more freely.
-  Reduces trade barriers for local production and import and export for **industry**, and eases market entry for new players and products, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises. This makes it more attractive to start companies in this space, building markets, improving supply and access, and creating jobs.
-  Contributes to a country's social and economic growth and development through ready-made and easy to adopt/adapt framework for **governments**.
-  Helps address and reduce the stigma associated with menstruation by promoting the legitimacy and acceptance of menstrual products through globally recognized quality standards.




The salient benefits to people who menstruate (consumers), policymakers and regulators, and the menstrual product industry are highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Benefits of global harmonized standards for menstrual products for key stakeholders


Benefit 1: Establish global minimum benchmarks for product safety and performance

 CONSUMERS	 INDUSTRY	 GOVERNMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Protection from unsafe and poor-quality products ✓ Improved informed choice through clear, comparable product information and greater transparency ✓ Consistent quality expectations across markets, reducing compliance complexity ✓ Improved access to safe, quality-assured products for all citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Streamlined manufacturing of products that meet defined safety and performance requirements ✓ A ready-made framework to adopt or adapt into national regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A ready-made framework to adopt or adapt into national regulations ✓ Improved access to safe, quality-assured products for all citizens

Benefit 2: Support destigmatisation of menstruation and strengthen informed choice and agency

 CONSUMERS	 INDUSTRY	 GOVERNMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Greater legitimacy, acceptance, and trust of diverse menstrual product categories ✓ Expanded choice across a wider range of products, supporting informed decision-making and agency ✓ Reduced stigma through improved access and normalizing the use of diverse product (especially insertion products) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Incentives for innovation and market entry ✓ Encouragement to develop products that respond to diverse consumer needs and preferences ✓ Standardized, inclusive, and non-stigmatizing terminology across the industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased regulatory credibility for emerging and historically stigmatized product categories (e.g., internally used products) ✓ Clear regulatory pathways for the introduction and oversight of new products

Benefit 3: Enhance ease of doing business and reduce costs through harmonization

 CONSUMERS	 INDUSTRY	 GOVERNMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wider availability of affordable, safe, and quality-assured products ✓ Benefits from fair and equitable competition in domestic and global markets ✓ Trust in the safety and quality of products that are on the market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reduced production costs through harmonized technical requirements, processes, and materials ✓ Improved access to export markets due to lower regulatory and trade barriers ✓ Clear technical specifications that support MSMEs and innovators in meeting global standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Clear definitions to support public procurement requirements ✓ Stronger basis for the development and implementation of regulations ✓ Reduced barriers to international trade and enhanced economic growth* ✓ Reduced information asymmetries, enabling countries to strengthen technical capacities for testing, certification, and related services

Benefit 4: Contribution to development outcomes as a result of improved access to affordable and quality menstrual products

- ✓ Standards can help advance national development priorities and multiple [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), particularly health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), WASH (SDG 6), and workforce participation and economic growth (SDG 8).**,*** These are important from the perspective of consumers, governments, and industry's contribution to development outcomes (often required by country regulations).

* Direct economic growth through market building and job creation in the menstrual product industry, and indirectly through improved participation of girls and women in education and the workforce.

** UNICEF West and Central Africa & UNFPA West and Central Africa. Assessing the Landscape for Menstrual Products Standards in West and Central Africa: Findings and Recommendations for Advocacy. UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office & UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office. April 2023. <https://fmuskoka.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/UNICEF-MHH-Report-A4-LowRes.pdf>.

*** Klintner L. (2021). Normalizing the Natural: A study of menstrual product destigmatization. MediaTryck Lund.

Why is harmonization needed?

Standards exist at different levels and can be created by individual organizations or industry groups, national standards bodies, and/or regional standards bodies representing a group of countries in a region—such as the [African Organisation for Standardisation](#) (ARSO), [East African Community](#) (EAC), [South Asian Regional Standards Organization](#) (SARSO), and [European Committee for Standardization](#) (CEN-CENELEC) (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Types and levels of standardization



While standards exist, they are not aligned, varying from country to country.

Most countries have either no standards or highly varying standards for only one or two product categories.


Some low- and middle-income countries have standards for only single-use products (e.g., Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka), with a select few having standards for reusable pads as well (e.g., Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia). Markedly, several LMICs still lack national standards for any menstrual products (e.g., Egypt, Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Brazil, Chile). Australia and the United States of America Food and Drug Administration also have requirements for tampons, and more recently East African countries like Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania have created standards for tampons for country-level use. While standards exist, they are not aligned, varying from country to country. Even in high-income countries, standards for single-use pads exist in the US, Australia, members of the European Union, and Japan, but vary significantly in terms of technical benchmarks.

Furthermore, for some products, like the menstrual cup, standards are absent in a majority of countries.

Different standards across countries and regions can lead to confusion and uneven product quality. This increases the probability of noncompliance, putting consumer safety at risk. This also limits access by increasing the

cost of production, as manufacturers have to spend additional resources to meet different standards across geographies, should they sell internationally. Varying standards also make it more difficult and costly for manufacturers to enter new markets, since the pathway to product registration and certification is unclear. This can limit the number of manufacturers operating within a given LMIC market, which not only curtails consumer choice but also contributes to higher prices.

Harmonized ISO standards offer an overarching, clear, and trusted benchmark that everyone can follow, because they have been developed through collaboration with many countries and stakeholders. For menstrual products, they offer a global common minimum benchmark that is broad enough to be applicable and adaptable across diverse country contexts, while maintaining non-negotiable requirements for safety and performance. This helps consumers have safe and reliable options, no matter where they live; makes it easier and cheaper for manufacturers, especially MSMEs, to manufacture safe products; supports cross-border trade; and enables governments to align their policies.



Different standards across countries and regions can lead to confusion and uneven product quality.

How can stakeholders support menstrual product standards harmonization through ISO TC 338?

In response to the absence of harmonized global standards for menstrual products, the ISO initiated the process through the creation of ISO TC 338, a technical committee established in 2022 for menstrual product standardization.

The idea to propose ISO standards for menstrual products was sparked in 2017, with Swedish stakeholders making an official request to the Swedish Institute for Standards (SIS). A ballot was circulated with this request within the Committee on Consumer Policy within ISO (the [ISO COPOLCO](#)) in June 2021, resulting in a positive outcome. ISO then launched a ballot for the creation of a technical committee for menstrual product standardization. This was approved in December 2022 and led to the creation of ISO TC 338, with SIS as the secretariat.

The scope of ISO TC 338 was defined by members as follows:

“Standardization in the field of menstrual products, covering all products intended for both single and multiple use, regardless of material.”

Currently, the committee is jointly administered by SIS and the Ghana Standards Authority (GSA) as a twinned secretariat. Refer to Appendix III for more information about ISO TC 338 and its working structures, as well as relevant contacts.

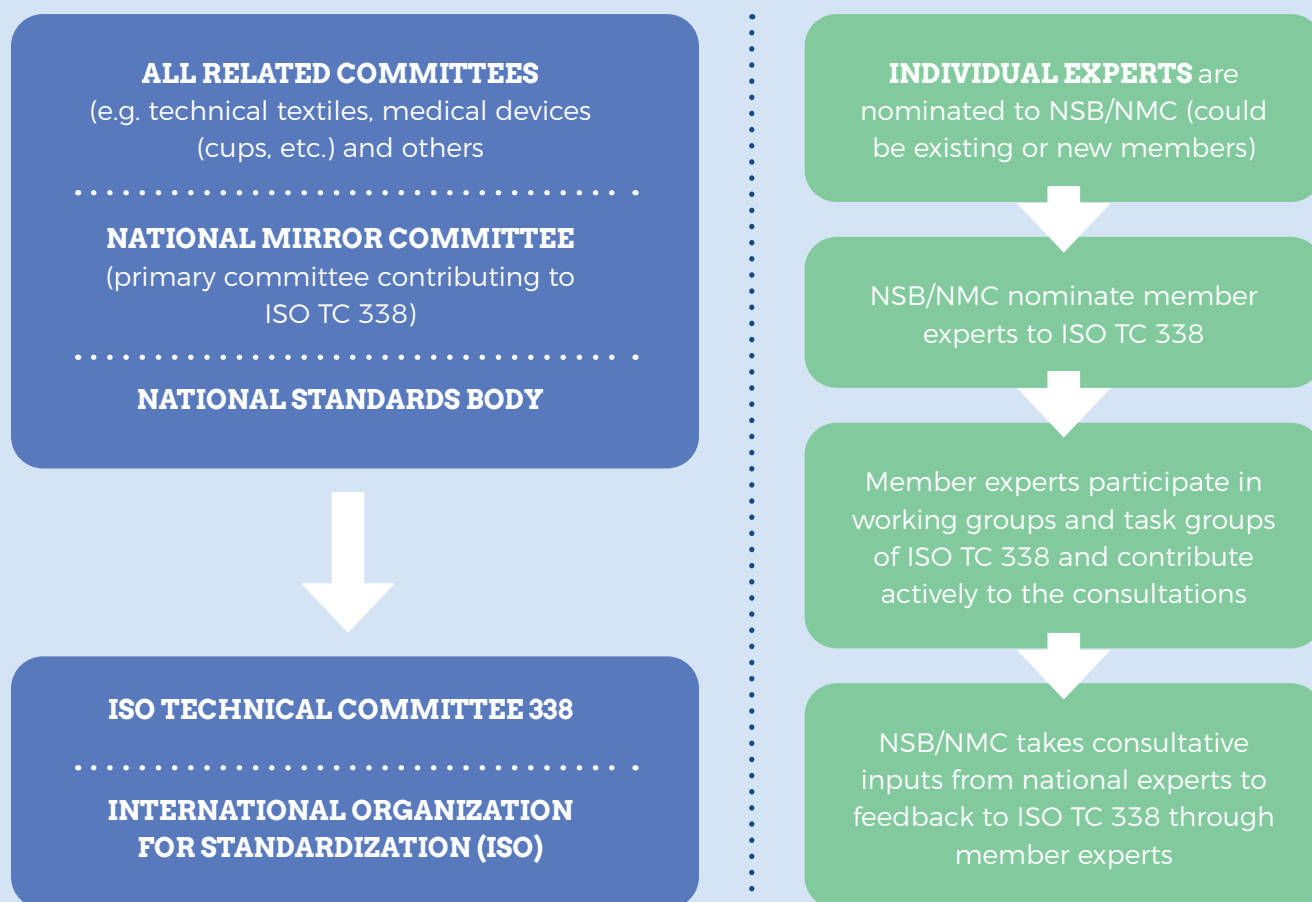


The scope of menstrual product standards

The scope of the standard has been defined with the **intent of promoting innovation**. The standard will be applicable to all menstrual products that are single use or multiple use and those that can be externally worn or internally worn. This includes known products like single-use and multiple-use menstrual pads, tampons, panty liners, menstrual underwear, cups, discs, and sponges. And also allows for new products that are yet to be introduced into the market. This spirit has been maintained in all discussions and decisions during the ongoing consultations of ISO TC 338.

National standards bodies (NSB) are the official country representatives to ISO TC 338 and are responsible for nominating experts from their countries to the committee. At the country level, these experts are members of the **national mirror committee (NMC)** or other related technical committees, and includes industry experts and manufacturers, testing and laboratory experts, development partners/civil society representatives, academics and researchers, consumer groups, government stakeholders, and other interested parties. The NMC and other related committees are also involved in the adoption of the ISO standard at the country level. The process of engagement of individual stakeholders with the NSB/NMC, and through them in ISO TC 338, is visualized in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Engagement of individual experts in ISO TC 338 through the NSB/NMC



NSBs can engage with ISO TC 338 as participating members or observing members, and individual experts can participate in ISO TC 338 through their NSBs.

Participating members (P-members) are full members or member bodies who participate fully in the committee. They appoint experts, contribute to meetings, have access to documents, can hold leadership roles in the committee and its sub-groups (as chair, convenors, etc.), and have full voting rights as part of the committee.

Observing members (O-members) are full members or members who can attend committee meetings, submit comments and access and review documents as observers but do not have voting rights and cannot hold leadership roles in the committee or its groups.

There are two other possible forms of engagements for non-NSB stakeholders:

Internal liaisons, where other ISO committees provide technical inputs within the competence of their own committees to the committee's proceedings.

External liaisons, where external organizations like UN bodies, industry associations, can provide technical inputs to the committee's proceedings and can also bring in expertise and industry and regional insights to the committee's discussions.

Liaisons do not have voting rights but can provide comments.

All internal and external liaisons can be found on the [ISO TC 338 webpage](#).

While a country's NSB is the primary representative to ISO, other country-level stakeholders can encourage and support the NSB. Industry experts, researchers, and civil society leaders, among others, can play a catalytic role in advancing their country's contribution to the ISO process.



Direct Request

As an individual or organization, a direct request first has to be made to the NSB for nomination as an expert to the NSB/NMC, and then by the NSB to ISO TC 338. Experts who are actively engaged in the national process are usually considered for participation at the international level.

Why should LMICs participate in global harmonized standards development?



LMICs are characterized by:



A large and growing market size (the fastest growing in the world)—with 1.72 billion people who menstruate in 2025, poised to grow to 1.89 billion by 2035.¹²



36 percent of people who menstruate in LMICs do not use purpose-made products to fully meet their needs, and large population segments face socioeconomic vulnerabilities that limit menstrual product access.¹³



Rapidly growing markets with diverse product offerings, market players (large multinationals, local manufacturers, especially MSMEs, import-export facilitators), and increasing volumes of trade.^{14,15}

Global harmonized standards can support future market growth by addressing barriers to trade and improve access to affordable and quality menstrual products for LMIC consumers.^{16,17}

12 Weinberger M, Eva G, Bellows N, Reidy M, Sanders R, Ahsan S. LEAP: Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs. Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2024.

13 Weinberger M, Eva G, Bellows N, Reidy M, Sanders R, Ahsan S. LEAP: Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs. Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2024.

14 Mann Global Health and Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (2021). Landscaping supply side factors to menstrual health access. https://www.rhsupplies.org/uploads/tx_rhscpublications/Landscaping_Supply_Side_Factors_to_Menstrual_Health_Access.pdf

15 International Trade Administration. Harmonized System (HS) Codes. <https://www.trade.gov/harmonized-system-hs-codes>

16 Dongus A. Global standards for menstrual products and why they matter. The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund. June 25, 2024. <https://www.shfund.org/media/global-standards-menstrual-products-and-why-they-matter>

17 Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. Menstrual product standards – a pathway to quality product access. Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2021. https://www.rhsupplies.org/uploads/tx_rhscpublications/Menstrual_product_standards_%E2%80%93_a_pathway_to_quality_product_access.pdf

LMICS MAY CONTINUE TO LACK STANDARDS FOR EITHER ALL OR SOME MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS because NSBs and other experts:

- Are unaware of the need for standards for these products.
- Lack awareness of the ongoing work being undertaken by ISO or the process of participation among experts (manufacturers, advocacy organizations).
- Face language barriers to participation, as consultations are primarily in English.
- Lack financial or technical resources for expert consultation and active participation.
- Are influenced by continuing pervasive stigma surrounding menstruation that limits policy engagement related to menstrual products in general.

ISO TC 338 SEEKS TO OVERCOME THESE HURDLES AND INEFFICIENCIES BY BRINGING TOGETHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS from across the world who have expertise in menstrual products, drawing upon their technical knowledge and skills to develop harmonized global standards that are applicable across countries and contexts.



Innovation Leaders

MSMEs from LMICs are leading innovation in alternative designs and materials that can (1) offer choice to consumers and (2) reduce dependence on global supply chains for wood pulp and other materials. LMIC participation in ISO TC 338 will also ensure standards are inclusive and responsive to innovation by these stakeholders.

PARTICIPATION OF LMIC NSBS AND EXPERTS IN ISO TC 338 CAN ADDRESS THE ABOVE-MENTIONED CHALLENGES and ensure that the resultant standards are:

- **Relevant** to LMIC contexts, including consumer needs and preferences, types of manufacturers (especially MSMEs), technologies, testing capacities, and human resources.
- **Aligned** with existing regulations and policies and have buy-in of decision-makers for ease of inclusion in the country's regulatory framework.
- **Sensitive** to the varied sociocultural, economic, and political contexts of LMICs.
- **Representative** of technical expertise from LMIC manufacturers, testing agencies, academic and research institutions, and others.
- **Informed** by shared lessons and experiences, enabling LMICs to address common challenges and build on collective progress.

Status of LMIC participation in ISO TC 338

The two figures below highlight the presence of ISO TC 338 members across the world (Figure 4), as well as the representation of LMICs and high-income countries (HICs) as participating and observing members (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Representation of ISO TC 338 members across the world as of March 2026 (Source: [ISO TC 338 participation](#))

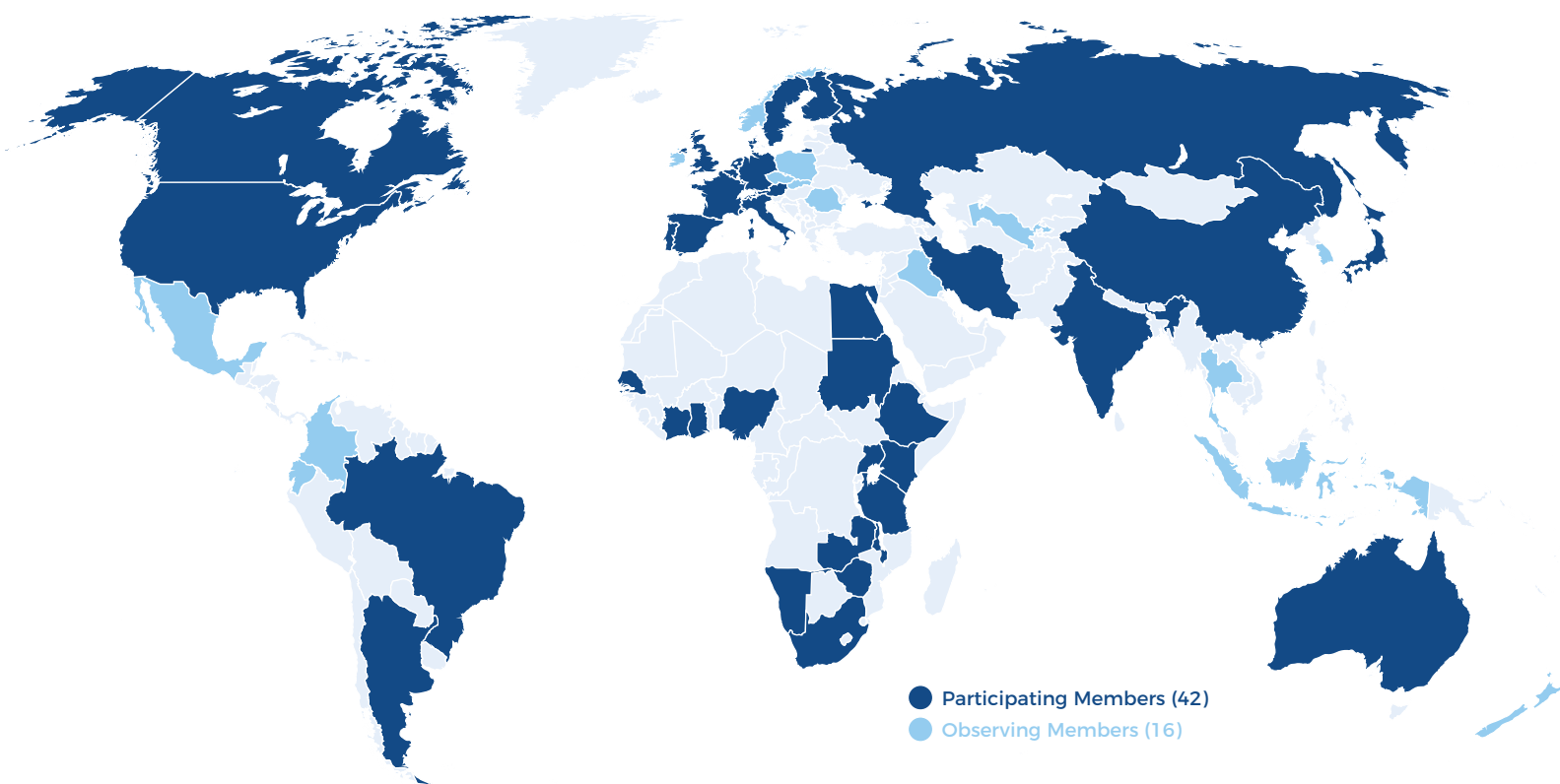
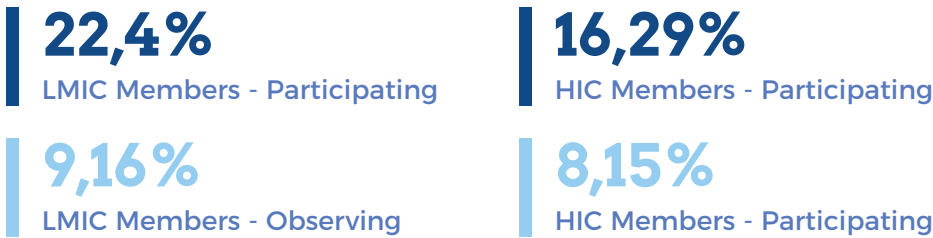


Figure 5: ISO TC 338 members as participating and observing members in LMICs and HICs (Source: [ISO TC 338 participation](#))



56.3%

Currently, 56.3% of ISO TC 338 members are from LMICs (31 out of 55), highlighting a significant presence of LMIC members as participating and observing members since the inception of ISO TC 338.* The TC also has many internal and external liaisons, of which two external liaisons, namely United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPs), actively support LMIC engagement in ISO TC 338. International associations serving the nonwovens and related industries (e.g., the European Disposables and Nonwovens Association or EDANA), Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry ([INDA](#)), and Organization for Trade Development and Standards Cooperation ([ODCCN](#)) are other external liaisons to ISO TC 338. The full list of members and liaisons can be found [here](#).

*ISO TC 338 participation: <https://www.iso.org/committee/8933440.html?view=participation>

While participation of LMICs in ISO TC 338 has increased over the years, especially since 2024, many regions across the world (e.g., East Asia and Pacific; Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan; sub-Saharan Africa; Latin America and the Caribbean) remain poorly represented.

The Swedish Institute for Standards, as the secretariat of ISO TC 338, is able to offer the following provisions to **support participation of LMICs in the committee**:

- Support for NSBs and subject-matter experts to participate in physical plenary and working group meetings.
- Twinning is a partnership mechanism of the ISO that enables cooperation and support between two NSBs, and is being leveraged by SIS, the secretariat of ISO TC 338, to provide technical support to LMIC NSBs.
- Broader NSB capacity strengthening initiatives.

NSBs must register as P-members of ISO TC 338 to avail themselves of these provisions when they are available.

While participation of LMICs in ISO TC 338 has increased over the years, many regions across the world remain poorly represented.

Call to Action

The window of opportunity is now.

ISO TC 338 is actively developing standards that will define menstrual product quality, safety, and accessibility for decades to come. The TC is developing two standards, one on general and safety requirements for menstrual products and one on menstrual products-related vocabulary, which are expected to be published by December 2027.

Countries that engage today will shape standards that reflect their realities, protect their populations, and strengthen their markets. Those that wait risk adopting standards that may not fit their contexts or serve the needs of their populations.

Technical and advocacy experts working in LIMCs are well-placed to encourage and support their NSBs to participate in ISO TC 338 and contribute to the co-creation of global harmonized menstrual product standards.

We call on you to engage with industry, technical experts, and government stakeholders, including the NSB in your country, to ensure your country's participation and active contribution to ISO TC 338.

ISO
TC
338

Taking action

This section outlines the steps and strategies by which country-level stakeholders can encourage and facilitate their NSB's participation in ISO TC 338. Annex I provides a checklist against which stakeholders can map their progress.



Understand the market and the standards landscape

1



Coordinate and convene multiple stakeholders

2



Encourage and support the NSB to participate in ISO TC 338

3



Thinking ahead to adoption and rollout

4



Annex I: Advocacy Checklist for Supporting National Participation in ISO TC 338



Understand the market and the standards landscape

The first step to champion menstrual product standards is to **understand the market landscape** in the country, which involves mapping:

- menstrual product categories, brands, pricing, market size, and penetration.
- the supply chain, including numbers and types of manufacturers (large vs. MSME, contract vs. own brand), importers and exporters, distributors, retailers, etc.

A market-mapping template has been provided as Annex II.

The next step is to **understand the status of engagement of the NSB in developing menstrual product standards**—at the national, regional, and global levels. This can be done through the following steps:

- Review secondary sources, including the [RHSC standards database](#)¹⁸ and the NSB website (if available).
- Connect with NSB personnel and the relevant government ministry (e.g., technical textiles, medical devices), industry experts such as manufacturers, testing agencies, and technical consultants to gather information. Use the checklist provided as Annex III to capture this information and categorize the country's menstrual product standardization engagement at the national and ISO levels using Appendix V.
- Understand the reasons for the level of engagement through direct interactions with NSB personnel or other stakeholders in linked ministries.
- Engage with government departments/ministries associated with health, education, WASH, labor, finance, trade, and commerce to understand their interest in promoting gender equity, menstrual health, menstrual product market development, and menstrual product standards as a pathway for achieving these outcomes.

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18 The standards database will be updated by June 2026.



Annex II: Market Mapping Template

Additional Resource: RHSC Menstrual product Standards Database

Annex III: Checklist for NSB's Engagement in Menstrual Product Standardization at the National and Global Level

Appendix V: Menstrual Product Standards Country Status Framework



Coordinate and convene multiple stakeholders

Multi-stakeholder convening and coordination is an important strategy for initiating action or strengthening ongoing action on menstrual product standardization at national and ISO levels. There are many stakeholders who can meaningfully contribute to national standardization and ISO TC 338 and should be engaged in the process. Appendix IV lists the types of stakeholders and their potential input on menstrual product standardization.

Multi-stakeholder engagement lays the foundation for:

- Advocating for menstrual product standards and participation in ISO TC 338, and eventual adoption of standards at a country level.
- Providing consultative and consensus-based technical inputs as external experts of the NSB/NMC or as nominated experts participating in ISO TC 338.
- Ensuring participation of under-represented stakeholders like small manufacturers and civil society organizations, especially where NSBs have limited capacity to reach a diverse set of stakeholders.

Figure 6: List of stakeholders relevant for menstrual product standardization

Map Stakeholders

- ✓ **National Standard Bodies (NSB)**
- ✓ **Industry Associations**
- ✓ **Advocacy Experts (INGOs, NGOs, and Collectives)**
- ✓ **National Ministries (Trade, Commerce, Finance)**
- ✓ **Consumer interest groups**
- ✓ **National Ministries (Health, Education, WASH)**
- ✓ **Testing, Research, and Academic Institutions**
- ✓ **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises**
- ✓ **Large Manufacturers**



Annex IV: Types of Stakeholders Relevant for Menstrual Product Standards



Coordinate and convene multiple stakeholders

Effective platforms for standards advocacy include:

- **Menstrual health coalitions or convenings** (led by civil society actors). Examples: [African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management](#) (East and Southern Africa), [Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance](#) (Nepal), [Pacific Menstrual Health Network](#) (Oceania), [Menstrual Health Action for Impact](#) (India).
- **Industry associations** (encompassing multinational brand owners, contract manufacturers, MSMEs, and product innovators). Examples: [Brazilian Association of Personal Hygiene, Perfumery, and Cosmetics Industry or ABIHPEC](#) (Brazil), [Feminine & Infant Hygiene Association](#) (India), [EDANA](#) (Europe and the Middle East).
- **Government and regulatory coordination bodies**

For platforms to be effective, they must be active, inclusive, regularly convened, fairly managed, adequately funded, and receptive to standards advocacy. Having as many and as diverse stakeholders as possible supports building demand for standards and allows stakeholders to present an evidence-based case to NSBs to engage in the process.

Days for Girls International, UNICEF, UNFPA, and other stakeholders collectively advocated for menstrual product standardization in Ghana during 2022–2023. As a result, Ghana Standards Authority took up the topic on priority and started participating in ISO TC 338 in early 2024 and is now an active member with a key leadership role in the TC.



Annex IV: Types of Stakeholders Relevant for Menstrual Product Standards



There are multiple strategies that stakeholders can use to encourage their NSB in initiating or strengthening their engagement with ISO TC 338 and leveraging national expertise and resources to contribute to the process.

Media engagement


Where NSBs are not yet engaging in menstrual product standardization at the national level or participating in ISO TC 338, media engagement can be an effective tool to drive conversation on the topic and stimulate demand from the general public and government stakeholders for NSBs to participate.

A media engagement kit has been included as Appendix VI, which can be used to drive conversation around menstrual product standards at the national level and engage governments and other stakeholders on the issue.

Government engagement

Engaging with government representatives—including those from relevant ministries (such as textiles, medical devices, trade, or commerce) and those associated with health, education, workforce participation, women's empowerment, water and sanitation access, etc.—is an important step in advocating for menstrual product standards engagement.

- Where standards do not exist, national ministries or departments can champion menstrual product standardization and participation in ISO TC 338 through an official request to the NSB.
- Where national standards exist or the NSB is participating in ISO TC 338, government engagement can help strengthen inclusion of under-represented experts in the process and also plan for adoption of the ISO standard by evaluating the regulatory steps that will be required to enable adoption.



In Nepal, civil society partners are actively trying to solicit a letter from relevant Ministries for the Nepal Bureau of Standards & Metrology for creation of standards for reusable menstrual products and the NSB's participation in ISO TC 338.

Similarly, in India, the erstwhile Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation requested the Bureau of Indian Standards to consider creating a standard for reusable pads, given the environmental impact of single-use pads. This led to the creation of a national standard for reusable pads and underwear.



Encourage and support the NSB to participate in ISO TC 338

- Where the NSB is participating as an O-member or with a limited number of experts, government engagement can also support the NSB in finding resources and experts to change its membership to a P-member, which will ensure more active contribution and higher likelihood of adoption of the resultant standard.
- For engaging with government stakeholders, it is important to build a strong case for why menstrual product standards are needed and why engagement with ISO TC 338 is important. This case should build on inputs from the multi-stakeholder consultations, be evidence-based, and provide country-specific insights. A template for “Making the Case” in the form of a presentation outline is provided as Annex IV.

Technical input

Stakeholders can also play a more direct role of providing and facilitating technical inputs to the NSB in the form of:

- Aggregating consensus-based technical perspectives from multi-stakeholder consultations with industry, civil society, and technical experts, e.g., through industry and civil society forums.
- Participating directly and actively in the NSB/NMC, including reviewing documents and providing comments.
- Being nominated as an expert to ISO TC 338, which includes participating in virtual and in-person meetings of ISO TC 338 subgroups, reviewing documents and providing comments, and, if possible, also taking leadership roles in ISO TC 338 (e.g., as convenor of a subgroup). This helps strengthen the NSB's commitment to the outcomes of ISO TC 338 and subsequent adoption as well.



In November 2025, Days for Girls Nepal and Days for Girls International, in collaboration with the Swedish Institute for Standards, brought together menstrual health stakeholders in Nepal to advocate for and support the country's engagement with ISO TC 338 and invited the Nepal Bureau of Standards & Metrology (NBSM) to join the effort.

During this meeting, evidence on menstrual product needs, preferences, and access were shared by researchers and implementers, and a detailed menstrual health and hygiene policy landscape was presented. These insights set the foundation to make the case for menstrual product standards in Nepal and for the Nepal NBSM to engage with ISO TC 338.



Encourage and support the NSB to participate in ISO TC 338



In Brazil, Associação Brasileira da Indústria de Higiene Pessoal, Perfumaria e Cosméticos (ABIHPEC) serves as a central coordination platform for menstrual product standards. The association brings manufacturers together to shape a shared industry position and represents them in the national mirror committee that contributes to ISO TC 338. ABIHPEC regularly updates companies on developments in the global ISO process and works with a national standards body to support adoption and rollout. Through this role, it also helps manufacturers understand technical requirements and prepare for future compliance.



Through support from the United Nations Sanitation and Hygiene Fund, the Gates Foundation, and the Case for Her, Swedish Institute for Standards is able to provide provisions to support increased participation from low- and middle-income countries in ISO TC 338. This includes support for national standards bodies, subject-matter experts participating in plenary and working group meetings, twinning arrangements, and broader NSB capacity strengthening, among other areas.

For example, the Ghana Standards Authority entered into a twinning arrangement with SIS in 2024, allowing them to co-lead the secretariat and participate more effectively in TC 338 proceedings. This has also increased the acceptability of GSA's efforts among other government stakeholders in the country.



The Kenya Bureau of Standards allows external technical stakeholders such as researchers, civil society groups, and product specialists to share inputs that help strengthen the national position submitted to ISO TC 338 through their national mirror committee. The NSB/NMC is active and conducts engagement sessions with diverse stakeholders, including SMEs, researchers, etc. to source inputs for contribution to ISO TC 338.



Encourage and support the NSB to participate in ISO TC 338

Each subsequent level of engagement requires a higher level of time and effort commitment, which is often voluntary in nature. Where experts are unable to directly participate in the NMC, they can provide inputs as external technical stakeholders to strengthen the NSB's participation in the ISO process. This can be done through one-to-one meetings with the NSB, participation in industry forums (see example of ABIHPEC in Brazil), participation in external consultations organized by the NSB/NMC (see example from Kenya Bureau of Standards and collaboration opportunity with UNFPA ESARO, below), or other context relevant opportunities.



UNOPS SHF has provided a grant to the UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office (UNFPA ESARO) that can benefit advocacy and cross-learning activities for menstrual product standards in the focus countries.

This grant is available in six countries (Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, which are P-members; Zimbabwe, which is an O-member; and Mozambique, which is not yet participating in ISO TC 338). The grant is active from May 2025 to September 2026 and offers an opportunity for advocacy stakeholders to collaborate with UNFPA ESARO in these countries for advocacy on menstrual product standards.

Using appropriate strategies

To decide on the best strategy for your context and country, you can use the Country Status Framework provided in Appendix V, leveraging the information collected in the first step to figure out which strategies best suit your needs. Table 2 summarizes the strategies as per the country's status:



Encourage and support the NSB to participate in ISO TC 338

Table 2: Strategies for supporting your NSB in engaging with ISO TC 338
(Refer to Annex III for how to map the country's current level of engagement)

	HIGH ENGAGEMENT	MEDIUM ENGAGEMENT	LOW ENGAGEMENT
MULTI-STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Recruit additional experts to contribute to NSB/NMC ▷ Seek additional inputs from under-represented stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Recruit additional experts to contribute to NSB/NMC ▷ Advocate for participation in ISO TC 338 through industry, civil society, and other platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Advocate for participation in ISO TC 338
MEDIA ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Share updates on status of standards development and progress made during physical meetings and other opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Explicitly advocate for participation in ISO TC 338 leveraging media to emphasize the status of menstrual product markets, quality of products, and the role of standards to overcome challenges and gaps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Highlight status of menstrual product access and product quality through media
GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Plan for country-level standards adoption and rollout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Request a change to P-membership and add experts as needed ▷ Plan for country-level standards adoption and rollout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Advocate for government participation in ISO TC 338
TECHNICAL INPUT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▷ Direct input as experts—external, as part of NSB/NMC, or nominated experts to ISO TC 338 ▷ Volunteer for leadership roles in ISO TC 338 to strengthen engagement of NSBt 		



Appendix VI: Media Engagement Tools

Appendix VI: “Making the Case” Presentation Outline

Example presentation used in Nepal for government and stakeholder engagement



Thinking ahead to adoption and rollout

Engaging national governments and diverse stakeholders early in the standards process lays the foundation for effective and efficient adoption and rollout of harmonized global standards at a country level. Once the ISO harmonized standards are published, country advocates can facilitate adoption through proactive coordination and technical assistance that can support NSBs to develop comprehensive and inclusive implementation plans. These should include:

1

Regulatory framework alignment to facilitate uptake and reduce barriers to implementation. NSBs in coordination with relevant government ministries can help clearly define how ISO standards will be integrated into national systems, whether within existing regulations or as new standards, adopted in full or in part. Timely discussions and early planning can prevent bottlenecks during adoption.



Sri Lanka proactively addressed a regulatory hurdle by transferring oversight of sanitary pads from the National Medicines Regulatory Authority (which regulated them as medical devices) to the Sri Lanka Standards Institute and Consumer Affairs Authority in June 2025. Additionally, the country developed a draft standard for reusable sanitary pads to fill an existing gap.



2

Practical implementation guidance to facilitate smooth implementation at a country level. NSBs, supported by civil society stakeholders and academia, can work with relevant government departments, regulatory agencies, and research institutions/laboratories to develop clear guidance for regulators and industry, such as specific test methods for each specification. The implementation guidance should also include a monitoring framework to track key progress indicators (e.g., percentage of products on the market tested against the standard, percentage of products meeting minimum safety and performance requirements, number of manufacturers certified or compliant with the standard, provisions for MSMEs to get certified, and numbers who are able to access these provisions). Government stakeholders responsible for implementation and monitoring should also be engaged in the standards development process to enable adoption and monitoring.



3

Laboratory and technical testing capacity development/enhancement to support timely, accurate, and affordable assessment of products as per the standards. Leading research institutions and testing facilities, supported by funders and financing institutions and civil society organizations, can facilitate investments and build capacity in technical areas where national infrastructure may be lacking or is limited. Financial, institutional, and human resource capacity enhancement is essential to enable LMICs to effectively assess material and microbiological safety.



The South India Textile Research Association extended technical support to the Philippine Textile Research Institute, providing training and guidance on selecting appropriate testing instruments and methods. The cross-country partnerships helped strengthen laboratory and technical testing capabilities for menstrual products.



4

Support to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) for compliance. NSBs, in partnership with civil society organizations, technical institutes, and funders, can design for provision of technical and financial assistance to help MSMEs meet quality requirements through testing, certification, and product related research and development. Supporting MSMEs is essential for fostering competition and innovation in the market, which will eventually benefit consumers through improved choice and affordability.



For the Pacific region, where technical capacity is limited, universities and technical institutions can offer short courses or guidance to upskill MSMEs, with strong potential to partner with ASEAN's research ecosystem—for example, Australia's biomedical engineering programs.



5

Technology transfer and cluster-based capacity building. NSBs and other regulatory stakeholders can use existing trade agreements to facilitate knowledge sharing, develop regional testing capabilities, and strengthen technical capacity among manufacturers and supply chain actors, with targeted support for MSMEs.



Bureau of Indian Standards follows a cluster based approach, which allows multiple small manufacturers to access a common testing and laboratory facility for menstrual product assessment. This shared model helps reduce costs, expands access to reliable testing services, and supports smaller enterprises in meeting quality requirements.



6

Consumer awareness campaigns to raise widespread basic understanding of quality menstrual products. NSBs in partnership with civil society organizations, consumer interest groups, and other relevant government departments responsible for consumer safety and awareness can create market demand for compliant products by educating consumers about quality standards

7

Regional coordination to leverage existing technical expertise. NSBs can leverage their positions in regional standardization bodies and existing treaties to enable collective adoption and amplify impact across multiple countries (e.g., through ARSO, EAC, SARSO, CEN-CENELEC).

Conclusion

The development of harmonized global menstrual product standards¹⁹ through ISO TC 338 represents a unique and pivotal opportunity to transform menstrual health for more than two billion people across the world. LMICs are home to the majority of people who menstruate and have the fastest growing population globally (reaching 1.89 billion menstruators by 2035).²⁰ LMIC participation in this process is essential to ensuring that resulting standards are relevant, adoptable, and effective in diverse contexts.



The path forward is clear and achievable.

With strategic stakeholder coordination, evidence-based advocacy, and proactive planning, LMICs can:

- **SECURE REPRESENTATION** in ISO TC 338 to ensure LMIC perspectives shape global standards.
- **BUILD MOMENTUM** through multi-stakeholder platforms that unite government, industry, civil society organizations, and technical experts.
- **PREPARE FOR SEAMLESS ADOPTION** by addressing regulatory frameworks, testing capacity, MSME support, and consumer awareness early in the process.



Success requires collective action at every level.

NSBs cannot do this work alone. Menstrual health coalitions, industry associations, technical experts, manufacturers, and advocacy platforms must coordinate their efforts to:

1. **MAKE THE CASE** for standards engagement with compelling evidence and stakeholder buy-in.
2. **ENABLE PARTICIPATION** of diverse experts in NMCs and ISO TC 338.
3. **STRENGTHEN TECHNICAL CONTRIBUTIONS** through consensus-building and knowledge sharing.
4. **PLAN AHEAD** for implementation challenges, including regulatory alignment, capacity building, and market readiness.

¹⁹ Standards for vocabulary, and general and safety requirements by ISO TC 338 (currently in draft stages) are slated to be completed by December 2027.

²⁰ Weinberger M, Eva G, Bellows N, Reidy M, Sanders R, Ahsan S. LEAP: Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs. Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2024.

The window of opportunity is now.

ISO TC 338 is actively developing standards that will define menstrual product quality, safety, and accessibility for decades to come. The TC is developing two standards, one on general and safety requirements for menstrual products and one on menstrual products-related vocabulary, which are expected to be published by December 2027.

Countries that engage today will shape standards that reflect their realities, protect their populations, and strengthen their markets. Those that wait risk adopting standards that may not fit their contexts or serve the needs of their populations.

This toolkit provides the roadmap—and action must now follow.

Whether you are a civil society organization, technical expert, government official, manufacturer, or advocate, you have a role to play in this transformative process. The time to act is now, because the health, dignity, and choices of millions of people depend on the standards we create together.

We call on you to engage with industry, technical experts, and government stakeholders, including the national standards body in your country, to ensure your country's participation and active contribution to ISO TC 338.

Key Takeaways & Highlighted Advocacy Messages

1.89 billion people living in LMICs will need menstrual products by 2035. Harmonized product standards are critical to meeting this essential need.

The opportunity is time-sensitive. Global menstrual product standards are being developed now and will shape markets and product access for generations.

To be effective, harmonized global standards must be LMIC-grounded, co-created with local technical expertise, reflecting sociocultural realities while leveraging shared learning across countries.

LMIC participation in ISO TC 338 is essential to ensure standards reflect diverse contexts and can be readily adopted.

Multi-stakeholder coordination at a country level is the foundation for effective advocacy and technical contribution to ISO TC 338.

Early planning for adoption prevents implementation bottlenecks and ensures standards translate to real-world impact.

Every country stakeholder has a role, from mapping landscapes to contributing technical expertise to building consumer awareness.

Benefits of harmonized global menstrual product standards are clear—they improve safety and quality, expand consumer choice and agency, reduce stigma, and support efficient markets and effective regulation.

Toolkit authors or toolkit leads



The Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition

is a global partnership of public, private, and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to ensuring that all people in low- and middle-income countries can access and use affordable, high-quality supplies to ensure their better reproductive health. The Coalition brings together diverse agencies and groups with critical roles in providing contraceptives and other reproductive health supplies, including menstrual health supplies. It advances work on menstrual health market development, data visibility, and product access through the Menstrual Health Supplies Workstream and its membership.

www.rhsupplies.org



Menstrual Health Action for Impact is a think tank and strategic advisory organization that uses the menstrual health lens to advance the health and well-being of girls and women in low- and middle-income countries. MHAi leverages menstrual health market building as a means of increasing access to a choice of quality and affordable menstrual products for people who menstruate in LMICs.

www.menstrualhealthaction.org

Appendices

Appendix I: List of Experts Interviewed

We are grateful to the experts and advocates who provided valuable input in the development of this toolkit as key informants.

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Adriana Martins	Independent Consultant Member of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee 338 (TC 338) through Instituto Português da Qualidade
Adele Stewart	Independent Consultant Member of ISO TC 338 through American National Standards Institute and Convener of Technical Group (TG) 2
Adrian Dongus	Menstrual Hygiene Markets Specialist , The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF) Member of ISO TC 338 through UNOPS-SHF (external liaison)
Amal Elhenawy	Technical Secretary , Egyptian Organization for Standardization and Quality
Amos Mwale	Executive Director , Centre for Reproductive Health and Education Co-Chair, Advocacy and Accountability Working Group, Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC)
Cintia Paes	Product Safety Leader , Latin America, Kimberly-Clark
Chelsea Hugget	WaterAid Australia
Deborah Appiah	Standards Officer , Ghana Standards Authority
Diana Nelson	Global Advocacy Director , Days for Girls Member of ISO TC 338 through American National Standards Institute
Dr. Ulrike Ryll	Project Manager , Swedish Institute for Standards
Dr. Zainab Umar	Assistant Director , Standards Organisation of Nigeria
Fayazuddin Ahmad	Lawyer and Policy Expert , WaterAid Bangladesh
Francisca Frimpong	Chief Scientific Officer , Ghana Standards Authority Twinned Committee Manager, ISO TC 338

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Gerda Mazi Larsson	Co-founder , The Case for Her Committee Chair, ISO TC 338, through the Swedish Institute for Standards
Halima Sharrif	Director , Advance Family Planning Tanzania Member, Advocacy and Accountability Working Group, RHSC
Jenny Acaralp	Project Manager , Swedish Institute for Standards Committee Manager, ISO TC 338
Kamilla Duarte	Coordinator of Regulatory Affairs & Innovation , Brazilian Association of Personal Hygiene, Perfumery, and Cosmetics Industry (ABIHPEC) Member of ISO TC 338 through Brazilian National Standards
Kelvin Kinyua	Regulatory and Quality Compliance Consultant Member of ISO TC 338 through Kenya Bureau of Standards
Ken Oduor	Standards Officer , Kenya Bureau of Standards
Levi Kanene	Standards Officer , Uganda National Bureau of Standards
Louise Klintner	Postdoctoral Researcher at Lund University School of Economics Member of ISO TC 338 through the Swedish Institute for Standards (representing the Swedish Consumers' Association as an independent expert) Researcher with PhD specializing in menstrual health
Meron Negussie	Adolescent and Youth Program Specialist , UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office
Preeti Mittal	Senior Policy Advocacy and Campaign Coordinator , WaterAid Nepal
Raheema Panhwar	Gender Advisor and Safeguarding Focal Point , WaterAid Pakistan
Riesa Putri	Co-founder , Perfect Fit (Social Enterprise in Indonesia)
Safia Ahsan	Senior Technical Officer , RHSC and Secretariat Backstop, Manufacturer's Group at RHSC
Selyna Peiris	Founder , Femme Care (social enterprise in Sri Lanka)
Shivani Swamy	Global Business Development Lead , Livinguard Member of ISO TC 338 through Bureau of Indian Standards
Sivakumar Subramaniam	Principal Scientific Officer , The South India Textile Research Association (SITRA) Member of ISO TC 338 through Bureau of Indian Standards and Convenor of WG1
Sophia Grinvalds	Menstrual Hygiene Country Markets Specialist , The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund Member of ISO TC 338 through UNOPS-SHF (external liaison)

Appendix II: Key Reading and Data Resources to Support Advocacy for Menstrual Product Standards

This appendix brings together key literature and data resources that can support country stakeholders in building a strong, evidence-based case for the development, adoption, and enforcement of menstrual product standards. The resources listed below provide global and regional evidence, policy arguments, market insights, and country-level data that can be used for advocacy, policy dialogue, and technical engagement with standards bodies and decision-makers.


How to use these resources

The resources below in part A and part B can be used in complementary ways:

- **Build the case for action:** Use the key reading materials to articulate why menstrual product standards matter for public health, consumer safety and protection, gender equality, and market development, and how menstrual product standards align with global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Support policy and advocacy messaging:** Draw on global and regional evidence to strengthen advocacy messages, briefing notes, and presentations for policymakers and decision-makers.
- **Document the national context:** Use the data sources to compile country-specific evidence on the number of menstruators, product use patterns, access gaps, WASH conditions, and relevant economic and demographic indicators.
- **Inform technical engagement:** Use standards-focused resources to understand the scope and processes of ISO and national standards development, and to prepare for participation in technical committees or consultations.
- **Adapt to local priorities:** Users are encouraged to select and adapt the most relevant resources based on national data availability, policy priorities, and the stage of standards development or adoption.



A. Key Reading and Evidence on Menstrual Product Standards

-  International Organization for Standardization, ISO. (2020) How ISO Standards Help Meet the SDGs. ISO: Standards. <https://www.iso.org/sdgs.html>
-  International Organization for Standardization, ISO (2022-). ISO/TC 338 – Menstrual products. <https://www.iso.org/committee/8933440.html>
-  Klintner L. (2021). Normalizing the Natural: A study of menstrual product destigmatization. MediaTryck Lund. https://lup.lub.lu.se/search/files/95803065/opponent_och_e_spik_ex_Louise.pdf
-  Mahajan T, Joshi S. (2021). Development and compliance of standards for menstrual products in South Asia and Africa. Development Solutions Inc. and Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. https://www.rhsupplies.org/uploads/tx_rhscpublications/Development-and-Compliance-of-Menstrual-Product-Standards-Asia-Africa.pdf
-  Marroquin J, Kiomourtzoglou MA, Scranton A, Pollack AZ (2024). Chemicals in menstrual products: A systematic review. BJOG : an international journal of obstetrics and gynaecology, 131(5), 655–664. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0528.17668>
-  Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. (n.d.). Menstrual product standards – a pathway to quality product access. https://www.rhsupplies.org/uploads/tx_rhscpublications/Menstrual_product_standards_%E2%80%93_a_pathway_to_quality_product_access.pdf
-  Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. Theory of Change - Market Based Approaches for Menstrual Health. https://www.rhsupplies.org/uploads/tx_rhscpublications/user_upload/Market-Based_Approaches_for_Menstrual_Health_Theory_of_Change.pdf
-  Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. (2024). LEAP – Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs: Menstrual health. <https://leap.rhsupplies.org/menstrual-health>
-  Sanitation & Hygiene Fund. (2024). Global standards for menstrual products and why they matter. SHF. <https://www.shfund.org/media/global-standards-menstrual-products-and-why-they-matter>
-  Sanitation & Hygiene Fund. (2025). Setting global product standards for menstrual health: The work starts now. SHF. <https://shfund.org/media/setting-global-product-standards-menstrual-health-work-starts-now>
-  Webb S. (2024). Putting menstrual health on the global agenda. It's about supplies (blog of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition). <https://medium.com/its-about-supplies/putting-menstrual-health-on-the-global-agenda-a4b6e2ee3a99>

B. Key Data Sources to Document Country Context

DATA	RELEVANCE	LINK
Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) LEAP data for menstrual products, contraceptives (RHSC LEAP)	RHSC's Landscape and Projection of Reproductive Health Supply Needs Report (LEAP) presents a comprehensive picture of the supplies that women need to meet their reproductive health needs in LMICs, including menstrual health. The LEAP analysis utilizes up-to-date key data sources, typically drawing from national data sources. Data are available on number of menstruators, use of purpose-made products and non-purpose-made materials, costing, and future scenarios.	https://leap.rhsupplies.org/
WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP)	The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene has reported country, regional, and global estimates of progress on drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) since 1990. They have a specific report on menstrual health and hygiene that includes use of products, in addition to awareness, participation in daily activities, private place to change, and experience of pain.	https://washdata.org/topics/menstrual-health
Multiple indicator cluster surveys that provide data on WASH, health, and menstrual health and hygiene (MICS)	MICS is a household survey program that generates data on the status and well-being of children, adolescents, and their families, with the goal to inform and shape policies to improve their lives. The MICS survey is a nationally representative survey that can be used for demographic details when DHS data are not available for the country, if DHS data are older than MICS data for the country, or if the DHS sample is much smaller than MICS sample, and data are older. MICS has an optional module on menstrual health and hygiene.	https://mics.unicef.org/
Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS)	The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) Program has collected, analyzed, and disseminated accurate and representative data on population, health, HIV, and nutrition. For some countries (like India), DHS reports also provide insights on age at menarche, age at menopause, menstrual product use, and even select indicators on menstrual taboos. DHS reports for all countries provide demographic data that can be considered to be representative for the country.	
World Bank	The World Bank data provide relevant information related to income classification of countries, GNI, GDP, population and population growth rates, urban population, and other essential economic indicators.	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators/preview/on
World Health Organization (WHO)	WHO provides country profiles with essential demographic and SRHR related indicators. Often aligned with World Bank data. WHO data are used to get information on country populations and the number of girls and women of reproductive age, by age bands.	https://data.who.int/countries/

Appendix III: ISO TC 338 Working Structure

This appendix provides an overview of the working structure, active groups, and standards development processes within International Organization for Standardization Technical Committee 338 (ISO TC 338) on menstrual products. It outlines the scope and status of current working groups, task groups, and ad hoc groups, as well as the stages involved in developing ISO standards. In addition, it includes key links and contact information relevant to ISO TC 338 administration, ongoing standards work, and engagement pathways. The information is intended to support understanding of how work on menstrual product standards is organized and progresses within ISO.

How to use this appendix

- Use this appendix to understand the overall structure and mandate of ISO TC 338, including the roles of working groups, task groups, and ad hoc groups.
- Refer to the descriptions of groups and work items to identify where specific technical, terminology, performance, or outreach-related work on menstrual product standards is being undertaken.
- Use the overview of the ISO standards development stages to understand how draft standards progress and to anticipate opportunities for input, consultation, or review.
- Consult the listed links to track standards under development, access publicly available ISO documents, and stay informed of updates related to ISO TC 338.
- Use the contact information to connect with the ISO TC 338 secretariat or relevant national standards bodies for questions related to participation, coordination, or engagement.

Technical Committees ISO/TC 338 Menstrual products

About

Secretariat: **SIS** (Sweden)

Committee Manager: **Mrs Jenny Acaralp**

Unaffiliated Secretariat: **GSA**

Unaffiliated Committee Manager: **Mrs Francisca Frimpong**

Person (until end 2028): **Mrs Gerda Larsson**

Technical Programme Manager [TPM]: **Mme Maha T**

A. ISO TC 338 groups working as of January 2026

WORKING STRUCTURE OF ISO TC 338		
GROUP NAME	SCOPE	ONGOING WORK ITEMS
Working Group 1 (WG1) Safety, performance, and general requirements for menstrual products	General and safety requirements for menstrual products, and covers internally and externally used products intended for single and multiple use	ISO/AWI 25071 Menstrual Products: General and Safety Requirements
Working Group 2 (WG2) Terminology	Terms and definitions related to menstrual products	ISO/AWI 25130 Menstrual Products: Vocabulary
Task Group 1 (TG1) Strategic Business Plan	Develop a Strategic Business Plan for ISO TC 338 Disbanded after completion of task	
Task Group 2 (TG2) Outreach and communications	Promote the benefits of standards for menstrual products in general, keep interested parties informed of developments within the TC, and encourage engagement of other entities (e.g., individuals, countries, organizations) in the TC	
Task Group 3 (TG3) LMIC coordination	Strengthen the LMIC perspective in the standardization work within ISO TC 338; develop a cohesive viewpoint and improve the awareness of LMIC challenges with respect to recommended inputs to the standard, among all other stakeholders; share experiences with the TC; propose areas where capacity building is relevant for LMICs and explore potential pathways; support the LMIC participants to advocate for this field of standardization in their respective countries and regions; explore potential solutions for adoption challenges by MSMEs operating in LMICs; and identify standardization needs relevant to developing countries and making proposals to the TC	
Ad Hoc Group 1 (AHG1) Terminology	Disbanded to create Working Group 2 and formally take the work on terminology forward as a standard through WG2	
Ad Hoc Group 2 (AHG2) Performance testing of menstrual products	Testing methods for absorption capacity, absorption speed, and rewet for absorbent menstrual products, applicable for externally worn, single-use products	Draft document for the defined scope is being developed

Any draft standard goes through nine stages of development, including:

1. Idea/proposal
2. Decision to start
3. Project launch
4. Working group draft
5. Committee consensus
6. Public enquiry/consultation
7. Revision of proposal
8. Final vote
9. Adoption and publication



WG1 and WG2 are working on draft standards for “Menstrual Products: General and Safety Requirements” and “Menstrual Products: Vocabulary,” respectively. Both these standards are at the stage of a working group draft and are expected to be published by December 2027. The work being done by AHG2 on performance testing of menstrual products is at the level of an idea and will be developed by the members before it can be proposed as a project.

B. Relevant links and contact information for ISO TC 338

CATEGORY	DETAILS
ISO Committee Administration, Scope & Membership	https://www.iso.org/committee/8933440.html
ISO Standards Under Development	https://www.iso.org/committee/8933440/x/catalogue/p/0/u/1/w/0/d/0
ISO Strategic Business Plan for Menstrual Products	https://www.iso.org/resources/publicly-available-resources.html?t=olqlxjs1rVetPgmT17hcLvINPGI0PNzEkA-il64jELRf4dGwdhEOI1R2etGogfhP&view=documents#section-isodocuments-top
Dedicated ISO TC 338 Website	https://committee.iso.org/home/tc338
Secretariat Contacts (Swedish Institute for Standards)	Jenny Acaralp , Committee Manager: jenny.acaralp@sis.se
Twinned Secretariat Contacts (Ghana Standards Authority)	Francisca Frimpong , Twinned Committee Manager: francisca.frimpong@gsa.gov.gh Deborah Kusi Appiah : deborah.appiah@gsa.gov.gh

Appendix IV: Types of Stakeholders Relevant for Menstrual Product Standards

This appendix outlines the key categories of stakeholders relevant to the development, participation, and adoption of menstrual product standards. It describes the roles that different actors—including national standards bodies, government ministries, civil society organizations, technical experts, manufacturers, and industry associations—can play throughout the standards development, adoption, and rollout processes. This appendix is intended to highlight the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in both international standards development through ISO TC 338 and in national processes. The stakeholder list provided here is specific to menstrual product standards. The [ISO stakeholder categories](#) are different and are defined to reflect the role and context of participating individuals and organizations across technical areas.

How to use this appendix

- Use this appendix to identify the range of stakeholders that may need to be engaged when advocating for, developing, or adopting menstrual product standards at the national or regional level.
- Refer to the stakeholder roles to clarify responsibilities and potential contributions across standards development, participation in ISO TC 338, and national adoption and implementation.
- Use the stakeholder mapping to support the formation or strengthening of a national mirror committee and to ensure diverse and balanced representation, including under-represented groups.
- Draw on this appendix when planning consultations, coordination mechanisms, or advocacy strategies to engage government, civil society organizations, technical experts, and industry actors.
- Adapt the stakeholder categories and roles based on country context, institutional arrangements, and the stage of engagement with menstrual product standards.



STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	ROLE IN STANDARDS
National standards bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Participate in ISO TC 338 → Create or identify an NMC for participation in ISO TC 338 → Engage with diverse stakeholders (including other government actors) to participate in NSB/NMC and nominate experts to ISO TC 338 → Seek ongoing inputs for the NSB/NMC and ISO TC 338 through circulation of committee documents and compilation and provision of feedback, and official consultations with a variety of stakeholders → Provide information on provisions for participation (like sponsorships, capacity building, etc.) to NMC members → Take leadership roles in ISO TC 338 and host physical meetings → Plan for adoption of ISO standards
Ministries of trade, commerce, technical textiles, medical devices. Ministries of health, education, water and sanitation, women's affairs (and others that may have menstrual health and hygiene interventions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Officially request the NSB to prioritize menstrual product standardization and participate in ISO TC 338 → Develop a regulatory framework in consultation with the NSB to develop a plan for adoption, rollout, and monitoring of ISO standards → Link NSB to a diverse set of stakeholders working on their areas of focus for contribution to the NSB/NMC → Support the NSB to liaise with regional standardization bodies for participation in ISO TC 338 as external liaisons or for regional adoption → Play a leadership role in national and regional adoption of ISO standards through technical support to regional countries
Civil society organizations/NGOs working on menstrual health, sexual and reproductive health, education, workforce participation Consumer interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Media and government engagement to advocate for participation in ISO TC 338 and creating national regulatory frameworks for adoption → Multi-stakeholder consultations, especially with under-represented stakeholders from academia, research, civil society, MSMEs, and others → Share insights and provide technical support to the NSB and other government stakeholders to proactively plan for adoption of ISO standards → Highlight voices of marginalized and vulnerable communities → Consumer awareness to create national demand for participation in ISO TC 338 and for adoption and compliance of ISO standards

STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	ROLE IN STANDARDS
Microbiologists and material safety experts	→ Provide technical inputs through direct participation in NSB/NMC and be nominated as experts to ISO TC 338
Medical practitioners	→ Conduct research to address evidence gaps in developing robust standards
Manufacturers and MSMEs	→ Provide technical inputs through direct participation in NSB/NMC and be nominated as experts to ISO TC 338
Raw-material suppliers	→ Industry associations can help develop consensus-based inputs through multi-stakeholder consultations and contribute as experts to NSB/NMC or as external liaisons to ISO TC 338
Industry associations	

Appendix V: Menstrual Product Standards Country Status Framework

How to use this framework

This table is used to categorize the level of engagement of a national standards body (NSB) in menstrual product standardization at both the national level and within ISO TC 338.

1. Complete the NSB engagement checklist (Annex III)

Before using this table, complete the Checklist for NSB's Engagement in Menstrual Product Standardization to gather the necessary evidence on national standards development and ISO TC 338 participation.

2. Assess national-level engagement

Based on the checklist and available documentation, identify the statement that best describes the current national situation:

- Standards exist for at least two menstrual product categories.
- Standards exist for one menstrual product category.
- No national standards exist for any menstrual product category.

Select only one option that most accurately reflects the current status.

3. Assess ISO TC 338 engagement

Identify the NSB's current level of participation in ISO TC 338:

- Participating as a P-member with at least three experts.
- Participating as a P-member with fewer than three experts or as an O-member.
- Not participating in ISO TC 338.

Select only one option based on formal NSB membership and expert participation.

4. Document the basis for classification

Record the source of information used to make this assessment (e.g., NSB communication, official ISO listings, government correspondence).

- Use the classification to guide action
- Apply the Country Status Framework.
- Select appropriate advocacy strategies outlined in the "Taking Action" section.
- Prioritize actions to strengthen NSB engagement and participation in ISO TC 338.

This assessment should be reviewed and updated periodically, particularly when new standards are initiated or published, expert participation changes, or the NSB's ISO membership status evolves.

NSB ENGAGEMENT IN MENSTRUAL PRODUCT STANDARDIZATION		AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL		
With ISO TC 338		Standards exist for at least two menstrual products	Standards exist for one menstrual product	No standards
	Participating (as P-member) with at least 3 experts	HIGH ENGAGEMENT		MEDIUM ENGAGEMENT
	Participating (as P-member) with at least 3 experts	MEDIUM ENGAGEMENT		
	Not participating	LOW ENGAGEMENT		



HIGH ENGAGEMENT



MEDIUM ENGAGEMENT



LOW ENGAGEMENT

Appendix VI: Media Engagement Tools

This appendix provides practical media and outreach tools to support advocacy for menstrual product standards. It brings together evidence-based key messages, suggested advocacy moments, outreach channels, and example press materials that can be adapted for different country contexts. The content is designed to help stakeholders communicate clearly and persuasively about why menstrual product standards matter; how they affect safety, choice, and markets; and why participation in global processes such as ISO TC 338 is important. By combining technical arguments with accessible messaging, this appendix supports public-facing engagement alongside policy and standards work.

How to use this resource

- Use the suggested key messages to develop consistent, evidence-based narratives for media engagement, social-media campaigns, presentations, and public communications.
- Align outreach activities with global advocacy moments (such as International Women's Day, Menstrual Hygiene Day, Girl Child Day, and World Standards Day) to increase visibility and relevance.
- Select appropriate outreach channels, such as social media, blogs, op-eds, webinars, public events, or stakeholder dialogues based on target audiences and country context.
- Adapt the example press releases to national priorities, data, and policy environments, ensuring messages reflect local realities while remaining aligned with global standards processes.
- Clearly define a call to action for each media activity, such as encouraging government participation in ISO TC 338, recruiting technical experts for national mirror committees, or mobilizing public and stakeholder support for national standards adoption.



1. Suggested content and key messages

Persuasive arguments that are evidence-based and relevant to context information:

- Access to safe, affordable #menstrualproducts depends on strong global harmonized quality #standards.
- Global quality standards will have direct impacts on the menstrual product #choices available to millions of women and girls (in LMICs).
- Standards contribute to quality products, stronger markets, and safer lives for women and girls.
- Global and harmonized standards are opportunities for manufacturing, retail, and trade while ensuring safer, high-quality products for millions of women and girls.
- Shared action through #ISO TC 338 can make menstrual health safer, more inclusive, and globally aligned.
- All other products used on or inside the body have standards—now it's time for #menstrualproduct standards.

Refer to these social-media illustrative examples. They can be adapted and used as relevant for LinkedIn, Instagram, and X.

Illustrative Post 1



Access to safe, affordable #menstrualproducts depends on strong global harmonized quality #standards.

Without global #standards, #menstrualproducts will face barriers in manufacturing, retail, and trade, leaving marked gaps in access, quality, and consumer trust.

Through #ISOTC338, your country can support the establishment of global standards and contribute to safe, quality, and affordable #menstrualhealth products that meet the needs of everyone everywhere!

#periodfriendlyworld



Global and harmonized #standards for #menstrualproducts:

Present opportunities for manufacturing, retail, and trade while ensuring safer, high-quality products for millions of women and girls.

Enhance access to and choice of menstrual products available to millions of women and girls in LMICs.

Shared action through #ISO TC 338 can make menstrual health safer, more inclusive, and globally aligned.

#periodfriendlyworld

For all posts:

Images for posts can be accessed [here](#).



TAG @relevant organizations, @Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, @Sanitation and Hygiene Fund, @Capital M, @Menstrual Health Action for Impact, @relevant individuals.



2. Leverage global advocacy moments:

Utilize awareness days, advocacy moments, and opportunities linked to standards, health, and gender equality for outreach. These include but are not limited to:

- 8 March – International Women’s Day
- 28 May – Menstrual Hygiene Day
- 11 October – Girl Child Day
- 14 October – World Standards Day

Organizing online campaigns and publishing blogs, newspaper pieces, and op-eds helps draw public attention to the issue and encourages action, such as signing a petition, joining a campaign, or contributing to an open consultation.

3. Potential channels for outreach

Use social-media campaigns (LinkedIn, Instagram, X), webinars, in-person events, stakeholder dialogues and public consultations, blogs, op-eds and media articles, etc. Open letters and petitions that engage multiple stakeholders can also be explored to develop momentum. Use outreach channels to try to encourage collaborative efforts that bring diverse perspectives to the table, enhancing the overall impact of the advocacy action.

4. Call to action

Any media activity should have a clear call to action. Depending on where the country is in its standards journey, these can include requests to:

- Sign a petition or another action requesting the government to take action on menstrual product standards and join ISO TC 338.
- Industry and technical stakeholders to volunteer their time and expertise to the NSB for technical contributions to ISO TC 338.

Two examples of press releases with clear calls to action are given on the next page:

EXAMPLE 1: To encourage NSB's participation in ISO TC 338

Strengthening LMIC Voices on the Global Stage

This is the world's once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape standards—and a market,” says Gerda Mazi Larsson, Chair of ISO TC 338.

ISO standards can improve access to quality and affordable menstrual products for girls and women everywhere. Through this, they can also help improve the health, education, and workforce participation for girls and women and contribute to various other development outcomes.* As ISO TC 338 develops international standards that will shape menstrual product markets worldwide, it is essential that perspectives from low- and middle-income countries are represented at the table. **[ORGANIZATION NAME]** urges advocacy organizations, technical experts, and policymakers to engage with **[COUNTRY NAME]**'s national standards body to ensure our nation's participation in ISO TC 338.

What Countries Can Do

- **Adopt comprehensive standards** that ensure all menstrual products are tested for safety, absorbency, and material quality before reaching consumers.
- **Engage diverse voices** in the standard-setting process, bringing together public health experts, women's rights organizations, manufacturers, and, most importantly, the voices of women and girls themselves.
- **Support implementation** by providing resources and technical assistance to help stakeholders advocate effectively for national standards that protect menstrual health.

About ISO TC 338: The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Technical Committee 338 is developing international standards to establish safety and performance benchmarks for menstrual products globally.**

Background on menstrual health: **[Add 1-2 relevant statistics or context points specific to your country/region]**

* Klintner, L. (2021). Normalizing the Natural: A study of menstrual product destigmatization. MediaTryck Lund.

** <https://www.iso.org/committee/8933440.html>.

EXAMPLE 2: To recruit more experts to contribute to the NSB/NMC

[Country Name] Joins Global Movement for Quality Standards of Menstrual Products: New advocacy initiative supports participation in International Organization for Standardization Technical Committee 338 to ensure safe, affordable menstrual health products for all.

Access to a basket of quality and affordable menstrual products is an essential component of comprehensive menstrual health.* Yet for **[INSERT DATA]** women and girls who menstruate in **[COUNTRY NAME]**, finding safe, reliable products remains a daily challenge. The lack of quality standards for menstrual products and variance in technical requirements where standards exist compromise the quality of products and create inefficient trade barriers that increase the cost of production, in addition to adversely affecting the health of menstruators.** ***

Development, harmonization, and enforcement of quality standards of menstrual products is important for addressing these concerns and strengthening LMIC markets for menstrual products.*** **[ORGANIZATION NAME]** and **[PARTNER NAME]** seek to create enabling environments where girls and women can make informed choices among quality, affordable menstrual products. To this end, we are advocating for the development and use of standards and request all experts to contact us about how they can be involved in contributing to establishing standards. By aligning with international processes such as ISO Technical Committee 338 on Menstrual Products, countries can develop harmonized benchmarks that support women's health, consumer safety, and sustainable production.

* Hennegan J, Winkler IT, Bobel C, Keiser D, Hampton J, Larsson G, Chandra-Mouli V, Plesons M, Mahon T. Menstrual health: a definition for policy, practice, and research. *Sex Reprod Health Matters*. 2021;Dec;29(1):1911618. doi: 10.1080/26410397.2021.1911618. PMID: 33910492; PMCID: PMC8098749. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8098749/>.

** Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, Mann Global Health. *Landscaping Supply Side Factors to Menstrual Product Access*. 2021. Accessible [here](#).

*** Marroquin J, Kiomourtzoglou MA, Scranton A, Pollack AZ. Chemicals in menstrual products: A systematic review. *BJOG*. 2024 Apr;131(5):655-664. doi: 10.1111/1471-0528.17668. Epub 2023 Sep 24. PMID: 37743685.

**** Mahajan T, Joshi S. *Development and compliance of standards for menstrual products in South Asia and Africa*. Development Solutions Inc. and Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. 2021. Accessible [here](#).

Annexes



Annex I: Advocacy Checklist for Supporting National Participation in ISO TC 338

Context: This checklist supports advocacy stakeholders to systematically plan, implement, and track actions to advance their country's engagement in menstrual product standardization and participation in ISO TC 338.

See checklist template here (tab 1).



Annex II: Market Mapping Template

Context: This annex provides a rapid market scan template to support country-level stakeholders in developing a high-level understanding of the menstrual product market. The information captured through this annex helps build an evidence base on product availability, market composition, pricing, and manufacturing and trade dynamics. This market intelligence is critical for informing advocacy with NSBs and government stakeholders, and for making a country-specific case for engagement in menstrual product standardization and participation in ISO TC 338.

See template here (tab 2).



Annex III: Checklist for NSB's Engagement in Menstrual Product Standardization at the National, Regional, and Global Level

Context: This annex provides a structured checklist to assess the current level of engagement of an NSB in menstrual product standardization at both the national level and within ISO TC 338. It enables advocacy stakeholders to systematically document whether key policy, institutional, and technical processes are in place, and to identify gaps that may require targeted advocacy or support.

By capturing information on national standards development, regulatory readiness, committee composition, and participation in ISO TC 338, this annex supports a clear, evidence-based understanding of where a country stands in the standardization journey. The information generated through this checklist feeds directly into the Country Status Framework and helps determine appropriate advocacy strategies.

See checklist template here (tab 3).



Annex IV: “Making the Case” Presentation Outline

Context: This presentation is designed to help country stakeholders make a clear, evidence-based case for their country’s engagement in global menstrual product standards development under ISO TC 338. It provides key messages and structure for stakeholders to use as they engage with key government officials and representatives from their national standards body.

See presentation template [here](#).