



Participation in consultation meeting of the Amsterdam Zuidoost city district committee

- *English translation*

Tuesday, September 13 2022

Topic: Period Poverty

Neighborhood Feminists is an intersectional feminist foundation based in Reigersbos. Since September 2019, we have been committed to combating period poverty in the city. We currently support approximately 650 people per month through our projects. Menstrual products are a basic need. Everyone who menstruates has the right to a safe and dignified menstruation, but in Amsterdam for many people that is not possible.

The need for support is great in Amsterdam. One in five Amsterdammers lives around or below the poverty line and 1 in 9 people who menstruate in the Netherlands experiences period poverty.¹ In Amsterdam, period poverty affects an estimated 26,000 people; in reality, however, that number is even greater.² For example, the little quantitative research that has been done tells us nothing about undocumented communities or gender diversity.³ Information is also outdated; over the past 2.5 years we have experienced a pandemic that has increased poverty.⁴ The current high inflation and increased energy prices will also further contribute to the increase in people living in poverty.

The average menstrual cycle lasts five days. When using 5 products per day⁵, which is average, and using the cheapest products, a person will end up paying between €0.77 for tampons and €1.32 for sanitary pads.⁶ When using products of a better quality, the cost can easily rise to between € 3.50 and € 6.40 per month. According to research by the Bovengrondse, average costs even lie around €7.90 per month for many people.⁷ Importantly, all these calculations do not take into account heavier

¹ Plan International, [Bloedserieus](#), 2019.

² This estimate is based on figures from the Municipality of Amsterdam from 2020, in which 258,768 women and girls of menstruating age (12 to 52) lived in Amsterdam.

³ 'In the Netherlands there are between 90,000 and 390,000 transgender people depending on which definition you use. If you only look at people who are going through a social (and medical) transition, you quickly arrive at the lower number. You quickly come to the higher number when you look at the variation of gender identity and expression of the birth sex in a broad sense.' Transgenderinfo.nl, [Vraag & Antwoord](#).

⁴ [Parool](#), 'Zuinig leven en toch niet rondkomen: ook Amsterdammers met middeninkomen in de knel.' Tim Wagemakers en Malika Sevil, 30 juli 2022.

⁵ Sanitary pads should be changed every 4 to 6 hours, tampons every 4 to 8 hours. Around 8 hours there is an increased risk of [tampon disease](#).

⁶ Bovengrondse, Rapport Onderzoek 'Verkenning van menstruatie-armoede in Nederland' 2019.

⁷ Bovengrondse, 2019. 'In our online questionnaire, 56 women entered the amount they spend on their menstrual monthly, varying from 85 cents to 25 euros, with an average of 7.90 euros. That is only an indication, and not a representative study, but it shows that the costs per person can vary greatly.'



periods, heavy menstrual blood loss (affecting 25% of people), longer cycles, and other necessities for menstruation such as pain relief.^{8 9 10}

On average, people who menstruate have their period every month from the age of 12 to 52, a total that amounts to about seven years of periods, or 17,000 pieces of sanitary napkin or tampons.¹¹ For people who can easily pay the aforementioned amounts, €1.32 or even €7.90 per month does not sound like much. But if you factor in the total number of periods, the costs for menstruation over a lifetime become considerable. This is all the more true for people living at or under the poverty line with a weekly budget of €50 for groceries, and especially for undocumented people who can't even go to the Food Bank.^{12 13}

Again, menstrual products are a basic necessity. Everyone who menstruates has the right to a safe and dignified menstruation. To ensure this, access to the right products must be facilitated. This is important for health as well as social reasons. The lack of products can lead to unhygienic solutions, such as using toilet paper or using products for too long. This can lead to infections and can even be fatal in the case of tampon disease. People who do not have access to products cannot fully participate in society; the 2019 Plan International Netherlands survey showed that four out of ten participants had sometimes missed school or work because they had their period.

A holistic approach to menstrual poverty requires tackling the taboo surrounding menstruation—and better research. That is why we have teamed up with research agency Opinium to quantitatively map the current menstrual poverty rates in Amsterdam. From September 15 to October 15, anyone living in Amsterdam can complete our research questionnaire. The results of this study will be announced at the end of October.

As Neighborhood Feminists, we have been doing our best to fight period poverty for three years now. But the reality is that we very much need the help of Amsterdam officials and policymakers, especially in Amsterdam Zuidoost, where 35% of children grow up in poverty.¹⁴ Help us help Zuidoost by tackling period poverty.

⁸ We know from experience that people with heavier menstrual periods are more likely to need 6 sanitary pads per day.

⁹ Research in the US shows that a quarter of all people who menstruate experience heavy menstrual blood loss (menorrhagia). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [Heavy Menstrual Bleeding](#), 2022.

¹⁰ Bovengrondse, 2019.

¹¹ [World Economic Forum](#), SDG 05: Gender Equality, 'Period poverty: why Periods shouldn't be a financial burden and how one retailer is helping?' 2021.

¹² The living amount of the Food Bank is a maximum of €225 per month per person (€315 for two-person households). This concerns the amount that can be used for food, clothing and care products. [Voedselbanken Nederland](#).

¹³ Through the Poverty Fund, the Amsterdam Food Bank has a [MUP](#) (Menstruatie Uitgiftepunt, or Menstrual Product Distribution Point). They occasionally hand out menstrual products to people who come there.

¹⁴ [Masterplan Zuidoost](#), Programma 2021 - 2040.