

賣一捐一推廣可重用月事用品  
抵抗月事貧窮

# Promoting Reusable Menstrual Products to Combat Period Poverty

Free Periods HK - Zoe Chan & Joyce Fung

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經血就代表不潔？用月經杯等於破處？在傳統保守社會，「性」彷如禁忌，而月經涉及性器官和血，教不少人避而不談，有時候誤解就在忌諱之中產生。2019年初，兩位關注月經議題的組織創辦人陳鈺霖（Zoe）和馮樂恆（Joyce），聯同其他性別組織，一同創立了「解放月事 Free Periods Hong Kong」，冀消除坊間對月事的誤解，並推廣可重用的月事用品；同時希望透過捐贈，讓低收入人士都能用到月事用品。

Is menstrual blood unclean? Does using a menstrual cup mean losing your virginity? "Sex" is a taboo in a traditional and conservative society. As periods involve sex organs and blood, many avoid talking about it. Misunderstanding sometimes arises from taboos. Menstruation advocates Zoe and Joyce co-founded "Free Periods Hong Kong" together with other gender organisations in early 2019 in the hope of clearing up public misunderstandings of periods and promoting reusable menstrual products. They also aspire to provide low-income families with period products through donations.

每月衛生巾支出等於一包米

在成立「解放月事」之前，Zoe與Joyce和其他性別組織討論下，發覺香港的月事貧窮現象頗為普遍。「提到小時候如何認識月經，或者當『漏M』（經血滲漏）而被人笑，如果有一些教育就好。還有原來大家小時候都試過不夠錢買M巾，可能用紙巾或者其他東西緊急處理月事。」

而且，即使月事用品是女性生活必須品，但今日已屬發達社會的香港，仍有低收入家庭難以負擔月事用品。「每月花費在衛生巾的錢，其實等於一包五公斤米的價錢。」Zoe說，一些發展中國家人民完全買不起衛生巾，但香港生活水平高，低收入家庭未必完全買不起，但可能為了節省洗費而忽略質素，「一塊M巾每四小時就要換一塊，但她可能覺得沒有髒，反正不會漏，使用多四小時，衛生上和健康上都不是理想的處理方法。」日用品理應可以用相對低廉價錢購得，甚至涉及人權，Zoe指政府應提供援助，以津貼等形式提供資助。

事實上，資助女性月事用品並非天方夜譚。2020年二月底，蘇格蘭議會在全體議員112票贊成通過法案 (Period Products (Free Provision) Scotland Bill)，政府向全國有需要的女性，免費提供衛生棉條及衛生巾等生理用品。蘇格蘭遂成為了全球首個國家，向女性免費於社區中心、青年中心及藥房等指定公共場所提供月事用品，預計政策年度所需開支大約為2.4億港元。

然而，香港仍未有相關措施，民間只能自救。Zoe參考國際知名月事產品公司Ruby Cup的做法，Ruby Cup提倡每賣一件月事用品，便捐出一件月事用品給不同地方的女性。「解放月事」遂與月經杯品牌合作，並獲得Good Seed十萬元資助，以「賣一捐一」的概念運作，把售賣布製衛生巾和月經杯的收入，用於為低收入婦女免費提供可重用月事用品。

同時，她們亦舉辦不同月事教育工作坊。Joyce指出，可重用的月經產品相對昂貴，月經杯或要二、三百元，低下階層人士一開始未必願意接觸，但實際上布衛生巾、月經杯和棉條等可重用的月事用品既符合環保概念，又可減低女性的每月支出。「所以捐贈和教育一樣重要，解放月事就並行做這兩件事。」Joyce說。

A Month's Sanitary Pads Cost as much as a Bag of Rice

Before founding “Free Periods Hong Kong”, discussions with gender organisations made Zoe and Joyce realise that period poverty is not uncommon in Hong Kong. “We talked about how we learnt about periods when we were little, and how we were laughed at when period blood leaked through. If only someone taught us more about it. Besides, we found out that we have all experienced times when we did not have enough money to buy sanitary pads and had to use tissues or other substitutes as an emergency measure.”

Menstrual products are a necessity for women, but even though Hong Kong is a developed society, there are still low-income families that cannot afford period products. “A month's sanitary pads cost as much as a 5kg bag of rice.” Zoe pointed out that people in developing countries may not be able to afford sanitary pads at all. But considering the high living standard in Hong Kong, it may not be that low-income families cannot afford sanitary products, but they may sacrifice quality to cut back on expenses. “Sanitary pads should be replaced every 4 hours, but these ladies may use it for another 4 hours thinking it is not dirty and won't leak anyway, which is not ideal for hygiene and health.” Zoe pointed out that daily necessities should be affordable as a human right, so maybe the government should provide support in forms such as subsidies.

In fact, subsidies for sanitary products are not unheard of. In late February 2020, the Scottish Parliament passed the Period Products (Free Provision) Scotland Bill with the unanimous support of all 112 MPs. The government would provide free sanitary products, like tampons and sanitary pads, for girls and women who need them. These products can be collected at designated public places, such as community centres, youth clubs and pharmacies. Scotland thus became the first country in the world to provide free sanitary products for women. The annual cost of the policy is expected to be around 240 million HK dollars.

Without such measures in place in Hong Kong, citizens can only help themselves. Zoe was inspired by how the well-known menstrual product company Ruby Cup donates a sanitary product to women in different places for every product it sells. Working with menstrual cup brands and supported by a \$100,000 Good Seed fund, “Free Periods Hong Kong” runs a similar “Sell One, Give One” concept. The profits from setting cloth sanitary pads and menstrual cups are used for donating menstrual products to women from low-income families.

They also organise various period education workshops. Joyce pointed out that people with lower income may not be willing to give reusable menstrual products a try at first because these products seem relatively expensive. For example, a menstrual cup may cost two to three hundred



解放思想 突破框架

不過她們推廣這個理念的時候，卻發現有很多香港人對於月事認知不足。Zoe解釋，有人會認為把月經杯放進下體便會「破處」，「但其實大家都可能不知道處女膜在哪裡，以及不知道處女膜是如何形成、不是每個人都有處女膜。」

除此之外，家人對月事的誤解，也可能令女性拒絕使用布衛生巾。Joyce說，由於使用過的布衛生巾需於陽光底下晾曬殺菌，一些劏房戶未必有空間晾曬；但就算家裡有晾曬位置，也會因尷尬怕被別人看到。

亦有傳統家庭認為接觸下體的月事用品不吉祥，故反對下一代晾曬。Joyce說：「我以前用布衛生巾掛在家中晾衫的地方，阿爸見到一開始覺得『唔老黎』（不祥），有種傳統觀念，因為這是放

在下體，和吸收經血，帶有不祥的意味，件事本身不潔，怎樣洗都是不潔的。」

不過，部份學校也沒有向學生傳授正確的月事知識。Zoe曾跟一些學校接觸，冀推廣可重用的月事用品，惟校方表現抗拒，「學校聽到我們會提月經杯和棉條，他們都頗緊張。」同時校方更重視安全性行為，「寧願就做預防性的，多過這類相對『普通』的性教育。」

Zoe解釋，香港教育屬校本主導，學校主導教學內容，月經這部份或只輕輕帶過，特別是教會學校更加忌諱。「但我們希望除了讓女仔認識，男仔都要知道，因為你在社會上一定會遇到一個『嚟M』的人，或者她『M痛』，你如何看這狀態，都與促進性別平等有關。」

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dollars. But in fact, reusable sanitary products, such as cloth sanitary pads, menstrual cups, and reusable tampons, are not only eco-friendly, but they also reduce monthly spending. Joyce noted, “Therefore, donation and education are both important. Free Periods is doing both at the same time.”

Liberate Thinking and Break Limits

Despite that, when they promote reusable sanitary products, they find that many Hongkongers do not know much about periods. Zoe explained that some people think that putting a menstrual cup into the vagina would break the hymen and make the user lose her virginity. “But they may not even know where the hymen is, how it is formed, or the fact that not everyone has a hymen.”

Apart from that, family members’ misunderstandings about periods may also deter women from using cloth sanitary pads. Joyce pointed out that used cloth sanitary pads have to be washed and placed under sunlight to kill germs, which subdivided flat residents may not have the space for; even if there is enough space, the women may feel embarrassed to let others see the pads.

Some traditional families may also object to their children putting period products out because they regard these products that touch sex organs

as unauspicious. Joyce said, “I used to hang cloth sanitary pads where my family hang clothes. My dad thought it would bring bad luck because in his traditional mindset, objects that touch sex organs and absorb period blood are ill-omened, and that they remain unclean no matter how much you wash them.”

To be fair, not all schools teach students correct knowledge about periods. Zoe was met with reluctance from some schools when she approached them to promote reusable period products. “Schools get very uptight when they learn that we will mention menstrual cups and tampons.” Schools also tend to focus more on safe sex in sex education: “They prefer preventive education to these seemingly general sex education topics.”

Zoe explained that sex education in Hong Kong is school based: the curriculum is decided by individual schools, which may rush through the part on menstruation. The taboo is particularly strong in schools run by churches. “But we hope that boys can also learn about periods because in society, they will definitely meet someone who is on her period or having a period cramp. What they think about this situation is key to promoting gender equality.”



## 社交平台教正確知識

學校忽視，家人忌諱，女孩如何學習正確月經知識？她們說，如今的青少年有較高自主性，她們懂得上YouTube和Instagram等社交網站自行接觸月事資訊。「也可能在Google上搜尋，但單單Instagram上關於月經的資訊，都可以有好多無關的東西，例如是藥、減肥等，十分美容導向的資訊，或者十分商業。」

於是，除了上述的「解放月事Free Periods Hong Kong」外，她們各自在有關網站辦了月事平台，分別是月事教育平台、月經用品專賣網站「Happeriod」，和分享月經大小事的社交平台「MenstruAction」。除了網上教育，更希望透過舉辦工作坊，讓女性認識自己身體，或了解出現月經血是平常事，理解自己的身體，從而去講身體自主。除此之外，她們也希望在工作坊中，向男士講解月事知識，例如是月經和經血本身無須因怕尷尬避而不談——透過理解消除誤解，促進性別平等。

「Free有兩層意義，一層就是免費，一層就是解放。」Joyce說，所謂解放，重點是思想的解放。

## Imparting Correct Knowledge on Social Media

How do girls access correct information about menstruation when it is neglected by schools and avoided by families? Zoe and Joyce said that teenagers nowadays are independent. They would search on social media such as YouTube and Instagram for information about periods. “They may also search on Google. But information about periods on Instagram and other social media contains a lot of irrelevant stuff, like pills and diets. It is either cosmetic-centred or very commercial.”

In view of this, besides working on “Free Periods Hong Kong”, Zoe and Joyce also started pages about periods on respective online platforms, as

well as period product online shop “Happeriod” and “MenstruAction”, a social platform for sharing period-related experiences. Zoe and Joyce also hope that by hosting workshops, they can guide women to learn more about their own bodies, understand that having periods is completely normal, and become more confidently in charge of their bodies. Apart from this, they also wish to explain periods to men to correct misunderstanding and promote gender equality. They hope that people will stop avoiding the topic of periods and menstrual blood out of embarrassment. Joyce pointed out, “The word ‘free’ means two things: free of charge and liberation in thinking.”

