

## **What schoolgirls think of the menstrual cup: A comparative study about perceptions of menstruation management in South Africa and the Netherlands**

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Many girls around the world miss school due to insufficient resources during menstruation. Although menstrual cups are cheaper and more environmentally friendly than pads or tampons, they are not widely used. This project investigates the awareness of the menstrual cup and barriers to using it among schoolgirls.

Girls in a South African and a Dutch school were asked to complete a questionnaire before and after receiving information about the menstrual cup. The results showed that Dutch girls are more aware of the menstrual cup and more willing to consider using it than their South African peers. In addition, the effect of providing factual information about the menstrual cup was bigger in the Netherlands. The South African girls proved less susceptible to information and less open to trying a new method of menstruation management.

In conclusion, barriers to using the menstrual cup differ between the countries in this study. Overcoming these barriers requires a differentiated, context-sensitive approach.

The differences in what girls think of the menstrual cup can be traced to differences in the broader culture surrounding menstruation. To further explore this and get more insight into possible recommendations, focus group discussions were held with small groups of Dutch and South African non-users as well as in-depth interviews with experienced users from both countries. The Dutch participants suggested a broad information campaign involving government agencies and medical experts, while South African girls thought information provided in a social and interpersonal setting would be most effective in empowering girls to make informed decisions about menstruation management.