

Exploring Menstrual Disposal and Myths in Mumbai's Slums through Filmmaking

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Abstract : The urbanization of Mumbai has loosened restrictions placed on Indian women while menstruating, like not praying or entering the kitchen, but it has also introduced sanitary issues. On one hand, residents use community toilets that lack water, electricity, doors, or disposal, making menstruation a communal issue. On the other hand, menstrual taboos perpetuate a culture of a dirty and clandestine menstrual experience. This dichotomy makes India the ideal location for public health research given the complexities of purity and pollution concepts in the Hindu tradition. This study asks: What are the attitudes, practices, and sources of knowledge production around menstrual disposal among men and women of different age groups in Dharavi? Using collaborative filmmaking (CF), researchers cocreated films on menstrual disposal with 20-30 women from 3 slum sites: Dharavi, Kandivali, and Kalwa. Results demonstrate 1) fear and availability issues around sustainable product use, 2) the prominence of certain myths and traditions, 3) lack of disposal facilities and clean toilets, and 4) a lack of discussion around periods with males. These factors jeopardize the health and safety for menstruating women.

Keywords : menstruation, sustainability, sanitation, public health, global health

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