



Unilever MENA's Menstrual Leave Policy: A Step Towards Diversity and Inclusion

In a significant move towards supporting women's health, **Unilever introduced a groundbreaking menstrual leave policy in June 2021 across MENA countries, making the organization one of the first in the region to do so.**

This policy not only addresses the needs of women but also highlights the company's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. What sets Unilever apart is that the decision to implement this policy was heavily supported by leadership, including both men and women, showcasing the organization's progressive mindset and collective commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

The business case for the introduction of such a progressive policy lay in a study that found that **90%** of menstruating women experience symptoms such as **premenstrual syndrome, fatigue, bloating, headaches, and abdominal cramps** during their period and **80% of women** choose to suffer silently with menstrual pain, rather than consult with doctors or report at their professional spaces. In such a scenario, the question asked was– how can an organization play a role in the improvement of women's wellbeing? As women around the world continue to mask their symptoms, it becomes crucial to build psychologically safe environments that enable women's wellbeing but also their capacity to take time off when needed.

As an active ally, and advocate for women empowerment, Unilever MENA's menstrual leave policy is designed to provide women employees with a **1-day per month paid leave**. This is in combination with a flexible location working policy. A notable aspect of this menstrual leave policy is the absence of the requirement for leave approval by a woman's line manager. This approach stems from the company's belief in building **trust between employees and their managers, ensuring privacy and understanding.**

This policy sends a powerful message of inclusivity to the wider community, positioning **Unilever as a progressive and socially responsible organization.** By



openly addressing a topic that is often considered taboo, the company is actively contributing to breaking down societal barriers surrounding menstruation.

The psychological and physiological wellbeing of women is vital for any organization, playing a role in retaining but also attracting talent. As His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid stated during the Government Summit in Dubai, **“We in the UAE are keen to enable women and put them in the right positions.”** Positions are not merely jobs, but include the culture, inclusivity, and realities women will face daily. Hence, it is an organization’s obligation to recognize the needs of any demographic and develop inclusive policies accordingly.

Women at Unilever have been extremely appreciative of this policy and below are some of their testimonials:

- “I feel seen, heard, appreciated and very grateful.”
- “This leaves makes me feel supported and understood.”
- “Getting 1 day off during my period makes me feel appreciated.”

Since the implementation of the Menstrual Leave policy in 2021, more organizations within the UAE have adopted such an approach, paving the way for the future of work and taking leadership in ways that motivate others to follow suit.

In conclusion, Unilever MENA's menstrual leave policy is a significant step towards women empowerment in the workplace. As other organizations look to adopt similar policies, **Unilever serves as a shining example regionally of how companies can take pioneering actions to prioritize the wellbeing and needs of their workforce, irrespective of gender.**