



Menstrual Health & Hygiene Management Programme

For Access, Education & Empowerment of Women Inmates

A State-Level Report for
FY 2024-26

Partner's Voice:



**Message From
Dr. Kiran Bedi, IPS (Retd.)**
Founder
IndiaVision Foundation

Project Sshakti reaffirms that dignity, health, and awareness are fundamental rights for all, including women in correctional institutions.

By integrating structured awareness sessions, easy access to menstrual hygiene products, and sustained institutional engagement, the initiative has helped to address a critical gap while fostering more informed, confident, and supportive prison environments.

The outcomes reflected in this report demonstrate not only significant improvements in knowledge and practices but also the value of collaborative partnerships in driving meaningful change.

As we move forward, such efforts must be sustained and institutionalized within prison systems. I commend all partners and prison authorities for their commitment to advancing dignity, equality, and well-being for women inmates.



Message From
Ms. Sarika Minda
Chairperson
Spark Minda Foundation

At Spark Minda Foundation, we believe that true progress is reflected in how inclusively we address the health, dignity, and wellbeing of every individual, especially those in vulnerable and underserved spaces. Over the past two years, through Project Sshakti, we have taken a significant step towards addressing menstrual health and hygiene among women inmates across prisons in Uttar Pradesh.

Implemented in a phased manner across different prison zones, the programme has focused on improving both awareness and access to menstrual hygiene solutions for women inmates. Through the installation of sanitary napkin vending machines, regular availability of sanitary pads, and sustained awareness sessions on menstrual health and wellbeing, we have worked towards creating a more informed, supportive, and dignified environment within prison facilities. Equally encouraging has been the growing openness in conversations around menstruation, helping challenge long-standing myths, taboos, and hesitation associated with the subject.

The successful implementation of this initiative has been made possible through strong collaboration and continued support from prison authorities and other stakeholders who have worked closely with us throughout this journey. Their collective efforts have enabled us to strengthen programme outreach and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women inmates.

Our interactions and programme assessments have reflected a positive shift in awareness and menstrual hygiene practices among inmates, while also contributing to their confidence and wellbeing. As we move forward, we remain committed to advancing menstrual equity and dignity in alignment with SDG 2030 and WASH goals, ensuring that no woman is left behind.



Message From Shri P C Meena

IPS, Director General, Department
of Prison Administration &
Government of Uttar Pradesh

Ensuring the health, hygiene, and dignity of women inmates is a key priority for the Government of Uttar Pradesh, and the Prison Administration has been actively advancing this agenda through focused initiatives and institutional reforms.

Project Shakti represents an important step in this direction, strengthening menstrual health awareness, improving access to essential hygiene infrastructure, and promoting more responsive and inclusive practices across correctional facilities in the state. The outcomes presented in this report reflect the Government's commitment to addressing gender-specific needs within prisons through collaborative and well-coordinated efforts.

Going forward, continued emphasis will be placed on integrating such initiatives into standard prison management systems to ensure sustainability and scale. The Uttar Pradesh Prison Department acknowledges the valuable contributions of all partner organisations in supporting these efforts and remains committed to advancing humane, dignified, and equitable correctional services.



Message From **Mr. Bhomik Shah**

Trustee
BharatCares

Project Sshakti provided an opportunity to engage with an often-overlooked yet deeply important aspect of institutional wellbeing – menstrual health and hygiene within correctional settings. At BharatCares, we recognised from the outset that meaningful change in such spaces would require more than infrastructure alone. It required trust, sensitivity, sustained engagement, and the creation of safe spaces for awareness and dialogue.

Over the past two years, it has been a privilege to work alongside Uttar Pradesh Prison Department, Spark Minda Foundation and India Vision Foundation, towards strengthening awareness, dignity, and access to menstrual health support for women inmates across correctional facilities.

The journey of Project Sshakti has reflected the power of collaborative action—bringing together institutional leadership, community-centred approaches, and responsive implementation to foster more informed, inclusive, and supportive environments.

As we move forward, our commitment remains towards deepening this impact, strengthening institutional engagement, and continuing to support initiatives that place dignity, wellbeing, and informed care at the centre of intervention efforts.

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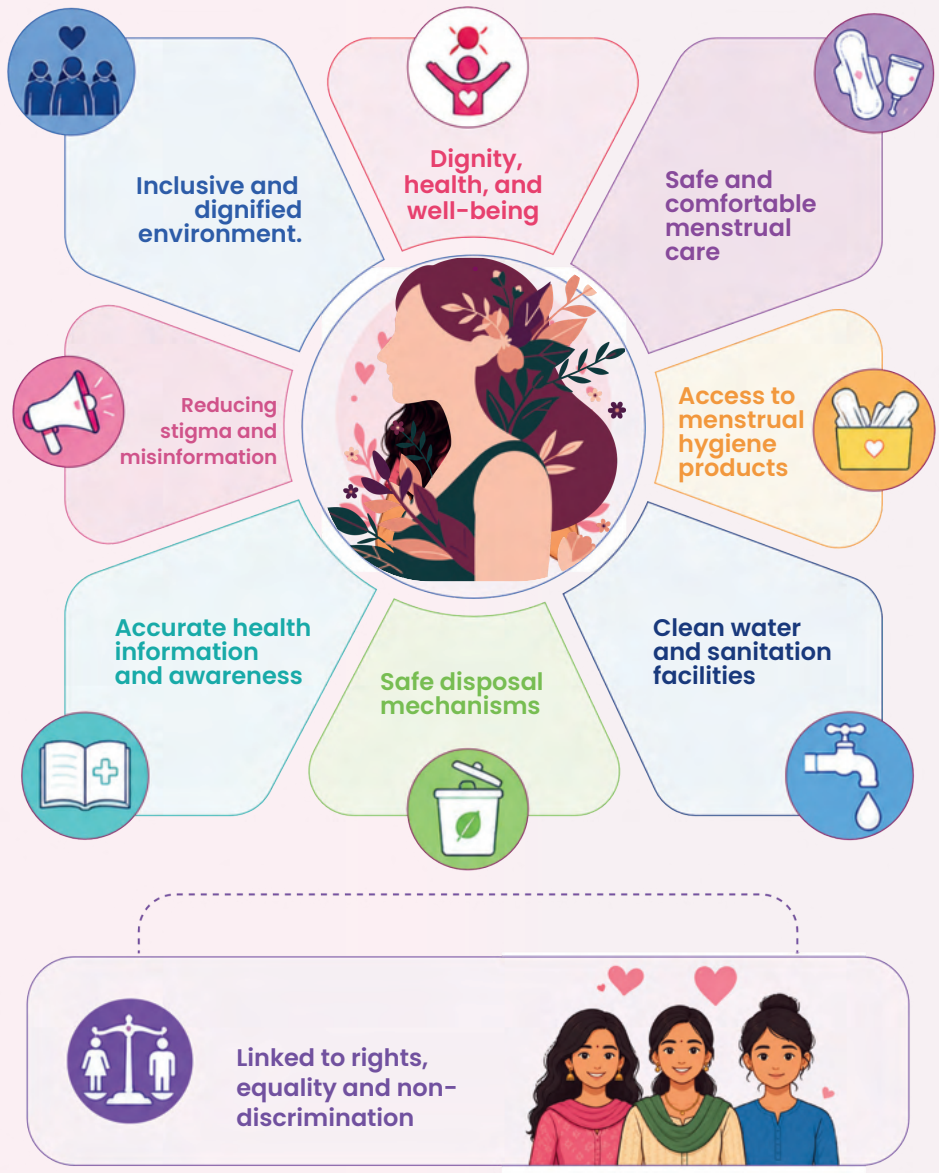
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Context Setting

A subject that had remained overlooked for far too long.

Menstrual health and hygiene are fundamental to a woman's dignity, health, and overall well-being. More than a matter of sanitation, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) reflects a woman's ability to manage menstruation safely, comfortably, and with confidence. It encompasses:





Ensuring these essentials aligns with the constitutional principles of the Right to Life and Dignity under Article 21, as well as the Right to Equality and Non-discrimination under Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution.

Menstrual health is also closely linked to the achievement of *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 5, and 6*, which focus on good health and well-being, gender equality, and access to clean water and sanitation. When menstrual hygiene needs remain unmet, women and girls often face health risks, discomfort, exclusion, and emotional distress.

Within correctional institutions, these needs become even more important. Women inmates in prisons represent a vulnerable group with respect to menstrual health and hygiene, where access to adequate menstrual products, sanitation facilities, awareness, and support systems plays a key role in ensuring safe, hygienic, and dignified menstrual care.

Recognising this need, strengthening menstrual health management within prisons becomes an important step towards building more inclusive, supportive, and dignified institutional environments.

Alignment with SDGs :

03
**GOODHEALTH
AND WELL-BEING**



05
GENDER EQUALITY



06
**CLEANWATER
AND SANITATION**





Why Uttar Pradesh ?

As per the latest National Crime Records Bureau Prison Statistics India 2024 report, Uttar Pradesh (UP) had **3,439 female inmates** in jails as on **31 December 2024**. It was the **highest number of female prisoners among all Indian states**.

These women come from rural and economically weaker backgrounds, where access to menstrual products, sanitation, and accurate health information is already limited. Within correctional settings, these existing challenges often become more pronounced due to limited access to awareness, hygiene resources, and supportive health systems.

Recognising the importance of ensuring dignified menstrual care within institutional settings, the need for focused intervention in Uttar Pradesh emerged around strengthening menstrual health awareness, improving access to hygiene products, and promoting supportive and inclusive prison environments. The intervention was shaped by the following key factors:



Large female prison population in Uttar Pradesh.



Continued stigma and silence around menstruation.



Need for improved hygiene and sanitation infrastructure.



Importance of access to menstrual hygiene products.



Linkage to dignity and overall well-being.



Need for awareness and sensitisation within institutions.

Strengthening menstrual health management is a step towards building more dignified, inclusive, and responsive institutional environments





How We Responded ?









Three organisations. One shared commitment. A programme built around dignity.

Project Sshakti was conceptualised with the understanding that menstrual health management is not only a matter of hygiene, but also closely linked to dignity, health, awareness, and overall wellbeing. Guided by the principles of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution – the Right to Life, Health, and Dignity- the initiative was envisioned as a structured and collaborative effort to strengthen menstrual health management within correctional institutions.

More than an intervention, Project Sshakti represents a collaborative commitment towards creating safer, healthier, and more inclusive environments for women inmates across prisons.

The partnership that made it possible:

Project Sshakti was designed as a collaborative effort – with each partner contributing its unique expertise and strengths:

Organisation	Role & Contribution
	 Lead CSR Partner Programme funder, strategic anchor, and champion of the health & wellbeing pillar
	 Facilitation Partner Inmate and staff engagement, led by Dr. Kiran Bedi, IPS (Retd.)
	 Knowledge Partner Session design, delivery, assessment, and state-level coordination
	 Institutional Co-implementer Facility access, warden coordination, and system support





Our Journey

From a pilot initiative to expanded outreach across correctional facilities in Uttar Pradesh.

The journey of Project Sshakti began in FY 2020–21 with a pilot across four prisons in Haryana. The initiative sought to demonstrate that structured menstrual health education, combined with improved access to menstrual hygiene products, could create meaningful change within correctional settings.

The pilot highlighted the importance of open conversations, awareness, and institutional support. Perception around the need for menstrual education among young girls saw a strong positive shift, increasing from 65% to 94% after the sessions, reflecting greater awareness and recognition of its importance among inmates.

Building on these learnings, the programme gradually expanded through continuous collaboration, trust, and shared commitment among partner organisations and prison authorities.

Today, Project Sshakti has extended its outreach across correctional facilities in Uttar Pradesh, with a continued focus on strengthening awareness, improving access to menstrual hygiene support systems, and promoting more inclusive and dignified institutional environments for women inmates.

The table shows the total prisons reached across various states under Project Sshakti:

Year	Prisons Added	Total Prisons Reached	Context
FY 2020–21	4	4	Pilot in Haryana
FY 2021–22	12	16	Urban expansion in Haryana
FY 2022–23	0 (Consolidation)	16	Deepening impact at existing sites
FY 2023–24	9	25	8 prisons in Uttrakhand & 1 in Delhi
FY 2024–25	23	48	22 prisons in UP and 1 in Uttrakhand
FY 2025–26	26	74	Largest single-year expansion- 8 zones of UP



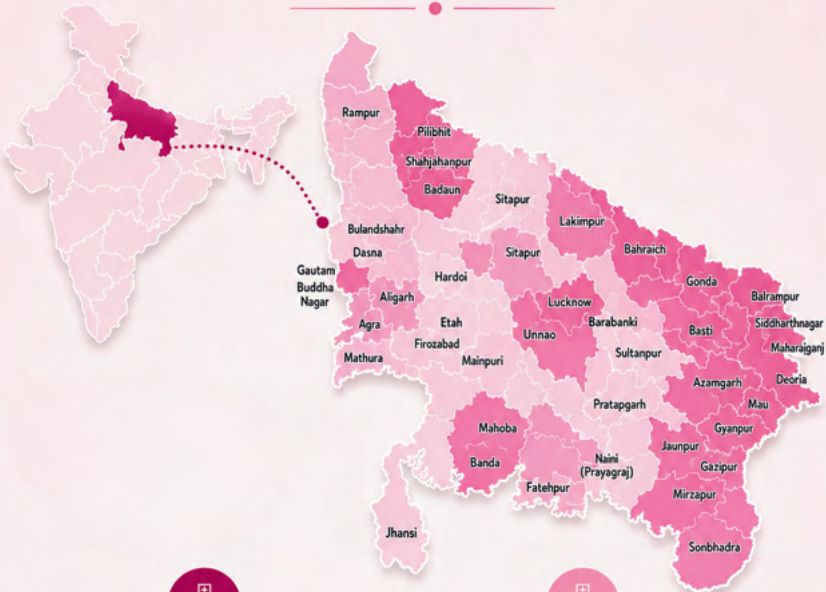


FY 2024-26 represents the most significant expansion in programme history. Forty-eight new prisons were reached across eight zones of **Uttar Pradesh - Gorakhpur, Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Agra, Bareilly, Meerut and Lucknow**. This is not just a number. It is a reflection of what institutional trust, quality implementation, and sustained commitment can achieve.

22 Districts added in FY 2024-25: Lucknow, Nari Bandi Niketan- Lucknow, Dasna, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Varanasi, Gyanpur, Jaunpur, Gazipur, Mirzapur, Basti, Lakimpur, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Mau, Azamgarh, Sonbhadra, Maharajganj, Sitapur, Hardoi, Unnao, Raibareilly, Siddharthnagar.

26 District added in FY 2025-26: Rampur, Mathura, Jhansi, Barabanki, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Badaun, Sitapur, Lakimpur, Bahraich, Gonda, Balrampur, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, Agra, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Unnao, Barabanki, Basti, Siddharthnagar, Maharajganj, Mathura, Pratapgarh, Azamgarh, Mau, Deoria, Mahoba, Banda, Sultanpur, Balrampur, Bahraich, Pratapgarh, Naini(Prayagraj), Kaushambi, Fatehpur, Ayodhya, Gonda.

Uttar Pradesh



22 Districts added in FY 2024-25

- Lucknow
- Nari Bandi Niketan-Lucknow
- Dasna
- Gautam Buddha Nagar
- Varanasi
- Gyanpur
- Jaunpur
- Gazipur
- Mirzapur
- Basti
- Lakimpur
- Gorakhpur
- Deoria
- Mau
- Azamgarh
- Sonbhadra
- Maharajganj
- Sitapur
- Hardoi
- Unnao
- Raibareilly
- Siddharthnagar



26 Districts added in FY 2025-26

- Rampur
- Mathura
- Jhansi
- Barabanki
- Pilibhit
- Shahjahanpur
- Badaun
- Bareilly
- Bulandshahr
- Aligarh
- Agra
- Firozabad
- Mainpuri
- Etah
- Kashganj
- Mahoba
- Banda
- Sultanpur
- Balrampur
- Bahraich
- Pratapgarh
- Naini (Prayagraj)
- Kaushambi
- Fatehpur
- Ayodhya
- Gonda





Two Years at a Glance :

Parameter	FY 2024-25 (Year 1)	FY 2025-26 (Year 2)	Total
New Prisons Added	22	26	48
Female Inmates Reached	1131	1180	2311
Prison Staff Reached	67	93	160
Vending Machines Installed	22	26	48
Awareness Sessions	22	26	48
Hours of Learning	3960	4680	8640
New Sanitary Napkins Users	876	274	1150

This scale reflects the institutional trust earned through two years of consistent, quality implementation.

The Approach



Infrastructure Support

- Installation of sanitary napkin vending machines
- Improved access to menstrual hygiene products
- Private, safe, and dignified product access



Awareness & Education

- Sessions in Hindi and local dialects.
- Illustrated Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and learning materials.
- Interactive awareness and sensitisation sessions
- Illustrated visual handbooks for continued learning beyond the sessions



Institutional Engagement

- Sensitisation of female wardens and staff.
- Strengthening supportive institutional environments.
- Promoting dignity, awareness, and wellbeing within correctional facilities.





Badaun District Prison 2025-26



Ayodhya district Prison 2025-26



Jhansi District Prison 2025-26



Bulandshahr District Prison 2025-26





Inside Every Session

180 minutes. Nine modules. Designed to move people - not just to inform them.

Each session was built on a simple yet powerful belief: women are not just recipients of information, they are active participants with their own experiences, questions, and voices. The aim was to create a safe and respectful space where women could speak openly, learn confidently, and challenge long-held myths around menstruation.



Menstrual Cramp Simulation Exercise



Body Literacy Exercise

Every session began with trust-building activities and an anonymous pre-assessment, allowing women to share their understanding honestly and without fear. The discussions then covered menstrual health, anatomy, nutrition awareness, hygiene practices, pain management, menstrual products, and the use of vending machines, followed by open conversations and a post-assessment. While the structure remained consistent across all facilities, each session became a unique space of learning, dialogue, and empowerment.





1	Ice-Breaking & Pre-Assessment	Trust-building; baseline knowledge questionnaire
2	Myths, Taboos & Practices	Dismantling misconceptions around impurity, food, activity, prayer
3	Body Literacy & Anatomy	Reproductive anatomy in accessible, non-clinical language
4	The Science of Menstruation	Menstrual cycle, hormonal changes, normal variation
5	PMS & Pain Management	Understanding PMS; yoga asanas for relief; when to seek care
6	Menstrual Products	Sanitary napkins, cloth alternatives, proper use and disposal
7	Menopause & Later Life	Age-appropriate education; reducing fear and stigma
8	Vending Machine Training	Hands-on operation and maintenance for inmates and staff
9	Wrap-Up, Q&A & Post-Assessment	Open dialogue; post-questionnaire; handbook distribution

Every participant received an illustrated handbook in their local language to support continued learning and awareness beyond the sessions. Designed as an integral part of the programme, these handbooks ensured that key information remained accessible even after the sessions concluded, covering topics such as menstrual hygiene practices, body anatomy, yoga postures for pain relief, menstrual products, and self-care.





The Change We Measured and Documented

Assessing shifts in awareness, knowledge, and menstrual health practices

Pre- and post-session assessments were conducted across all sessions to understand changes in awareness, perceptions, and menstrual health knowledge among participants. The findings reflected significant improvement across multiple indicators related to menstrual hygiene, self-care practices, myths, and awareness.

The assessment findings indicate that structured, participatory, and culturally contextualised awareness sessions can contribute meaningfully towards improving menstrual health understanding and informed practices within correctional settings.

1	Menstrual blood is impure or dirty (believed)	72%	5%	67% reduction in menstrual myths and misconceptions
2	Exercise is safe during menstruation	37%	89%	52% increase in awareness on safe self-care practices
3	Know pain-relief yoga exercises	23%	88%	65% improvement in awareness of pain management techniques
4	Hair washing is safe during periods	40%	89%	49% increase in understanding of menstrual hygiene practices
5	Use of light-coloured cloth for flow tracking	33%	87%	54% improvement in awareness of menstrual monitoring practices
6	Need of menstrual education among young girls	65%	94%	29% increase in acceptance of menstrual health education
7	Knowledge of Correct disposal of sanitary pads	69%	94%	25% improvement in awareness on safe disposal practices
8	Period pain is normal, not a disease	60%	90%	30% increase in understanding of menstrual wellbeing





What stands out in this data is not just the scale of change, but the nature of it. The myth that menstrual blood is impure – one of the most deeply held and most damaging beliefs, moved from 72% to just 5%. The knowledge of pain-relief exercises went from 23% to 88% in a single session. These are not incremental shifts. They are moments of transformation.

For many women, the sessions marked an important step towards greater awareness, confidence, and understanding of their own health.

The numbers also reveal something about what was missing before. Seven out of ten women did not know the correct way to dispose of a sanitary pad. More than half had been told not to wash their hair during their period. Only one in three knew that exercise could relieve menstrual pain. These are not remote or unusual beliefs, they are the baseline for millions of women, including those living inside UP's prisons.





The Numbers That Define a Movement

Two years. Eight zones. Forty-eight facilities in UP. These are the numbers -and what they represent.

Two-Year Consolidated Impact



The project successfully covered a total of 44 prisons across multiple geographies between FY 2020-21 and FY 2025-26, including

- **16 prisons in Haryana,**
- **9 prisons in Uttarakhand,**
- **1 prison in Delhi, and**
- **48 prison in Uttar Pradesh.**

This shift is not small- Its dignity made operational





The Legal & Policy Grounding

This programme does not exist in a vacuum. It is rooted in law, policy, and international standards.

The Model Prison Manual 2016, issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, includes specific provisions for healthcare and hygiene for women inmates. The Right to Equality under Articles 14 and 15 further reinforces that failing to address gender-specific needs in institutional settings constitutes indirect discrimination. Project Sshakti operationalises these legal mandates –translating constitutional guarantees into practice.

Alignment with National Policies and Institutional Framework :





The Road Ahead

Towards stronger institutional support for menstrual health and dignity.

The expansion to 48 prisons across Uttar Pradesh has demonstrated what is possible. But the prisons covered represent only a portion of India's correctional landscape, and the depth of change within each facility still varies. The next phase of Project Sshakti is focused on going further – in geographic reach, in institutional depth, and in the sustainability of what has been built.

Strategic Priorities for the Next Phase

01		Expanding Project Sshakti to remote and under-resourced prisons across Uttar Pradesh.	
02		Strengthening menstrual health awareness through regular sessions, demonstrations, and continued engagement.	
03		Ensuring sustained access to sanitary napkins through vending machines and prison-led distribution systems.	
04		Integrating Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) into prison health and rehabilitation frameworks.	
05		Creating self-sustaining peer educator networks through trained inmates and prison staff.	
06		Promoting a sustainable, rights-based approach to menstrual health within prisons.	
07		Embedding menstrual dignity within women's health, rehabilitation, well-being, and gender equality efforts.	

The goal is not to run Project Sshakti indefinitely as an external intervention. The goal is to make menstrual health management a permanent, funded, institutionalised part of how UP's correctional system cares for the women in its custody and then to replicate that model in every state where it is needed.

The true success of this programme lies not only in the sessions conducted, but in building systems, awareness, and institutional ownership that continue to support women's dignity and wellbeing for years to come.





A Movement, Not a Project

Beyond Numbers: A Journey Towards Dignity and Awareness

Project Sshakti has, in two years, reached 3461 women inmates across 48 correctional facilities. It has delivered 48 awareness sessions totalling over 8640 hours of learning. It has installed 48 vending machines, making sanitary products available to women who previously had no reliable access and it has produced consistent, dramatic improvements across every indicator of menstrual health knowledge and behaviour. But the numbers as significant as they are, are not the story. The story is in the individual moments that the numbers represent.

It is the woman in Fatehpur who had spent her entire life uncertain whether her own blood was clean or dirty – and who left a session knowing the answer. The woman in Pratapgarh who had given birth but had never been taught the names of her reproductive organs. The group in Mahoba who laughed, for the first time, talking about something they had been taught their whole lives to be ashamed of.

These moments are not side effects of the programme. They are the point.

Every session held, every napkin distributed, every myth challenged or engagement with prison staff – contributed towards building more informed, supportive, and inclusive institutional environments for women inmates.

The progress achieved over the last few years reflects the collective efforts of partner organisations, prison authorities, institutional leadership, and field teams who worked together towards a shared vision of strengthening menstrual health management within correctional facilities.

While the journey ahead continues, the initiative has laid an important foundation for continued awareness, institutional engagement, and sustainable support systems for women inmates across correctional institutions.





Inside the Journey



Agra



Pilibhit



Bulandshahr



Kasganj



Naini





Balrampur



Sultanpur



Ayodhya



Badaun



Pilibhit





Agra



Shahjahanpur



Bulandshahr



Bareilly



Ayodhya





Submitted By



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