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Have you ever spent weeks without taking a shower? Without access to a bit of soap to wash your hands or to toilet paper to clean yourself?

Access to hygiene products and services are very often taken for granted as a basic commodity, but for many people on the move, hygiene makes a huge difference to their health and mental wellbeing.

In Ceuta, most teenagers living on the streets do not have access to this right. Sometimes, for fear of the authorities, they refuse to enter the centres for minors, where they could have access to showers. Also, the city does not offer any service of public showers nor any other kind of hygiene facilities either. This means that many teenagers sometimes endure long periods of time without cleaning themselves, a condition that leads to infections and skin diseases.

Moreover, lack of hygiene has other consequences that cannot be seen, but which we keep to ourselves. Feeling oneself dirty deeply influences one's self-esteem and thus, one's mental health. Most boys in Ceuta actually feel so stigmatised that they even fear exposing themselves by going to fetch water at the beach.

And these are just some of the hurdles that result from not considering hygiene a basic and essential right – and they increase greatly for women.

To the above complications, women must add all those related to menstrual hygiene, which are rarely mentioned. Period poverty is common to most women on the move. Despite having complained to the Ombudsman about this problem, these people are still waiting for something that simple which, however, may never arrive.

