

# The Status of Standards for Menstrual Products in West and Central Africa (WCA)

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## AT A GLANCE / KEY FACTS

Globally, many countries have standards for disposable pads and several countries have standards for other menstrual products. Global standards are being developed through ISO. Menstrual product standards are still rare in WCA.

In WCA, menstrual health (MH) is starting to gain attention. The additional of MH to policy documents and the establishment of MH Technical Working Groups can help build the enabling environment for advocacy on standards. The review mapped where these existed in the region.



How does this contribute to the MnH Workstream's focus areas of markets, standards, and menstrual health/SRHR integration?

The primary reason for standards is to ensure that consumers have access to safe, quality products. When standards are compulsory and enforced, consumers can assume that all products sold on market meet the minimal benchmarks of the standard.

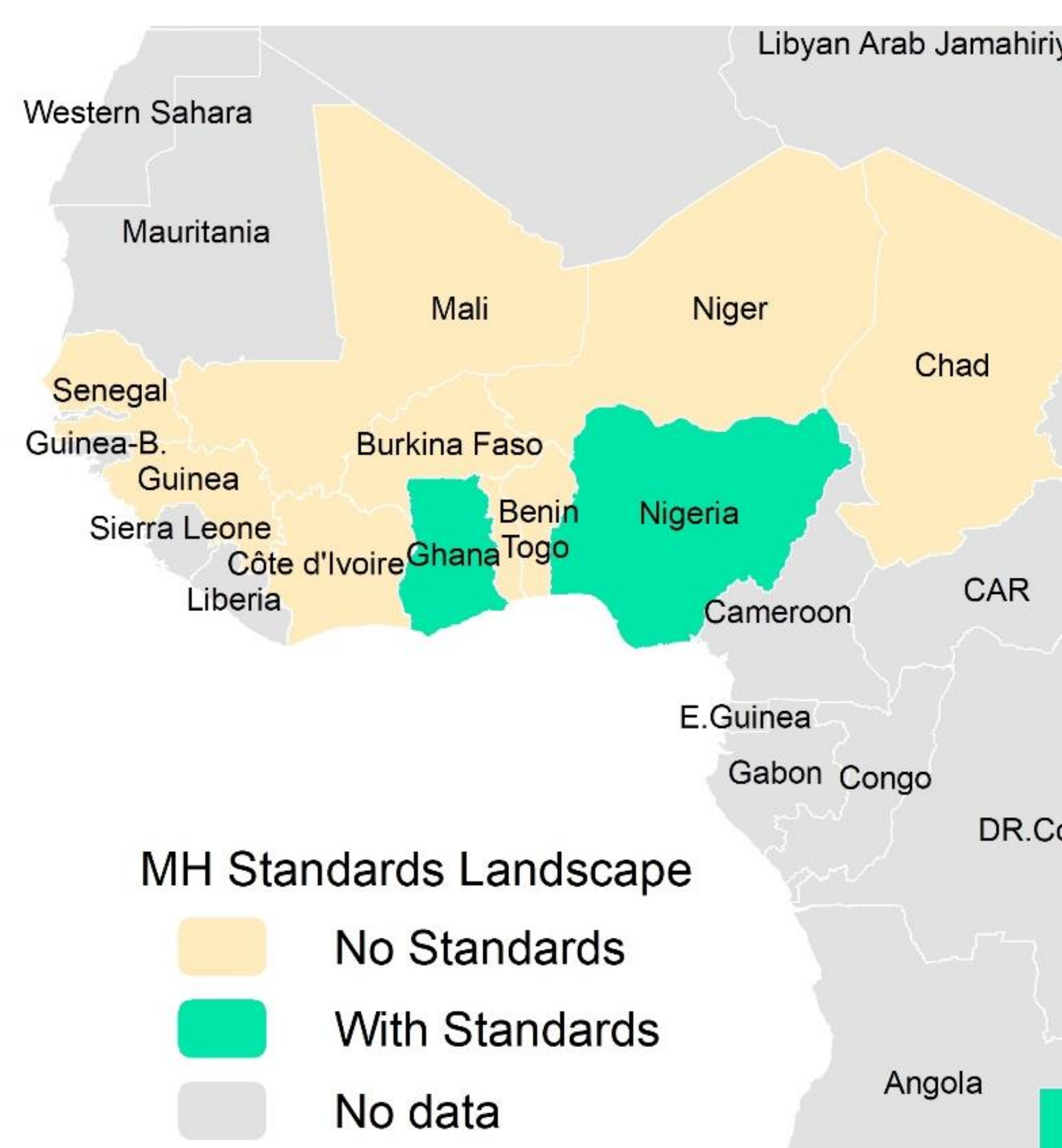
Standards facilitate the introduction of new products and brands, expanding competition. Without standards, suppliers struggle to import products into new markets.

## INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- A standard is a set of benchmarks which products need to meet to be considered of acceptable quality.
- **Context:** In West and Central Africa, UNFPA, UNICEF and their partners seek to create enabling environments where girls and women can make informed choices among quality, affordable menstrual products.
- **Purpose:** To understand the regulation (or lack thereof) of menstrual products across WCA and to formulate recommendations for the widespread development, adoption, and compliance with quality standards for menstrual products.
- **Methodology:** Key informants interviews and literature reviews were conducted at the global and then country-specific level in 11 countries. A draft report with recommendations was reviewed during a validation meeting in March 2023.



## Landscape of Quality Standards for Menstrual Products



- Ghana: GS 1248, 2019 Disposable pad
- Nigeria: NIS 291, 2018 Disposable pad
- In both countries, there is established interest in additional standards.
- But awareness of the standards is low and compliance is limited.

- In the 9 francophone countries, there are not yet menstrual product standards. There is also no ongoing, organized advocacy from the MH community for standard.
- Awareness of standards is low.
- There are other MH efforts underway, and National Standards Bodies in all 9 countries.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

### NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS / COUNTRY-LEVEL ACTORS

- Implement the national advocacy framework for standards.
- Join ISO Technical Committee developing global standards for menstrual products.
- Support local MH movements (coalitions, TWGs) and advocate for MH inclusion in policy.

### REGIONAL-LEVEL ACTORS

- Translate existing resources on MH standards and market development into French.
- Develop a toolkit to support menstrual product standards advocacy.
- Create a regional MH coalition.

For full report in English & French, see:

<https://ffmuskoka.org/rapports-thematiques/>

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