

SET HER FREE SANITARY PAD PROGRAM – MARCH 2014

REUSABLE SANITARY PAD MAKING BY SET HER FREE FOR THE PROMOTION OF GIRLS' ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION IN SCHOOL

Set Her Free (SHF) is a non-profit organization that is working to restore the lives of young girls formerly enslaved by the sex trades, the vilest form of child labor. We currently have two homes situated within slum divisions of Kampala, Uganda. These serve as temporary residences that provide not only food and shelter, but also formal education, vocational training, counseling, medical cares, mentoring, and resettlement opportunities. Above all, we give them the love they have been denied.

Menstruation and a girl's education in Uganda

Education is a vital tool for empowering individuals and more so girls. Studies have shown that an educated woman is able to get gainful employment, to take her children for immunization, to practice family planning (delayed child bearing and fewer children), spends over 40% of her income on her family's welfare as compared to the male counterpart who spends far less on his family. Cultural and traditional barriers still play a prominent role in hindering the access of several girls to education. Women are considered secondary citizens as compared to males in conservative and patriarchal societies. Boys are given higher preference when it comes to education. Very little attention has been paid to critical infrastructure like latrines, water facilities that are vital for the retention of girls in school, especially those that have reached puberty. Due to the lack of water and sanitation facilities in schools, studies show that a girl will miss an average of 45 days per year due to her menstrual cycle. Absenteeism leads to poor academic performance, which eventually leads to the drop rate of a sizeable number of girls from schools.

Interventions aimed at providing free and accessible reusable sanitary pads will go a long way in reversing the negative trend of girls' education, especially in the rural areas.

Menstruation Hygiene & Management (MHM)

Menstruation is a normal, natural process that occurs in all healthy adolescent and adult women who haven't reached menopause. Girls begin to menstruate normally between eight and twelve years. In the life time of a woman, she has to manage 3,000 days of menstruation. For an average schoolgirl ranging from grade 4 to 10,

this is on average a total of 450 days. Across the developing world, the lack of adequate sanitation facilities prevents girls from attending school when they are menstruating. There is evidence to show that girls' attendance in school increases once hygiene and water sanitation facilities become available.

Young women need to change their sanitary napkins three or four times daily during the first 3 days of menstruation. The vast majority of women and girls in East Africa use rags, usually torn from old T-shirts, leaves, mud, animal skin, toilet paper, bark cloth instead of sanitary napkins. Rags are washed and reused several times. There is no private place to change and clean the rags and often no safe water and soap to wash them properly. A culture of shame and embarrassment forces them to seek for well hidden places even in their homes to dry the rags. These places are often damp, dark and unhealthy. This practice is responsible for a significant proportion of illness and infection associated with female reproductive health. Rags that are unclean cause urinary and vaginal infection. Very often serious infections are left untreated. This is a common incident in most slum and rural areas.

MHM remains a daunting challenge in the life of many adolescents and women alike. In Uganda, just like in many African countries, menstruation is a very private matter that is rarely talked about in public. The muteness about the issue of menstruation coupled with the disadvantaged socioeconomic position of girls and women in Africa in general and Uganda in particular perpetuates further inaccessibility to the much-needed sanitary pad.

The advent of commercial sanitary towels has not generally saved the situation considering that the associated price of the towels is not affordable. SHF has surveyed and found that the prices of a pack of sanitary towels for different companies varies as follows; Always (pack of 8) costs UGX5, 000 (\$2.10), Secrets and Bliss (pack of 8) both cost UGX3, 000 (\$1.30). These costs are more than \$1.00, which is above the daily income of many households. It therefore becomes difficult for an individual household to appropriate for sanitary towels over other needs considered to be more essential.

Realizing that the problems of MHM are countering the efforts of government and other stakeholders to promote universal education for girls, SHF is proposing to intervene by initiating a reusable sanitary pad project. The proposed project aims to increase accessibility to sanitary towels for girls in schools, especially those in rural Uganda, as the divide between rural and urban schools is huge in terms of income and gender disparity. The provision of free sanitary towels to girls in poverty-stricken areas will enhance the enrollment and retention of girls in school thus having a long-term impact on an individual girl and her community development.

The Project

The proposed project seeks to address the perpetual challenge of MHM through the making and distribution of reusable sanitary pads to underprivileged girls in

schools. SHF, in collaboration with GlobeMed, will professionally train and employ the vocational girls in the making of such pads. Phase 1 of the project is projected over 1 year with the estimated cost of \$16,473. GlobeMed will fundraise to provide the needed funds for the project. The project considers schools as organized outlets for distribution of the sanitary towels to the girls. The total number of girls to benefit from the proposed project is 1200 over a 1-year period. The program will be piloted in the rural districts of Nakaseke and Rakaio, Uganda.

The proposed budget will be used to purchase materials, pay for skilled tutors and distribution expenses. Virtual sales will be promoted through crowd funding and the SHF website for individuals to pay for a Reusable Sanitary Pad Kit and proceeds will then be used for increased production and distribution.

PROPOSED BUDGET

Item	Quantity	Unit of measure	Unit cost (UGX)	Total cost (UGX)	Unit Cost (USD)	Total Cost (USD)
Fabric	700	Meter	10,000	7,000,000	4	3,043
liner	700	Meter	10,000	7,000,000	4	2,800
threads	50	Rolls	3,000	150,000	1.3	65
binding	200	Meters	2,300	460,000	1	200
Machines (sewing)	10	Pieces	700,000	7,000,000	304	3,040
machine (Press buttons)	2	Pieces	150,000	300,000	65	130
Buttons	50	Pieces	2,300	115,000	50	2,500
Transport (car leasing for distribution)	36	Times	300,000	10,800,000	130	4,694
Total				32,825,000		16,473

