



Myna Mahila Foundation provides women in Mumbai's urban slums with access to low cost sanitary pads at their doorstep. Our pads are manufactured and distributed by women from these communities, creating employment opportunities and building a trusted network.

Menstruation challenges in India

Periods are a taboo topic in India. Like our namesake the chatty "Myna" bird, we want women to feel empowered to talk about periods, a normal part of life, and not to be ashamed of their bodies. In a survey we conducted in the Govandi slums in Mumbai, we found that 47% of women did not feel comfortable at all talking about their menstrual cycle. With only 58% of women in India using hygienic methods of menstrual hygiene management, there is an urgency to increase awareness and access to more hygienic products.

Women face stigma and shame buying pads from male-run medical stores and the cost is often prohibitive. Without access to pads, they rely on unhygienic cloth rags. These are improperly cleaned, can cause infections, uncomfortable irritation and social exclusion. Our Myna women work door-to-door educating women about menstrual hygiene, breaking silence on the topic and ensuring that every woman in the community has access to accurate information and affordable pads. For more vulnerable households, we provide a menstrual hygiene kit and counsel the girls so they understand the importance of investing in their own health.

Creating Employment and networks

We provide women in urban slums with access to a trusted community and stable employment close to their homes. We empower our staff through trainings in women's health, English, Math, and life skills such as self-defense. The 15 women working at our production facility have already made more than 500,000 sanitary pads. Through door-to-door sales from our network of entrepreneurial businesswomen in 12 slums across the city, we reach an average of 10,000 women per month.

Our vision

We want every woman and girl living in Mumbai's slums to have access to sanitary pads and feel empowered about menstrual hygiene. To achieve this goal we need to expand our production and sales capabilities, providing employment and a safe women's' network to more women from slum communities across the city.

Project

Empowering women in Mumbai slums with jobs and hygiene

This project is aimed at improving the livelihoods of many more women in urban slums by increasing access to employment opportunities in their home communities. Ultimately, we hope that women are able to find a safe space to work at Myna, where they can share a part of their lives, be a part of a powerful network of women, generate employment and improve health affordably.

We are raising \$200,000 for the following purposes:

	No.	Amount (\$)
Increase access to women at the doorstep per month (if spread over 2 years)	125,000 per month	150,000
Distribution team costs (spread over 2 years)	20 per month	50,000

Our distribution team comprises of one team leader and five distribution ladies who go door-to-door with educational materials and hygiene products. Each distribution woman can cover up to 100 houses a day for 5 days a week (i.e. ~2,000 houses a month). In each house, there are on average 2 women, hence she is able to reach about 4,000 women a month.

Over time, we have also realized that women do not have access to job opportunities outside of home due to their commitments at home, i.e. taking care of their children. As we raise funds to empower more women, it would help to create a safe space, such as a day care center, where the children can be taken care of in the day while the mother is working (inside or outside the slum community).

Some of the other activities we do are:

Myna Series: We educate women in English, life skills, mathematics, computer and health and financial literacy. We hold workshops, courses and lectures with the women twice a week. We also train some women in business skills to be able to operate the sanitary pad micro franchisee themselves.

Myna Research: We conduct extensive surveys about menstrual hygiene awareness and generally women's health from house-to-house to understand the extent of the problem and the reasons for existing stigma and disposal constraints.

Myna Shop: We collect in-kind donations through our networks in Mumbai and invite people from the slum community to come and pick what they want from books and toys to clothes. The Myna Shop aims at redistributing to people in need but also to give more visibility to Myna, our products and breaking taboos around menstrual hygiene.

Thank you for all your support and interest in Myna Mahila Foundation!