

# KEEPING NIGERIAN GIRLS IN SCHOOL

*A partnership between the Hope and Dreams Initiative & Be Girl, Inc.*

## **Background:**

When girls reach puberty and get their periods, school can be a challenging – even unfriendly – place to learn. Too often, girls miss school or have trouble concentrating during their period because they lack access to affordable, quality period-protection products and/or their school lack safe, private hygiene facilities. Join us to adopt a school on the outskirts of Abuja, Nigeria, and transform it into a safe place for girls to stay in school and thrive. With your help, we will construct toilets, washing stations, and a school library including education material with a spotlight on health and hygiene. We will also partner with the social enterprise Be Girl to provide beautiful and durable PeriodPanties™ for every girl in school to ensure she has access to high-quality, sustainable period protection throughout secondary school without worrying about buying sanitary pads every month to go to class.

## **Overview of Hope and Dreams Initiative:**

The mission of the Hope and Dreams Initiative is to educate, empower, and enable each student to acquire the knowledge, skills, and core values necessary to achieve personal success and to enrich their community – by becoming caring and contributing citizens. Working with local partners, communities, and key stakeholders, we aim to further improve the environment of students in Nigeria through collaboration and necessary resources on all levels. Our vision is to provide all students with a safe environment to learn and explore the world.

"The desire to launch the **Hope and Dreams Initiative** started while visiting Nigeria," explains Nguzo Ogbudo, President and Founder of the organization. "My then six-year-old daughter, an avid reader, requested that I take her to a children's library, as it is tradition in my household to go to the library every Saturday.

"When I told her that it wasn't possible, there is no children's library around, she said, '*Mummy why don't you gather your friends together and raise money and build one for the children of this community and I will invite Michelle Obama to come.*' At that moment, I was moved by my child's idea and dreams to do something.

"We as parents know the importance of providing meaningful learning opportunities to children from a young age."

Thus, the **Hope and Dreams Initiative** was founded in 2011 with an initial commitment to change the poor reading culture in under-served communities in Nigeria and Africa as a whole – with a particular focus on girls, who are so often left behind.

### Challenge:

The kidnapping of 276 school girls by Boko Haram in 2014 brought global attention to issues related to girls' education in Nigeria. But long before this act, girls across the country faced often insurmountable challenges to go to school. Even those who are able to go to school often have little access to supplies, books, or even toilets while they are in school.

When girls enter puberty, they face a new wave of challenges. In many cases, parents face a tough choice between other necessities and buying sanitary pads for their adolescent girls. Girls then have their own tough choice to make – whether to stay home from school when they get their period or use rags (or other improvised methods) and risk stains in front their classmates, not to mention potential health problems from using unhygienic materials. Some look for “boyfriends” to buy sanitary pads for them.

It's not enough just to make school available to girls. In order for girls to be able to attend school safely and concentrate on their studies throughout the month, they must have reliable period protection, a safe place to use the toilet and wash up, and quality education and information about health and hygiene.

### Project Description:

Our goal is to adopt a school on the outskirts of Abuja, Nigeria, and transform it into a welcoming and supportive space for girls through four core objectives:

1. **Improve school water and sanitation infrastructure:** Many schools offer little or no access to toilets, washing stations, or education on health and hygiene. When we adopt a school, we construct separate toilet blocks for girls and boys and build washing stations to encourage hygienic practices.
2. **Promote reading opportunities and positive hygiene practices:** Within the school, we create a library/reading room equipped with educational materials about handwashing, menstrual hygiene, and other sanitation and hygiene practices.
3. **Provide sustainable solutions for menstrual hygiene management:** Disposable sanitary pads are not a sustainable solution to help girls manage their periods. They are expensive, only provide a short-term solution, and waste-disposal systems are not equipped to handle the waste. Moreover, many girls who struggle to afford sanitary products also struggle to afford underwear. To address this problem fully, we partner with the social enterprise Be Girl to give each girl two of their high-quality PeriodPanties™ (two-in-one underwear and reusable pad). Each PeriodPanty™ lasts for at least two years, so girls are covered for the duration of secondary school without worrying about buying sanitary pads every month. The products are designed for more than function; they come in a colorful, beautiful design that helps to shift the way that girls have been taught to think about menstruation, no longer thinking about it as something dirty or shameful. The PeriodPanties™ are accompanied by menstrual hygiene education and the intuitive SmartCycle™ period education and tracking tool.

4. **Improve girls' life skills and self-esteem:** Helping girls succeed in school goes beyond addressing physical needs. A key part of our school adoption program involves providing basic life skills and support for girls' psychosocial well-being. We hold a festival that provides practical education about girls' personal health along with games and activities to celebrate girls simply for being girls. We bring experts to deliver workshops on health and life skills, and we offer a host of games and activities designed specifically with girls' empowerment in mind.

### **Long-Term Impact**

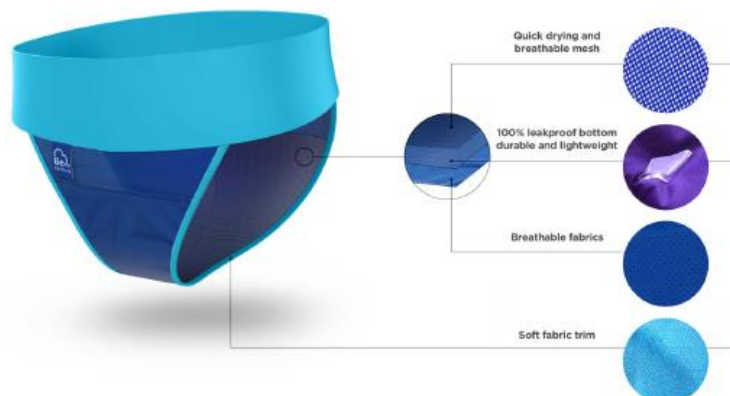
The benefit of a secondary-school education sticks with a girl throughout her entire life. A girl with a secondary-school education is more likely to access safe and stable livelihood opportunities, give birth to healthier children, and have higher self-esteem throughout life. We have seen over and over again that when a girl thrives, her entire family and community thrive as well.

Your support makes it possible to give these opportunities to an entire school of girls in Abuja, Nigeria. The project will improve the educational experience for girls at the school – thereby boosting learning and increasing the likelihood each will graduate. Each girl adopted by the program will have her physical needs met while she is at school, but, just as importantly, she will learn that being a girl is not something to be ashamed of.

### **Partnership with Be Girl:**

Disposable sanitary pads are not a sustainable solution to help girls manage their periods. They are expensive, only provide a short-term solution, and waste-disposal systems are not equipped to handle the waste. Moreover, many girls who struggle to afford sanitary products also struggle to afford underwear.

To address this problem fully, we partner with the social enterprise Be Girl – which creates high-quality, durable period products for girls around the world. Piloted and tested throughout sub-Saharan Africa, each of Be Girl's PeriodPanties™ provide a girl with two or more years of leak-proof protection. The products are designed for more than function; they come in bright colors and a beautiful design that help to shift the way that girls have been taught to think about menstruation, as something dirty or even shameful. We provide a girl with two Be Girl PeriodPanties™ each, so she has access to period protection on her terms for the full duration of her secondary-school years.



Be Girl's PeriodPanties™ are made from breathable, stain-resistant sports fabric that is easy to wash and quick to dry. They contain a pocket that holds an absorbent, microfiber towel to provide leak-proof period protection for the whole school day.

The PeriodPanties™ are accompanied by menstrual hygiene management education, and each girl is given an intuitive SmartCycle™ period education and tracking tool.

There has been growing attention of the need for programming that addresses menstrual hygiene. However, most solutions to date focus on taking disposable products that were designed for very different contexts and applying them to low-income and/or rural environments. By partnering with Be Girl, we provide a period-protection solution that is high-quality, long-lasting, and designed specifically for girls who can't afford to continually buy products month after month and may face limited access to water or waste management systems.

#### Program Budget:

Component	Unit cost	Units	Total
PeriodPanties (landed Abuja)	\$ 10.00	2500	\$ 25,000.00
SmartCycles (landed Abuja)	\$ 4.00	1250	\$ 5,000.00
Toilet block	\$ 5,000.00	1	\$ 5,000.00
Washing station	\$ 1,000.00	1	\$ 1,000.00
Library with WASH corner	\$ 3,000.00	1	\$ 3,000.00
Water purifiers and soap	\$ 500.00	1	\$ 500.00
Hope and Dreams Girls Festival	\$ 4,000.00	1	\$ 4,000.00
<b>PROJECT TOTAL</b>	-	-	\$ 43,500.00