



Empowering Girls Pads for Schoolgirls Project



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Background

Millions of girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are disempowered by the simple biological process of menstruation. Affordable and hygienic sanitary protection is not available to girls in many areas. They resort to the use of unhygienic rags and cloths which puts them at the risk of infections.

UNICEF estimates that 1 in 10 menstruating African girls skip school four to five days per month or drop out completely. A girl absent from school due to menstruation for four days of every 28 day cycle loses 13 learning days, the equivalent to two weeks of learning, every school term.

Studies show that every year of schooling increasing a girl’s future earning power by 10 to 20 percent. In addition, each additional year a girl is in school can reduce the risk of HIV infection and delay a girl’s first pregnancy.

Educated girls are more likely to become empowered women; they are more likely to take control of their lives, have economic security, and raise fewer and healthier children who will in turn be more likely to be educated themselves.

Uganda

The median age in Uganda is 15 years old. Approximately eighty five percent, 85%, of Ugandans live in rural poverty; earning an average of \$300 a year.

The education of these children is critical for Uganda’s economic development. Educating girls is widely regarded as one of the best ways to improve the economy and health of developing countries.

Girls, however, consistently fare less well academically than boys. Academic performance is closely correlated with school attendance, and absenteeism, and dropout rates are high for rural Ugandan girls. Studies have shown that these high rates are often linked to their reproductive biology.

In 2004, a survey of menstruating girls in Uganda found that “the biggest numbers of school dropouts are girls because of inconveniences during their menstrual periods.”

The government of Uganda provides “free” primary education for all children up through Primary 7, or P-7. However, statistics show that fewer than 38% of girls entering Primary 1 in 2009 will complete their primary education. Children enter P-1 at age 6.

Proposed Solution

Reusable sanitary pads. Reusable sanitary pads are a sustainable and easily renewable resource, allowing the girls to wash and reuse them rather than having to buy disposable pads every month. In addition, they are comparatively inexpensive and environmentally friendly. The social benefit

of the implementation of this concept can greatly mitigate the disadvantages and challenges many disempowered girls endure during their process of maturing.

Pilot Project Synopsis

The goal of the Pilot Project will be:

1. Create an immediate supply of reusable sanitary napkin kits for the young girls in the program.
2. Create a Vocational Training Program focused on seamstress and sewing skills. Part of the training in this curriculum will be the manufacture of the reusable pad kits to be “paid forward” to other girls in the region.
3. Connect with Non-Governmental Organizations, NGOs, teaching women and girl’s reproductive health and safety. Be a focal point for





- the development and expansion of Health Awareness programs to bring concepts such as feminine hygiene, programmed parenthood, and general wellbeing.
4. Grow/expand the Vocational Training Program into a sustainable part-time industry providing a viable income-generating activity for impoverished women to manufacture pad kits.
 5. Create and promote an activist campaign to create awareness in the global community and to petition the Ugandan government to allocate funding to prevent girls from missing school due to lack of sanitary pads. To cite an example, the government of Kenya has recently established a gender-responsive funding initiative with this goal by providing free pads to schoolgirls.

Pilot Project Location

Humanity Healing International, HHI, is partnered with Future Victory School, FVS, to host the pilot project.

FVS is a private educational institution, licensed by the Ministry of Education and Sports. It was established in the year 2000 as a response to an avalanche of orphans created by AIDS and the Civil War in northern Uganda. Currently, there are 458 children, 283 of which are girls. The majority of the children are orphaned and the balance includes children of local families who are foster families for the orphaned children. The children at FVS

include 10 who are HIV+ and 4 who are disabled.

Future Victory School has a physical location of Bugaya Zone, LC1, Kiwungu Village, Butansi Sub-county, Bugabula County, Kamuli District, Eastern Uganda, East Africa.

The mailing address is:

P.O BOX 33704, Kampala, Uganda, East Africa

or

C/O Humanity Healing Foundation-Africa, P.O. Box 31838, Clock Tower, Entebbe Road, Kampala, Uganda, East Africa

The education system in Uganda consists of three 3 1/2 month terms per year. The grades offered at FVS are:

Nursery, N1-N3: Baby, Middle, Top

Primary, P1-P7: Students enter P1 at 6 years of age.

Project Goal – Long Term

HHI will be working with FVS to evaluate, modify and re-evaluate the design and implementation of the pilot project. The goal of this process is the creation of a self-contained module, with a working Operation and Methodology Manual, including a complete Bill of Materials; which will allow the down-stream projects to be easily implemented in other schools and locations.

This Operation and Methodology Manual will be available to all organizations interested in rippling this Girls Empowerment program into their communities. Funding raised over and above what is needed for the pilot project will be made available to help these new programs to be started.

Pilot Project Details

Phase 1 – Immediate Needs

The Goal of Phase 1 is to provide a quantity of 500 Pad Kits. This will take care of the immediate need of the girls in the pilot program at FVS as well as provide Pad Kits as part of the partnership with other NGOs (see Phase 3). This will be broken down into two separate stages.

Manufacture of Pad Kits – Corporate Level

The Baby Flamingo Co., thebabyflamingoco.com, has taken the lead as the Corporate Sponsor for the development of the Pad Kits, now commercially know as GLY Pad Kits.

Each Reusable Feminine Cloth Pad Kit consists of:

- 4 Maxi Pads
- 3 Medium Pads
- 3 Small Pads/Panty Liners
- 1 Bag for Clean Pads
- 1 Bag for Dirty Pads

The prototype units have

been manufactured and tested. The first Pad Kits have been delivered and will be shipped to the Pilot Project at FVS for distribution.

Manufacture of Pad Kits – Individual Level

Many compassionate individuals feel the calling to give of their time and energy as well as of their resources. To this end, HHI will put up on their website the following items for individuals who wish to contribute their talent and make Pad Kits themselves:

- Bill of Materials for Pad Kits
- Patterns of Pads and Bags
- Written Instructions
- An Instructional Video

Pad Kits may be mailed to HHI, who will consultate them and ship them to the Pilot Project at FVS for distribution.





Phase 2 – Vocational Training Program

Upgrading the Current Curriculum

The current Vocational Training Program at FVS will be expanded to include Seamstress / Sewing Skills. An instructor will be hired for teaching these skills to the girls at FVS. This program will be used to teach a full range of seamstress skills for future empowerment and job security of the girls at FVS after they have graduated and have moved on from the school.

A suitable building / classroom will be converted to this use. Stock material and supplies

As FVS is not located on the Ugandan power grid, the choice for sewing machines for instruction will reflect this. Initially, ten treadle-style (foot pedal powered) sewing machines will be purchased.

Service to Others

Trademarks of HHI projects are education, empowerment and service to others. As part of the sewing curriculum, the students will practice their newly acquired skills with the fabrication of Pad Kits. As part of their Community Service, the girls will help distribute the Pad Kits they have made to other girls in the region.

Ugandan communities, in particular, have been devastated by both the scourge of AIDS and the 22 year civil war with Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army.

HHI believes the best way to reweave a sense of community is through helping others. To form, educate and empower

communities has been the underlining purpose behind all the global initiatives of HHI. This reweaving back into society is particularly important with children who have been orphaned, abandoned and disempowered.

Empowering Young Women

Once the girls at FVS have acquired a skill-set that they can market, they will need the equipment to do so. Older girls in the program will be given portable, battery operated sewing machines with a solar battery charger. This will empower the young women with the tools of a trade for when they leave FVS.

An important aspect built into the vocational program that underlines this project is the fact that the vocational program is designed to go beyond the normal expectations of other NGO's working on the same premises. It gives power to the girls and young women to not only receive normal education, but to also acquire a marketable skill and be able, after the curriculum is concluded, to walk out of the program as an empowered human being; retaining not only the ability to succeed in life but also with the material tools to do so.

The sewing machines to be given to the graduates of this program are included on a planning scope beyond an understanding of a simple loan; it is a vouchsafe of trust in their future.



Phase 3 – Synergy with Related NGOs

One of the core principles of HHI is the Twelve Keys of Spiritual Activism¹. Number Four states:

Apply synergy and teamwork to accomplish goals

Synergy is the process where two or more actions combine to produce an effect greater than the sum of its individual parts. Like ripples in a pond, spiritual actions combine and build on each other to magnify an effect beyond what each could do individually. Whenever possible, team up with others to acquire a multifaceted and more holistic approach.

There are multiple NGOs working in the field of Women’s Reproductive Health & AIDS awareness in Uganda, either through seminars or the training of Peer Educators (for example, the Jane Goodall Institute).

The goal of this Phase will be to link to other organizations who we can work with to ripple out the reach of the project, both during the Pilot Project phase and, ultimately, to assist in the creation of future Pads for Schoolgirls programs.

Our direct benefit will be to receive training and counseling for the girls in the Pilot Project at FVS and other locations we serve. The partner organizations’ benefit will be to receive Pads Kits made by the girls as part of their Community Service, help identify need

and distribute Pad Kits to expand the impact in the region.

Phase 4 – Income Generation for Impoverished Women

As the Vocational Training Program at FVS is an enhancement to the primary focus of a core educational curriculum, there will be times when the sewing machines are not being used for student vocational instruction. It is the ad of this phase of the Pad Project to use this “down time” for the teaching of sewing skills to woman in the local community. As the goal is immediate income generation, full seamstress skills will not be taught initially, although there may be a demand for this down the road. The skills taught will be geared towards the fabrication of the Pad Kits. One of the ripples of this facet is the empowerment of local women, bringing them new options to directly improve their life conditions, generate self-confidence and opening their scope of possibilities and participation in the fabric of society.

A cooperative of women will be organized to manufacture of Pad Kits for sale. Additional sewing machines will be purchased for the use of the cooperative. Our objective here is to create an engine of local sustainable income generation that will gradually eliminate reliance on the more expensive imported Pad Kits from Phase 1.

Our ultimate goal would be to sell this product to a government program outlined in Phase 5 for distribution.

¹¹ <http://humanityhealing.org/who-we-are/12-keys-of-spiritual-activism>

Phase 5 – Activism Campaign for Gender-Responsive Educational Funding

Recently, the Finance Minister of Kenya allocated almost \$4m from the current national budget to provide free sanitary pads to schoolgirls. This came after persistent pressure from women parliamentarians, who took the issue of girls' absenteeism from school due to lack of sanitary pads to parliament. It was a campaign that left their male counterparts speechless, for such matters are rarely spoken about in public, let alone in parliament, in Kenya's conservative society.

As part of the Pads for Schoolgirls, HHI will start an activist campaign to lobby female members of the Ugandan Parliament, including the Speaker, the RT. HON. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, and Minister of Finance Margret Kiwanuka, among others, to apply gender-responsive budgeting as part of the educational funding. Gender-responsive budgeting is being sensitive to the distinctive needs of men and women, while allocating and spending public funds.

We would like to petition Uganda to follow Kenya's lead in providing subsidized sanitary products for disadvantaged schoolgirls in order to keep them in school.

This will include a Petition Drive sponsored by Humanity Healing International.

