

KEEP A GIRL IN SCHOOL PROJECT
VIHIGA COUNTY



"Giving the girl child Hope"

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Position: Programme Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Amala Initiative is a Community Based Organization registered under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development that realizes the significance of a positive influence on the girl child in the development of the society. It was established in 2013 with 6 members as one of the Community based Organization in Vihiga County. We are looking forward to reaching 100 fully registered Members by end of 2014 with a vision for active, erudite and responsible professionals to become the future leaders of their community with members designing and organizing programs that help empower the girl child and the youth at large. This sanitary towels project targets school-going girls from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds in their puberty.

Amala Initiative is raising funds to provide free sanitary pads to female students in Vihiga County. The Initiative will distribute the pads to girls in more than 300 schools, both primary and secondary schools. At the primary level, these will encompass girls from Class 5 to Class 8. The Initiative will organize trainings and question-and-answer sessions to give girls a forum to discuss related issues along with female teachers and other staff in the schools. This project will be on-going and is envisioned to address not only girls in Vihiga County but also those in other rural and arid areas starting with the western region.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

Female students face great challenges in terms of hygiene and sanitation. For girls who are menstruating, these problems compound the difficulties posed by the inability to afford sanitary towels as well as cultural taboos around menstruation. As a result, many girls miss on average four days of school every month which is over a month in a year, meaning they fall behind in class and sometimes even drop out of school altogether. This is an added challenge to the already existing problems that lead to the high dropout rate of female students in primary and secondary schools. The main problems faced by women and girls are:

- The expense of commercial sanitary pads;
- Absenteeism where girls stay at home rather than attending school when menstruating;
- Unhygienic ways to dry menstrual materials;
- Inadequate waste disposal facilities;
- Lack of privacy for changing menstrual materials;
- Leakage from poor-quality protection materials;
- The lack of resources for washing such as soap;
- Limited education about the facts of menstruation;
- Limited access to counseling and guidance;
- Fear caused by cultural myths;
- Embarrassment and low self esteem;
- And the unsupportive attitudes of some men.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SOLUTION

Distribution of reusable pads has radically proved to create a world where women and girls can step boldly into the promise of their future. The goal of the Initiative is to empower the vulnerable girls through provision of reusable pads and capacity building on menstrual hygiene management and reproductive health for improved performance and self esteem. This will be done through distribution of reusable sanitary pads as well as ensuring provision of menstrual hygiene management education and facilities to girls in primary schools in Vihiga County. By acquiring knowledge on menstrual hygiene management, the overall health status of the girls will be enhanced as myths and misconceptions that surround puberty and menstruation will also be demystified.

The vision of distributing the pads is to ensure empowered girls are in charge of their own socio-economic development. A study by the Ministry of Education in 2007 found that sanitary pads provision coupled with sexual and reproductive health education could reduce absenteeism amongst girls by over 3.5 days per month and brought other important benefits in terms of girls self esteem and self confidence. Findings from a survey conducted by Kenya Industrial Research Institute (KIRDI) in 2011 among piloted users of reusable pads revealed that only 5% of the respondents were unable to attend school during menstruation solely because of cramps/pain. If this is compared with school absenteeism prior to the pilot (27%), then the use of reusable pads arguably significantly improved the school attendance of the pilot group.

The use of the disposable pads currently on the market is estimated to be Ksh1, 020 per girl per year. In rural areas where transport networks are often poor, ensuring a regular supply of disposable pads at an affordable cost is also challenging. Ensuring the safe disposal of disposable pads still remains a major challenge as unsafe disposal carries with it attendant environmental and health risks. One packet of the reusable pads that will be distributed through this project is sufficient to meet the sanitary needs of a girl for three years at a cost of Ksh1, 020. The adoption of reusable pads which trade at Ksh400 is therefore more likely to be sustainable in the long term whether it is financed by development partners, from household expenditures or by implementing a sustainable model.

Using the promotion and distribution of reusable pads as an entry point for engagement on wider issues related to menstrual hygiene and reproductive health, the project will also demonstrate how opportunities for contact with girls and communities on a specific issue can also be used to promote and develop wider action on issues that affect girls health status, access to quality education and the achievement of better education outcomes and will identify appropriate strategies for doing so. In the meantime, campaigns to demystify menstruation will be rolled out at grassroots school levels. These campaigns will aim to make adolescent girls recognise that they are contributing to the silence and stigma around menstruation and encourage them to use their voices to talk about the topic and themselves, and to demand their rights.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The overriding objective of the project is to ensure that Girls in Vihiga County will not have to miss school simply because they are menstruating. Other objectives are to ensure that:

- To improve school attendance among girls between the ages of 10 and 17 years in primary & Secondary schools;
- To increase access to vulnerable adolescent girls with sanitary towels and comprehensive menstrual hygiene management knowledge and risk awareness of HIV&AIDS among in-school and out of school girls between the ages 10 to 17 years;
- To increase the self-esteem of needy girls between ages 10 to 17 years;
- To improve economic status for out of young women between 18-34 years;
- And to document lessons learned and scale-up options documented.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN:

1. The project aims to purchase re-usable sanitary pads from I-Care for female primary and secondary (Day) school students in Vihiga County. These sanitary pads are made from natural and chemical free materials and are usable for about one year. Moreover, we will also provide the girls with underwear, which is 100% cotton. We will supply a pack that contains 4 reusable sanitary pads, 3 pairs of underwear per girl & 500gms bar soap. Thus, the Initiative will raise money to support the purchase of the necessary sanitary pads and underwear for the girls. In order to raise the fund for the project the initiative will use different approaches, one of which is soliciting funds from well wishers, this entails creating awareness to the general public and also raise funds. Furthermore, the initiative will approach individual donors and use simple fund raising mechanisms such as pledge forms and promissory requests.
2. Amala Initiative will distribute all pads and underwear to the primary and secondary schools in Vihiga County. Selected members of Amala Initiative & a team from I-Care will deliver the pads and underwear's to the girls at each school. These members will meet with the director of each school and together with school staff will distribute the pads.
3. Amala Initiative plus the team from I-Care will organise training and question-and-answer sessions in each of the schools at the start, middle, and end of the project. At the start of the project, Amala Initiative members, I-Care team and female teachers will hold a meeting together and then a forum with female students to discuss the sanitary pads and concurrent problems encountered by girls in the schools. Members of Amala Initiative will build a relationship with the female teachers and nurses over the course of the project and involve them in organizing the trainings. The club will also follow-up on the

girls and involve their parents, by contacting the parent teacher associations

DETAILED PLAN OF ACTIVITIES

Distribution of 1500 reusable pads (I-Care pads)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct familiarization visits to schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procuring materials and collection of the reusable pads
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development of detailed instructions for pads use
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribution of pads in schools and monitoring
Building the capacity of 1500 girls on menstrual hygiene management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff induction on the project
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobilisation of school management committees and heads
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design, development and production of materials (Booklet)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Menstrual Hygiene Management trainings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertaking a girls day event
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Periodic staff planning and review meetings
Monitoring and Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducting baseline survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertaking monitoring visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation

IMPACT

Up to 1,500 girls from rural communities within Vihiga County schools will benefit from the project. The project will have an impact on health status of girls through improvement in the health status and personal hygiene of the girls as a result of using the reusable pads. This will be realized in the sense that girls will no longer have to use unhygienic materials like old pieces of cloth or old newspapers that most of them are currently using during their menses. Also considering the fact that the first menstruation is often horrifying and traumatic to an adolescent girl because it usually occurs without her knowing about it, the knowledge and understanding of girls on menstrual hygiene and reproductive health issues will be enhanced further leading to improved health status, increased levels of confidence and active involvement of girls in school. It is consequently anticipated that by providing the reusable pads, the number of days of education that a girl might receive as a result of this initiative could increase by as much as 3-5 days in a month. Ultimately, there will be a significant reduction in the rate of school dropout as well as reduced vulnerability of the girls to early engagement in sex in order to get income for acquiring the basic needs like sanitary pads.

Girls that are regularly absent from school are more likely to be those that drop out and fail to transit successfully through the education system. By reducing the number of days of absence currently related to their menstrual cycle, it is anticipated that retention and transition rates amongst girls at individual schools could improve by up to 60%. Girls will therefore be able to go to school and participate in school activities thereby ensuring a holistic development i.e. mental, physical and social development. With the significant reduction in drop out cases amongst girls, which ultimately will lead to improved performance of girls in schools, these will eventually culminate into increased income opportunities for girls as they finish school and are able to access more opportunities for income earning/generation and dignified livelihoods. The provision of reusable sanitary pads coupled with the proposed activities involving girls, boys, and the wider community on menstrual hygiene and rights are likely to have important direct impacts on the economic status of up to 10 households.

Recognising that girls from low income families which this project will focus on engage in transactional sex to get money for pads further predisposing them to higher likelihood of contracting HIV as they are not able to negotiate with their partners to use protection, the proposed activities will have direct impacts on up to 1500 girl's exposure to risks such as early pregnancy, marriage and HIV AIDS given that the project will equally address issues of individual and communal behavior change with regard to adolescent sexuality, menstrual hygiene health and reproductive health rights issues. Additionally, issues of environmental conservation will be addressed as the problems posed by disposing the sanitary pads in schools will be a thing of the past. The reusable pads are more environmentally friendly compared to commercially produced pads because they contain fewer chemicals such as polyacrylate superabsorbent gels. Their use will ultimately lead to environmental conservation.

Pupils and students will receive information about menstrual hygiene management (MHM), about biological facts and practical ways of managing blood flow in a hygienic and discrete way. Through the knowledge that the beneficiaries will get through the programme, more awareness and capacity enhancement on natural family planning methods will be reinforced. Also by focusing MHM education towards both boys and girls, this will foster more understanding attitudes and decreased social stigma in schools.

GIVING THE GIRL CHILD HOPE

THE MODEL AND JUSTIFICATION

The beneficiary's need being met through this project includes provision of reusable sanitary towels (pads) which are the preferred sanitary protection for most women and girls. And while pads are preferred, the disposable ones are expensive. Still, many adolescent girls and women in Kenya have limited knowledge about their bodies, especially in relation to menstrual hygiene and reproductive health. For young girls in poor rural settings like Vihiga county who often receive minimal instruction on what menstruation is and how it can be managed, the experience has been described as frightening, confusing and shame-inducing. Thus menstrual hygiene management capacity building will be another service provided through this project. The product is compelling to the users due to the following reasons:

- It is a hygienically approved, high-quality, affordable reusable product that responds to users tastes and preferences for self comfort and personal hygiene.
- The product can be used for a period of more than one year. Thus the girls will be able to attend school without worrying about menses and through this project there will be a significant reduction of girl-parent dependency for sanitary towels every month.
- Through the use of the Huru sanitary towels, issues of environmental conservation will be realized as the pads contain fewer chemicals compared to the disposable pads.

Generally, the taboos associated with menstruation have ultimately led to reduced levels of confidence and active involvement of girls in schools. The taboo related loss of confidence among girls has had direct impacts on girl's exposure to risks such as early pregnancy, marriage and HIV AIDS. In schools, there is usually a lack of physiological education while at home; advice (traditionally given by aunts and grandmothers) is often insufficient. Therefore this project is compelling as it seeks to bridge the gap that exists in limited knowledge about the biological process of menstruation among the girls and women.

The type of relationship that each of our beneficiaries expects us to establish and maintain is a personal assistance approach given the personal nature of the product. As such, this project envisions providing exactly that personal touch through the trainings that will be offered at two levels:

- To the female teacher focal points and the training sessions to be conducted in schools before distribution of the pads and during the monitoring visits.
- For the women in the neighborhoods, the girls trained will be expected to relay the same information to them and also inform them where the product can be found.

PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

Purpose of evaluation:

To share with the stakeholders, the outcomes and impact of the project. Financial accountability of the project will also be key. Through the evaluation, the project team will identify other issues affecting performance of girls in schools. The project evaluation will also indicate what worked well and what didn't go as planned so as to improve on related projects in the future.

Method of Evaluation

The evaluation will use interviews with officials at the schools involved as well as teachers, with a special focus on female teachers. In addition, we will hold interviews and focus group discussions with the girls. Due to the nature of the issues involved, all evaluation involving interviews with the girls will be carried out by female representatives of Amala Initiative. This part of the evaluation will be carried out at the start of the project and every three months by Amala Initiative members. The female teachers and nurses in the schools will also be encouraged to keep track of the progress of the project as the year progresses.

Involvement of Stakeholders:

- Girl recipients - Feedback will be sought as to the improvements in performance and significant reduction in absenteeism
- Boys schooling with the girls - Feedback sought on usage of the sanitary pads by the girls
- School heads - Feedback on performance by girls compared to the boys
- Education officers at the county and sub-county level - Feedback on significant increase in enrolment to schools by girls.
- Amala Initiative – Feedback on distribution methodology and whether the trainings conducted have opened up learning opportunities

Indicators of achievement:

- Increased attendance in schools
- Manufacturer commissioned to produce affordable Sanitary Pads
- Importation of affordable Sanitary Pads
- Girls perform as good as boys

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION:

To this end the organization has reached the beneficiaries through a number of channels that include:

- Social media networks (Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/amalinitiative> and Twitter account / [amalinitiative](https://twitter.com/amalinitiative))
- Out-door promotions;
- Out-door activations where a team from the organization has visited various schools to give sensitization talk to the targeted girls; and
- Audio channels like the radio (Vuuka Fm) mainly adopting the commercial spots and radio talk show to advertise the product.

Through this project, the organization will reach the beneficiaries through direct personal encounters occasioned by visiting the schools to enlighten the pupils and school management committees about the product. Also the use of radio talk shows in local vernaculars and social media will continue to be scaled up to reach the targeted beneficiaries to benefit from this affordable, sustainable and innovative product. Still, the organization will on a regular basis be sending to both the potential and actual partners' newsletters, brochures and other promotional items such as branded t-shirts to ensure that product knowledge is improved.

PROJECT BUDGET:

WHAT WE NEED TO ENABLE US TO CARRY OUT THE PROGRAMME

- a) **Kshs 770,000 i.e. (USD 9,058.82)**
- b) Programme sponsors
- c) Voluntary human resource

THE MAIN BUDGET:

- Primary girls.....Kshs 450,000 (900 girls @500)
- Secondary girls..... Kshs 300,000 (600 girls @500)
- Logistics.....Ksh 20,000
- Total.....Kshs 770,000

DONATIONS IN KIND:

- Branded T-shirts designed and printed with the Amala Initiative logo at the front (chest position) and your brand colors, message or logo or both placed at a position of your choice on the T-shirt.
- Sanitary towels for upper primary and secondary school girls.

MANAGEMENT TEAM

AMALA initiative Management Committee-(6 members):

1. Ms. Lydia Anjiro..... Chairperson
2. Mr. Mwavali Newton.....Vice Chairman
3. Ms. Udana Caroline.....Treasurer
4. Mr. Lidonga Geoffrey.....Programme officer
5. Ms. Owendi Dorcus..... Organizing secretary
6. Mr. Ben Odana..... Project Advisor

ACCOUNTS DETAILS

AMALA INITIATIVE

CO-OPERATIVE BANK, CO-OPERATIVE HOUSE BRANCH

A/C NO 01134615002500

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN GIVING
THE GIRL CHILD HOPE**



Girls from one of the schools (Ivola primary in Hamisi constituency) we visited last year

Giving the girl child Hope