

University of Richmond

Project Name: Soma Nyekundu (Read Red)

Project Leader: Shamim Mohamed Ibrahim

Location and Date: Mukangu, Kenya. 24th June - 2nd August 2019.

Background

In my second year at Pearson College, I had the honor of having two of my projects awarded \$1000 each by Go Make A Difference (GOMAD). Both were carried out in Kenya: one in Nairobi, the capital city, and the other in Mukangu, a village in central Kenya. The Nairobi-based one, Kenyan Youth for Peace, was to promote peace among the youth and fight tribalism during the tense presidential elections of 2017. The Mukangu-based project, Vijana Imara (Resilient Teenagers), was to empower girls through education. We collaborated with Kumbuka Universal Learning Experiences (KULE), an NGO started by one of my teachers at Pearson College, and has been volunteering in the area for 16 years. We used KULE's connections and reputable background to get in touch with schools and facilitate discussions about culturally taboo topics such as; menstruation, consent, gender-based violence, and HIV/AIDS. Additionally, we worked with AFRIPads, a social business that produces reusable sanitary pads, and bought 100 pads. AFRIPads was so impressed with our project that they donated 100 more pads. We distributed these pads to female students between the ages of 13 and 18 in Mukangu Secondary School.

A lack of sanitary products imposes on the access girls have to their education. It is an unfortunate yet common reality that girls perpetually miss school when they are menstruating because of financial barriers. Period poverty is widespread in Kenya with 65% of women and girls unable to afford sanitary pads¹. This number is even higher in Mukangu due to the financial situation of most residents. The impact that Vijana Imara had on the high school girls further inspired me to continue this project and expand it on a wider scale. The goal is to reach even more women and girls in the area.

Project Overview

1. **Sustainability:** "In the United States alone, an estimated 12 billion pads and 7 billion tampons are disposed of annually²". The main reason why my then school mate and I started this project was because we realized how much waste we contribute through the disposal of our sanitary products. The average woman menstruates once every month with a cycle of around 5 days, using 3 pads or tampons a day. Every year, this average woman disposes at least 180 pads or tampons. This does not include the women who have two cycles a month or have their period for over 7 days. Keeping with the sustainability mission of UWC, we decided to look into sanitary products that are reusable. Our first idea was menstrual cups, but we quickly realized this would be too much of a cultural shift and would not be accepted by the village residents. Reusable pads, on the other hand, are similar to pads that the girls are used to, the only difference being that they have to wash them after use.
2. **AFRIPads:** I have confirmation from AFRIPads that they would love to continue supporting the project. I plan on purchasing and distributing 500 pads twice a year, in the summer and winter. AFRIPads is willing to donate 200 more for each shipment. This would be enough for 1,400 girls and women every year as you only need one packet. An advantage of working with AFRIPads, on top of having previous contact, is that there are girls who already know the product and are comfortable using it and can thus advocate for it. I also got trained on how to use the product and do use it myself, so I will be confident to talk about it and teach the girls and women how to use it.
3. **Expansion:** I want to consistently provide sanitary products to 2 secondary schools, 2 primary schools, and 2 orphanages in Mukangu. Having KULE as a partner is going to be an excellent tool in reaching out to these schools and orphanages. In addition to distributing the products, I want to conduct discussions on the previously mentioned topics in the background section. The discussions will be in the form of workshops facilitated with the help of the KULE participants who volunteer in Mukangu each summer. During the last days of the project, I will organize an event where students can come together and produce a show with dances, music, and plays for the residents. The idea is to use the familiarity found within culture to destigmatize taboo topics. This event will

¹ Nairobi, Abigail Higgins in. "Having a Period Is Unaffordable in Kenya, Yet No One Wants to Talk about It." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media. 5 Jan, 2017.

² National Women's Health Network

occur at the local church and we would advertise through the church by putting up posters and collaborating with pastors. Through their performances, the students can share what they've learned with their community and each other. In this way they will be able to teach and share with people who were not able to be part of the discussions regarding consent, gender-based violence, sexual assault, and HIV/AIDS. Lastly, I believe this will be an engaging and fun way to end the project prompting interest from a range of people.

4. **Long-term:** To ensure the sustainability of this project, I have partnered with the Mothers Union, a local committee consisting of women from Mukangu who take on different projects to empower women, for example, fundraising to support a woman starting her own tailor shop. They are currently running the only local dairy cooperative, that generates regular income to the women and their families. I have contacted the committee manager, Muthoni Njoroge, and she is willing to have AFRIPads deliver the sanitary products to her address twice a year. The pads will be distributed in the summer and winter. In the summer, KULE will be available to help with the distribution and in the winter the Mothers Union will be in charge of distribution. Partnering with these two organizations will ensure the continuity of this project. KULE, by bringing volunteers each summer, will guarantee the summer distribution of the pads and the participants can continue the discussions in schools and overtime add on new topics. The Mothers Union, as a local contact, is pivotal in doing outreach and knowing how best to serve the women in their community. Additionally, both organizations commit to fundraise every year to sustain the project. Due to their different geographical locations, we will have fundraising at the local and international level.

At the end of this proposal I have attached links to the different organizations I have mentioned. You can also find links to articles, pictures, and videos of our past projects.

Timeline

Week 1: Meet with AFRIPads in their Nairobi office and discuss project. Collect the pads and travel to Mukangu with KULE participants.

Week 2: Meet with school principals and directors of the orphanages to arrange days when we can hold discussions and distribute pads. Additionally, meet with Mothers Union to discuss the project.

Week 3: Distribute pads and hold workshops in primary schools.

Week 4: Distribute pads and hold workshops in secondary schools.

Week 5: Distribute pads and hold workshops in orphanages.

Week 6: Organize, prepare for. and put on the show.

Links

KULE- <http://www.kulefoundation.org/>

Video- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BRSuUZFKx8&feature=youtu.be>

GOMAD Projects- <http://www.gomakeadifference.global/projects-awarded/2017-awards/>

<https://www.gomakeadifference.global/projects-awarded/africa/vijana-imara-resilient-teenagers-2018/?platform=hootsuite>

AFRIPads- <https://www.afripads.com/>

Article- <http://uwckenya.org/pearson-college-uwcs-support-mukangu-village-muranga-kenya/>

Pictures- [https://pearsoncollege-](https://pearsoncollege-my.sharepoint.com/personal/mcabras43_pearsoncollege_ca/Documents/Forms/All.aspx?slrid=ca51399e-f09b-4000-b677-95f2bd0cbd59&RootFolder=%2Fpersonal%2Fmcabras43_pearsoncollege_ca%2FDocuments%2Fkule%20pictures%20su)

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