



Femme International is building a world where menstruation is not a barrier. Where everyone has access to opportunity and possibility.

OVERVIEW

Femme International is menstrual health NGO, based in East Africa.

Femme International was founded in 2013 to address the critical lack of menstrual health education available to young girls in East Africa, with an overarching goal of breaking down the persistent menstrual taboo.

Femme developed an education-based intervention that delivers comprehensive health education workshops to women and girls, as well as provides them with reusable menstrual products.

CORE VALUES

Education → We use education as a tool to ensure menstruators understand their bodies, and reduce stigma.

Distribution → Reusable products have health, financial, and environmental impacts that long outlast our intervention

Research → Collecting data to accurately measure menstrual health in East Africa

Advocate → Use experiences and research to advocate for change in communities and at policy level.

THE TWaweza PROGRAMME

The Twaweza Programme uses an education-based approach, and has an overall goal of improving the quality of life of participants. Therefore, it is essential to measure impact beyond school attendance, looking instead at mental and physical health and well-being, and participation in life.

In Swahili, “twaweza” means “we can”, because we believe that this is a problem that we can fix.

During fun, interactive workshops, we cover a range of topics on menstruation, reproductive and sexual health, from puberty to menopause, and more.

The combination of reusable products and access to information improves menstruators’ physical health, decreases the shame and anxiety they feel, and improves their income-generation ability.

After 6 months, schoolgirls reported an overall 50% increase in attendance, which is incredible. Additionally, there was a nearly 60% increase in girls staying at school all day, and not leaving early.



Through education, engaging communities in conversation, and providing sustainable access to reusable menstrual products, Femme International works to address the unique needs of menstruators in low-income communities.



71.8% of girls are comfortable sitting at their desks during menses – better able to focus & participate in school activities.

89% of participants feel less menstrual shame during their periods.

71.8% of schoolgirls report not missing out on any aspects of their lives due to menstruation – a very exciting result!

THE TWENDE INITIATIVE

An award-winning social business initiative to ensure menstrual resources are available, affordable, and accessible to everyone.

Twende uses networks of women as sales agents, based in their communities, to engage stakeholders, host meetings, run trainings, and sell reusable menstrual products and other key resources.



Twende is derived from our years of experience, participant feedback, and research in this setting and sector, and addresses a repeatedly-stated and unmet need for menstrual products and menstrual/sexual/reproductive health information

Twende means “let’s go!” in Swahili because we are going to the last mile.

Twende integrates into existing community structures, partnering with women’s lending groups, religious groups, NGOs, and businesses to offer payment plans, ensuring affordability for everyone.

Since 2013, Femme has reached over 16,500 menstruators in Kenya and Tanzania.

PASS-MHW

In partnership with LSHTM, MITU, and funded by MRC UKRI, we received the first research grant for menstrual health in Tanzania! We are embarking on a three-year journey to evaluate the Twaweza Programme in schools, alongside including boys and better menstrual pain management.

Additionally, the project is exploring sustainability through integrating with government systems.



MENSTRUAL CUPS & WASHABLE PADS

Menstrual cups are bell-shaped receptacles made of medical-grade silicone. They are worn in the vagina to collect rather than absorb menstrual blood. Washable pads are made of fabrics designed to be highly absorbent, fast-drying, and leak-proof.

Menstrual Cups	Washable Pads
Last 10 years	Last 1-2 years
Water: 1 litre/period	Water: about 11 litres/period
One cup, one period	4-8 pads in one period
Cost: about \$15 USD	Cost: about \$5 USD



“My name is Emily, I’m a Form 3 student from Ghona Secondary School, and I’m 16 years old. I was among the group of students who participated in Femme’s Twaweza Programme. I received a Femme Kit with a menstrual cup inside, I was happy and excited to have and use the cup for the first time. I found the cup easy to use because I was so interested and focused during the training. I fell in love with the cup because it doesn’t cause me any rashes or itching. Compared to when I was using disposable pads, I’m now staying in class for the full time without worrying.”