



RED DOTS

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SAMUEL IORON FOUNDATION - SIF

RED DOTS-Period

Menstruation - or having period - is when blood and tissue from the uterus come out of the vagina which happens USUALLY every month.

Koree in firstperiod.org defines it thus: Menstrual Flow: A period is the process when a thick fluid consisting of blood, uterus lining, and cervical mucus leaves our body through the vagina as part of the menstrual cycle.

On average, we get our first period (menstruation) between the age of 12 and 14. Some girls start as young as the age of 8. Other girls are 18 years old when they get their first period.

The project is focused on educating the general public about Menstruation, period tracking and sustainable menstrual processes.

Problem statement

Facts have showed that Menstruation is still a taboo topic and considered as a disgusting procedure where girls are shamed for it. Most girls of school age all over the world drop out of school due to lack of period products and the misconception surrounding menstruation have caused mistreatment of girls. A good number of girls have no idea what menstruation is until after their first period. This causes a lot of problem. Menstruation is a shameful topic for most girls to discuss due to this. In most cultures, girls are secluded from performing religious activities and often made to feel to stay away from family members or live alone during period months.

Imagine what girls go through each month. This causes most girls to feel ashamed of their bodies and avoid discussion on periods.

A lot of girls have no real knowledge of when to expect their next period, a procedure that can be done through period tracking

Period products used at times are not properly disposed, neither are they healthy.

There are a lot of options about sanitary products as you may know: disposable pad, tampon, cloth pad, menstrual underwear, and menstrual cup.

Disposable pads and tampon are the most popular right now all over the world. However, they have some potential threat to our health and our environment.

Using synthetic menstrual products means a risk in exposure to:

- ✚ Residual pesticides – Most major brands of tampons and pads contain non-organic cotton or wood pulp grown using agrochemicals and pesticides.
- ✚ Synthetic fragrances, odor neutralizers and other potentially hazardous ingredients

Dioxins and plastic chemicals – The hazardous nature of chemicals are cause for concern that calls for further research. The WHO classifies dioxins as a highly toxic environmental pollutant and health risk. Dioxins are produced in chlorine bleaching processes. A possible link to cancers, endometriosis, immune system depression and pelvic inflammatory disease has been established. BPA and BPS disrupt embryonic development and are linked to heart disease and cancer, Phthalates are known to deregulate gene expression and DEHP may lead to multiple organ damage. The call for further research to reduce on health risks to women from dioxin and other chemicals has been raised in the US Tampon Safety Act and Robin Danielson Act since 1999. The US Endometriosis Association indicated to use organic cotton sanitary products without plastics until research addresses the risks. Bacteria and fungus toxins – Synthetics and plastic also restrict the free flow of air; can trap heat and dampness, potentially promoting the growth of yeast and bacteria in your vaginal area, a possible cause for vaginitis.

Most pads have a top layer that feels like cloth but is in fact a plastic woven sheet, plastic wings and adhesives, and Super-absorbent polymer gels—that soak up the flow—which are comprised of plastics; most tampon brands come with plastic applicators, not to mention the wrappers!

The plastics and components of disposable products are largely non-biodegradable, presenting huge waste management challenges around the world. A single pad is estimated to take 500—800 years to decompose; disposed sanitary products fill landfills and in communities and countries without waste management systems they pollute water bodies, communal toilets, and roadsides.

In many parts of the world, disposable menstrual products are burned along with other waste; this causes dioxins and other chemicals to be released and creates toxic ash and fumes.

It's estimated that a woman use up to 10.000 sanitary pads during her life time and produce around 3 kilogram of sanitary waste per year.

Solution

Being aware of these problems, we can choose alternatives methods to drive discussions on menstruation to reduce the taboo surrounding menstruation, encourage girls to share their period stories and foster more sustainable menstruation practices through discussions, chats, conferences centered on educating stakeholders about menstruation and advocating for the use of reusable and safe period products and to reduce the plastic waste to the environment.

Objectives

The project is focused on achieving the following:

- ❖ Reducing the concept of menstruation as a taboo topic
- ❖ Encouraging girls to share period stories to break the shame surrounding menstruation
- ❖ To educate stakeholders on menstruation, and sustainable menstrual practices
- ❖ To reduce environmental pollution through the use of reusable pads and other period products
- ❖ To end period poverty through distribution and monitoring of reusable pads
- ❖ To promote retention of school girls.

Our target audience is the general public; old and young, male and female living in rural, peri urban and urban communities.

While our beneficiaries are teenage girls between the ages of 10-18 living in underserved communities, either in school or out of school.

Red Dots Guide

The organization in partnership with Yandeh Sallah Muhammed developed a curriculum guide to aid the sensitization of stakeholders at conferences, seminars and workshops to be held.

Programs will be hosted at schools, workplaces and online to foster discussion on period, the stories gathered will be published on the organization's website and blog site to encourage girls to indulge in discussions and reduce the concept of period taboo.

An illustration book and the menstrual guide will be used as resource materials in conducting RED DOTS projects.

Reusable pads will be donated quarterly to 10 girls living in underserved communities to foster retention of school girls. The girls will be monitored within a 3 months, six months and 12 months period to record the effectiveness or otherwise of reusable pads and the RED DOTS project as a sustainable menstruation program.

The use of art based tools during campaigns and educational lessons will be encouraged. Exhibitions of art pieces featuring period work will be used to raise funds to produce and distribute pads to girls in Nigeria to end period poverty.