

Improving access to Menstrual Hygiene Management.

Lessons from the field



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Introductory

Improving access to menstrual health and Hygiene Management using the Dorena pads initiative. This is a project under the Cho Ngafor Foundation (CNFoundation). The CNFoundation is not for profit Non-Governmental organisation with a strong vision of helping to improve the quality of life for people living in resource limited settings by building a community of hope through Education, health, and sustainable developments. Driven by passion we aim to use our vision to open doors, expand opportunities, contribute to economic growth, reduce poverty as well as improve health. Studies have shown that many girls face barriers in managing their periods safely and comfortably. Some have used dirty rags, other use leave of tree, or cow dung, some don't even have any think and are expelled from home, social activities and schools. Thus menstruation remains a taboo subject in many communities Cameroon. According to the United Nations Educational, scientific and cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Human Right watch, studies reveal that one in ten girls in sub-Saharan Africa miss School during their menstrual cycle due to lack of affordable sanitary products. To address this issue in the Cho Ngafor Foundation an International Organization with Headquarters in Bern Switzerland and Bamenda Cameroon came up with the life changing innovative solution "Dorena Eco-friendly Pads"(DEF-Pads). These pads made out of cloth are Washable and Reusable and will support girls to manage menstruation with dignity. reduce absenteeism from School, to combat the untold stories of misery girls face during Menstruation in many schools and especially hard to reach Communities as well in Cameroon.

Methodology

We meaningfully engage the target community of the adolescents girl population, with specific focus on those with lower educational levels, living in poverty, forced marriage, pregnant, and girls with disabilities. We educate them on the importance of Menstrual health and hygiene management (MHHM). We do this through organised workshops, focus-group discussions, and one-to-one training and mentoring especially amongst the girls with disabilities. We also distribute our already produced DEF-Pads with users instructions to school girls, girls in hard to reach communities, as well as during other gatherings. Our aim is to complement the efforts of the governments in achieving Health for All, UHC and the SDGs as MHHM remains an important indicator of health.



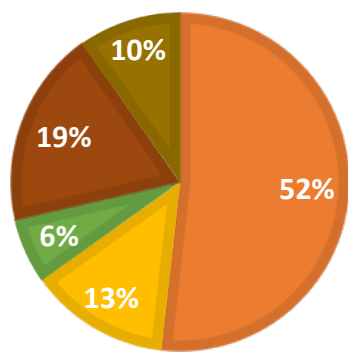
Objectives of DEF-PADS

1: To create an engaging, accurate and dignified product for young adolescent girl mostly between the ages of 09 -15, to use during menstruation. This will demystify the taboos centered around menstruation in school and communities, reduce school absenteeism, and reduce the use of dirty cloth or rags during menstruation.

Understanding the problem using a formative research

(A). We worked with tree communities a total of 125 girls. We tried to understand how Cultural beliefs, stigma, taboos, lack of menstrual education/products limited access to water and sanitation facilities has created a vacuum for school girls and what effect this has on their education and social lives.
 (B). We used a mixed methods to carry out our analysis. We did on one hand interviews and on the other a question and answer session. This survey conducted gave us an ideas on how to scale our lectures on – MHHM in these schools and communities. The same Model we replicated in other communities. Our aim was to develop positive change in attitude towards menstruation, support knowledge exchange between teacher and adolescent, as well as support in MHHM programs in the schools and communities.

52% did not know much about menstruation before their first period.
 19% were of puberty ages and know much
 13% talked about relationship between sex, menstruation and pregnancy
 6% were neutral.
 10% wanted to know more about effect of sex during menstruation, safe and unsafe days



Guide on menstruation.

"The journey into womanhood"

This is a 40 page pamphlet that comprises of questions and answers on menstruation. This book which is still under development is an initiative put into place because during the campaign many children have question that cannot answered due to time. Another reason is the absence of frequent campaign, and also the lack of internet access. This pamphlet features questions they ask during the campaigns, pictures and should help the girls gain to access and have constant possibilities of continuous education and emphasis on MHHM ..



Understanding the Journey into womanhood

Conclusion

The results of this study provide insights into the MHHM preferences, wants, and needs of a selection of girls in various representative settings in Cameroon . • Balanced investments are required to ensure that girls have access to the products, education and a supportive environment in which change can occur. The DEF-PADS Washable and Reusable Pads initiative aims to reach 40 communities by Feb 2030, thus supporting the 100.000 girls to manage menstruation with dignity. Male engagement is critical, their attitudes and behaviours in particular play a vital role in girls regarding menstruation.



Fig. 1. Dorena pads production.

Intervention, Implementation and results

Baseline Start 2018. Endline March 2020

- support girl to understand MHHM practices before and during school age
- understand the cultural taboos and beliefs that affect MHHM interventions
- Raise awareness, strength knowledge, develop positive attitudes toward MHHM
- Introduce DEF-PADS as an alternative solution to MHHM in Urban / Peri- Urban
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	Number of children/adults	Children who missed school
School 1.	341	88
School 2-3	376	73
School 4	322	103
School 5 (a)	211	52
Community 5 (b)	785	217
Community 6-8	1103	000

Fig. 4. simple table of what we did in Cameroon

Awareness, Impact, Foreseen Impact,

Awareness

- Sensitization, Innovative and Inclusiveness

Impact:

- Creating contacts(Azylcenters, communities schools, commune sewing centers...)
- Sewing atelier. Fundraising, partnerships
- Fundraising...chips for girls, research, contact with schools
- Survey, video conference with the Team in Cameroon, recruitment of volunteers, articles and awareness about menstruation

Foreseen Impact;

- Fundraising, Partnership,
- Construction of a Community center for the production of Dorena Pads in Cameroon

Feedbacks:

Girls reported very positive form the use of Dorenapads, less leakages during Menstruation, increase presence in community schools, churches, increase in health clubs, both in communities and churches, reduction of health hazards form girls, open communication on topics of menstruation.



Fig. 6. Sensitization, production, of Dorean Pads

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