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Let's End Period Poverty Documentary

This is a documentary about an initiative implemented to educate girls in school on hygienic practices concerning their menstrual health and advocate against period poverty.

<https://youtu.be/59OYSWzgIS8>

Introduction

Let's End Period Poverty Ghana

PERIOD EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE

When we understand menstruation, we help address the stigma and empower women to take care of their bodies.

Illustrations showing correct use of a tampon and a menstrual cup, with a green checkmark indicating they are the preferred methods.

Unhygienic products you should not use

Illustrations of unhygienic products: Newspaper, Cotton wool, Sock, Toilet roll, Make-up, Torn up nappies, Old rag, Plastic bag. A large red 'X' is drawn over these items.

There is no shame in having a period.

**Stop hiding it
It's a pad,
not a bomb**

Illustration of two women, one holding a box of 'SANITARY PRODUCTS'.

Make it normal to speak freely about periods

Be informed! Get period-related learning materials and resources via our website or scan the QR code.

SCAN HERE!

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SCAN HERE!

Ghana faces high levels of period poverty, which limits educational opportunities for girls due to the lack of access to menstrual products. Period Poverty continues to persist with a toll on high taxes on sanitary products in Ghana, labelling it as a luxury product. After a survey conducted by BCC in August 2023, unsurprisingly, Ghana was named the first amongst the African countries to have the least affordable menstrual products, labelling the count as of now as one where women and girls are unable to afford a healthy and sustainable option for a natural non-negotiable monthly life cycle. I envisioned "Let's End Period Poverty Ghana" to combat this issue by providing sustainable menstrual kits and establishing a model that could be expanded to address the menstrual health needs in underserved communities and schools.

The "Let's End Period Poverty Ghana" initiative was born out of a need to address menstrual health inequalities. This project aimed to contribute to ending period poverty in Ghana, specifically by keeping menstruating girls in school, reducing absenteeism, and introducing biodegradable sanitary products in Ghanaian educational institutions. Let's End Period Poverty Ghana played a significant role in achieving these targets, notably in the realms of health and well-being (SDG3) for the girls within the school, Sustainable Education (SDG4), and environmental protection by introducing sustainable kits and recycled washroom bins. This project was implemented for about two weeks in Ghana, reaching four (4) community schools with over a thousand girls and one public university and distributing about thousand four hundred and eighty-eight (1,488) sustainable menstrual kits and educational pamphlets.

The initiative also saw its wider influence not only on gender inclusiveness in educational institutions but also an opportunity for engagement with stakeholders of schools and students and a call for advocacy concerning health education, incentives and policies in such regard.

Project Proposal

The initiative centred around combating period poverty by;

Providing Sustainable Menstrual Products: This project aimed to distribute 1,200 sanitary products as part of the poverty campaign by supplying products and educational materials and offering expert guidance through informative sessions led by a certified reproductive health nurse

The project also aimed to educate girls in schools on menstrual hygiene and create an open dialogue about menstruation, especially in a culture-centred atmosphere where the dialogue has been known to be kept secret among girls only.

Advocacy: The initiative also sought to advocate for policy changes at local government levels to ensure menstrual health support in schools and public spaces.

Implementation



The project was carried out over two weeks in two different regions. In the first week, three (3) community schools were reached in Kumasi, Ghana, and the remaining two (2) schools were visited in the concluding week at Accra's University of Ghana and Armed Forces Government School.

More than 1,000 sustainable menstrual pads were procured from local manufacturers. Distribution and educational events were organized in each of the four community schools,

combined with workshops that educated both girls and boys on menstrual hygiene, proper pad use, and breaking menstrual stigma. Over 2,000 people participated in these workshops.

In parallel with the distribution, we ran an awareness campaign with the help of certified nurses and the Power to Girls Foundation, an NGO that supports and empowers Black and marginalised girls through mentorship and health wellness in disseminating menstrual health management.

Achievements and Limitations



Notable Successes:

A significant outcome of this initiative has been the establishment of emergency pad banks in schools. School authorities were encouraged to liaise with parents to facilitate an emergency pad bank in their institution to foster inclusivity. This policy ensures that no girl misses school due to the unavailability of menstrual products. By this, I aim to track the usage of these emergency pad banks as an indicator of the ongoing need and their success in keeping girls in school. Through this project implementation, I have influenced school policies to include menstrual health in their broader health and wellness programmes, ensuring that girls' menstrual needs are met during their education.

A unique aspect of the project has been the inclusion of men and boys in the menstrual health education sessions. By involving them in the discussion, the initiative helped foster a broader

cultural change toward a more inclusive perspective on menstrual health, where menstruation is seen as a natural and accepted part of life.



What Didn't Go as Intended

The project was successfully implemented, though it faced a challenge in sourcing 100% biodegradable menstrual products. Only one of Ghana's two manufacturers of biodegradable menstrual products was operational at the time, and they could not provide the required volume of kits. While this initially seemed like a setback, I adapted by sourcing sustainable and recycling-approved menstrual products. To further support our commitment to eco-friendly practices, I also produced recycled toilet bins for the schools receiving the products. Additionally, I coordinated with school management to establish proper disposal channels, ensuring the recycled materials would be responsibly handled and disposed of.

As much as the initiative centred predominately on the need for conscious hygienic practices and materials, talks on preserving the environment were discussed. Discussions explored why it is important to use sustainable products to help better the environment, highlighting how using sustainable products can reduce human consumption and the production of plastic waste. This, in turn, benefits the environment by mitigating climate change and protecting our water bodies. The session was highly interactive, with participants actively sharing ideas on how to make positive impacts on the environment through thoughtful health and lifestyle choices.



Lessons Learned and Skills Developed

Reflecting on the "Let's End Period Poverty Ghana" campaign, I'm proud of the skills I developed and the positive impact the project had on both the community and my personal growth. One of the standout skills I honed was project management, especially in overseeing logistics and coordinating with schools and local partners. Managing a large-scale project required planning, coordination, and adaptability. The project taught me how to navigate logistical challenges, communicate effectively with diverse stakeholders, and balance various responsibilities, all of which were critical to the project's smooth execution.

I also strengthened my communication and public speaking abilities by delivering workshops and advocacy sessions to over 1,000 students. Engaging with students and community members, I learned how to adapt my message to suit different audiences of diverse backgrounds, which pleasantly surprised me as it showed how effectively I could connect with diverse groups on a sensitive topic.

Additionally, my stakeholder engagement skills developed significantly. Collaborating with school leaders, teachers, and community organisations to ensure the project's success required building trust and maintaining open communication. This helped me forge meaningful connections and made clear the importance of relationship-building in achieving sustainable outcomes.

The project's success, as evidenced by the positive feedback from schools and the increased accessibility to menstrual products, was incredibly rewarding. Personally, this experience demonstrated my capability to lead impactful initiatives, fulfilling my self-development aims by enhancing my leadership, adaptability, and confidence in tackling challenges that matter to me and the communities I aim to serve.

Also, navigating logistical issues has improved my ability to adapt and find practical solutions. Despite the initial goal of sourcing 100% biodegradable products, only one manufacturer in Ghana was operational, limiting the available supply, I adapted by procuring sustainable but recyclable menstrual kits instead and introduced eco-friendly disposal bins for schools to manage waste responsibly. This required recalculating the budget, emphasizing flexibility in managing project funds, and ensuring responsible use of resources while maintaining project integrity. The experience highlighted the importance of resilience and adaptability in real-world project execution.



I have also gained invaluable insights into both myself and the broader impact I can make within communities. One of the most significant things I learned about myself is my resilience and ability to navigate complex challenges with confidence. Running a project of this scale came with unexpected obstacles, from logistical hurdles to addressing cultural sensitivities around menstrual health. I learned to embrace these challenges, finding solutions creatively and adapting as needed, which reinforced my capacity to stay focused and proactive, especially withing a short period for such an initiative.

I also discovered how empowering it feels to advocate directly for others. Speaking to over 1,000 students and leading workshops on menstrual health showed me that I have a genuine ability to engage others on sensitive topics, using clear language and empathy. This strengthened my confidence in public speaking and in addressing topics that matter deeply to me and those I serve.

One of the most significant personal insights I gained was realizing how much I enjoy fostering connections. Building relationships with teachers, community leaders, and students requires

active listening and a genuine understanding of their needs and concerns. I found that this approach not only made the project more impactful but also deepened my own commitment to advocacy work.

This experience has cemented my belief that I want to continue working in social impact roles that allow me to combine strategic planning with meaningful community engagement. I'm more aware of my strengths in navigating challenges with sensitivity and confidence.

After 'Let's End Period Poverty Ghana Initiative'

Going forward, I am dedicated to expanding this work through a grassroots charity organisation focused on reproductive health education and resource distribution. This organisation will leverage the relationships built during the campaign to provide menstrual products and ongoing educational workshops, equipping students, teachers, and community members with local tools to sustain these initiatives. By establishing partnerships with local health providers and training community leaders, I aim to create a replicable model that can be adopted in other regions, inspiring broader community involvement.

This project has also profoundly influenced my academic path. I plan to pursue a PhD in reproductive health, focusing on developing community-centred approaches that address reproductive health access challenges in underserved populations. The hands-on experience and insights from the campaign will directly inform my research, enabling me to bring practical, field-tested solutions to the academic study of reproductive health.

Conclusion



The "Let's End Period Poverty Ghana" initiative has reached over 1,000 girls, contributing to menstrual health and education in a way that is both sustainable and culturally relevant. Through this project, I've gained invaluable skills and a deeper commitment to advocacy work. The experience has solidified my future goals, where lies founding a charity for reproductive health education and pursuing a PhD in reproductive health. I am determined to continue advocating for menstrual health as a fundamental right and inspire future generations to do the same.

Appendix

Link to pictures

This is a link to the project uploaded to Google Drive:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lnaeAv3NTJSG-XqgD6VIpfxG7Jq8foNp>

More pictures from the project







