

Comfy Care12 News

2024

DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,

Welcome to this edition of the Comfy Care12 newsletter, where we share the impactful work we have accomplished in providing menstrual health and hygiene support to underprivileged girls in rural high schools across Tanzania.

HIGHLIGHTS

This financial year has been a productive one. We visited two schools in Arusha and five secondary schools in the Kilimanjaro region, reaching **497** young women and girls.

This achievement would not have been possible without the support of our partners, including the Australian Volunteers Program, Ananke Foundation, and MS-TCDC's Arusha Youth Hub Program. We also collaborated with like-minded organisations such as Inherit Your Rights, Empowered Girls Africa, and Glami Tanzania. We are extremely grateful to our friends and partners who have enabled us to keep girls in school.

LOOKING AHEAD

As ever, our priority is to:

- promote menstrual hygiene education
- create awareness of a woman's right to access safe menstrual products
- minimise the number of school days missed by girls.

This year, Comfy Care12 also plans to expand our education sessions to include boys, promoting a more inclusive understanding of menstrual health and hygiene. Find out more about this initiative on page 2.

Despite our ongoing progress, our work is constrained by our financial model, which relies heavily on voluntary contributions for over 80% of our budget. This dependence limits our ability to deliver high-quality normative and technical work that local communities expect and need. That's why we are always on the lookout for like-minded partners, donors and volunteers to support our mission. If you are interested in finding out how you can support Comfy Care12 to keep Tanzanian girls in school, please contact me via the contact details listed within this newsletter.

Warm regards,

MAGDALENA MASSANJA

Managing Director
Comfy Care12



FOLLOW US



Comfy Care12 provides menstrual health and hygiene education and reusable sanitary pads to underprivileged women and girls in rural Tanzania.

IDA FUNDS SANITARY PRODUCTS FOR 130 SCHOOL GIRLS

When Finnish entrepreneur Ida Huiskonen heard Comfy Care12 Managing Director Magdalena Massanja present at a Women's Day celebration hosted in Arusha, Tanzania, she was inspired to begin a fundraising campaign to support Comfy Care12.

So far, Ida has raised US\$843.

Ms Massanja said Comfy Care12 will use these funds to visit Nanja Secondary School on 12 July this year and provide menstrual health and hygiene education and reusable pads to around 130 girls.

"Nanja Secondary School is a government school based in the Arusha region," Ms Massanje said.

"Its health teachers have identified students who come from low income families and who, among other challenges, face a lack of menstrual health products during their periods while at school."

A survey recently conducted in the Arusha region showed:

- 95% of all households conduct unsafe menstrual health practices
- 31% of households do not have access to menstrual health products.

As a consequence, girls often drop out of school or miss up to 35-40 days of school per year to stay home during their period.



Ms Huiskonen has built a career supporting startups and entrepreneurs. One of the areas of impact she is particularly interested in is gender equality and the education of women and girls.

Ms Huiskonen is still accepting donations via GoFundMe. To donate click [here](#).

WHY SHOULD WE INCLUDE BOYS?



Australian volunteer, Jodi Titley, interviewed Magdalena Massanje about Comfy Care12's plan to include boys in menstrual health and hygiene education sessions.

Jodi: Why include boys in menstrual health education?

Magdalena: Including boys reduces stigma and normalises menstruation, fostering a supportive environment. Educated boys are less likely to perpetuate myths, and contribute to a healthier dialogue around menstruation.

Jodi: How does this promote gender equality?

Magdalena: By fostering mutual respect and understanding, we can break down gender stereotypes, enabling boys to support gender equality throughout their lives.

Jodi: Can this impact boys' own health and hygiene practices?

Magdalena: Yes, it teaches them general health and hygiene practices, encouraging good habits and benefiting overall public health.

Jodi: Can boys become menstrual health advocates?

Magdalena: Absolutely. Educated boys can advocate for menstrual equity and access to products, supporting initiatives to provide menstrual products in schools and public facilities. This helps combat period poverty and ensures menstruation doesn't hinder opportunities and well-being.

Jodi: When will the first session with boys begin?

Magdalena: We will start scouting interested parties this year and work with local counterparts like Peut Naidim (EPN), who already include boys in their menstrual education programs. We've learned a lot from them and plan to attend their sessions to understand what works best. So stay tuned!



INTERNATIONAL MENSTRUAL HEALTH DAY AT MATEVES

In May, coinciding with International Menstrual Health Day, Comfy Care12 and fellow educational NGO, GLAMI Tanzania, visited Mateves Secondary School in the Arusha region to provide menstrual health and hygiene education and reusable sanitary pads to 200 high school girls.

The students were very interested in learning about what happens to women’s bodies and why, and we were able to bust a few myths along the way.

During each of our sessions, we always provide students with an opportunity to write down questions for the teachers to address. Common questions, include:

- ‘Why does a woman experience mood swings during her menstrual flow?’
- ‘If I have reached the puberty age and I haven’t started my period, is it a problem?’

There also some common myths that we need to correct, including:

- ‘Is it true if I pick green vegetables on the farm (while I am menstruating), it will dry up the plants?’
- ‘Why are we not allowed to bury used sanitary pads?’ (in some cultures it is taboo to bury blood)

“Is it true if I go pick green vegetables on the farm it will dry up the plants?”

At the end of the session, the students expressed deep gratitude for the education they received, and especially for the sanitary pads provided, and it is this feedback that inspires our team to continue our work.

FOSTERING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENSTRATION AT KIDINGA

Comfy Care12 and GLAMI Tanzania recently visited Kidinga Secondary School to talk to 110 students, aged 12 to 18, about menstrual health and hygiene, and the cultural taboos that restrict girls and women from participating in certain activities

“It is important to emphasise the importance of hygiene to prevent infections,” Eve said.

“And it’s important to give girls a safe space to express their concerns and ask questions. Open dialogue helps to normalise menstruation, reducing the shame and embarrassment often associated with it. By sharing personal stories and experiences, we create a supportive community where the girls feel understood and empowered.”

To ensure the training session had a lasting impact, free sanitary towels and underwear were distributed

to the girls, and the school established a mentorship program, where older students who had undergone the training could support their younger peers.

“By equipping the students with this essential knowledge, we are able to foster a positive attitude towards menstruation, and empower them to take charge of their menstrual health.” Eve said.



ZERO TOLERANCE OF ABUSE

Comfy Care12 has a zero-tolerance policy regarding child abuse. We comply with all relevant laws of the United Republic of Tanzania in relation to child protection and in particular the Law of the Child Act 2009.

WHERE TO GET HELP

If you (or someone you know) are being abused, call:

NATIONAL CHILD HELPLINE : 116

The Tanzanian National Child Hotline can provide support and advice, and may also provide information about One-Stop Centres that help victims of gender-based violence, including medical care, psychological support, and legal assistance.

The Tanzania Police Force also dedicated Police Gender and Children Desks to address barriers to justice for women and children. As of 2018, desks had been formally established in 420 police stations.



HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO COMFY CARE12

DONATE

By donating as little as US\$10 you can help one school girl in rural Tanzania remain in class – with confidence and dignity – by providing:

- four comfortable, hygienic, locally-made, reusable sanitary pads that will last up to 18 months.
- Cover the cost of a much-needed and much-wanted quality education session on menstrual health and hygiene.

VOLUNTEER

Contact Comfy Care12 to discuss how you can volunteer.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

- ♥ **Learn new skills:** Practise teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving.
- ♥ **Meet people:** Make friends with people from all walks of life.
- ♥ **Feel fantastic:** Boost your mood and health by staying active and having a purpose.
- ♥ **Make a difference:** Help your community and see the positive changes you're a part of.
- ♥ **Find joy:** Experience the amazing feeling of knowing you're making the world a better place.

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS



Rotary Club of Arusha



Womenchoice Industries