

My Hygiene, Business, and I

Introduction

As premed students at UCSD, we have the resources to help developing countries achieve basic health needs. The lack of focus on women hygiene is a global concern, and our team can encourage a sustainable approach towards healthier feminine hygiene practice beginning in the community of Cameroon. Our focus is on Cameroon's lack of healthy and sustainable reusable pads for menstruating girls and women. Its rarity and the lack of education surrounding the topic cause many of them to resort to unsanitary substitutions that could cause health complications. To create a healthy and sustainable reusable pad for the women and girls in Cameroon, we looked at materials readily available to their community, especially in terms of their agriculture. Specifically, we are looking at using cotton for the outer layer and for the buttons. We will be using shredded banana stalks for the absorbent core and the backsheet. These materials can be measured and cut according to the paper template and sewn together.

Thus we have determined that there is a need for girls in Cameroon to have more readily available menstrual hygiene products. This need extends to both South and North Cameroon, with both areas providing their respective challenges for pad distribution and access. The stigma surrounding menstruation in Cameroon is a major hurdle towards providing for these needs. Societal shame discourages women from attending to their menstrual needs causing many to avoid it completely. Many girls, especially when first exposed to menstruation, are unable to achieve daily tasks like attending school. Most are shocked and terrified due to an abundance of misinformation and an absence of accurate information which, coupled with a lack of sanitary and sustainable pads, puts them at a disadvantage in completing their daily lives/tasks.

Our goal is thus to provide women and children in Cameroon with the resources and the ability to make and use menstrual pads. Furthermore, providing safe and easily accessible menstrual products will allow female students to be able to spend more time at school instead of leaving school early or skipping school.

Our team consists of students from the student organization American Medical Student Association at the University of California San Diego.