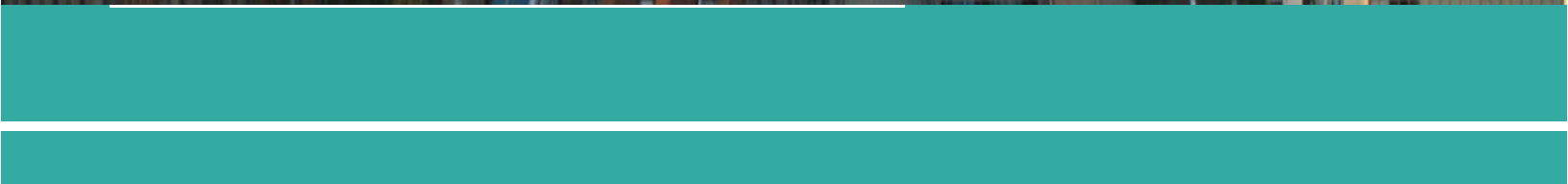


GO WITH THE FLOW, PERIOD

(GoMakeADifference Project

**UWC Robert Bosch College
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What did we achieve?

The project's aim was to facilitate menstrual education and distribution of menstrual cups to homeless women and girls in the streets of Nairobi, Kenya and that is exactly what my team and I spent the past two months on. To begin with, as our target group was based in the streets we had to find an effective way of bringing all the women and girls together at one meeting point in order to start our group trainings and finally the menstrual cups distribution. To do this, we partnered with Joy Divine Feeding Program which is a program that brings the homeless together every three days in a week by serving them meals. Afterwards, we had an introduction session with the women and girls and had conversations with them in the first weeks to make a safe space for them and act as a transition to our trainings that would follow.

To facilitate our trainings we made Twaweza Program workbooks courtesy of Femme International in both English and Swahili to ensure an optimum comprehension of what we would be training the women and girls. The workbooks were planned to cover the female reproductive system, puberty, personal hygiene, menstruation and the menstrual cycle, managing and tracking periods, Pre-Menstrual Syndrome (PMS) and how to manage it, problems associated with menstruation, Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs), Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs), reusable pads, menstrual cups and more. In addition to managing the trainings and distributing menstrual cups to the women, we had the privilege of having more discussions through new friendships we formed on gender inequities in Nairobi, being a woman in the streets from both emic and etic perspectives and period poverty. After the project we were nearly all a menstrual movement family.

What difference was made?

Difference was made on several levels to the homeless women and girls of whom our project was impacted, on our team while running the whole project and on general communal perspectives on

menstruation. We made a difference particularly to the women and girls by being the only group of people that considered providing them with more sustainable menstrual cups that they could use for up to ten years. For all the women and girls, it was their first time learning about menstrual cups and it was a fulfilling experience seeing them have menstrual cups for the first time and probably not having to worry about their periods any longer resulting from lack of sanitary supplies. Additionally, as the menstrual cups came in Femme kits we provided the women and girls with bars of soap and at least a pair of underwear each to allow for proper sanitation during their periods.

As part of the team, I was challenged and inspired more not only to have conversations with the girls but with the younger boys too. With time I together with my team had more interactions with both women and men in the streets and learned about more issues younger people especially face in the streets including gang violence, drug abuse and rape. From these realisations we partnered with the community and Joy Divine Feeding Program and always had weekly meetings where we discussed these difficult scenarios, condoned them and encouraged change by providing alternative opportunities in education. A project that arose through these interactions was the *Masomo Mtaani* which translated from Swahili to “education on the streets”. This was an inflection point for me during the project and I still treasure the opportunity we all heard to learn from each other.

The immediate community was very open in supporting our movement and mission and at some point also encouraged their younger daughters to join in the trainings we gave in order to learn more on menstrual education. This shaped to some extent their perception on menstruation in general and of course clarified to the girls that menstruation is not something they should be shamed of as it is natural and something they should embrace and be proud of. The community was happy.

Are we proud?

Yes, we are proud of our efforts and our team spirit. As my team and I both came from the opposite ends in Nairobi we appreciate that we were able to move for more than three hours for three days weekly especially in June to make the project possible. Further, we are happy that we were able to learn and adapt to the Swahili slang that is commonly used in the streets. With time, we made it our mode of communication while training the women and girls.

Additionally, I appreciate the patience, flexibility and perseverance we had while teaching. In the streets, most people abuse drugs which affects their concentration. This could not have been an ideal situation had we strictly followed our teaching scheduled we had drafted before. To work with the women and girls, therefore, we had them choose the times they wanted to learn and made sessions shorter with breaks in between. This made it a lot easier for us and for them and I value that we gave them the chance to have a say in terms of when they felt ready to be taught.

How did we utilize our budget?

We used our budget to get 50 menstrual cups, learning materials for the project which includes the course work books and stationery and candy for younger girls as rewards when they participated in any way in the classes. With the remaining money, we got about 5 reusable pads which we gave the young girls who joined us in our sessions from the immediate community.

What have we learnt?

Throughout the process of organizing the logistics of the project we learnt the value of doing an evaluation of the project and our target group by going to areas where they are found to assess their situations on the ground. Additionally, the value of teamwork has been emphasised even further and this has been brought about especially by partner organisations who helped us easily connect to our

target group. In terms of the project execution, I learnt that it is okay to be flexible in terms of accommodating for the needs of those one is serving. This came to play when we asked the girls and women to choose the times and days they wanted to learn instead of us having a fixed time that they could not concentrate or could find themselves occupied.

This project has made us learn that there is a lot going on the streets of Nairobi and has inspired us to think deeper on how we will continue helping women and girls beyond menstruation and towards sexual and mental health support.

A LOOK INTO THE PROJECT!



