

RED ALERT : Educate, Empower, End Period Poverty.

The project RED ALERT: Educate, Empower, End Period Poverty was aimed at providing period education and providing period products in Chitambi Village of Kasama district, Zambia. Through workshops, we educated young girls in the school about menstruation and period hygiene, hence breaking stigmas and barriers. It also involved teaching the girls how to make their own reusable sanitary produce and giving them instructions on how to use them properly.

My mission was to raise awareness about the challenges of menstrual access, break down stigmas and empower the community with the resources and knowledge needed to ensure that every girl has the dignity and support they deserve during their cycle. Through education, distribution and advocacy, I aimed at ensuring that no girl has to miss out on opportunities and most importantly an education because of their period.

I'm happy to report that all this and so much more was achieved successfully.

After some initial background planning in terms of collecting and putting together all the necessary resources and communicating with the school authorities, the project officially commenced on the 14th of July, 2025.

On the very first day I visited the school and held my first workshop with students from three classes; fifth to seventh grade. This workshop was an ice breaker discussion to create a sense of trust and create an environment where everyone was encouraged to learn and make contributions as well. We then had our official discussion on what menstruation is and the importance of menstrual health and education awareness. It was very interesting to have this discussion in such an open space because this is not a topic that is normally discussed freely as it is still very taboo in most villages. We ended the first session with a question and answer session and a strong emphasis on treating periods with dignity and pride.

On the second day, the hands-on work began. On this day we discussed the different types of period products available and how they are used. Many of the girls reported to have never used any of them at all as they were not readily available and could sometimes be very expensive. After this discussion we introduced reusable sanitary towels. We went through the steps on how to make them at home and how to use and keep them properly. Each student was given the chance to cut out their own fabric and put together their own sanitary towel. This empowered the girls with real knowledge and skill, therefore creating self reliance with a sustainable solution.

Over the next few days, I engaged a tailor to help with the process and we managed to make 200 reusable sanitary pads. On the final day, We distributed the sanitary pads to more that 100 girls, each receiving two to keep. I strongly emphasised on the importance of washing them and storing them properly.

The project did not end here, I went on to another school in the suburban area of the district. Here I held an interactive workshop with the girls as well. We discussed menstrual health and education and

why it is important. I made them aware of the statistics on period poverty and encouraged them to see themselves as advocates for change.

Over the course of the summer I was fortunate enough to work with another organisation that was running a campaign on menstrual awareness. After hearing about my work and what I had done, they reached out to me to help them run their campaign in another school where we distributed more than a hundred reusable sanitary pads.

One challenge I faced in particular was the difficulty of including boys in these conversations. When I planned this, I had envisioned the workshops where both girls and boys could learn together therefore breaking the stigma at its roots. However because of the deep cultural sensitivity and the fact that menstruation is still rarely spoken about openly in the community, it was not possible to involve the boys at this stage.

To avoid making the girls uncomfortable I chose to just focus on them for now. I understood that including the boys into the conversation prematurely would have led to resistance. Not only from the girls but also from the wider community which is still very conservative around menstruation. However I did place a strong emphasis on reassuring the girls that menstruation is natural, normal and never something to be ashamed of.

While it was difficult to involve the boys in these conversations, I realized that creating safe spaces for girls was the first step. Change will come slowly and sometimes it starts really quietly.

Doing this project has been a journey of learning, growth and impact for me. What struck me the most was not the lack of access to pads, it was the silence that still surrounds menstruation. For many of the girls I worked with, it was their first time being invited to speak openly about periods without fear, shame or judgement. This made take a different approach to the project, menstrual health is not just about period products; it's about dignity, voice and equality.

Through doing this project, I have seen the power of education and dignity. I learnt that empowerment begins with knowledge and that even learning a simple skill like making a reusable sanitary towel can transform a girl's sense of control over her own life. It's more than just pieces of clothing put together, it's a symbol of freedom, independence and the possibility of staying in school without interruption.

This journey has taught me patience, humility and hope. I know that ending period poverty is not a one time event, it's a movement that requires persistence. I know that we can break the silence around menstruation in many communities and break the barriers to education and opportunities.

I am deeply grateful for the support I received from Go Make a Difference and I'm inspired to continue making a difference.