

# THE UNTOLD STORIES

## A TRUE STORY OF MY TEENAGE LIFE IN THE VILLAGE

### THE STORY OF MENSTRATION IN POOR VILLAGE GIRLS IN KENYA



Many stories are told every day, but there are some which are never told due to the pain and the shame behind them. Almost every girl in the villages of Kenya has an untold story, one that brings bad memories once remembered. I do have mine too!! One that I have never narrated to anyone till now. Not even my own sisters.

I was a happy girl, born in a family with seven sisters and five brothers. Life was good I would say. At the beginning. I felt good having so many sisters who would carry me along after school and go with me to church on Sundays. It felt good to be a baby girl. Life went on until one day. A day I will never forget because it was the beginning of about five years of agony. I remember very

well that I was in class six when the teachers started teaching us about adolescence and the implications that being a teenager comes with. I knew that I was getting there soon. I would say that I was lucky to have a friend who was older than me, a girl who was my desk mate. Her name was Sally.

Sally had already started the journey and knew it so well. I almost felt like I was already there and it felt so easy to deal with, until that day finally dawned on me. I HAVE STARTED MY PERIODS...I felt a moment of excitement as I ran to tell Sally about it, it was like the first step of becoming a big girl to me (an ADULT)but soon reality stroke me..How do I deal with it? I had never heard any of my elder sisters talk about it, I had never seen a pad in my house before, I was so afraid to talk to my mother about it because it seemed like she didn't know that any of those things existed. Only the teacher seemed to know about those things. It was very hard to find a tissue in a rural village house those days but a handkerchief (a piece of cloth from an old cloth) was available, one which we used to blow our nose. That was my only savior, but it could only save me for a day making my other three days of menstruations a leaving hell. The only option was to tell my mother that I had a headache so as not to go to school, something she will only accept for a day then the next I'm told to go to school. I remember spending the whole day without standing up during lessons. Break time was a relief and not before every child went out of the classroom then I'd remove my sweater, tie it around my waist then slowly go to the toilet to check if my small cloth is okay. The rest of the day as cold as it could be, my sweater was around my waist till I got home. The end of the four agonizing days was finally over, such a relieve but waiting for the next month to come never gave me enough peace.

Four years went by, I finished my eighth grade and time to join Secondary School came. I remember that January when I was preparing to join my Form one in a boarding school. My mother came home with a bag of shopping for my school personal items, and that was my first time to see a pack of Cotton wool in the bag. Even if she never said a word about the pack, It was like being born again, it was such a relieve, that's when my life changed. What followed was a shopping of proper pads that could not leak at all. We called them STAY FREE...

I keep asking myself questions now that I'm a mother of two girls who I'm so close with and discuss so much about their periods and the pad thing... **DID MY MOTHER HATE ME? DID SHE KNOW ABOUT IT BUT IGNORED? WHY DID SHE HAVE TO WAIT FOR THAT LONG TO BUY ME A PAD WHICH WAS NOT MORE THAN 30 SHILLINGS? WHY?**

### **THE PROBLEM**

These are questions that I cannot get answers because I wasn't bold enough to ask her then and I won't ask now because she won't have the answer for me either. My answer could be right or wrong. I assume it was seen as Taboo. This made me suffer a lot. But I keep wondering how many other girls are going through the same thing that I went through, they are voiceless and they continue suffering inside, they have no Dignity, they are humiliated, sad, and this even prevents the full growth of the poor girls. Every time I visit a school, I try to engage teachers in this talk and the same thing continues over and over. This brings me back the bad memories of my teenage.

Limited access to safe affordable, convenient and culturally appropriate methods for dealing with menstruation has far reaching implications for rights and physical, social and mental well-being of many women and adolescent girls in Kenya. It undermines sexual and reproductive health and well-being and has been shown to restrict access to education."

Studies of girls' school attendance and menstruation have stated that drop-out rates among schoolgirls accelerate at the onset of puberty and menstruation.

Adolescence is a crucial stage of life and one that is challenging for most girls because of its physical and psychological changes. One of the major physiological changes in adolescence girls is menstruation. Today in Kenya menstruation is not only a health concern, but also an educational policy concern.

### **TEMPORARY SOLUTION**

I feel that the rights of a girl child are violated and even if the Government should be the one ensuring the provision of sanitary ware takes place, very little has being done and something needed to be done. That's why with a few resources I decided to stand up and make a difference in the girl child life by donating a pad every month when I can.



This can never be enough, there are so many girls out there suffering and we need to do more than just the girls around us. We need a lasting solution to this matter. We want our girls to be happy throughout the month and attend classes without failure of fear.

My solution is to give each teenage girl in my home area a pack of eight pads every month. But my worry is how about the ones not in my area? Who takes care of them to make sure that they get a pack? I have to stretch my wings and give a lasting solution to over 50,000 girls in our schools who don't have access to any pads. **HOW WILL I MEET THIS GOAL????** I keep asking myself. A pad costs minimum Khs.80/\$8 per girl per month. Each girl will need at least one packet per month. If we target the least number of girls about 5000.00 per month it will be Kshs. 400,000.00/\$4000. This might not be possible to achieve. We need a lasting solution.

### **MY LASTING SOLUTION**

I have been thinking of a lasting solution, something affordable that will help these girls overcome this problem for a longer period and came up with an idea which will help our girls continue with their studies throughout the month.

## **REUSABLE PADS**

Buying disposable sanitary pads has proven to be very expensive. They cost more than a day's wage and so many women cannot be able to sustain themselves and their families needs. The only solution is to make reusable/washable pads available to them so that we can restore their dignity and help many girls attend school on daily basis.



Our aim is to reach about 50,000 or more cannot afford to buy sanitary pads every month and give them a solution per for a whole year by distributing reusable sanitary pads to girls

This can only be done by the help of well wishers who can connect with my story. I'm appealing to any individual or organizations to come on board and assist me in doing this.

## **BENEFITS**

- ❖ It provides an alternative and affordable sanitary pad.
- ❖ It allows them to attend school without worrying about their menses.
- ❖ It demystifies the cultural taboos about sexuality and menstruation.

## **WHAT IS REQUIRED**

- ❖ Fabric and materials to make the pads
- ❖ Sewing and interlocking machines and sewing accessories
- ❖ Man power
- ❖ Packaging and distribution
- ❖ Donate the reusable pads to us if possible

**Give as little as \$5 and restore dignity to a girl in the village.**



**HELP ME TO UNCOVER THESE UNTOLD STORIES FOR OVER 50,000 GIRLS**

*For more information please contact me on:*

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