

The Importance of Feminine Hygiene Products to Schoolgirls in Liberia

The problem: Periods are a fact of life. In developing countries, many women don't have access to a plethora of feminine hygiene products, let alone resources like bathrooms with proper waste receptacles and running water. Furthermore, in a country that has recently been ravaged by Ebola, a blood-borne illness, women and girls currently dealing with their monthly cycles are often looked upon with disgust and fear.

Aside from the typical hurdles this causes, some women in Liberia must use rags that are quickly soiled. This forces many of these young women to stay home from school one week a month where they have the privacy and resources to deal with their cycles. Unfortunately, this causes many girls to fall severely behind in their educations due to these interruptions.

That's where we come in. Our mission to bring restoration, dignity, and hope to the women and girls in Liberia does not end merely with healing and prevention of fistula, but by also making sure every girl has access to a proper education. One way we can accomplish this mission is by providing menstrual cups to schoolgirls.

One menstrual cup can last at least 4 years with proper care and allows a woman to be away from home for up to 12 hours without having to dispose of waste. They are very hygienic, safe, and don't create mounds of waste in a landfill. The expense of the cups compared to buying feminine products make this product very inexpensive as well.

The solution: Dignity: Liberia partnered with [MeLuna](#), a company based in Germany, who graciously agreed to help us purchase cups at their production cost.

BENEFITS OF MENSTRUAL CUPS

- Can be worn up to 12 hours
- With proper care, one cup can last up to 2 years
- Safe and sanitary. Not linked to toxic shock syndrome (TSS) like tampons
- Easily cleaned and disinfected for immediate re-use which is great for the environment and your purse strings
- Odor-free and leak-free
- Safe - doesn't contain any harmful substances such as chlorine, fragrances, or BPA

TESTIMONIAL

"I grew up using traditional feminine hygiene products while never truly feeling they were hygienic. Throughout adolescence and into adulthood I found ways to hide these products in my purse for whenever there was an imminent need. It seemed there was not another way to engage with this awkward monthly female process. At thirty I was open to learn about any other solution that did not incur a monthly cost or result in bags of trash polluting the environment. I happened to learn about menstrual cups and I decided to learn more about this process. I learned that in other countries (western and non western) women have been using them in reliable and sanitary ways. I researched finding one for myself and tried it. Unlike pads and tampons, there is no trash involved, there is no monthly fee and hygienically there is no blood exposed to the air which also means that there is no smell and there is more control of the process of blood disposal overall.

Basic info: A woman can wear a menstrual cup for up to 12 hours which means that she can literally go all day without having to interact with a dirty bathroom stall trashcan. She can take care of her cycle at home privately and cleanly.

When a menstrual cup is removed the blood is immediately spilled into the toilet where it is flushed away. The cup itself needs a quick rinsing and is then reinserted. Once learned it is a very easy process (It took me about one cycle link to figure it out, the mechanics are different from a tampon but no more complicated once learned).

After a cycle the menstrual cup needs to be cleaned with unscented soap and then boiled to sanitize for the next cycle. That's it. There are no stains or smell and a menstrual cup can last up to two years if properly cared for. The cup can easily store in your purse and overall can provide comfort and freedom during a potentially uncomfortable time.

I have been so blown away by this and have been encouraged to hear that there are organizations providing menstrual cups for women in developing countries as a healthy and sanitary alternative to rags or lack of expensive feminine products overseas. It feel like such a win win to provide clean health and a way for young girls to continue to attend school while on their period. What a cool way to support confidence in young girls!"

Michelle M