



17th March 2015

NEEMA REUSABLE SANITARY PADS PILOT PROJECT REPORT

PILOT PROJECT IMPLEMENTED AT NJENGA KARUME AND GATATHA PRIMARY SCHOOLS, CIANDA WARD, KIAMBU COUNTY BY RURAL TEENAGERS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The following report details the milestones taken by Rural Teenagers Support Programme (RTSP) in the Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads Teens Hygiene Pilot Project. The pads are been donated to vulnerable school going teenage girls as a sustainable, hygienic and cost effective menstrual management alternative in rural areas of Kenya.



A Neema Reusable Sanitary Pad designed by RTSP

The girls are vulnerable due to poverty that has led to many families not affording a regular supply of disposable sanitary pads. We are glad to report that the pilot project has been a great success, and today RTSP is proud to present Neema Reusable Cloth Sanitary Pads as the way to go for sustainable menstrual management.

Boys: Under the Teens Hygiene Program boys too receive kits that promote proper personal hygiene, a core recipe for high self-esteem, leading to all round personal development.

The climax of the pilot project was on 10th October 2014 when RTSP in conjunction with the Austrian Embassy in Kenya, being the main project donors, donated 323 hygiene kits; 167 for girls and 156 for boys at Njenga Karume and Gatatha Primary Schools in Cianda Ward, Kiambu County.



Ambassador Dr. Harald Guenther and Ms. Katharina (Deputy Head of mission) Austrian Embassy Nairobi donate hygiene kits to girls at Gatatha Primary School on 10th October 2014.

Other organizations that kindly supported the pilot project and RTSP programs include Bidco Oil Refineries through their donation of Nuru Antiseptic soap, East African Canvass who donated bags to contain the girls' kits, ACK St. James Cathedral who donated a snap button machine and buttons, Sumsconsult Quantity Surveyors, Freb Pharmaceuticals Ltd (Kiambu), amongst other well-wishers listed at the end of this report.

The Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads have been in use for the last 4 months, successfully combating the shame of improper menstrual management that the girls in the pilot project used to experience previously. The

positive feedback we have received from the girls, has given us great encouragement to ensure Neema Reusable Sanitary pads reach as many vulnerable school going teenage girls as possible in Kenya. We look forward to partnering with diverse organizations and well-wishers in general to ensure the challenge of improper menstrual management is a thing of the past. The result being, better quality of life for our female population in rural areas.

RTSP is also focusing on improving the hygiene standards of the boy child by providing hygiene kits for boys simultaneous to providing girls kits.



Ambassador Dr. Harald Guenther donates boys' hygiene kits assisted by RTSP Volunteer Anne at Gatatha Primary School.

The pilot program by the Austrian Embassy Kenya also provided kits for boys. The result is greater consciousness amongst boys to maintain good personal hygiene. Complimented with the Life skills Training program, teenage boys will build a positive mind-set which is a good foundation for success.

In 2015, RTSP targets to raise KShs. 8,000,000 which will see the donation of 6,000 Hygiene Kits in Kenya.

The following is a link to a video link that captures the feedback session in which RTSP Teens Counsellor Lucy and Volunteer Leah shared a lively session with the girls of Gatatha Primary School <http://youtu.be/bX4cPP9HIAw>

Feedback on Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads

RTSP Counsellor Lucy and volunteer Leah held feedback sessions with the girls of Gatatha Primary and Njenga Karume Primary Schools respectively, to get feedback regarding their Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads user experience.



Girls share their Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads user experience with RTSP Teens Counsellor Lucy.

In all sessions no teachers were present to ensure that the girls did not hold back. RTSP held Teens Counsellors had held sessions with the girls before building a good relationship that allowed for open discussion. The feedback from the girls was as follows:-

- The Neema Reusable pads are soft and comfortable to wear.
- The Neema Reusable pads are easy to wash.
- The Neema Reusable pads do not cause burns or irritation.
- Some girls said they preferred Neema Reusable pads over disposable pads.
- The Neema Reusable pads have come in handy for majority of the girls who cannot afford a regular monthly supply of disposable sanitary pads.
- The girls' female parents have requested that RTSP considers supplying Reusable pads kits for them too.
- The Head-teacher said her office no longer receives requests for sanitary pads from girls in classes 7 and 8 who benefited from the Neema Reusable pads last year, a positive sign that the pads are effective.

In addition we have received the following suggestions from the girls:-

- Some girls suggested that we slightly increase the length of the pads; currently the pads measure 9 inches in length which was based on the size of a disposable sanitary pad.
- Some girls suggested that we insert 2 snap buttons on the wings to more firmly fasten the pads.
- One girl asked that we look into the possibility of developing a pad that can be used continuously for 24 hrs.

What the Teens Hygiene Program aims to achieve

- The challenge that RTSP set out to tackle is the rampant absenteeism, use of inappropriate materials and the quiet vice of child prostitution for pads amongst school going teenage girls in the rural areas of Kenya.
- Many girls have had to contend with embarrassing leaks that lead to humiliation by fellow schoolmates, and infections due to use of improper materials to cope with menses because their parents cannot afford a regular supply of disposable sanitary pads. As a result girls opt to stay away from school losing up to 50 learning days. This leads to poor academic performance, with some girls even dropping out of school.
- The root challenge is poverty occasioned by low incomes, hence, RTSP took the Reusable Sanitary Pads way because it is sustainability, proper hygiene and cost effectiveness.
- The boy child in recent years has slowly been slide-lined with increased attention on empowering the girl child. At RTSP we acknowledge that boys too need to be empowered because they are tomorrow's family heads, and they need to be ready for the responsibility in waiting. RTSP has started by changing the approach to personal hygiene amongst boys, who are generally accepted in their characteristic unkempt state especially in rural areas. Good personal hygiene leads to high self-esteem that leads to all round personal development; a good life foundation for teenage boys.

The Journey Developing Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads

- 1) It all started in 2012 with visits to local public Primary Schools in Kiambu County by Lucy King'ori one of the Founders of RTSP, she identified the need for a **Teens Hygiene Program** that would ensure school going teenage girls had a sustainable solution to the challenge of lacking sanitary pads. As a result, RTSP was founded to implement teens empowerment programs among which was the development of a reusable sanitary pad design to provide a sustainable solution for girls. We also wanted to ensure that personal hygiene amongst boys was improved as a way of overall improving rural communities.
- 2) RTSP embarked on research of existing reusable sanitary pad designs, consulting organizations that have successful models, we acknowledge the support we got from two organizations namely *Afripads* and *Lunapads* for helping us understand the world of reusable sanitary pads. We thank our friends *Cordy Beckstead (USA)* and *Pedro Teixeira (Portugal)* who helped fund our research to develop our Neema Reusable Sanitary pads. Eventually we came up with a winning design that is practical for Kenyan use and beyond.

- 3) After conducting our theoretical research, we engaged the services of an experienced tailor, [Teresia Njambi](#), who made the Neema Reusable Pad a reality. To date she has been an integral part in the production of Neema Reusable Sanitary pads.
- 4) Through the kind donation of [Austrian Embassy in Kenya](#), RTSP was able to start work on the pilot project that would see the donation of 323 hygiene kits; 167 kits for girls containing – 10 reusable sanitary pads, 3 panties, 3 soap bars and a personal hygiene guide pamphlet. 156 kits were for boys and contained 3 underwear, 3 soap bars and a personal hygiene guide pamphlet.
- 5) On commencing work on the pilot project's 323 hygiene kits, RTSP started sourcing additional support to fully implement the pilot project, [Bidco Oil Refineries](#) donated Nuru Antiseptic Soap for all 323 kits. [East African Canvass](#) donated bags for all 167 girls' kits. [ACK St. James Cathedral Kiambu](#) donated a Press Button Machine and snap buttons. Many other donors have supported us ensuring the pilot project was a success. Special mention goes out to [Cordy Beckstead \(USA\)](#) who has supported the founding of RTSP, office establishment and operations, thus facilitating a conducive environment for RTSP to operate and realize the current milestones to date.
- 6) On 9th and 10th March 2015, RTSP went back to Gatatha and Njenga Karume Primary Schools to get feedback from the pilot project beneficiaries, we gladly report it was positive; Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads are the way forward for sustainable, hygienic and cost effective menstrual management.

CONCLUSION

RTSP is encouraged by the success of the pilot project, it confirms that we got the design correct, and the training given on use and care of the Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads is effective to ensure proper use. A good product that is not properly used will not give the desired results. We thank the [Austrian Embassy in Kenya](#) for funding the pilot project, enabling RTSP to test and prove the effectiveness of Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads.

The challenge ahead is still enormous in terms of reaching out to all vulnerable school going teenage girls in Kenya, we hope this report will encourage many more partners and well-wishers to support RTSP to reach out to many more vulnerable teens (boys & girls) in Kenya. **Our 2015 goal is to raise KShs. 8,000,000 (US\$ 100,000) to donate 6,000 hygiene kits.**

We continue to monitor the performance of Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads, including the lifespan of the pads which is projected to be 2 years. We welcome feedback regarding this report. Thank you for reading.

References

Online Multimedia Resources

Item	Url Link
Making Neema Reusable Sanitary Pads	http://on.fb.me/1EU1KRy
Austrian Embassy Funded Pilot Project Video	http://bit.ly/1xB0r2C
Austrian Embassy Funded Pilot Project Photos on RTSP Facebook Page	http://on.fb.me/1sIncxt
Austrian Embassy Funded Pilot Project Photos on Austrian Embassy Facebook Page	http://on.fb.me/1wHHpHE
RTSP's No Shame No Regret 2015 Campaign video	https://youtu.be/banB_kQfTwU
RTSP's Location on Google Maps	http://bit.ly/1GS4T3B

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