

JAN - JUNE 2022



PATHWAYS
MEANINGFULLY ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

NEWSLETTER



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ABOUT PATHWAYS POLICY INSTITUTE

Pathways Policy Institute (PPI), a policy and accountability think tank meaningfully engaging communities on Population, Health, and Environmental & Climate Justice. Pathways works to create safe spaces for advocates and communities to engage and influence public health and environmental policies through research, training and capacity strengthening. Pathways believes that policy engagement has to shift into new and innovative ideas. From January to June 2022, PPI was involved in many activities as highlighted in this Newsletter.

In Brief



MESSAGE FROM PPI'S CHAIRPERSON



Faith Kaesha - Chairperson, PPI

The past six months have proven to be another trying season for Kenyan citizens; with the countdown to the end of the second-generation County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and counties happening, and most of the leadership heading to campaigns; there has been limited-service delivery and focus on development at the expense of politics.

Interestingly, such periods come with increased 'public participation' as leaders try to reconnect with the electorate and a scorecard for their work is put in check. The resilience demonstrated by our communities to ensure the second term of counties doesn't go without realization of their 2017-2022 priorities remains remarkable.

It is our community's collective responsibility to ensure that grassroots communities, particularly young people, are effectively heard and deeply involved in all sectors of development, particularly in Areas of Budget Investment, Inclusion in decision making and awareness of government policies and plans.

With COVID-19 cases going low and the nation fully reopening, PPI has worked to ensure that we are not only focused on its impact on health but social, political and economic dynamics. Thus, through the support of Act! In the last 6 months, PPI has worked to ensure social accountability of water and health in Laikipia.

Through support from PAI, we have also continued to push the county governments of Nyeri, Nakuru and Laikipia to review and invest more in their Primary Health Care facilities and programmes through clear strategies and investment models.

Pathways Policy Institute looks forward to continuing to engage county leadership, women caucus in various county assemblies and the youth in a multitude of ways in people-centered initiatives. Here's to a better half of 2022!



WORD FROM THE TEAM



Lucky Namunyak - Policy & Advocacy Associate

Kenya is seeing a rise in political fever as a result of the national elections in August 2022. Despite this, we have been able to keep things moving. This newsletter lists our successes in the many advocacy efforts we carried out from January to June 2022. It shows how we were able to work together with the county governments in the counties of Laikipia, Nyeri, and Nakuru to make sure that we meaningfully engaged community members to affect change, hold capacity-building and sensitization forums for continued engagement in public participation, and budget advocacy for budget allocations to improve the primary health care facilities. The family planning budget for Laikipia County has been boosted to \$300,000 this financial year after successfully training a civil society organization late last year to develop a memo and submitted it to the County Assembly. We have supported the Nyeri County Reproductive Health Strategic Plan midterm review. With a 3 million investment in the Youth Friendly Centres, the review revealed that Nyeri has advanced in Youth and Adolescent SRH.



Betty Wangui Muchiri -Communications Associate



Sherry Muthaura -Youth & Gender Associate

Pathways has been working hard to end teenage Pregnancies during the pandemic. Since Kenya implemented containment measures, such as closing schools and restricting movement, accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services has become extremely difficult for girls and young women.

Pathways has engaged over 50 youths in public participation through the gender desk in three counties: Laikipia, Nyeri, and Nakuru, with the goal of empowering the youth to be well-informed, active citizens, giving them the opportunity to change the world around them. It is an essential component of any democracy, providing ordinary citizens with information about our democracy and our constitution.

There is powerful potential in our Youth as pathways, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we can channel their power for good.

It's been an eventful transition from 2021 to 2022 and as we all get used to not having our masks on our faces all the time and getting used to the calm that has come after the pandemic, we at Pathways are very happy to have ushered in the year 2022 and we love to keep you in the loop on our activities and projects. Here's what we've been up to between January and June 2022. You will join us in condom blowing for a cause during international condom day, join us in class as we learn alongside our new cohort of youth champions and later unwind by camping with us as we commemorate international women's day alongside engaging county government officials on matters 'Ugatuzi' which translates to devolution. Enjoy our newsletter.

PPI Works With Boys/Men to Promote Gender Equality



Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) in partnership with The Leo Project has launched a 'BetterBoyz' outreach program. The program has sessions that target adolescent boys in upper primary and high school in Laikipia County. The sessions involves the use of a syllabus intended for the engagement of boys in conversations about sexual reproductive needs, menstrual hygiene management (MHM), Boygirl relationship, life skills and career development.

Men and boys play a key role in bringing about gender equality since men often exercise preponderant power in nearly every sphere of life, ranging from personal and relationship decisions to government policy and program decisions. This includes the promotion of gender equitable fatherhood, advocacy against discriminatory laws and policies, and changing attitudes and behaviours that are a cause and consequence of sexual and gender-based violence and women's inequality.

Men and boys are the focus of these engagements as boys' knowledge about MHM is key in the holistic approach to sexuality education in MHM as well as the creation of a supportive environment in which women and adolescent girls receive the required supplies; this understanding will ensure they respect girls' privacy in the use of these products as well as the DE stigmatization of menstruation management products. Menstruation and menstrual practice still face many social, cultural, and religious restrictions which are a big barrier in the path of menstrual hygiene management.

To address these gaps, PPI and The Leo Project target young men in upper primary and high school while at their most formative stage. This has been achieved in 8 schools within Laikipia County namely;

- Mukima Secondary
- Neibor Secondary
- Kagondo Secondary
- Mukima primary
- Oljogi Primary
- Kagondo Primary

From the 8 schools, a total of 510 boys participated in this program who were between the ages of 15 and 20.

PPI Participates in Condom Awareness Activities on International Condom Day



On 13th February, 2022, PPI, Leo Project, UNFA Downtown Chill n' Grill Kitchen, Rotaract Club of Nanyuki, Drawing Dreams Initiative, and Pathways Policy Champions commemorated the International Condom Day event that took place in downtown Nanyuki. The Condom Day seeks to remind the public that condoms prevent sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancies. It is also a day to promote the use of condoms to protect from HIV. Unprotected sex results in complications that lead to incurable infections. Some of the sexually transmitted infections that cannot be cured include hepatitis B, herpes simplex virus, human papillomavirus (HPV), and HIV. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is especially dangerous because left untreated, it leads to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Nearly one million people each day around the world die from HIV/AIDS. In some countries, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death.



The event had an audience of about 200 youths that participated in different activities. These activities included condom blowing, bike riding, free condom distribution, free cervical cancer screening, free HIV testing, free screening for NDC, free consultation, Covid jab vaccination and voter registration. The event led by PPI and partners saw more than 150 youth riders who competed around town while creating awareness and distributing condoms to the local pubs, markets, and bus stations. There was also a public address to increase use of condom awareness.



PPI Trains Youth Champions in Advocacy

The Pathways policy institute change makers' advocacy training for youth champions' initiative took place in Nanyuki, Laikipia, from the 14th to the 16th of February 2022. This was the second training of its kind, which provided an opportunity for 18 youth from Laikipia, Nyeri and Nakuru counties to get training on budget advocacy among other areas of advocacy.

The training aimed at equipping a cohort of young talented youth on advocacy. These youth for the next year (2022) will help shape their respective counties' health advocacy work. The training was focused on the following thematic areas.

- What advocacy is and why it matters.
- Understanding the SMART approach to advocacy and fusing it with the New ABC Advocacy Model.
- Problem tree analysis, how to identify problems and defining a smart objective.
- Stakeholders mapping and power analysis.
- Making sense of county budgets, the budget cycle and an overview of Laikipia's health budget.
- Memo development.
- Developing smart messages and elevator pitches.



Community Outreach and Roadtrip for a Cause on International Women's Day



Women in society for the longest time have been victim to bias and stereotypes which have led to their concerns and rights getting neglected if not abused. To mark international women's day PPI participated in the Road trip 4 a cause, an initiative powered by Drawing Dreams Initiative and supported by PPI, BATUK, NIBC Entertainment, KSG youth center, RedP Kenya, Dress for change initiative and Chill and Grill Kitchen. This was an opportunity for likeminded organizations and youth from different sectors to come together and engage communities while having fun.



On 5th march, 2022 began with a drive to Isiolo by a team of 65 people from Nairobi, Nanyuki and Isiolo for the commemoration of the International Women's Day. The teams aimed to make a road trip to Tumaini and Almasi Center. The meeting point was at Kisima as they geared up for a day of breaking biases that affect women which was in line with the theme of this year's IWD, 'BREAK THE BIAS'.



On arrival at Pepo la Tumaini center, the activities began as the people were split into three groups namely, pre-pubescents, adolescents and youth and the women who had also come were put into a group. The topics for the respective groups were based on age to ensure all groups received gender appropriate information. The prepubescents who were between 6-10 years were introduced to the topics of puberty and the changes that one experiences. The second group which was the adolescents and youth whose ages varied from 11- 18 years. They tackled in-depth, the topic of adolescence, focusing mostly on menstrual health and hygiene. The third group was the women's group, who weren't afraid to explain that they wanted to hear the info that is given to their children since they had been having difficulty knowing how to package this information for their children.

The sessions were ended with a question-and-answer session during which one of the women stood and pointed out that at the beginning she had been skeptical when she saw men among the team facilitators and when they were asked to bring their sons for the talk but by the end, she saw it as an important way to break the bias caused by lack of information by the menfolk that has led to women being discriminated against.

PPI Attends Laikipia County Reproductive Health Technical Working Group Meeting

On 10th March 2022 at Beisa Hotel, Nanyuki PPI attended Laikipia County Reproductive Health Technical Working Group Meeting where they had a chance to present the results of a study they made, through the support of PAI in Laikipia. The study sought to establish the extent to which Women of reproductive age in Laikipia, Nyeri and Nakuru County spend their resources as out-of-pocket expenditure on Family Planning Services.

PPI explained that the study focused on three major hospitals in the three respective counties; with two being government owned while one being privately owned i.e, Nanyuki Teaching and Referral Hospital, Cottage Hospital, and Nyahururu County Referral Hospital for Laikipia. The information obtained from this survey is aimed at adding to the discourse on Family Planning in the Universal Health Coverage Context and helping advocates push for the inclusion of Family planning in the benefits package. This study is also aimed at providing data decision-makers to use when making decisions. The survey will also act as a baseline point of reference to measure changes and developments from subsequent alterations in policies and adjusted focus.

The department of medical service and public health forum on the Laikipia county Reproductive Health Technical Working Group aimed at understanding in-depth the review of the RMNCAH indicators and budget study for the year 2021 through quarterly reproductive health technical working .

Pathways having conducted a youth champions training in which the youth were trained on both budget advocacy and sexual and reproductive health rights and information are working towards addressing the RMNCAH indicators. Pathways has also been and continue to be involved in school outreach programs in which upper primary and secondary school students are provided with age-appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health. During the session, the organizations reviewed the RMNCAH indicators for the year 2021 by use of data from all the counties in the country and comparing it to the years 2019, 2020 and 2021.



TUPEPEE2HIGHSCHOOL Program Boosts Youth Transition from Primary to Secondary Life



On 8th April 2022, PPI took 70 young boys and girls from Kagondo primary school and secondary school through their transitioning mentorship program dubbed Tupepee2highSchool.

Tupepee2highSchool program is an initiative developed by PPI as a transitioning mentorship program that is anchored on the power of informed youth in influencing change and making informed choices. Transitioning from Primary to Secondary school is a time of excitement and anxiety for both children and parents. New surroundings, new friends, new challenges, and new choices are all on offer as the form one's pupils open the door on the first days of school.

The initiative covered various thematic areas such as; menstrual hygiene management and drugs with in-school and out-of-school, adolescents and youths. As this was among the identification that there exists a big gap between mentorship and information, especially on matters transitioning to the next phase of their lives, personal hygiene, career goals, relationships, peer pressure, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Sexually Transmitted Infection, talent identification, different career opportunities, teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence among other topics. On menstrual hygiene management, 50 girls received a dignity pack with sanitary towels after the sessions to mitigate menstrual poverty.



PPI Joins in Celebrating the Hearts4arts Festival



On 2nd April, 2022 in support of this year's International Women's Day, Declares Kenya alongside PPI and other partner organizations held an annual initiative named the Hearts for Art Festival and Awards. This annual festival uses Art to call for or champion local actions to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts, and share knowledge and innovations to address Gender based violence in West Pokot County.

West Pokot County is one of the most affected counties when it comes to gender disparities, While the country has made great strides over the past decade to strengthen its legal framework and finance interventions to Prevent Gender-Based Violence against women and girls, GBV remains a reality for many women and girls among pastoralist communities in Kenya's arid north and Northwest, especially in West Pokot County. The County is riddled with high rates of Gender Based Violence including Female genital mutilation with its prevalence rate standing at 78%, and early forced marriages are normalized in the community alongside an increase in teenage pregnancies. These issues have directly contributed to by negative community attitudes and stereotypes which in turn lead to gender-based violence, including spouse-beating, forced marriage and other forms of physical or emotional abuse.

This Year's Hearts4arts Festival hosted over 500 attendees representing a broad spectrum of cultural expression and artistic endeavors including visual and performing arts, fashion and design, theatre and music.

Creative arts are playing an increasingly significant role in raising awareness and encouraging sustainable social, economic, and environmental practices in West Pokot County and the entire North rift region. Through this platform, the youth are using their talents and resources to draw attention to issues, build will and agency for change, and devise innovative solutions to move us towards greater society development and sustainability amidst this COVID-19 pandemic. These innovators are breaking down false myths and boundaries that have for a very long time marginalized young people in the Arid Pastoral community of west Pokot county from claiming their spaces in shaping the Gender Equality agenda in the county and country Art has become an important and effective catalyst for discussing and driving conversations around sustainable Gender equality in the county. This Festival has given the youth a different way to be meaningfully engaged and their voices heard.

PPI Attends Central Region's Stakeholders Meeting



On 1st April, 2022, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (the Commission or KNCHR) held Central Kenya's region stakeholders meeting.

Pathways Policy Institute attended and contributed in the meeting conversations that were centered on human rights, lack of civic education thus lack of information to the public among other rights. The Commission or KNCHR is an independent National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) established under Article 59 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 and the KNCHR Act, 2011. The Commission's mandate is the promotion and protection of human rights in Kenya.



Dreams Youth Expo 2022

"Sustainable designs for a sustainable future."

On the 1st and 2nd July, Drawing dreams initiative in partnership with Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) spearheaded the 2nd edition of the Dreams Youth expo. This is a platform that bridges the gap between young innovators and creative's with investors, government agencies and market players within the diverse sectors. The expo brought together 76 exhibitors from different sectors, it was officially opened on the 1st of July with a few speeches from the commander British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK) who sponsored a number of young innovators to exhibit their businesses.

Exhibitions ranged from agribusiness, arts, tech, fashion, cottage industries and social enterprise from different places and towns. This brought about diversification with the main goal being to inspire, empower & impact social change in the society.

The expo gave the youth a platform where they can exhibit their goods and services, opportunity to establish connections with stakeholders from different sectors and established institutions.

"Happiness is nothing more than good health"

Healthcare is something everyone needs access to hence pathways policy Institute in collaboration with Laikipia Health services set up a beyond zero truck during the expo. They offered free family planning services, cervical & breast cancer screening and HIV/AIDS screening.

This created a safe space where youth were open to discuss their sexual and reproduction health which impressed the LHS team.

"Seeing the world through the eyes of the youth!"

The dreams youth expo was concluded by youth show casing their talents that's by modeling and skating. The Team Pathways Policy Institute Condom blowing competition served as the Expo's grand finale this was conducted as way of destigmatizing condom use as seen among the youth and encourage communities to embrace all forms of contraceptives.



Advancing Access to Adolescent, Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in a Pandemic



Sun, Sand, and Advocacy!

White sand beaches, palm trees, gentle ocean waves, and the coastal region in general conjure images of warm, muggy air, a leisurely pace, and delectable coastal foods that reflect a carefree lifestyle. The 5th Reproductive Health Network Kenya Conference (RHNK) annual scientific conference on adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights, however, did not reflect this. The four-day conference brought together people from various backgrounds and experiences to take part in the scientific conference on teenage sexual and reproductive health and rights. This enabled SRHR stakeholders, actors, champions, and young people a forum to interact and exchange experiences while also learning new details on sexual and reproductive health and rights from professionals.

The timing of this year's theme was perfect as the nation was just beginning to recover from the Covid 19 outbreak and prepare for the triple threat; HIV, teenage pregnancy, and abuse against women. The four-day conference aimed to give everyone a forum to discuss anything affecting the sexual and reproductive rights of all Kenyan minority groups.

During the conference Pathways Institute (PPI), had an opportunity to present three abstracts at the conference;

- Role of CSOs in advocating against environments enabling retrogressive cultural.
- Reduction of the information gap on matters budgets through budget advocacy training for the youth; JASIRI youth champions initiative.
- Youth-led budget implementation and follow-up; a case of advocacy for youth-friendly services in Nakuru county.

The conference will significantly contribute to the formulation of final comprehensive policies that will enhance the health.

Timiza Ugatuzi Project



The Kenya Devolution Program (KDP) is 4 years National Program (2021-2025) funded by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office Consortium led by ACT Change Transform (ACT). It is a successor program that builds on successes and lessons from the previous FCDO and other donor investments in devolution in Kenya including the Kenya Devolution Support Program and AHADI. The program is expected to contribute to improve development results at county level as impact.

This project is made possible by the Laikipia County Civil Society (LACCSOF) team whose chairperson is Peter Ngure of Pathways policy institute. The Laikipia County Civil Society Organization Forum is a network of 12 CSOs working in Laikipia around environmental issues, menstrual health management, Health, Budget advocacy, accountability, and good governance. Timizika Ugatuzi project endeavours to contribute to solutions to some specific challenges, one of them being the inadequate engagement between county governments and citizens in service delivery and limited integration of evidence, digital technology and learning as enablers of public service delivery and reforms within two sectors Water and Health in Laikipia County Kiandeg ward narrowing down to Kiandeg water project and Laikipia Health Services Ngobit.

The LACCSOF team has thus been able to engage many county government officials on behalf of the public and also maintains touch with the people through community social auditors who attend the meetings.

PPI Commemorates Menstrual Hygiene Management Day, 2022

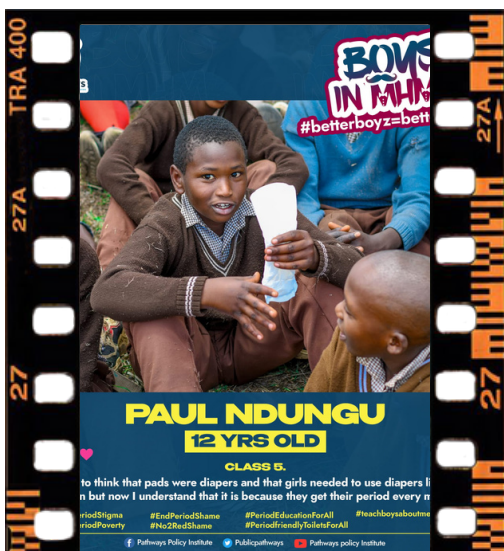


Menstruation is stigmatized all over the world. Stigma, taboos, myths and misconceptions as a result of tainted information passed on for generations prevent adolescent girls -- and boys -- from the opportunity to learn about menstruation and develop healthy habits; it's not just a "girls' problem, it's time to help build a generation of boys and men that associate periods with strength rather than shame and have the information to be better brothers, friends, teachers and future fathers.

Myths, misconceptions and misinformation still plague our societies leading to the natural act of menstruation being deemed shameful. With this information being known to everyone PPI commemorated menstrual hygiene management day by holding a social experiment to gauge the public's perception of menstruation. This was done alongside a 5-day online campaign on Twitter.

The Twitter Campaign's theme was "it is not just a girl's problem". The campaign was achieved through the use of posters and tweets giving information about Menstrual Hygiene Management and focusing on male involvement in menstrual health conversations. This was done on the five days leading up to the 28th of May to symbolize the average 5 days most women have their period during the average 28-day cycle. Among the topics covered during the 5 days included:

- What is MHM ?
- Boys in MHM
- Sanitary products
- Myths, misconceptions and stereotypes



PRODUCT NAME	IMAGE	DESCRIPTION
Reusable pads		Reusable pads are worn externally to the underwear, to absorb menstrual flow and placed usually by snaps. They are made from natural or synthetic materials. After use they are washed, dried and reused for approximately a year.
Disposable pads		Disposable pads are worn externally to the underwear to absorb menstrual flow. They are disposed of after a maximum of 8 hours. They come in various sizes, absorbencies and materials.
Menstrual cup		The menstrual cup is a non-absorbent bell-shaped device that is inserted into the vagina to collect menstrual flow. It creates a seal and is held in place by the walls of the vagina. It is typically made of medical-grade silicone. It collects three to five times the amount of blood than pads or tampons and needs to be emptied every 6-12 hours. Fun fact: Cup reusable for 5-10 years.
Tampons		Tampons are absorbent materials made from cotton and/or rayon that are inserted into the vagina to absorb menstrual flow. They expand with the flow and thereby avoid leakage. They can be used for up to 8 hours, after which they are removed with a removal string, and disposed of.

Boys Write Ups About Menstrual Hygiene Management Education

MURAMATI PKY

Embrey Kairithia

menstruation Flow

Menstruation flow it is the release of ova through a called ovulation. When a mature egg is released from the ovary and are not fertilised before twenty-eight days. they die and that's why the eggs are released from the fallopian tube the vagina (birth canal) in a form of blood.

During that time a girl is at a higher risk of getting pregnancy because it is time they are attracted to the opposite sex and they may engage in sex after having sex. menstruation stops and the sperms entered attaches the wall of uterus in a form of tad-pole. when someone stops experience menstruation she is advised to seek for pregnancy test to know their status.

In this opinion someone experiencing this flow should be having sanitary pads to wear during this results. she should be wearing for two-five hours. after using it you should dispose in a well disposable place like latrines or toilets and other pits.

During this menstrual flow you should be eating foods that give much iron to replace the lose body greens like spinach, sukuma, pigweed and some types of fruits like, mangoes, oranges, Guavas etc.

Someone should be bathing every day and changing under pants everyday so that you avoid bad odours when someone is inhaling bad odours from you he couldn't engage with you anymore in studying and some of activities etc.

On menstruation flow when you follow the instructions needed you will end up no stress and no fear at all you will progress in life merrily.

We should be advising our boy girls in this way and the other.

menstrual health

It is the release of the ovum from the ovary. It starts at nine years to twelve years. If it is not fertilised it gets out of the body. At this stage the girl can easily get pregnant. Some girls who are used to play sex are at a high risk of getting pregnant.

The government can help them by counselling them at their young stage so that when they start experiencing menstrual cycle they will know what it is like and how it is handled carefully without getting diseases. During this period the girls must eat food rich in iron because it is used by the blood and a lot of it is lost at the menstrual flow.

Some parents don't buy sanitary pads for their girls causing them not even go to school. Some people still believe in myths that a girl experiencing menstrual flow cannot cook or go to church but, they are myths. And others say that if a girl experience menstrual flow she is pregnant.

The ministry of health should organize many groups of people so that they can teach them how to handle those challenges. The government should also make many sanitary pads which can be washed and can be worn again. Many girls face many challenges because they don't have money to buy sanitary pads.

The government can even employ people and there can be a radio channel about menstrual health. They should even write on newspaper and magazines.

The girls should bath everyday so that they will not get infections. They should even put billboard's in towns so that people can know. And even post in the internet like facebook whatsapp and others. Our president should encourage people to help girls because they are part of our people in the country. We should love our neighbours as we love ourselves

Menstrual Period

JOHN MWAI

Menstrual period is blood that comes to girls after every 28 days of a month. There are some experiences and signs like some girls may see discharge, pimples may appear, some are moodless others are happy. Aching of clames, headache etc. Some periods are heavy and, getting others are light, some girls may see their periods on two days, four, three or even a week, some of their dates may jump and come to another date, sometimes girls may be very sad and talk rude. They may be looking tired & loss of appetite.

If some of the girls may sit next to boys when they have clames it stops, others may have heavy period. Some have backache. Some of the period of girls may hate boys others may love them.

Some girls when they have periods some of pads may affect them. When some girls have heavy periods they may mess, some girls do not know their date and so they make themselves dirty, others are shy of their period.

Ian Isakiiki

MURAMATI PWI

menstrual flow

Menstruation period starts at puberty. It is a physical change in girls during adolescence. When the ovary produces mature ovum travels through the oviduct/fallopian tube to the uterus/womb. If fertilized it attaches itself on the uterus walls. But if it is not fertilized by a sperm, it flows out through the cervix to the vagina. This is where a girl experiences menstruation period.

If a girl is experiencing this, she can easily get pregnant and give birth. During this period, there are these things that a girl should do, in order to remain healthy, e.g a girl should bathe every day, change sanitary pads regularly and be clean in body and clothes.

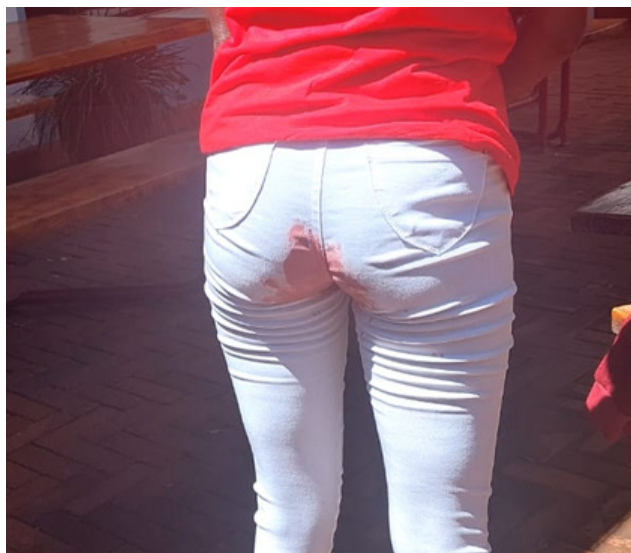
There are many types of pads to be used by a girl who have reached puberty and experiences menstruation period e.g a menstrual cup. A menstrual cup is inserted in the vagina, and all the discharge will be discharged in the menstrual cup. The menstrual cup costs two to three

PPI Conducts a Menstrual Health Management Social Experiment

Myths, misconceptions and misinformation about periods feed into stigma which can be hugely damaging for many girls, and women who menstruate around the world. In part, stigma exacerbates certain cultural beliefs about menstruation. Rather than simply being acknowledged as a natural bodily function, it is considered rude or embarrassing to discuss periods in most societies and spaces. Due to the conversation around menstruation being suppressed, beliefs about people on their periods being unclean are widespread. At any given time, approximately 300 million people globally are menstruating. Given that 1 in 4 people do not have adequate access to a toilet while in public and 11% do not have clean water anywhere close while in public, this leaves a significant number of women and girls unable to manage their periods in a hygienic, safe way in the public.

Pathways Policy Institute in conjunction with Leo Project decided to conduct a social experiment, this was achieved by having a young lady in white trousers 'unknowingly' walk around town and in the marketplace where all kinds of people frequent while having soiled herself. It didn't take too long before she had caught the attention of very many people going about their business. While many saw her and chose to ignore the situation, the women were first to call at her and in very harsh tones reprimand her for exposing her 'filth' to the public. They disgustingly laughed and shook their heads in amazement while pointing out that in the olden days, girls would never put themselves in such embarrassing situations. Some women went as far as calling our volunteer a dirty disrespectful woman. The disgust in their tones and faces communicated the position of menstruation in society which is unfortunate because many girls are not able to access sanitary towels regularly and are prone to have 'accidents' from time to time. Some of the men going about their business also were quick to notice the red blotch on our volunteer's trousers. Many were not bold enough to talk to her and would just point at her while whispering amongst themselves, others rudely shouted at her to go and clean up but would not talk to her directly while others seemed to signal to women to talk to her, disgust plastered on their faces.

These however weren't the only reactions observed during this exercise, a few women mistook our cameraman for her boyfriend and instead reprimanded him for not shielding his woman from shame. The women called him absent-minded and asked him to cover her up and take her home. The most heart-warming reaction, however, came from an elderly man who without any second thought bought a leso and without attracting a lot of attention walked up to our volunteer and very calmly told her that she seemed to have had an accident and that she should cover up and go home. On asking him why he did that he explained that he had daughters and it would break his heart to imagine that people would shame his children for a normal bodily function. He explained that he wished that people would stop stigmatizing periods because they have always and will continue to exist.



Website

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