

**UNICEF &
EDUCATION:
MENSTRUATING
GIRLS**

**ASPEN
DESIGN SUMMIT**

ASPEN MEADOWS, COLORADO | NOVEMBER 11 TO 14, 2009
SPONSORED BY AIGA AND WINTERHOUSE INSTITUTE WITH SUPPORT FROM ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

INITIATIVE

This initiative begins with a collaboration between AIGA, INDEX: and UNICEF to rethink approaches to two specific problems that must be overcome to provide effective support to education in developing countries. Faced with enormous challenges to advance education, UNICEF is striving to make schools safer, healthier and more conducive to learning, especially in the case of vulnerable and difficult-to-reach populations or children dislocated by disaster.

This initiative will focus on two well-defined projects, each of which can address an immediate need:

- 1.** Design a low cost, durable Early Child Education kit that can be used in emergency situations
- 2.** Design clean, dignified facilities and support services for menstruating girls, so they are more likely to continue to attend classes

Teams will develop thinking about how design interventions can capture both ideas for the projects and create a foundation for a global INDEX: | AIGA Aspen Design Challenge. This will be presented to design, engineering and business students at colleges around the world during 2010, resulting in the selection of several proposals to present to social venture entrepreneurs and UNICEF in spring 2011.

This excerpt from the briefing book only includes information around support services for menstruating girls.

PROTECTING THE DIGNITY OF MENSTRUATING GIRLS

BACKGROUND

The absence of appropriate facilities to provide privacy, dignity, safety and hygiene management during menstruation results in a high rate of drop-out or absence of girls from schools. In countries where menstrual hygiene is a taboo, girls in puberty are typically absent for 20 percent of the school year. Menstrual hygiene in schools requires a way for girls to dispose of and change pads or wash, dry and change cloths without adversely confronting social norms around this often stigmatized subject, allowing them to comfortably attend school while menstruating.

UNICEF estimates that one in 10 school-age African girls either skips school during menstruation or drops out entirely because of the lack of proper sanitation facilities. The total amount of lost school days, in an environment that already places low value on the education of girls, poses formidable obstacles for girls to continue their schooling.

Absenteeism during menstruation is due to a variety of reasons. These include the lack of the following: sanitary pads; privacy; clean girls-only facilities such as bathrooms or latrines; places for girls with menstrual discomfort to rest; and soap and water for washing hands. Moreover, widespread ignorance of hygiene and health issues and information related to menstruation, as well as cultural taboos that tend to isolate and stigmatize girls and women when they are menstruating, contribute to the problem.

CASE STUDIES

Makapada

A product called Makapads were created in Uganda to address the issue of the high cost of sanitary pads, after research showed that many girls could not afford to buy commercially-made pads and that 90 percent of the urban poor were improvising with unhealthy materials such as banana fibers, grass, leaves, old newspapers and pieces of cloth that did not provide reliable or hygienic protection. Developed at the Makerere University's faculty of technology in 2003-04, with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, Makapads are made from 99 percent local materials, with the main material being from readily available papyrus reeds which are mashed and processed into a softened material. They cost less than commercial brands.

Ghana

In 2006 a pilot program in Ghana facilitated the creation of ten newly designed, girl-friendly latrines in three regions of the country. This included learning models to teach girls that menstrual blood is not dirty; the odor can be eliminated by good hygiene and washing; using sterile pads. The latrines include a wash room where girls can clean themselves and change sanitary pads in private; water and soap is provided

www.schoolsandhealth.org/Lists/List%20by%20Country/DispForm.aspx?ID=42

Once a Month

The Once a Month campaign, run through U.S. embassies, provides sanitary pads to girls in Zambia. Pads are provided by corporate donors and then shipped to Zambia for distribution.

<http://hopebuilding.pbworks.com/Affordable-menstrual-pads-keep-girls-in-school%2C-create-jobs>

Always and Tampax

The companies behind the brands Always and Tampax created the Protecting Futures program in 2007 to provide puberty education, sanitary protection and sanitary facilities to help vulnerable girls stay in school. By the end of 2009, the organization will have reached approximately 115,000 girls in 17 countries and is committed to reaching 1 million girls by 2012.

www.always.com/protectingfutures

Rwanda

Sustainable Health Enterprises (SHE), a social enterprise, is setting up a program in Rwanda to help local women open businesses to manufacture and distribute affordable, quality, and eco-friendly sanitary pads.

www.sheinnovates.com

RESOURCES

www.unicef.org

www.unicef.org/wash/index_45948.html

www.unicef.org/wash/index_documents.html