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## NEWS

**Bridging the Gap: Empowering Samburu Women and Girls**

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# Bridging the Gap: Empowering Samburu Women and Girls

Samburu, Kenya is known for the beautiful desert landscape, big herds of elephants, the reticulated giraffe, and the Grevy's zebras that are indigenous to the area. It is also home to the beautifully adorned women of Samburu, who stand out in the distance wearing their bright red beads and colorful clothing. Sadly, Samburu is also known to be a county on the forefront of climate change.

With less and less rainfall each year, trying to maintain their cultural traditions is proving extremely challenging for the Samburu people. With chronic drought, the livestock at the core of their livelihood is severely compromised, herd mortality is at an all-time high, and conflict is growing. **The Samburu Project** is addressing these serious issues by focusing on water first. Installing a well to provide easy access to clean water impacts a community in measured ways. Time saved by no longer walking miles in search of water, provides women and girls time for new pursuits.

With free primary school, girls are being enrolled in growing numbers. With these steps forward come new challenges - how do school age girls manage their menstruation? That is one intervention that The Samburu Project is solving for girls in Samburu East.



For women and girls around the world, access to safe water, proper hygiene, and improved sanitation plays a critical role in reproductive health and, as a result, in gender equality. In the remote region of Samburu, menstrual hygiene supplies are almost non-existent. Instead, girls are forced to put their studies on hold each month and try to manage their menstruation with little to no supplies or knowledge. This burden can cause a Samburu girl to miss up to 60 days of school a year - the equivalent of 2 months.

But with access to clean water, this all changes. Reusable menstrual hygiene supplies become a realistic option, and girls can stay in the classroom, where they belong.



This is why, for the last four years, The Samburu Project has put menstrual health at the forefront of their women's programming. Together with PadMad founder, Madhvi Dalal, The Samburu Project has been able to educate girls on their menstrual health, provide them with products that are designed to last five years, and inspire Samburu girls to live their best lives and dream big!

The PadMad products created by founder Madhvi Dalal, are known worldwide. Unlike other menstrual products they are not made out of plastic, making them better for both the environment and the girls who use them. Madhvi not only supplies TSP with these products, but also provides education on reproductive health and is working to erase the stigma and taboo of talking about your period. She leads the girls through simple yoga stretches to help with cramping and shares instructions on how to use the pads.

To further inspire the girls, the workshops include inspirational speakers. Previous speakers have been Samburu Chief Joy, Kenyan musician, King Kaka, and world record holder, Eliud Kipchoge who led the whole community on a run throughout Samburu National Reserve.

With the success of the school programs, The Samburu Project is now bringing their menstrual education program to rural villages where TSP has drilled wells. The program offers the same education and products to adult women who otherwise use leaves, rags and even animal skin to manage their menstruation. Clean water plus safe menstruation means healthier Samburu communities.

Thanks to our corporate partners, The Samburu Project's Menstrual Hygiene program is growing every year. Thank you to AirKenya, whose female pilots provide air transportation to The Samburu Project, Family Bank, Kapa Oil, and the generosity of donors across the globe.



#### STUDENT TESTIMONIALS:

Ellyjoy Nachuch, a class 7 student at Girgir primary school, said she is thankful that she was able to attend MHD workshop and is still using the products! "[I am] trying to teach my friends what I learned that day. I hope they will be able to attend such a workshop in the future so they can experience what I learned," she shared.

In addition to the products, Ellyjoy said she enjoyed meeting new friends that day and learning yoga. "I never knew what yoga was, and I still practice what I learned at the workshop!"

"Thank you TSP and Padmad Kenya for [your] support and provision of sanitary products. [You have] changed my life," said Doreen Wamboi Lenasio. "The MHD workshop [taught me] how to keep personal hygiene a priority. [I hope there] will be many workshops in the near future to help create awareness for other girls about personal and menstrual hygiene."

#givewatergivehealth