



EMPOWERING GIRLS THROUGH PUBERTY EDUCATION

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HOW DREAMWALKING® SPARKED A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP TO BENEFIT GIRLS IN AFRICA AND A PANDEMIC EXPEDITED THE DREAM

CINCINNATI, OH, APRIL 23, 2021 -- Vasikana Project, an organization promoting the empowerment of girls through menstrual health education in Zimbabwe, today announced a global partnership with Menstrupedia of India, Stayfree Africa, and The Sister Accord® Foundation to publish the critically acclaimed Menstrupedia Comic in Shona, in a virtual launch on May 29, World Menstrual Health Day in Zimbabwe, USA and India.

Vasikana Project worked with Menstrupedia of India, the original publishers, to translate the comic into Shona, a language spoken by most Zimbabweans. The Sister Accord® Foundation donated \$2500 to print the comic to be made available for schools in Zimbabwe. Translating the critically acclaimed comic into Shona is the 10th partnership for Menstrupedia and an unparalleled resource for girls especially those in rural Zimbabwe. They often do not have access to resources that empower and educate them about their own changing bodies.

"For years, we distributed pads in schools. However, we realized that ending period poverty is multifaceted, and we wanted to do more than leave a packet of pads. We wanted to put an educational resource that eradicates barriers to menstrual health and a resource available to the girls for years to come," said Zvisinei Dzepasi Mamutse, Founder and Executive Director of Vasikana Project.

Meanwhile, in India, Aditi Gupta was making headway with the publication of the Menstrupedia Comic, a friendly guide to healthy periods on the other end of the globe. The comic, used in over 10 000 schools, has won awards for its concept of using graphic comics to educate about periods, a topic with many cultural taboos. Aditi and Mamutse would soon meet over a Zoom webinar on Menstrual Health Education during the pandemic.

"Menstrupedia has been organizing monthly Masterclasses on Menstrual Education for Educators...Zvisinei Dzepasi happened to be an attendee. And not only did she attend the Master class, she went ahead and completed our Changemaker's Program - an extensive course to help Menstrual Educators design and implement successful Menstrual Hygiene Management, Menstrual Awareness/Education modules that are sustainable, efficient, and can be easily introduced to hundreds of girls" Says Aditi Gupta, founder of the Menstrupedia comic, on how the partnership came about. "It was a proud moment for the entire team of Menstrupedia since this is the first time our comic book was being introduced in an African country where the issues related to women's health were very similar to the Indian context" Gupta concluded.

Instead of inventing the wheel and spending money to create a resource from scratch, translating the Menstrupedia comic into Shona was affordable and fast. We agreed right away to make it happen," says Mamutse.

It was a plan that Stayfree Africa got behind, supporting the comic publication and making Mamutse a Brand Ambassador. "Stayfree is committed to providing young women with the educational tools from a young age to naturalise menstruation so they can progress confidently in life, knowing that they are comfortably protected at all times. The partnership with Vasikana Project is an amazing opportunity to further support the education of young woman through an engaging format", explained Jess du Plessis, Stayfree Brand Manager.

The comic book will be the first publication on menstrual health to be published in Shona in Zimbabwe. It is set to eradicate barriers to menstrual health. Plans are underway to distribute books to the five schools Vasikana Project serves as well as make the book available to other organizations who want to purchase the book for the communities they serve and individuals who want to support their grade schools, youth groups, or girl clubs. Those in the diaspora may buy books online, to be picked up in Zimbabwe.

"The Sister Accord® Foundation is on a mission to have 1 billion girls, and women learn how to love themselves and each other. In order for girls and women to love themselves, they must fully know and understand their bodies. The distribution of this amazing comic book is aligned with one of our global pillars: educating girls and women." says Sonia Jackson Myles, Founder of the Sister Accord® Foundation, which has sponsored printing the initial 1000 copies. "Important educational information will be accessible to girls who don't have a smartphone and are not on the internet. We are literally making history in Zimbabwe, with this action, that will leave a legacy for years to come." Myles concluded.

In 2019, Vasikana Project published "I Call on You Sis" an Empowerment Journal whose sales have funded the hiring of a full-time Health Educator focused on implementing and expanding the program into more schools. Mamutse plans to raise more money to print more books and push for adopting the comic book in schools across Zimbabwe and other African countries.

"Vasikana Project honors our late mother Judith Mereki Dzepasi, affectionately known as "Mbuya Utano" (the health grandmother). In the 80's she rode on her bike from village to village empowering women to advocate for their bodies through the use of contraceptives. The challenge for women and girls is no longer contraceptives, but menstrual health. We hope to provide young women with the dignity they deserve to manage their periods." Mamutse Concluded.

For more information, please visit vasikanaproject.org

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About Vasikana Project

Founded in 2014, Vasikana Project is a non-profit organization aimed at empowering girls in Zimbabwe by providing puberty education and safe, dignified ways for young girls to manage their periods.

About Menstrupedia

Menstrupedia is a friendly guide to periods that helps girls and women to stay healthy and active during their periods. With a team of dynamic and passionate people with complementary skills, Menstrupedia aims at delivering informative and entertaining content through different media. Menstrupedia is a small but definitive step to shatter the myths and misunderstandings surrounding menstruation for ages.

About The Sister Accord® Foundation

The Sister Accord® Foundation has three global life integration pillars:

Educating girls and women

Enlightening girls and women of the Power of Sisterhood

Eradicating bullying and violence against girls and women

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Zvisinei Dzepasi Mamutse Image
Menstrupedia Comic Front Cover
Menstrupedia Comic pages (2)

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