

Pad Aid Report

We are members of the British School of Brussels' Global Issues Network Group, who are fighting to raise awareness of period poverty and menstruation taboo. We firmly believe access to menstrual products is a right for every woman and that these products should be provided free in all schools in Belgium.



Break the taboo

change the cycle!



Research

- The need for affordable, accessible sanitary products, as well as the treatment of women during their period in certain parts of the world is often overlooked when poverty, health care funding and women empowerment is brought up.
- 1 in 15 Belgian women cannot afford menstrual products and in Uganda, research from UNICEF states, 1 in 10 African girls skip or drop out of school due to a lack of menstrual products. In both locations women's health and education suffers, as they rely on crude material, such as scraps of old clothes, leaves and toilet paper. These methods are unhygienic, uncomfortable, and often do not prevent leaks. These methods often cause recurrent infections.
- There are also psychological effects associated with menstruation, as looking for other solutions often causes stress and a fear of leaking and that these leaks will be seen by others. This can create isolation, as girls often skip school, avoid meeting friends or carrying out hobbies. In Uganda there is a lot of stigma attached to periods, with girls being perceived as "unclean", being told to sit outside their homes on sand whilst menstruating.
- There is a double taboo: one on poverty and one on menstruation. Is it right that women should spend on average \$6,500 on sanitary products in their lifetime? We believe all countries should follow Scotland, in providing free sanitary products for all women.



SDG's our campaign addressed:

Poor hygiene negatively affects women's health. We have addressed this by collecting and donating sanitary products to a women's shelter in Brussels and through fundraising for a local charity Bruzelle, which fights menstrual poverty.

Fundraising for both Bruzelle in Brussels and Afripads in Uganda addressed SDG4, as both these organisations provide sanitary products to girls, which means they are less likely to skip school. In Uganda 20% of the academic year is lost due to period poverty. A member of the Pad Aid team has also just started giving PSHE lessons to Year 6 and Year 7 students about menstrual health and hygiene.

We have raised awareness through school assemblies, charity information stalls, social media, the school newsletter, and magazine. We have also surveyed over 200 female students at the school and shared the results with the local community.

We have supported Afripads, Uganda, which makes reusable, sustainable sanitary pads. An Afripad kit contains 4 reusable pads, which will ensure a girl attends school for a year. Our fundraising will initially purchase 25 kits.

To achieve our goals we have developed partnerships with our local community, by developing links with Bruzelle and a women's shelter in Brussels. We have also reached out to the TNC Proctor & Gamble, securing their support & we have also sought advice from two Belgium towns (Ghent & Aarshot) who have already implemented free sanitary products in schools. Internationally, we have met online with a representative from Afripads, Uganda.

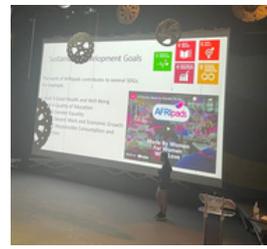




Outcomes & impacts of our project:



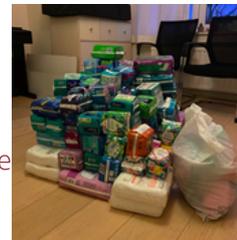
- Attended school assemblies to advertise of our sanitary donation collections for a women's shelter in Brussels (Centre Ariane), successfully collecting over 3,000 pads.
- Surveyed over 200 female students about menstrual issues.
- Presented our research & survey results to the school's board of governors, persuading them to install free menstrual vending machines by September 2023.
- Contacted Proctor & Gamble, persuading them to support us until the vending machines are installed.
- Wrote to schools in two Belgium towns (Ghent & Aarshot), where they already provide free menstrual products in their schools to find out their successes and challenges. We hope to use this information to inform our school trial.
- Free baskets of sanitary products are now provided in female bathrooms on campus.
- Article written for school newsletter and newspaper about our campaign.
- Delivered x5 assemblies to +500 students to share our campaign success and to raise awareness of the issues women face in Brussels & Uganda.
- Held awareness stalls, music concert, collected donations and carried out bake sales for our two charities, where we raised over 350 euros.
- Persuaded our peers & teachers to form a band (GIN & Tonics) and support our awareness stalls.



Funds & Donations secured:



- +3,000 pads collected for women's shelter in Brussels (Centre Ariane).
- 180 euros raised & +100 pads collected for Bruzelle.
- 170 euros raised for Afripads, which will buy reusable sanitary kits for 22 girls in Uganda.
- P&G donated several boxes of tampons and pads to cover out 3-month trial at school, before the free vending machines are installed.



Highlights from our experience so far:

- +100 students filling in our survey in the first afternoon illustrated how passionate they felt about the issue.
- Board of Governors supporting our campaign and agreeing to install free vending machines, making the project sustainable.
- Students sharing their appreciation for the free products.
- Making links with our local and wider community (online Teams meeting with Lowri from Afripads & Major of Aarschot responding to our e-mail).
- Teachers and peers getting involved and giving up their time to support our project.
- P&G agreeing to support the women's shelter in Brussels, ensuring our donations are sustainable

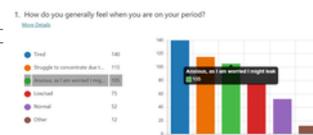


Skills & learning gained through the project:

- How to research effectively, as this was vital at the start of the campaign.
- Organisation & time management, as we needed to balance schoolwork and meet project deadlines.
- How to make an effective survey and analyse the results.
- Teamwork and communication skills.
- How to make an effective video presentation, as due to Covid 19 we couldn't present in person.



Survey Results - Feelings



Tips:

- Educating your community about the issue is vital, if you want to secure large donations.
- Creating video presentations takes time. Be prepared to allocate more time than a live presentation.
- Avoid creating a band and concert at a similar time to other musical events, as finding time to rehearse can be difficult.
- Be optimistic and flexible during a global pandemic.



Future plans:

- We plan to present to a representative of P&G's Femicare branch, in the hope they can help us role out our campaign to other local schools.
- We have written to the local Major and the local councillor responsible for education to inform them of our campaign and to request a meeting.

