



FEMME INTERNATIONAL

2022

ANNUAL REPORT



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ABBREVIATIONS

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DEFINITION

ACMHM	African Coalition for Menstrual Health Management
AWDF	African Women Development Fund
LSHTM	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
MITU	Mwanza Intervention Trials Unit
M&E/MEL/MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
MH	Menstrual Health
MRC UKRI	Medical Research Council UK Research and Innovation
MSRH	Menstrual, sexual, and reproductive health
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PASS-MHW	Partnering to Support Schools to Promote Good Menstrual Health and Well-Being

ABOUT FEMME INTERNATIONAL



MISSION

Through education, engaging communities in conversation, improving access to reusable menstrual products, and conducting research, we are breaking taboos and barriers, and addressing the unique needs of menstruators in low-resource contexts.

VISION

We envision a world where menstruation isn't a barrier, a world where all menstruators have equitable access to opportunity and possibility.

Femme International is a menstrual, sexual, and reproductive health NGO.

For nearly a decade, we have been working in East Africa, in Kenya and Tanzania, to implement our programmes and evaluate impact. To date, we have reached more than 17,000 people – women, girls, boys, and men.



OUR WORK

We run two primary programmes that, through different approaches, work to improve people's access to menstrual resources – reusable products, information, whilst also tackling menstrual stigma.

The Twaweza Programme is our bread and butter, an updated version of our original programme and mission. In schools, communities, or partnership with other NGOs and community organisations, we run workshops that cover comprehensive menstrual, sexual, and reproductive health information.

At the end of the session, all menstruating women and girls are given a Femme Kit. This cute fabric bag, made by a local sewing cooperative, is filled with items that make it easier to manage menstruation. Most importantly of all, this includes a reusable menstrual product of their choice.

The Twende Initiative grew out of demand generated by Twaweza, demand that we as an NGO simply could not fulfill. Pivoting to take into account more sustainable development practices, Twende is a social business model that positions women, in their communities, as agents of change.

Women are trained as sales agents, incorporating both sales of reusable menstrual products, and broader menstrual awareness or education, into their pre-existing day-to-day activities. They are able to skillfully navigate the social structures of their community, using their position to gain trust and boost legitimacy.



OUR RESEARCH

PASS-MHW

2022 was a big year for us in terms of furthering our research goals and contributing to the global evidence base around menstrual health. In 2021, we secured a research grant from the MRC UKRI. Titled PASS-MHW, this remains the first menstrual health research grant in Tanzania. In partnership with MITU and LSHTM, the project is to pilot and evaluate a more comprehensive version of our long-standing Twaweza Programme. 2022 was our implementation year.



THE TWaweza PROGRAMME



In Kenya, we partnered with Call for Africa to implement the Twaweza Programme in Kahawa West.

Fun fact! In Swahili, 'kahawa' means 'coffee.'

The needs assessment showed that most girls think safe days are effective pregnancy prevention, and three quarters said their quality of life was worse during their period.

A total of 66 adolescents and 20 caregivers took part in the workshops, and received Femme Kits. In having the different age groups present, participants had a rare treat of being in a supportive environment that facilitated positive learning from each other and exchanging of wisdom.

We also ran a workshop for 100 adolescent mothers who want to return to school, focussing on contraception, relationships, pregnancy prevention, and GBV.

In Tanzania, we did the majority of our Twaweza programming in Mwanza, alongside our research project.

During the formative phase of PASS, we did some data collection in two Mwanza schools. After we finished implementing, we went back and ran the Twaweza Programme for these schools as well. In total, 166 girls and 141 boys benefitted from comprehensive MSRH information and Femme Kits.

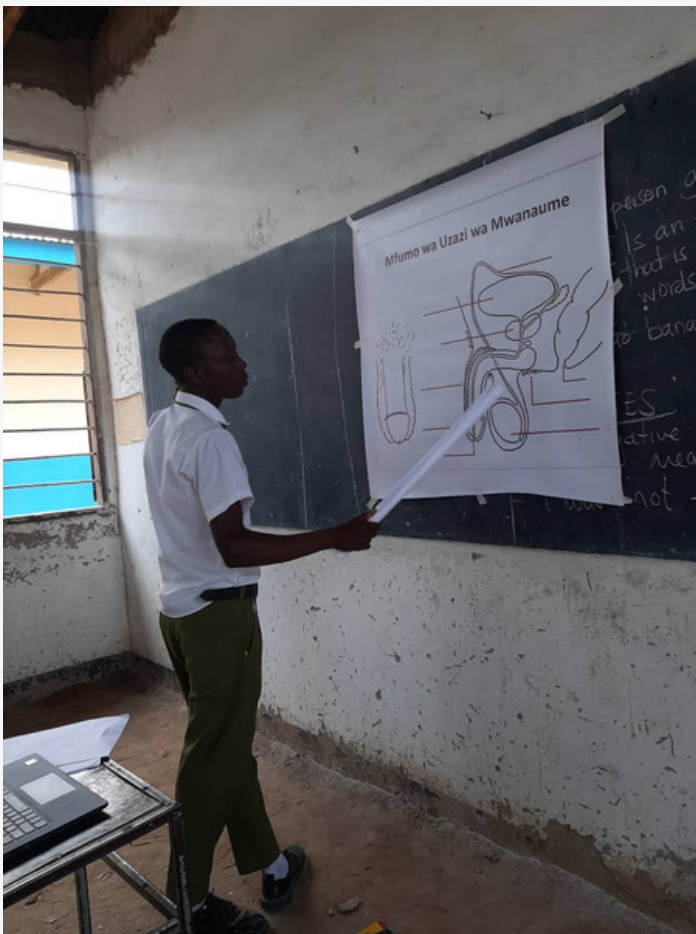
Because the research project focussed specifically on girls in Forms 2 and 3, we also went back, after the project, and made sure that students in Forms 1 and 4 had access to the same vital information and resources, for a total of 215 students (135 girls and 80 boys).

Our evaluation shows that girls feel more comfortable and confident during their periods. They report fewer vulvovaginal symptoms, and are better able to participate in their day-to-day lives during menstruation.

SCHOOL CLUBS

MENTORING AND LONG-TERM SUPPORT FOR ADOLESCENTS

Our school clubs initiative started last year, and has continued due to popular demand. With a decrease in funding that has made travelling and product distribution more challenging, we pivoted to this model. It's a low-cost model that continues to ensure adolescents, girls and boys, have access to vital information. Like with PASS, we cover not just menstrual health, but broader SRHR topics including relationships, GBV, and preventing pregnancy.



These students grow into peer ambassadors both within their school and home communities.

This year, we're running these clubs in two secondary schools in Moshi, Tanzania - Jamhuri Secondary School, and Kiusa Secondary School. A total of 162 students benefitted from these clubs, 95 girls and 67 boys.

Teachers too recognise the importance of these sorts of programmes. With the full support of the school administration, 15 teachers (ten women and five men) were trained, and will continue to support the work and, with our support, implement and train incoming students in the coming years.

In Mathare, a slum of Nairobi, Kenya, we've been running this in Mathare Primary School with a total of 55 students



PASS-MHW

PARTNERING TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE GOOD MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Although the pilot phase of the project took place in Kilimanjaro, around Moshi where we implement the bulk of our programming, PASS is taking place in Mwanza region, in the north west of Tanzania and on Lake Victoria. We chose two districts in which to implement; one rural and one urban, and sampled four schools.

A total of 952 students (502 girls, 450 boys) took part in the workshops, received workbooks, and got a Femme Kit.

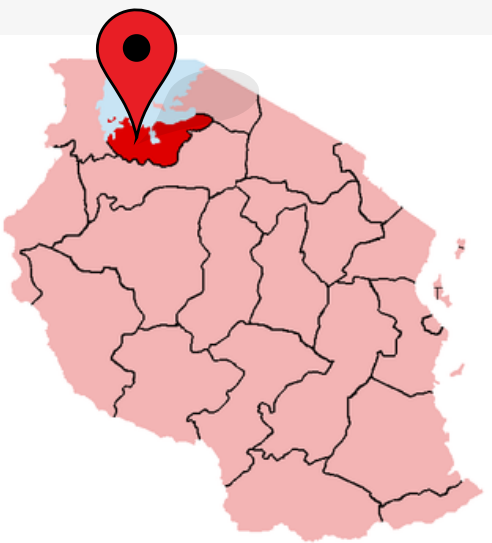
Boys' Kits are a new addition to our work. We worked with boys and stakeholders to design them, and for this project, they included a razor, soap, and pair of boxers.

Teachers also received a short workshop, and a supply of over-the counter analgesics

was furnished to each school.

Additionally, we worked with schools to do minor, non-structural WASH improvements (finishing construction on a room to be used as a changing room for girls, or connecting the water tank to the newly-built latrine block. Each school also received cleaning supplies, buckets to supply water in the stalls, and small repairs on the stalls themselves, such as adding locks or doors.

Our programmes typically include a six-week check-in, and for PASS we were able to add a twelve-week check-in as well. This provides an extra level of support for cup users, and enables us to further tackle harmful practices and beliefs whilst reinforcing positive alternatives.





MH DAY 2022

THE BIGGEST DAY OF THE YEAR, IT'S MAY 28TH WHEN WE CELEBRATE ALL THINGS PERIODS



28 May
**MENSTRUAL
HYGIENE DAY**

Every year on May 28th, we partner with other NGOs, as well as municipal government to put on an event for MH Day.

Moshi

Every year, the Municipal Council puts on an event in Moshi, partnering with local organisations like us. The event included radio interviews and PSAs with key advocates, including some of our own Femme team ambassadors.

The main event was hosted at Mereweni Primary School, where approximately 300 government officials, NGOs, and general public attended. Mereweni is unique in that it is a school for students with disabilities, specialising in visual disabilities. It offers vocational training alongside traditional education.

There, we were in our element as we led a menstrual health workshop for students and teachers, and distributed Femme Kits to the students.

One of these partner organisations, Songambebe, you can see in the photo, is a fierce advocate for people with disabilities, and their unique needs when managing menstruation.

We also had a sign interpreter, to ensure all students would be able to access and profit from the vital information we were sharing.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

REAL, SYSTEMIC CHANGE HAPPENS WHEN EVERYONE IS INVOLVED. THE PATRIARCHY IS TOPPLED WHEN MEN STAND UP FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

Long-term change doesn't happen in isolation. As part of PASS, as well as Twaweza and Twende programmes, community engagement is a key component to breaking taboos and stigma.

Although MSRH information is traditionally passed from adults to adolescents, the mothers, aunts, and grandmothers have no more information than the younger generation, just the wisdom of years of experience. And so myths, taboos, and misinformation is passed on, generation to generation, until forums like this can break that cycle and offer accurate information to communities.

We held parent/caregiver meetings with the four PASS schools in Mwanza, and they were a great success. Although planned for only an hour, they lasted over two hours, as the Femme team were peppered with questions about the project - questions about cups and pads, about virginity and the hymen, about pain management, about any and every issue related to MSRH imaginable.

In Mwanza, we did a lot of work with two districts this year, working to engage local government officials and members of the larger community in addressing MSRH issues.

Through numerous small sessions, we reached over a hundred adults, men and women. The focus of these sessions was specifically to raise awareness around menstrual health being not just a women's issue, a gendered issue, but affecting everyone.

Male support and active engagement is crucial to tackling menstruation, which is rooted in patriarchal sociocultural norms. During these sessions, we talk about being a good husband or father, and go through numerous ways to support the women and girls around them during menstruation. From purchasing menstrual products or painkillers to understanding what they are experiencing, it's always eye-opening for men, who have usually never had an opportunity to discuss menstruation or understand their wife's experiences.

FEMME IN PUBLIC

WE PLAY LEADING ROLES IN NUMEROUS NATIONAL AND GLOBAL COALITIONS. FROM ATTENDING CONFERENCES TO PRESENT OUR WORK, TO OUR ROLE ON THE BROADER GLOBAL STAGE, HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS



OUR PASS PROJECT MANAGER GLADNESS REPRESENTED US AT SEVERAL NATIONAL EVENTS

For the annual Tanzania WASH Conference, we wrote a policy brief on integrating COVID-19 preventative measures, such as handwashing stations, into menstrual health programming, as part of WASH in Schools.

Gladness also represented us at the first National Annual M&E Conference in Dodoma, Tanzania by the Tanzania Evaluation Association. There, she presented a green paper on our integrated approach to M&E for MSRH programming in low-resource contexts, titled "The Role of Formative Evaluation in Changing Menstrual and Puberty-Related Challenges of Adolescent Girls in Tanzania."

OTHER AFRICAN AND GLOBAL FORUMS IN 2022

For those of us keen on data, as we are, the most exciting event of 2022 was the Global Advisory Group for MH Measurement launching a set of guidelines for menstrual health in national data collection systems, like a census.

As co-leader of the ACMHM M&E/Research Task Force, our own MEAL Director Jen Rubli spoke on behalf of the ACMHM at the inaugural webinar to launch the tools.

Funded by AWDF, Days for Girls in collaboration with the IIEA held a series of webinars around the MH policy landscape in East African countries. This time Jen represented us, and spoke as a panelist, sharing our expertise on MH in Kenya and Tanzania.

OUR PARTNERS

THE AWESOME PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS THAT SUPPORTED US.



MITU
MWANZA INTERVENTION
TRIALS UNIT



LSHTM
LONDON SCHOOL OF
HYGIENE AND TROPICAL
MEDICINE



MRC UKRI
MEDICAL RESEARCH
COUNCIL UK RESEARCH
INNOVATION

RUBĪCUP



AFRIPADS
FOR DONATING SCHOOLGIRL
KITS FOR PASS-MHW

We also need to acknowledge the individuals who have helped us along the way, who have given of their time, expertise, wisdom, and money. And most importantly, their hearts.

Only by working together are we able to bring about great change.



SAALT CUP
FOR DONATING MENSTRUAL
CUPS FOR PASS-MHW

OUR 2023 PLAN

OUR YEAR OF DISSEMINATION AND CELEBRATION



PASS remains the first and only research project funded in Tanzania. As we finish collecting endline data and start getting results, we have a lot to share. We are planning and attending numerous events, meetings, and conferences where we will be sharing the results, learnings, and next steps of this milestone project.

We're going to be putting out numerous papers and policy briefs as we share important learnings to key audiences, from the research community to government stakeholders to the small organisations who are implementing on the ground.

Women Deliver is in Rwanda this year, and along with other menstrual health organisations, we plan to represent! So look out for us there.

In other exciting news, we've converted our Moshi office into a shop! We're setting this up as an income-generating stream, and selling reusable menstrual products. We're also offering a rent-a-shelf model for other environmentally-friendly products that are otherwise not available in Moshi. So if you're ever in Moshi, come say hi!

We're still running our school clubs in the Kilimanjaro region, and want to expand to a few Mwanza schools as well.

As usual, our activities are completely funding-dependent, so this year we have a big focus on fundraising, especially within Tanzania.





“It's not rocket *science*, it's a
PERIOD!”

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