

## **Dreams for our Daughters**

**Website:** [www.huruinternational.org](http://www.huruinternational.org)

**Mission:** The word *huru* is Swahili for *freedom*, signifying independence and personal growth, concepts Huru was built on. Huru's mission is to empower young women living in poverty to become self-sufficient. By distributing kits of reusable sanitary pads, life-saving HIV prevention information, and other essential resources, Huru is working to ensure that girls everywhere have the means to complete their education and safeguard their health. In addition to giving girls the freedom to grow up to be healthy, self-sufficient women, Huru's commitment to local production creates sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities that benefit whole communities.



### **About the Organization and Where They Work**

Huru was established in 2008 by Lorna Macleod, Executive Director of AmericaShare, the US-based nonprofit arm of Micato Safaris, an organization that has worked in Kenya for more than 20 years. Huru was launched with support from Johnson & Johnson, Micato Safaris, and the Elton John AIDS Foundation. Having demonstrated the effectiveness of the program, Huru has earned the support of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), USAID, the Safaricom Foundation, the Peace Corps, and many others.



Huru realized that without the means to take care of their basic needs, young girls in Nairobi's Mukuru slum would continue to suffer needlessly and be denied the opportunity to stay in school and be healthy. They started by developing a durable, low-cost, and locally produced reusable sanitary pad to be bundled into kits along with other resources for safe and sustainable menstrual care and life-saving HIV/AIDS prevention information. Kits are delivered through peer-led educational workshops, which engage beneficiaries in discussions and activities focused on HIV prevention, health and hygiene, education, and other topics relevant to at-risk girls.

These problems being addressed in Mukuru exist throughout the developing world, making Huru's work easily adaptable. In 2012, Huru is launching a scale up program in Kenya that will reach more than 60,000 youth. Having established a proven model, Huru aims to replicate this program elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa and will launch a pilot program in Tanzania.

## Life Challenges for Girls

Ministry of Education in Kenya estimates that 868,000 girls miss an average of four school days each month because they cannot afford sanitary pads. This puts girls at a severe disadvantage as they fall behind, repeat grades, and may eventually drop out of school. Failure to obtain a basic education dramatically increases vulnerability to disease and long-term poverty.

- ❖ The most frequent obstacle to education mentioned in resource-poor areas of Kenya is access to sanitary pads. In 2008, the Girl Child Network (GCN) studied this issue in Nairobi's slum areas, and found that most girls resorted to various unsafe practices to meet their needs (e.g., retrieving used disposable pads from the waste, or making their own from unsanitary materials). Many others routinely do not go to school during their periods. The patterns of absenteeism create gaps in education and create high dropout rates and decline in enrollment of adolescent girls.
- ❖ The demographic structure of HIV incidence and awareness reveals that adolescent girls are a highly at-risk population. Education is likely to determine a person's vulnerability to HIV infection, and gains made through prevention efforts to change behavior have had the greatest impact among the educated. This makes keeping girls in school critical to the success of sustainable prevention efforts.

### ***Each Huru Kit includes:***

- *Eight reusable sanitary pads*
- *Three pairs of underwear*
- *Detergent-grade soap*
- *A waterproof storage bag*
- *Educational materials focused on HIV prevention*
- *Detailed instructions on proper pad use and maintenance*



## The Program

### ***Program Objectives***

The key objectives of the Huru program are to:

- Reduce school absenteeism by providing girls with essential sanitary products.
- Increase beneficiary access to HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health information and resources.
- Economically empower communities through local production of sanitary pads.

Huru Kits are distributed through peer-led educational workshops, which reach at-risk girls through their schools. Huru coordinates with local school personnel and community-based organizations (CBOs) to ensure that project resources are reaching the girls who are not able to afford sanitary pads.

The distribution workshops are built around interactive training sessions that focus on HIV prevention, key elements of sexual and reproductive health, and menstrual health and hygiene.

Distributions are carried out directly by Huru and through partner CBOs operating in target districts which will enable Huru to efficiently reach beneficiaries throughout Kenya. Implementing partners have also distributed Huru Kits in programs serving diverse populations, including out-of-school girls, orphanages, and female prison populations.

***How DFW’s Donations Will Be Used***

DFW will provide a grant for \$21,990 to Huru to produce and distribute 1,625 kits to underserved girls in Kenya. This will cover the cost of personnel, the manufacturing of reusable sanitary pads, assembly and transportation of kits, printing of HIV-focused materials, distribution workshops and Nairobi office administrative costs. If funds are available beyond the requested grant amount, DFW will support the production and distribution of additional kits.

<b>Project Budget Item</b>	<b>Total</b>
Personnel - program manager, production supervisor, field coordinator and accounts manager/office administrator	\$2,020
Manufacturing of 13,000 reusable sanitary pads for 1,625 Huru kits: purchase and transportation of raw materials, labor and manufacturing costs	\$8,390
Procurement, transportation and assembly of additional kit contents (backpack, soap, underwear and storage bag)	\$6,900
Procurement and printing of HIV-focused materials	\$1,000
Huru Kit distribution seminars - delivery of kits and dissemination of HIV prevention messaging	\$1,680
Nairobi office administrative costs	\$2,000
<b>Total of Program Budget supported by DFW</b>	<b>\$21,990</b>

**Why We Love This Program**

Access to sanitary pads and menstrual hygiene for many women is taken for granted, but to millions of adolescent girls in developing countries this is a luxury. Missing school because they cannot afford sanitary pads puts these girls at a great disadvantage. The distribution of kits allows at-risk adolescent girls to stay in school during their periods and improve their educational outcome, provides sustainable menstrual care, and empowers communities through the local production of reusable sanitary pads.

Girls that stay in school longer delay sexual activity and have greater awareness to the risks and knowledge of HIV. Educated girls are also more confident, better equipped to assert their sexual autonomy, and less likely to engage in transactional sex or relationships with older men.



HIV incidence is among the highest in the ages 15-24 in Kenya where 40% of the new cases fall within this group. Within this age group 47% of males have a comprehensive understanding of HIV, compared to 34% of females. The workshop education will also reduce a girl's vulnerability to HIV.

By providing means for menstrual sanitation and HIV education, Huru empowers young women to continue their education, improve their health and reduce long-term poverty.

## **Measuring Success**

Strict inventories of procured materials and kits are maintained and program outputs are carefully tracked. The distribution of kits is tracked in a database and a master list of the beneficiaries is maintained for follow-up reporting and impact assessment.

Huru conducts baseline studies through surveys of targeted schools for distribution. Data collected includes: rates of absenteeism and dropout, attitudes and level of HIV/AIDS knowledge, patterns of sexual behavior and awareness and uptake of HIV prevention and treatment services. Post-distribution surveys are given to collect attendance data, and changes in HIV and sexual attitudes and behavior. This information allows program impact to be assessed.

Through December 2011, over 20,000 Huru Kits have been distributed to date in seven of Kenya's eight administrative provinces. The program has produced strong and impressive results:

- ❖ Absenteeism eliminated among more than 95% of beneficiaries
- ❖ School performance improved among 85% of beneficiaries
- ❖ HIV awareness increased for 79% of beneficiaries

## Voices

### ***Meling, age 15 and student at Loitip Primary School, Baringo, Rift Valley***

“I am in class 5 and I come from one of the very hardship areas. I have been going through a lot of stress when on my monthly period and used to miss school 4 days every month until Huru International rescued me. Our school is very far and I couldn't manage to walk to school because I used to use a piece of clothe which could not fully protect me for the entire journey. Since our place is so hot walking to school when on my periods I smelled so badly. Since I got Huru pads I never get to school late and I don't skip classes. Also the HIV material contained in the kit has helped me learn to avoid sex while young until we finish school. I am so grateful to Huru and God bless you as you continue helping more girls like me.”



### ***Mary, age 13 and student Njenga Primary School, Nairobi***

For a long time before I got Huru pads I used to miss school some days every month. I used sponges to cover me. People from Huru brought to me 8 good pads in December 2008 and since then I have never missed school during my periods. I now feel good and stay comfortably without worries during my periods. Unfortunately out of the 8 pads I was given 2 of them are worn out and so have only 6 left. I wish I would be supplied with some more.

### ***Ndinda, age 17 and student at Kyevaluki Secondary School, Kangundo, Eastern***

“Monthly period is something that troubles girls if they are not having pads. Pads are good because they protect you and make you do all things well. All along I have been using pieces of clothe and I would keep on looking at my uniform to see if it is soiled. Since I got 8 Huru pads and a bar of soap I don't fail to come to school and my marks in class are good now. I now participate in any games and have also learned that I should not get favours like money from men to buy pads in exchange for sex. The Huru pads are nice because they don't leak and also because this helps conserve the environment from pollution. “

### ***Teacher Hellen, Sokotei Primary School Baringo, Rift Valley***

“Many of the many schools in hardship areas don't have female teachers and so it becomes hard for the girls to confide in male teachers when it comes to things to do with monthly periods. Thus most of the girls opt to skip school until the periods are over.

Even in some of these cultures women during their monthly period are considered an outcast until it's over. As such the girls cannot talk to the male teachers about their ordeals and even their fathers cannot provide sanitary towels. That is why we came together as a women group to source for help for some of these girls. Whenever we get time to meet them we encourage their parents to attend our meetings where we advocate for girl child education.”

## **Additional Resources**

On the **DFW June Program webpage for Huru** you will also find:

- Huru Program Presentation file in both Powerpoint and PDF formats
- Huru program video files

You may view these files online or download them to your computer.

### **Source Materials:**

- *Huru International website*
- *Documents provided Huru International to Dining for Women*