



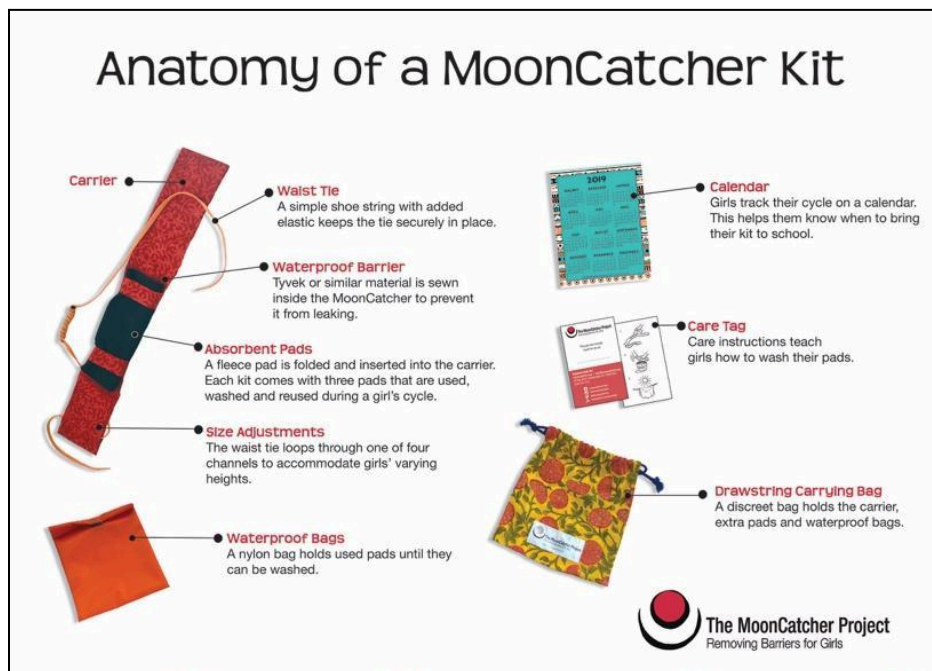
PROJECT TITLE: Sustaining Africa Projects
GRANT AMOUNT: \$43,000
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Project Overview

The goal of this project was to serve 15,000 school-aged girls by sustaining our existing sewing cooperatives and maintaining existing education and outreach programs in Africa.

The MoonCatcher Project (MCP) serves girls by producing and distributing “MoonCatcher” menstrual management kits and providing reproductive and menstrual health education to each girl who receives a kit. Our unique product, designed by our Founder and Executive Director, will last 3-5 years and can be used with or without underwear (a luxury for many people living in low-income communities).

What is in a MoonCatcher Kit?



Who Makes MoonCatcher Kits?

MCP operates eight sewing cooperatives in Africa. These sewing cooperatives are funded by MCP. The tailors earn income for each kit they produce, and they are encouraged to use the

equipment to earn additional income. For example, the cooperative in Wakiso, Uganda, produces aprons and others make school uniforms.

The cooperatives are located in: UGANDA: Wakiso, Jinja, Kimenyedde and Pallisa; MALAWI: Mzuzu and Mtunthama; KENYA: Ahero and Kisumu.

Project Outcomes

Our objective was to use the grant funding toward our goal of providing 15,000 MoonCatcher menstrual management kits to girls in Uganda, Malawi and Kenya. The table below provides data on our work during the grant period including: the total number of kits produced in each country, the number of students who participated in classes where our menstrual health curriculum was taught, and the number of kits given free of charge to schoolgirls.

Country	Kits Produced	Girls Taught	Boys Taught	Kits Delivered
MALAWI	4,064	3,552	45	3,028
UGANDA	6,000	2,112	652	2,022
KENYA	6,021	6,230	507	6,181
TOTAL AFRICA	16,085	11,894	1,204	11,231

Production

Our production goal of 15,000 kits was surpassed by 1,085. (16,085).

One of our cooperatives (Pallisa, Uganda) is located within a vocational school. The tailors there have been inactive since the pandemic lockdown when the school was closed. Getting them up and running again was a focus of our most recent visit to Uganda in March 2024. During the visit to this cooperative, Ellie von Wellsheim (Executive Director), Phoebe Nabwami (Uganda Coordinator) and Charlotte Mack (Assistant Director) met with the tailors and brought them materials to begin sewing again. MCP provided existing tailors with a refresher sewing class on how to produce the MoonCatcher Kit, making sure each person present could complete a kit from start to finish. We are hopeful that with this cooperative back in business, our numbers will increase in the coming months.

Delivery of Kits and Curriculum

While our production goal was met, fewer kits were actually delivered to schoolgirls than were produced (11,231 kits were delivered). Because production of kits is ongoing, but distribution depends on the school schedule, we often see a lag in delivery. This partially explains the difference. Other factors also contribute.

Reporting Challenges

The difference in kit production and distribution is likely due to problems with accurate reporting (especially in Uganda).

Over the years we have worked hard to develop tools for data collection and reporting. In 2021 we began to make use of *Google Forms* to track expenditures and outcomes of our program. The process of developing the forms, learning to use them properly and training coordinators (and some of the tailors) to use them accurately is an ongoing project. Many factors contribute to problems with reporting, including lack of consistent access to the internet and/or power.

To reinforce the importance of accurate reporting, our directors held training meetings with all coordinators during their March 2024 visits. All coordinators were trained regarding reporting and they each signed a memorandum of understanding agreeing to the reporting requirements. Concurrently, we continue to work on our spreadsheets to make them easier to use and more useful in collecting data.

Training sessions were also held on production of kits and the importance of high-quality work. Below are some photos from Uganda and Kenya of training sessions that were held there.



Above: Coordinators from Uganda and Kenya met with Ellie and Charlotte to learn more about reporting requirements and sign new MOUs. March, 2024



Above: Ugandan Coordinator (Phoebe Nabwami) and Ellie work together to provide training on Kit production to the tailors at the Woman of Purpose (Pallisa) Sewing Cooperative. March, 2024



Above left: In Malawi Ellie works with Olipa and tailors on quality control. Above Middle: Ellie and Emanuel teaching in Malawi. Above right: Charlotte and Ellie work with Olipa and Emanuel on teaching the MCP Curriculum.

Project Funding and Expenses

During the grant period, The MoonCatcher Project received grant funding for Africa Projects of \$58,986.

Grant Funding For Africa Projects April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024			
Date	Foundation	Description	Amount
05/15/23	Together Women Rise	For Africa Production	43,000.00
06/08/23	Together Women Rise	Honorarium donated	250.00
10/11/23	Henry Niles Foundation	For Africa Production	2,500.00
05/29/23	Circle of Sisterhood	For Malawi Production	10,000.00
06/30/23	First Reformed Church	For Malawi Production	1,500.00
03/22/24	Albany District Links	For bathroom repair Malawi	1,000.00
10/11/23	Scotia Rotary Club	For Uganda Production	736.00
TOTAL			\$58,986.00

Additional funding raised during the grant period included: Individual Contributions: \$107,497; Corporate Donations: \$4,047, Other unrestricted grants: \$30,777, Income from fundraisers: \$17,456 and income from craft sales \$1,348.

Project expenditures are detailed in the chart below:

Africa Projects Expenditures April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024				
	Kenya	Uganda	Malawi	Total Africa
Labor & Training	\$7,452	\$12,659	\$15,840	\$35,951
Materials for Kits	\$9,369	\$23,086	\$38,466	\$70,921
Other supplies	\$ 46	\$ 192	\$ 42	\$ 280
Equipment	\$2,823		\$ 500	\$ 3,323
Shipping Costs			\$ 225	\$ 225
Travel (in-country)		\$ 1,638	\$ 1,244	\$ 2,882
Travel (delegation visit)	\$3,543	\$ 3,486	\$ 4,327	\$11,356
Bank Fees		\$ 72	\$ 455	\$ 527
TOTAL	\$23,233	\$39,495	\$61,099	\$125,465

Other Difficulties Encountered and Lessons Learned

In 2023 one of our cooperatives in Malawi had to be closed. Sadly, the leader of the Chituka cooperative was not following through on the work promised and was keeping the funding provided for kit production for her personal use. This is the first time we encountered this kind of obstacle. This, and the problems with reporting, were lessons learned, motivating our board to work on procedures for greater accountability both at home and abroad. As with all challenges, these situations provided opportunities for growth in both areas.

Our project is constantly evolving as we continue to learn more about the countries we work in, and the high need for our product. Other challenges we face include the ever-changing exchange rates within our three main African countries: Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi. In an effort to address this concern, our directors are working closely with data collection managers (who are donating their time to us) to better ensure accuracy regarding supply purchasing and labor payments. Now our spreadsheets provide live updates for currency exchange using Google Finance. This update will help us to save time, reduce errors, and better track expenditures.

Our Board is on the cusp of growing as well, and we are scouting interested, diverse individuals who have skills and knowledge our current board members lack. These skills include but are not limited to: financial management, data collection, data organization, and marketing strategies.

Impact: St. Mary's Secondary School - New Hope Campus, Uganda

The MoonCatcher Project has been working with St. Mary's Secondary School since 2016. Phoebe Nabwami, the Uganda coordinator, returns annually to provide kits for the incoming classes and any new students. These pictures and stories were captured on March 6, 2024 during MCP's annual trip to Africa.



Above: The sign at the entrance to St. Mary's School.



Above: Phoebe takes her time to listen carefully to the experiences of girls.



When Ellie visits Africa, she makes sure to check in with girls who have been using our kit. She asks for feedback and uses the feedback to improve our product. Many girls are shy about discussing menstruation, but there are always a few who are willing to talk



Above: a photo of the girls from St. Mary's who were brave enough to talk with us about their experience using MoonCatcher Kits.

Personal Stories from Ugandan Girls (St. Mary's School)



Aisha Nalwadda

Aisha wants to be a midwife.

“Before using the MoonCatcher pad, I was using disposable pads but I got “effects” from those because I was not feeling comfortable and those pads used to affect me in my private parts. When the MoonCatcher came, when I wear the pad, I feel very comfortable and my private parts feel comfortable. And that is all.”



Catherine Nalunkuuma

Catherine wants to be a surgeon.

“Before the MoonCatcher came into our school it was not good. I was using bed sheets, I was using old clothes, the situation was not so good but thankfully the Lord has helped us to go through that. And I thank the MoonCatcher Project for the support they have given to us girls in our school and Uganda as a whole. Thank you for what you have done.”



Tracy Nambatya

Tracy wants to be a nurse.

“Before they gave us those kits, I was not able to buy pads because we did not have money at home. I just beg my father because I don’t have my mother...”

“What I have gained is now I can save money because I don't have to buy pads.”



Nabirah Namale

Nabirah wants to be a doctor.

“Before I got the kit, I used to use wasted clothing and for me I live with my dad, my mother died. I cannot afford to buy sanitary pads. And I cannot tell my dad that I want to buy pads, so I used to use wasted clothing. But when I received the MoonCatcher pads it saved money, it is comfortable and soft, it helped me.”



Sophia Lunkuse

Sofia wants to be a journalist.

“Before The MoonCatcher Project I used to sometimes plead to my dad and my mom to buy for me pads but they didn't have the money because they were too expensive. Sometimes I used clothes, I used to tear off my clothes to use them as pads. And sometimes I would save money and I would buy pads. But after The MoonCatcher Project I have been able to save money and my parents were overwhelmed when I told them I had received the pads from The MoonCatcher Project and now I am happy, and I am using them.”



Sheillah Namyalo

Sheillah wants to be an engineer.

“Before The MoonCatcher coming I was using some clothes and one day at school the cloth fell down, and I was very embarrassed but The MoonCatcher came and I walk with my kit. That's why I thank you The MoonCatcher Project and I appreciate, thank you.”

Personal Stories from Malawian Girls

St. Andrew's Primary School - near Mthuntama, Malawi



Twambilire Kabaghe – 16 years old.
Wants to be a doctor.

“I like it (the MoonCatcher kit) because whenever I use it there are extra pads for me to use. I like it too much, it is soft. Before, it was a problem to us. We cannot buy pads. It is very expensive. I was using old cloths from torn up old skirts. But it wasn't working. They would stain my school dress. The MoonCatcher pad does not cause staining.”



Faith Banda – 13 years old
Wants to be a medical doctor to help those in need.

“MoonCatcher Project is so important to me. I could not manage to buy pads in shops because they were too expensive. Now we don't spend the money to buy them. The kit – it's easy to use. Very, very comfortable.”



Lisa Nthakomwa – 16 years old.
Wants to be a nurse.

“The pads have helped us in many ways. They help us in saving money. They are perfect, they are nice and are still helping us. I have been using it for a year. Now I come to school every day now that I have a pad to use. I was using pads you buy in shops, but they were too expensive., so I didn't always have them.”

Chilala Primary School – Nkhatabay, Malawi



**Jennifer Phiri – 14 years old.
Wants to be a journalist.**

“It fits well and it is comfortable to use. It is easy to wash and it doesn’t leak.”



**Chikumbutso Saka – 15 years old.
Wants to be a teacher.**

“My family cannot afford to buy those things in shops. They are too expensive for us. This was a problem before. Now I have this kit that is easy to use. I thank you the MoonCatcher Project.”



**Fanny Mwale – 15 years old.
Wants to be a doctor.**

“Before using the MoonCatcher Kit I would buy a single pad for my whole period because it’s all I could afford. When that one was used up, I would stay home and wait for my period to end to avoid bleeding at school and being embarrassed. Now I come to school every day I have my period.”

Summary

The process of developing our grant application and then becoming a featured grantee of Together Women Rise last April has strengthened our project in multiple ways.

With the added financial support, our directors were able to make a three week delegation trip in March, 2024 to Africa, spending about a week in each country. Although the cost of travel is one of our higher expenses, these delegation trips are what keep this project alive and thriving. Ellie von Wellsheim has made numerous profound connections in each country over the years. Every year she is able to return enhances these relationships. This year Charlotte Mack was able to establish these connections as well.

This grant has provided us with a presence on Together Women Rise's platform, providing us with a new audience of individuals who are interested in our cause. Since last April, MCP has forged connections with women around the country who learned about our project when we received the grant. One connection is with Hispanola Health Partners in Haiti, where a TWR member, Louise Lindenmeyr, delivered 150 MoonCatcher Kits to girls there.. We have made connections with Colorado chapters of TWR where members are sewing MoonCatcher Kits.

The grant application itself was a difficult process. It was appropriately demanding and very thorough. It helped us to become better grant writers and caused us to examine our data collection processes. Receiving a grant of this size in 2023 provided us with a sense of assurance after a few worrisome years during the pandemic. We were able to move forward with confidence when our tailors asked for more work. This was the largest grant we have received to date.

We will always be grateful to Together Women Rise for providing us with such an incredible opportunity.