

ISSUE 1
MAY 2015



IN THIS ISSUE:
FIND OUT WHAT I AM GIRL IS ALL ABOUT
YOUR MONTHLY PERIOD - TRUTH AND LIES
YOUR STORIES AND POEMS



HAVE YOU GOT QUESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE ANSWERED?
FIND OUT INSIDE HOW TO WRITE AND SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO US.



28 May
MENSTRUAL
HYGIENE DAY


fields of life
CHANGING LIVES, BUILDING HOPE

WELCOME



Fields of Life is a charity which provides education, clean water and health programs for communities in East Africa.

We discovered that girls face many struggles as they go through puberty and this affects their education. We wanted to start helping you! We launched our 'I AM GIRL' program in January 2015. Our aim is to intentionally provide menstrual hygiene management training to equip you with confidence to access, remain at and complete school.

Ednar (Executive Director, East Africa)

Welcome to I AM GIRL magazine! This is the magazine written by you, about you and for YOU!

You are unique, you are the only one of you, and you are amazing!

My name is Maggie and I work for Fields of Life. Earlier this year we launched our I AM GIRL project. Along with my friends at Fields of Life I am bringing this new magazine to you to encourage you, inspire you and give you a space to ask the difficult questions in life without being embarrassed. We believe you have the power to succeed, to remain in school and grow into women who can provide a positive change for the future.

In this first edition of I AM GIRL we discuss periods, sanitary pads and what it's like to be a girl growing up in Uganda and in the UK.

We would love you to write to us with your questions on any topic you like – anything from relationships to changes in your body. Our experts will choose a few questions for every edition and do their best to answer them truthfully and factually.

I hope you enjoy reading I AM GIRL and sharing it with your friends.

Editor

Maggie



REUSABLE SANITARY PADS

Find out about re-usable sanitary pads!



**Reusable
Pads can last
up to 1 year!**

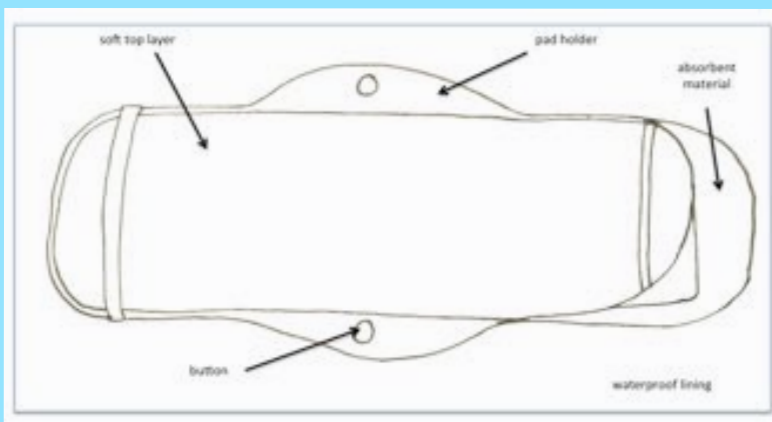
Many of us girls struggle with our periods because of a lack of sanitary pads. However many people are now starting to use re-usable sanitary pads.

WHAT ARE THEY?

Reusable sanitary towels are made of materials, which do the same job as disposable pads except they last for up to 1 year! They are made from materials, which absorb the period and also have a waterproof layer to stop any leakage. The materials used are designed to be soft slim discreet and reliable so that you are comfortable during your period.

You attach these to your underwear using a small button, which holds them securely. Once they are used you need to wash and dry them carefully and then they can be used again!

As well as lasting longer they are also good for the environment, as you are not disposing of pads each month.



If you can afford to buy some reusable pads AFRIPads are a great option. Many of our girls have used AFRIPads.

If you cannot afford to buy any you can also make your own.

IMPORTANT!!

When caring for your reusable pads you need to ensure you:

- 1. DO NOT** share them with other people as this can spread infections.
- 2. DO NOT** iron them as this will melt the plastic layer.
- 3. DO NOT** soak them in hot water, use COLD water.
- 4. DO NOT** wash them in dirty water.
- 5. DO NOT** wear them if they are still wet or damp, because this can also cause infection.
- 6. DO NOT** dry them in a corner or under your bed.

HELPING YOU SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF PERIODS!

IN THIS SECTION WE HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHY PERIODS HAPPEN AND SHOW YOU HOW TO WORK OUT WHEN YOUR BLEEDING WILL ARRIVE SO YOU CAN PLAN AHEAD.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT A PERIOD ACTUALLY IS?

It is hard to tell just by looking at it but menstrual blood is made up of both tissue and blood. Blood and tissue come from the uterus, the muscular organ in a girl's body where a baby can grow. Isn't that amazing! The bible says that we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made'. Menstruation normally happens in 28 day cycles so most women get their period every 28 days. Some women have longer cycles and may only get their period every 40 days, while others have shorter menstrual cycles and may get their periods as often as every 21 days.

What's
Happening to
Me?



WHY DO WE HAVE PERIODS?

You know that you bleed once a month, but why? Each month an egg is released into the uterus and if it is not fertilised the body will wash out the lining it has made for a fertilised egg (a baby) so that it can start again with a fresh home for the next egg. This washing out of the tissue and blood is your period. Menstrual blood usually flows for 3 – 7 days every month.

IMPORTANT!

Just because you have started your periods and COULD have a baby this does not mean you SHOULD be having children. Although your body may be getting ready for carrying a child, there are still many reasons why you should WAIT until you are older before having a baby:

- If you have a baby while you are still at school you may never be able to complete your education
- The rest of your body is still developing
- Even if your body is fully developed you may not have developed emotionally sufficiently to cope with the stress of looking after a baby
- It is against the law for a male to have sex with you when you are under 18



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

MENSTRUATION CALENDAR

You can make your own calendar. Draw 12 monthly calendars on your own paper. Mark on the calendar each time your period starts and then again on the day your bleeding stops. Over time you will start to see a pattern so you will know how many days your period usually lasts for and when the next one will be.

NOW YOU CAN BE PREPARED!

MY FIRST PERIOD

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET YOUR FIRST PERIOD?



We spoke to Andrea Smith, a muzungu from the UK, who told us all about her first period experience.

Andrea was 11 when she got her first period. She had just started secondary school in a place called Sheffield in England. Andrea tells us, "I was the first girl in my class to get my period. It was quite a scary day as I didn't really know what was happening. I went to bathe in the morning but found a red stain in my knickers. Thankfully I was at home and my mum helped me with a sanitary pad. She explained that this would happen every month now and that it was exciting because it was a sign that I was growing up and I could have children in the future."

When Andrea told her friends about her new development she didn't get the reaction she was expecting. "I was one of the smaller girls in my year group and some of my friends in my class thought that I was making it up for attention. I don't know why I would do that but I think maybe they were jealous."

"THERE WAS BLOOD ALL OVER MY CHAIR!"

Andrea is now 31 but can still remember how awful and uncontrollable having her period felt for the

first few months. "I never knew when my period was going to arrive because it was quite irregular. One day my period started at school when I hadn't taken any sanitary pads with me. There was blood all over my chair but it was the last class of the day so I managed to somehow get home without sitting down properly on the school bus! No one except my best friend who was sitting next to me seemed to notice."

"From that day onward I promised myself I would always carry a sanitary pad, no matter if my period was due or not."

"ALWAYS CARRY A SANITARY PAD."

Andrea's first period arrived at a young age but girls can get their period as young as 10 and as old as 18. Any age is normal – don't think you're not normal if you reach 17 and you haven't had your first period yet. If you're worried about anything to do with this topic please find a female adult that you trust who you can talk to.

JENNIFER'S STORY

What happens to Jennifer when she starts her first period? What will she do?

Jennifer sat quietly in class. Maths was usually her favourite subject but today she couldn't concentrate. She had been feeling pain in her stomach all morning and now she had started to notice a wet feeling in her underwear. Her best friend Esther was answering all the questions and wondered why Jennifer was so quiet today. Normally they were competing to see who could score the highest. Jennifer slipped out of class and ran to the toilet. What could be wrong? Her heart started to beat faster as she noticed a red stain in her underwear. What was it? Why was she bleeding? She started to panic. Was she really sick? What was going

to happen? Tears filled her eyes and her hands began to shake.

Esther was still in class and had started to wonder what was taking Jennifer so long. She normally wouldn't miss maths. Maybe she was sick. Esther asked to be excused and went to check. As she reached the toilet she could hear Jennifer sniffing. What was wrong? Why was she crying? Jennifer started to tell Esther what had happened, but noticed Esther starting to smile. Why was she smiling? This was serious! Esther then put her arm around Jennifer and



Why am I bleeding? Am I sick?

started to explain to her that this was perfectly normal, she had started her period. Esther helped her find a teacher who could help. Mrs Katesi was always very kind. She gave Jennifer a pad and then sat with her and explained what was happening to her body and that this happens to all girls. Jennifer began to relax. She was still a bit worried about all the changes which were happening but she knew she had people she could talk to.

- **ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT PUBERTY?**

- **DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE YOU CAN TALK TO?**

Periods are normal and every girl's first experience will be different, some start young, some older but you do not need to be

afraid. Find someone to speak to who you can trust like your mother or grandmother or even a teacher like Jennifer did.

10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CLEAN DURING MENSTRUATION

1. CHANGE YOUR PAD EVERY 3 - 4 HOURS FOR NORMAL FLOW. IF THE MENSTRUATION FLOW IS HEAVY, CHANGE THE PAD EVERY 2 HOURS.



2. ALWAYS CARRY SPARE KNICKERS AND PADS FOR CHANGING WHILE AT SCHOOL.



3. ALWAYS CARRY A PLASTIC BAG TO WRAP YOUR DIRTY REUSABLE PAD FOR WASHING AT HOME.



4. HANG ON A OR PEG UNDER THE SUN FOR COMPLETE DRYING BECAUSE IF IT DOES NOT DRY IT MAY CAUSE INFECTIONS IN AND AROUND THE PRIVATE PARTS.



5. AVOID DRYING UNDERWEAR ON THE GRASS AND ALWAYS STORE YOUR PADS IN A CLEAN AND DRY PLACE.



Check out some helpful advice here!

6. NEVER DRY YOUR REUSABLE PADS AND KNICKERS UNDER YOUR BED, INSTEAD DRY THEM IN THE SUN COVERED UNDER A PIECE OF CLOTH.



8. NEVER HIDE DIRTY KNICKERS IN OR UNDER THE MATTRESS. ENSURE THAT YOU ALWAYS WASH THEM. MENSTRUAL FLOW IS NATURAL, BODY FLUID THAT CAN BE WASHED OUT WITH SOAP AND COLD WATER



9. REMOVE AND WASH REUSABLE PAD MATERIALS SEPARATELY FROM THE OUTER MATERIAL USING SOAP AND WATER TO ENSURE CLEANLINESS.



7. ALWAYS DISPOSE OF OLD PAIRS OF KNICKERS BY BURNING THEM



10. DO NOT SHARE YOUR REUSABLE PADS WITH YOUR FRIENDS.



TRUTH OR LIES?

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME BELIEFS ABOUT PERIODS. ARE THEY TRUTH OR SIMPLY A LIE?



JEMIMAH, 14

‘You cannot attend school for the first few days of your period’

LIES!



Although it may seem impossible to go to school if your period is heavy, there are ways to ensure you will be ok:

- Carry spare reusable sanitary pads and a plastic bag.
- Leave class in good time to change your sanitary pad
- Check your pad after each lesson to make sure it is not leaking
- Take an extra pair of knickers with you in your school bag



ESTHER, 12

‘Your eggs will one day run out and you will stop menstruating’

TRUTH!



You are born with a certain number of eggs in your body, usually around 450. You will normally get to the end of your eggs when you are about 50.

PMS SYMPTOMS

What is PMS? What are the symptoms?

Periods can often make you feel sad, tearful or angry, this is completely normal. Premenstrual Symptoms or PMS is the name for the feeling some women and girls get a few days before their period. About 90% of women and girls get PMS and the symptoms they experience can be mild or severe.

The symptoms you may have include:

- mood swings and getting easily annoyed
- crying or feeling sad even though you can't explain it
- difficulty concentrating
- tiredness
- your breasts may feel painful
- your stomach feeling really full or bloated
- pain in the stomach area
- temporary weight gain
- headaches.



Why do I feel like this?

PAIN OR CRAMPS BEFORE AND DURING YOUR PERIOD

The bleeding does not hurt but muscle cramps can be painful. Hormones in your body can lead to side effects, the most common ones are stomach pain, headaches and a swollen, tender tummy.

This pain should not stop you from normal activities and you should be able to remain in class. You may find that doing some gentle exercise; drinking water or taking some pain relief tablets may help relieve the pain. However always seek advice from your school nurse before taking tablets.

PMS SYMPTOMS EXPLAINED:	MOOD SWINGS	TIREDNESS	PAINFUL BREASTS	HEADACHES
45% of women suffer from PMS 	You may feel angry, upset and may cry this is due to an increase in your hormones.	Changes in your hormones may make you tired. Also some girls find it difficult to sleep during their period.	Changes in hormones may cause your breasts to swell slightly which causes pain.	As your hormone levels change you can experience headaches. This is a normal symptom.



POEM BY MAGGIE AND FRIENDS



I AM GIRL

I AM GIRL –YES THAT’S WHO I AM,

I live, struggle and survive like any other child,
But I am different, just because of who I am,
My monthly flows.....OOOH....My Nature

I AM GIRL – YES, THAT’S WHO I AM

My obstacles, challenges, my failure
I can’t play, can’t stand because am shy,
I use papers, leaves and rags because that’s what I have,
I am bullied, mocked and sent home because am not safe,
Forced to early marriages, drop out of school because am
a girl,
But I live, struggle and survive like any other child.

WE ARE GIRLS – YES, THAT’S WHO WE ARE

Teachers, parents and community members
It’s possible for a girl child to stay in school,
We are smart, strong and better off educated,
Cherish a girl child –make her world safe,

I AM GIRL

WE ARE GIRLS,
THATS WHO WE
ARE!

WRITE YOUR OWN POEMS:

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR YOUR POEMS. WRITE THEM OUT AND GIVE THEM TO A FIELDS OF
LIFE VISITOR TO YOUR SCHOOL.



MEET A DIRECTOR

Find out about Anne and what she thinks about I AM GIRL.



Think instead
“Yes I can!
I AM GIRL”!

WE SPOKE TO ANNE BROWN FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

Anne has been living in Uganda for over a year, let's find out a little bit more about her and what she wants to tell us girls.

1. Tell us about yourself.

My name is Anne Brown. I am married with three grown up children.

2. What do you do?

I am a member of the Fields of Life Board of Directors in Northern Ireland. I worked as a lawyer for many years but am now a volunteer in the Fields of Life office in Kampala.

3. When did you first come to Uganda?

I first came to Uganda for two weeks in 2007 with a team of volunteers from my church.

4. Why do you work with I AM GIRL?

I am a woman and I have two daughters so I know many of the issues and challenges that girls face. I was a school governor at an all girls' school for many years and I believe that the education of girls is good for girls and good for your families, your

communities and your country whether that country is Northern Ireland or Uganda.

5. What do you hope for I AM GIRL?

It is my hope that I AM GIRL will encourage girls and young women in Uganda to talk about issues that affect them, to believe in themselves, to stay at school and to achieve their full potential.

6. What message would you like to give to the readers?

Girls, when you think you can't do something, think instead “Yes I can! I AM GIRL”!



QUESTIONNAIRE

WE WOULD LOVE TO KNOW WHAT YOUR LIFE IS LIKE AS A GIRL LIVING IN UGANDA. LET'S CHANGE THE WORLD OF A GIRL CHILD THROUGH OUR EXPERIENCES AND INSPIRATIONS. PLEASE REPLY WITH A DETAILED RESPONSE. YOU CAN USE A SEPARATE PAGE. USE THE QUESTION NUMBERS TO GUIDE US.

1. How many years do you have?
2. Where do you stay?
3. What would you like to be when you grow up?
4. What is your family/home life like?
5. What challenges did you have as a girl child growing up?
6. Who is your role model and why?
7. Have you ever dropped out of school? If yes, why?
8. What ideas do you have for changing the world of a girl child?
9. What do you think about the I AM GIRL project?
10. What do you have to say to encourage other girls in Uganda?

**ALL ABOUT
YOU!**



AND FINALLY, PLEASE ASK US ANY QUESTION YOU LIKE. IT CAN BE ABOUT SEX, MENSTRUATION, BOYS, OR ANYTHING ELSE. WE WILL CHOOSE TWO OR THREE QUESTIONS AND ANSWER THEM IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF I AM GIRL.

YOU CAN GIVE YOUR COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE AND QUESTIONS TO ANY OF THE FIELDS OF LIFE VISITORS TO YOUR SCHOOL.