



Tackling Gender and Educational
Inequity with Sanitary Pads in
rural Masvingo, Zimbabwe



Thuy Vi Nguyen

4th year IR major at UC Davis

Worked in rural Masvingo, Zimbabwe in July
2019 for 4 weeks



Background



- * 62% of girls in Zimbabwe miss school due to lack of pads (Ncube, 2018)
 - Unaffordable and unavailable especially in rural areas
- * Aim to:
 - (1) address their absence from school and its negative educational outcomes
 - (2) ameliorate menstrual stigma that ostracizes females in the community

Context: Zimbabwe

- * Based in Manunure Village of Masvingo Province
 - Lived in staff quarters
- * 16 official languages: English, Shona, and Ndebele are most common
- * Hyperinflation: ecocash & bond
- * Power cuts, shortage of food & fuel
- * Political unrest





Methods



- * Part 1: Pad-making Workshop
 - Train girls and boys how to make reusable pads
 - Work with flannel, fleece, and waterproof fabrics
 - Use cut-outs for the different pieces of the pad
- * Part 2: Menstrual Health and Hygiene Workshop
 - Menstrual cycle, hygiene, and self-defense



Week 1: Arrival and Acculturation





Week 2: Sewing and Workshopping





Instructions and Templates



Instructions for Making Tese Pad

Materials:

- Template for topping and backing piece
- Templates for the pieces of the core:
 - Template for flannel and waterproof insert
 - Template for fleece insert

*There are different sizes, so be sure to use the correct templates for the size of the pad you want.

- Velcro pieces cut into 5cm squares
- Tese tag

Types of Fabric:

- Flannel fabric for topping and backing piece and flannel insert
- Fleece fabric for fleece insert
- Waterproof fabric for waterproof insert

For one pad you will need:

2x flannel piece for top and back



1x flannel insert



1x fleece insert



2x waterproof insert



2x Velcro pieces



hard



soft

1x Tese tag

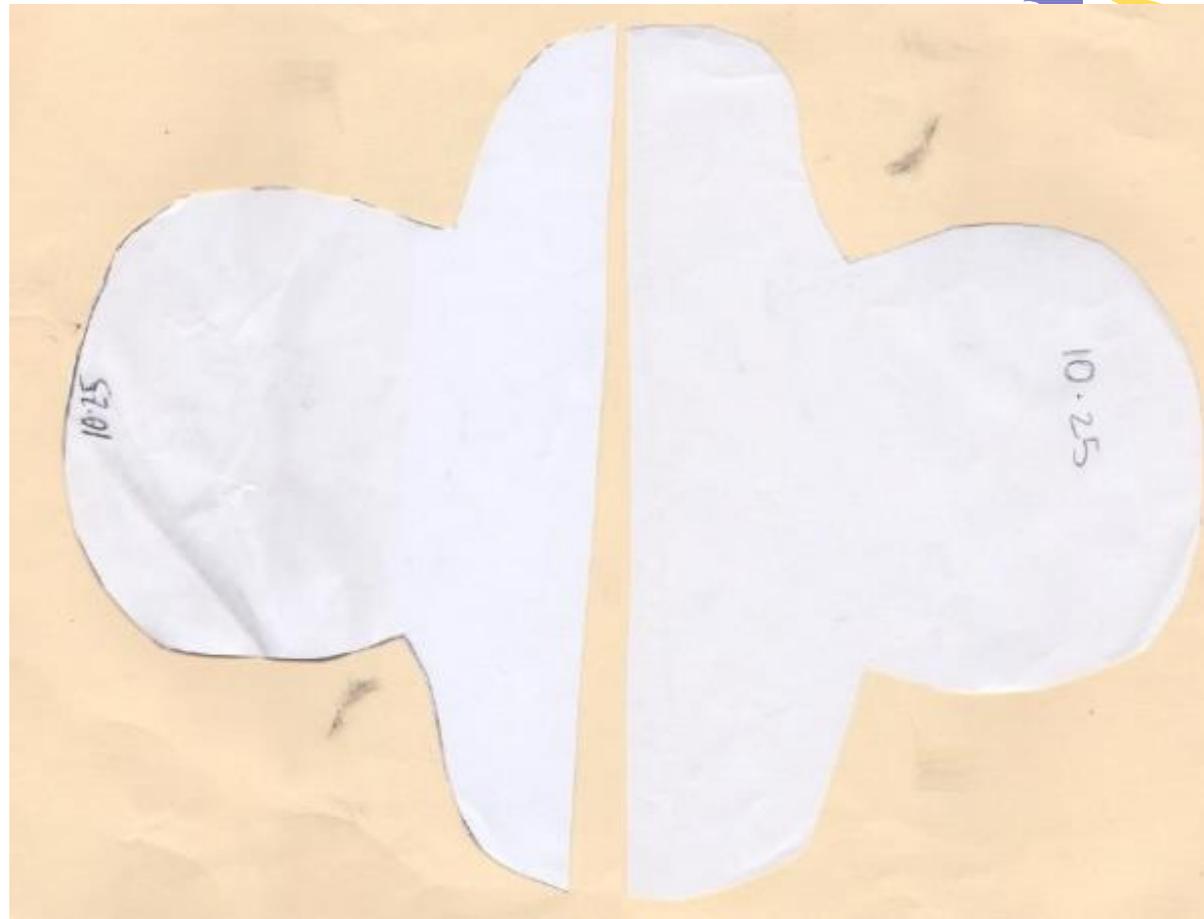


Instructions:

Step 1: Trace and cut out the pieces using the templates.

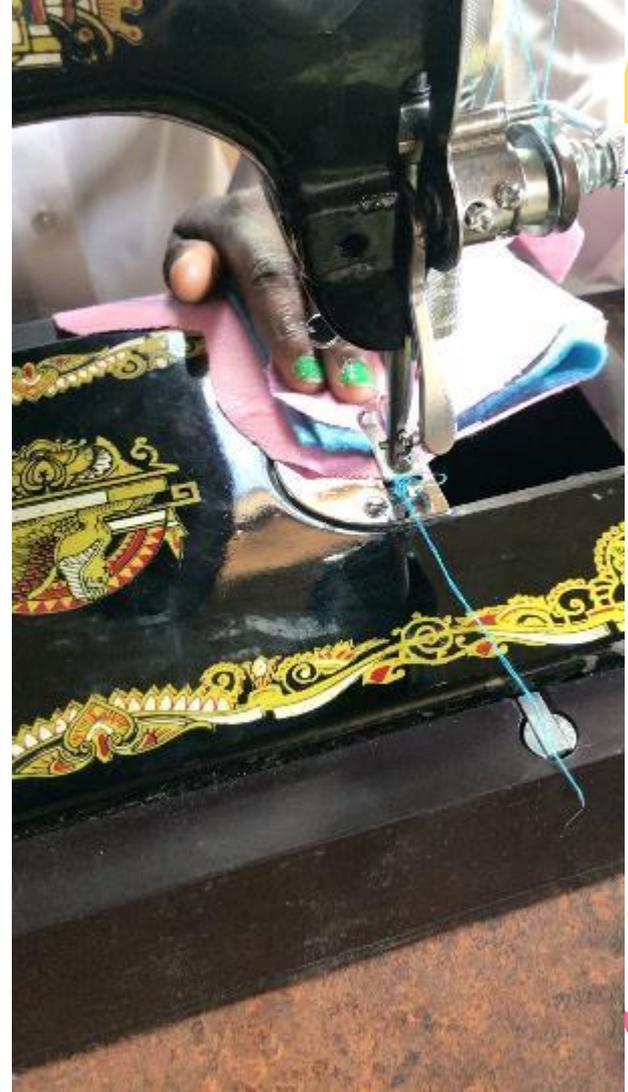
- Cut topping and backing pieces on flannel material.
- Cut flannel insert on flannel material.
- Cut fleece insert on fleece material.
- Cut waterproof insert on waterproof material.

*Note: Trace templates against the grain of the fabric OR parallel to the selvage so that the material does not stretch.





Video of Student Sewing

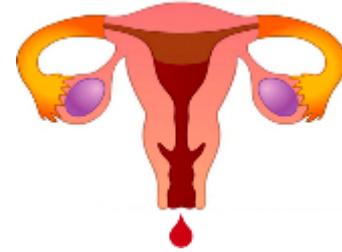




Sample Workshop Slides



Menstruation



About Days 1-7 (Menstrual Bleeding)

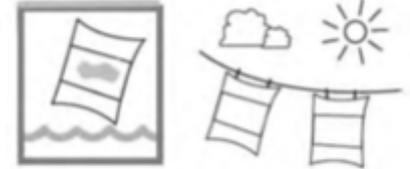
1. Menstruation is the shedding of the the lining of the uterus
1. The lining breaks down in to a bloody substance and exits through the vagina.
1. Periods can last 2 days - 8 days. The number of days might change from one month to the next for some women.
1. Many girls experience cramps during this time.

How To Use Your Pad

- * Use a sanitary pad for your period and make sure it's **clean and dry**
- * Wash *gently*; it can last 2-4 years

How to wash pads:

1. Change pad when it looks full of menses
2. Wash pad as soon as possible at least once a day with **soap** and water
 - a. Keep rinsing until water is *clear*.
3. **Completely** dry pad in the sun to kill germs.
4. Store pads when they are clean and dry.





Self-defense Means SAFE



When someone tries to **attack** you:

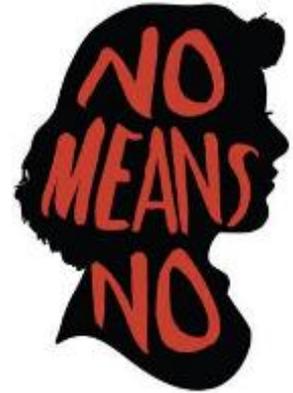
- * You have **control** over the situation
- * **SAFE** begins with **YOU**

SAFE means:

- * **Survive** because **YOU** matter and **Shout**
- * **Awareness** of what's around you
- * **Feelings** matter; trust your gut!
- * **Exit** with others in a group.

Where are you **STRONG**? Where are they **WEAK**?

No means NO!





Week 3: More Students, More Schools





Week 4: New Challenges





House Visit: Tatenda and Edith





Week 5: Goodbye





Snippets of Life in Zim





Results



- * Reached girls and boys at 5 different schools
- * Taught over 260 girls and boys how to make reusable sanitary pads
- * Made over 280 reusable sanitary pads
- * Gave full 1hr lectures to groups of girls at two schools
 - Shorter lectures at the other 3 schools



Lessons Learned



- * Things do not go as planned
- * Lots of students wanted to help, but not enough supplies
- * Need more time to reach all of our goals
 - Wanted to go to too many schools
- * Priorities: quality or quantity?



References

- * [Zimbabwe map]. (n.d).
<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/879751/Zimbabwe-map-where-is-Zimbabwe-Harare-location-Africa-mapped>
- * Chatter, P. (2013). Does schooling and work empower women in Fiji? Or have gender inequalities persisted and why?. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 25(1), 61-76.
- * Ncube, L. (2018, Jan 9). Rural girls in Zim still facing menstrual hygiene challenges. *The Chronicle*, Retrieved from <https://www.chronicle.co.zw/rural-girls-in-zim-still-facing-menstrual-hygiene-challenges/>



Any Questions?