

RUBY CUP MADE ME PROUD TO BE A WOMAN



Above: Picture of Diana in Kyaka II on her day to day routine supporting adolescent girls and women on Menstrual Health Management

My name is Diana. I am 26 years old, and I am a Congolese refugee living in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement. I participated in WoMena Uganda's Menstrual Health Management (MHM) training in June 2019. I am now a Trainer of Trainers (ToT) on MHM in the settlement. I support adolescent girls and women in the settlement by providing them with information on MHM.

I fled conflict in the DRC in 2008, at the age of 14 together with 3 members of my family. We arrived at the settlement and we were given disposable pads when being settled in Kyaka II. Since then, the distribution of necessary items hasn't been reliable including sanitary pads. Sanitary need to be provided on routine basis. The disposable pads used to be distributed every 6 months, but then, it became even less, and it was difficult for girls and women in my community including myself to manage our menstrual periods. I had to use disposable pads and pieces of cloth which were very uncomfortable. When I moved long distances in the settlement the improvised sanitary wear caused rubbing, burning effect including embarrassment when they leaked.

The settlement has limited access to water, soap, and privacy which made it difficult for me to properly manage my menstruation and wash my improvised sanitary wear. The situation was even worse for other women who could not afford or get access to adequate MHM products. They had to use dirty cloth that they ripped from their skirts or shirts. They would get infections from the improvised sanitary wear because they were unable to properly wash them and would wear them for long periods of time.



For most women and girls in my community and in the settlement, there was always shame and silence surrounding menstruation. We did not discuss the difficulties, challenges, or pain caused by our menstrual periods. We always felt menstruation was a shameful part of being a woman. Something that is meant to be kept secret and dealt with silently. As a result, women and girls in my community felt consciously uncomfortable during our menstrual periods. We were afraid to stain our skirts, and when we did, men and boys laughed and stared at us. We were even scared to dry our reusable products or clothes in the open which made it difficult to dry them. We were limited in ways of finding MHM products or alternative ways to lessen our menstrual pain.

When I began WoMena's MHM Training of Trainers, I was the most challenging participant. I challenged WoMena trainers a lot because I wanted to know everything about MHM. I wanted to know how to help girls in the community. The 3-day training gave us information on puberty, hygiene, pain management and tracking our menstruation cycle. I thought that was very good. After the training, I now feel more hygienic and more confident. I speak more openly about menstruation and menstrual health to my friends and family. WoMena also gave us a MHM kit with a menstrual cup (Ruby Cup) on the last day of the training. I now use it to manage my menstruation and can continue to use it for the next 10 years.

The menstrual cup is comfortable, easy to use, reliable and reduces time spent on washing. I no longer have to worry or fear about my menstrual periods. I can use it easily and I can do everything while using the cup. I always think, "oh how I was spending my money and fearing to stain." Other women and girls in my community that have also received a Ruby Cup and WoMena's MHM training are less restricted, experience less difficulty, save money, and talk more freely about their menstruation. Girls and women now come to me to seek information and help on the cup including their menstruation. They have reported so much positive feedback. They always ask me "when is the next WoMena training and menstrual cup distribution?"

Today, I manage my periods safely and easily, and whenever I see menstruation, I feel like I am a full woman because I know even if I get a husband I am able to produce for him. I feel I'm normal and natural because I'm always seeing other women who don't menstruate. They are going to the hospital to see why they aren't menstruating, but if I am menstruating, it means I am normal, I don't have any problems, and I can produce. I feel like I am a full woman. I hope more women and girls can also receive the menstrual cup and learn about their menstrual health.



Prepared By:

Name: Megan Dumas

Date: March 25th, 2020

Position: Junior Project Manager

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Megan Dumas", written over a light blue horizontal line.