



Finalist's case study



University of Warwick

Enterprise

Project Baala: a real solution not insanitary



Profile

- Higher Education
- 24,000 students (includes full and part time students)
- 6000 staff
- Campus based in rural location but situated next to urban Coventry

About the project

Summary

88% of menstruating women in India don't use any sanitary products. The result is a 31% drop in productivity levels for working women and almost 25% of adolescent girls quitting school. We created *Project Baala* to raise awareness about menstrual health and hygiene in India and to distribute 3 reusable sanitary pads for women which can last up to a year and a half.

Project partners

The project was financially supported (£3k) via the Lord Rootes Memorial Fund, The University of Warwick

The results

The problem

88% menstruating women in India do not use any sanitary products during their period and use alternatives such as pieces of rag, ash, sand and husk. This results in a drop of 31% in productivity levels of working women and almost 1 in every 4 adolescent girls in the country, quits school due to the lack of any sanitary facilities (Nielson Corporation, 2015).

'These are not mere statistics for me but growing up in India, I have witnessed these problems first hand whilst volunteering and working in urban and rural slums. It is appalling that something that is taken for granted by most of us affects the education and income of nearly half of India's female population. In addition to proving as a barrier to higher income and education levels, poor menstrual hygiene rooted in years of unawareness, misinformation and taboos substantially increases the risk of reproductive tract infection amongst these women.' – Soumya Dabriwal, Enactus Student

Additionally although sanitary waste disposal is a global problem but it is more distinct in India due to poor solid municipal waste management. An estimated 125kg of sanitary waste is generated by a single woman in her



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menstruating years (Ecofemme, 2016) and with 12% of women in a population of 1.25 billion using sanitary pads, India is facing a serious problem of non-biodegradable waste.

With this in mind, *Project Baala* was created to provide a two-fold solution to menstrual problems in India:

The approach

1. Generating awareness about menstrual health and hygiene via workshops in rural areas.
2. Distribution of 3 reusable sanitary pads for women which can be used up to a year and a half.

This allows to eliminate the recurring costs of buying sanitary pads and the use of unsafe alternatives whilst simultaneously improving the menstrual health practices employed by the women. It also allows to minimize the cost on the environment and reject the myths and taboos associated with menstruation. With generous support from the Lord Rootes Memorial Fund, ~840 women were impacted over the summer of 2016. After that ~1250 more women and girls have been impacted due to the high interest shown by different NGOs and organizations in India to take it up as their CSR initiatives.

Our goals

Project Baala seeks to eliminate this trade-off between food, education and sanitary products that prevails in India. The ultimate goal is to generate a self-sustainable model where all 88% of the women with no sanitary facilities can be positively impacted. It is also a great sustainability model as it improves social sustainability of women's interactions with others and their education along with reducing waste and negative impacts on climate change through landfill disposal.

- Timescale – Implemented 2016 and ongoing.
- Costs – Just under £3,000. Impact – 1,000's women in rural India
- Status – Ongoing, working on a sustainable delivery model/NGO to take on board.
- Involvement – Soumya Dabriwal, other Students, Warwick Enterprise Team, Lord Rootes Memorial Fund and Enactus Warwick.
- External Recognition – This project propelled Enactus Warwick to reach the National Competition in April 2017 and make it to the semi-finals and be labelled as 1 of the Top 15 Institutions within the UK, a momentous accolade. Enactus also won 'Most Improved Team' this year.



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The pilot project (Project Baala) demonstrated a two-fold solution to menstrual problems in India:

1. Generating awareness about menstrual health and hygiene via workshops in rural areas.
2. Distribution of 3 reusable sanitary pads for women which can be used up to a year and a half.

Impact can be seen in terms of educating women on sanitary healthcare and demystifying myths etc. - 840 women were impacted over the summer of 2016. After that ~1250 more women and girls have been impacted due to the high interest shown by different NGOs and organizations in India to take it up as their CSR initiatives. Also, by distributing 3 reusable sanitary pads for women which can be used up to a year and a half means that there's a huge reduction in sanitary waste reducing negative environmental impact.

This offering means that women have access to clean sanitary-ware as opposed to what potentially unhygienic methods they may have previously been utilising.

Also the project has positive implications as women will be able to stay within education, as result of receiving sanitary-ware and having more knowledge on menstruation etc.

Obstacles and solutions

Performance and results

This project is very scalable and can have a huge impact on women throughout the world whilst reducing the harmful impact of mass produced sanitary products.

The future

Top 3 learnings from implementing your project

1. Education plays a vital role in empowering women to be independent and confident
2. The power of discussion and awareness plays a pivotal role in tackling stigmas attached to taboo subjects.
3. Never underestimate the strength of team work and perseverance, when faced with obstacles

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

'We seek to instil in our students the knowledge and skills they need to make a positive change in the world. It's rewarding to see them having a positive impact on the other side of the globe - a Green Gown Award would be a fantastic way to celebrate this.'

Vice Chancellor and President of the University of Warwick, Prof. Stuart Croft

Further information

<http://projectbaala.com/>

www.greengownawards.org.uk

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