

# The Nia Project: Girl-led design of a menstrual health product offering in Kenya

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ZanaAfrica in Kenya 

ZanaAfrica is a Kenyan social enterprise that equips women and girls with the high quality menstrual and reproductive health support they need, seek, and deserve. We believe that the onset of menstruation and puberty is the most natural and opportune time to engage girls in a range of personal decisions. In 2014, we launched a project to design a sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) educational tool for adolescent girls to compliment our Nia (Purpose in Kiswahili) Teen sanitary pad brand.



Up to 2 in 3 girls lack regular access to pads<sup>3</sup>

The status of adolescent girls in Kenya<sup>1,2</sup>:

- 1 in 5 girls is pregnant by age 18
- Girls are 14X more likely than their male age-mates to have sex with a partner 10+ years older
- Girls are 3X more likely to have recently experienced sexual violence compared to boys
- In some counties, girls are as much as 100% less likely than boys to be enrolled in primary school

## The Nia Project Objectives

1. Create a referable, engaging, accurate resource for young adolescent girls (age 11-15) that is responsive to their current knowledge gaps and vocalized questions, to serve as a stand-alone or supplemental SRHR tool.
2. Produce rigorous evidence on the role of a combined MHM product-SRHR education intervention on girls' educational attainment and well-being.

## Objective 2: Implementation + Evaluation



In 2017, Nia Teen Mag will be implemented in a randomized controlled trial (RCT)—conducted by Population Council—evaluating the individual and combined effects of school-based sanitary pad and reproductive health education provision on girls' education and well-being in Kilifi, Kenya.

## Objective 1: Product Design

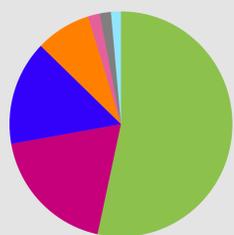
**Formative research** entailed compiling insights from 2 activities to understand girls' attitudes, experiences, and knowledge gaps:

- Mixed-method insights (92 interviews + 4 focus group discussions) with primary school-going girls (Class 6-8) from 5 schools in 3 counties
- Ongoing analysis of anonymous questions from girls received through ZanaAfrica's programs (data presented is from 1,111 questions representing 635 girls in 5 counties)

Significant knowledge gaps persist, with 98% of girls wanting to learn more about menstruation and reproductive health



53% did not know about menstruation before her first period.



Of the questions analyzed:

- 53% centered on menstruation
- 19% covered puberty
- 15% addressed relationships
- 8% were on sex

Many girls leveraged questions on menstruation to inquire about extended SRHR topics, including sex, pregnancy, and social norms

"Will you get pregnant if you have sex with a boy when you have periods?"

"What can I do not to feel ashamed of my periods?"

"I started my periods when I was in class six why do boys keep on calling me when on the road?"

## Key Research Questions:

1. What is the effect of an MHM intervention combining software (SRHR education) and hardware (sanitary pads), versus software or hardware alone?
2. What is the cost-effectiveness of the combined approach, as compared to either software or hardware approaches alone?

## Research Design:

Arm 1 35 schools	Arm 2 35 schools	Arm 3 35 schools	Arm 4 35 schools
Control (No intervention)	Sanitary Pads	Reproductive Health Ed	Sanitary Pads Reproductive Health Ed

- Baseline: January 2017
- Endline: January 2019
- 20-month intervention
- School-based cluster design
- 140 schools, ~ 3,500 girls
- Endline results: August 2019

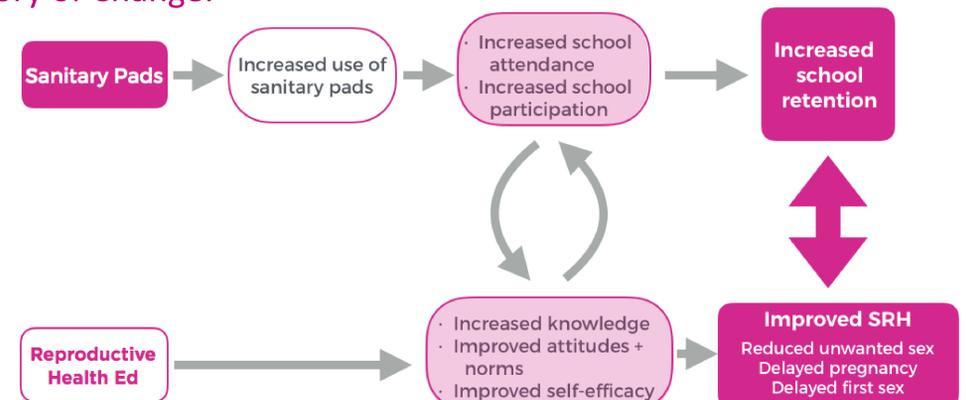
Sanitary Pads

= Free monthly provision of ZanaAfrica's Nia Teen disposable sanitary pads

Reproductive Health Ed

= Free termly provision of Nia Teen Magazine, combined with 2x/month facilitation of government-approved after-school SRHR and life skills education curriculum

## Theory of Change:



The Nia Project evaluation will be the **first rigorous study in Sub-Saharan Africa** to provide evidence on the **individual and combined effects of disposable sanitary pad provision and SRHR education on girls' health, educational, and social outcomes.**

## Final Product: Nia Teen Magazine

- 52-page magazine delivered termly based on academic calendar (3x/year)
- Features a combination of interviews, comics, activities, infographics, and Q&A
- Rooted in continuous research with girls and UNESCO's TG on Sexuality Education, with emphasis on MHM

## Key Design Elements

- Referable resource that girls can engage with on their own time
- Centralized content ensures consistency of information delivery
- Low cost of production (USD \$0.85 per issue) favors scale
- Termly delivery format facilitates responsive content

