



Freedom For Life!

Profile

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Our Story

In 2009 when Ann the founder of Binti worked for a women led microfinance institution in western Kenya, she noticed while visiting the women groups in her portfolio that the women were often accompanied by their teenage daughters. When Ann asked the women why the girls were not in school the women said it's because they could not afford sanitary towels. The girls' families were so poor they could not afford sanitary towels. Upon further inquiry, she found out that for many of these girls used pieces of old mattress, clothes and even leaves.

Many families in Kenya are Large and many of these families especially in rural areas survive hand to mouth with wages of Ksh. 200 per day (about 2 dollars) which barely covers the cost of food, housing and school fees. Most of them are left to make the difficult choice between catering for food and buying sanitary towels. As a result of the seemingly inescapable financial circumstances many young girls often end up in early marriages, going into prostitution (sex for pads) and having to deal with stigmatization, harassment, exclusion from basic activities (like work and education), physical, emotional and psychological abuse while some even die of STD's simply because they have started menstruating.

Menstruation is natural and not something to be ashamed of or prevent women/Girls from living! However, everyday millions of women and girls are victims of systematic crimes against humanity because of menstruation. So in 2012 Anne founded Binti Mwangaza. Since then Binti has manufactured and distributed over 20,000 Reusable sanitary pads, delivered training to over 500 women and young adults and visited a variety of schools in Laikipia and Meru counties to teach about menstrual health hygiene, sexual and reproductive health rights while handing out reusable sanitary pads. One of these schools was Machungulu day secondary school where we found that girls were not attending school one week a month during their menses. We were over the moon to find that all these girls are now attending school after Binti handed out reusable sanitary kits! These success stories give Binti the motivation to keep going. We hope to change policies in Kenya so that all girls in need have access to proper menstrual management products i.e reusable sanitary pad kits and hope that this movement goes global.

Over time we have implemented other programs at Binti i.e a livelihoods and mentorship programme dubbed Hold my Hand Initiative (HmH) to help these women and girls attain financial freedom and a Water and Sanitation Program (WASH) to help alleviate the challenges these women and girls go through on a daily basis.

About Binti Mwangaza

Binti Mwangaza is a non-profit community-based organization working in Kenya to support and improve the lives of vulnerable women and girls from low-income families by giving them access to reusable sanitary towels. Over time, our mandate has evolved to include a livelihood program through the Hold my Hand Initiative which aims to help vulnerable women and young adults in our communities attain sustainable financial freedom so they do not have to depend on handouts.

Since 2012 we have manufactured and distributed over 20,000 Reusable sanitary pads and delivered training to over 500 women and young adults. We also seek to address the lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities that are essential to menstrual hygiene management.

Mission

To ensure financial freedom for women and young adults in vulnerable communities while making it possible for girls in these communities to attend school during their menstruation.

Vision

To create a world where women and young adults have equal opportunity to develop their talents, hobbies and ideas in order to thrive.

Overall Objectives:

- To provide basic life skills to vulnerable women and young adults that will help them establish and run sustainable income generating businesses.
- To ensure the continued Growth of the cottage industry championed by women and young adults.
- To help girls from low-income families stay in school during menses and educate them on Menstrual Health Management and Sexual Reproductive Health, good hygiene and the negative impact using disposable pads has on the environment as most of them end up in landfills.
- To establish and evaluate other challenges affecting vulnerable school girls with regard to managing menstrual cycles
- To include and educate boys on menstrual taboos and stigma and the role they can play to support women and girls in their communities thereby encouraging gender equality.
- To permanently reduce the number of sanitary products that go to landfills and promote mindfulness towards our environment in our community.

Programs under Binti Mwangaza

The following programs run concurrently under Binti Mwangaza

1. Hold My Hand Initiative (**HmH**)
2. Menstrual Health and Hygiene Program
3. Water and Sanitation Program(**WASH**)

1. Hold My Hand Initiative

Most women and young adults from rural areas do not have a means of generating income for their families while some of them have small businesses that remain stuck in the informal sector of our economy and do not generate nearly enough income to sustain their families. The hold my Hand Initiative is a startup incubation programme that looks to;

- a. Impact usable skills to vulnerable women and young adults in our communities. We do this by

- i. Training them on value addition and turning what is readily available to them into sustainable business ventures that will help them supplement their family income.
 - ii. Training them on basic bookkeeping to help them properly run and manage their businesses while maintaining consistent growth and profitability.
- b. Incubation - We help vulnerable women and young adults groups transform hobbies and crafts into sustainable businesses through:
- i. Market research - we help them identify their target market, conduct market testing to gather feedback and where feasible we help them brand and package their products to fit a wider market range.
 - ii. Product development - We help these groups develop new products that will cater for the ever changing marketplace using the skills and materials already available to them.
 - iii. Quality assessment and certification - after product development we help them get their products through Kenya Bureau Of Standards (KEBS) and acquire KEBS certification.
 - iv. Marketing - we help the groups explore new markets for their products (both local and global markets)

By doing so we hope to foster a sense of innovation and entrepreneurship in our communities and ensure the continued growth of cottage industries in our country. Those who receive training and go through our incubation programme are able to employ themselves and those around them thereby reducing cases of unemployment in the villages.

2. Menstrual Health and Hygiene Program

This is a flagship program that aims at keeping girls in school throughout the term by giving them reusable sanitary pads (which we manufacture locally at the Binti Workshop) free of charge giving them a fair chance at education.

Under this program, we also;

1. Educate the girls on their reproductive health, rights, anatomy, personal hygiene and personalized kit care.
2. Train them on how to make the pads with materials readily available to them to ensure sustainability.
3. Educate boys on menstrual taboos and stigma and the role they can play to support women and girls in their communities.

This is made possible by well-wishers, donors and proceeds from our Social Enterprise **Binti World**.

Why Reusable Sanitary Towels

- They are cost effective in the long run as the pads last up to 3 years.
- Made with cotton materials that are hypoallergenic which helps reduce cramps, infections skin rashes, recurrence of Reproductive Tract infections (RTIs) and Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) that occur when girls/women resort to using unhygienic alternatives during menstruation.
- Made in Kenya by women for women thereby creating local jobs.
- They are eco friendly as cotton only takes 6 to 12 months to decompose compared to plastic pads which takes about 500 to 800 years

What is in a Binti Kit:

- 6 Reusable Sanitary Pads
- 1 Bar of Soap
- 2 Panties
- 1 Waterproof carrier Bag (to carry soiled pads when the girls change at school so they can take home and wash)
- 1 plain carrier bag (to carry Clean Pads)
- An instruction Manual on how to clean and use the pads.

3 . Water and Sanitation Program (WASH)

For many low-income communities, water sources are usually far from their homes, and it typically falls to women and girls to spend much of their time and energy fetching water, a task which often exposes them to safety risks and leaves them vulnerable to attacks when collecting water from distant areas, domestic violence over the amount of water collected, and fights over scarce water supply (**violence against women**). Around a third of schools in these communities have no safe water supply leaving children dehydrated and less able to concentrate. The time to collect water then comes at the expense of education, income generating activities, cultural/political involvement, rest and recreation. This water work is also largely unpaid household work based on patriarchal gender norms and often related to domestic work, such as laundry, cooking and childcare. For adolescent girls, the presence of a safe water supply and clean, functioning, private sanitation facilities can be the difference between dropping out of school and getting an education.

Further to this, more than half of the population in these communities do not have access to adequate or safe sanitation forcing people to use inadequate communal latrines or to practice open defecation. Women and girls often have to wait until the cover of darkness so they can find a place to go to the toilet outside and have often reported to feel a danger for their security whilst journeying to toilets particularly at night.

Overall Objectives of the Binti Water and Sanitation Programme (WASH)

- Make water safely attainable and affordable for at least 12 hours a day in low income communities.
- To ensure educational progression of girls, high female-to-male enrolment ratios, and reduced repetition and drop-out ratios by providing adequate sanitation facilities in schools as Boys and girls are able to more fully participate in school when there is improved access to water and sanitation.
- Significantly Improve productivity, increase student attendance, reduce hygiene-related disease and contribute to dignity and gender equality in low income communities through gender-sensitive approaches to water and sanitation.
- To evaluate the severity of challenges related to lack of adequate water and sanitation facilities and come up with sustainable solutions and encourage inter-sectoral collaboration and cooperation between schools, communities and different levels of government as well as community leadership and accountability.