

## **Pad for Pad: passing on the power of informed choice**

Pad for Pad connects our customers and adolescent girls in India through the shared experience of menstruation, respect for our bodies, and love for the earth. When women and girls around the world chose to use our cloth pads their purchase ensures that other girls, who might not otherwise be able to, get to access clean, alternative menstrual products and answers to their questions. It's an idea we like to call 'eco-sisterhood.'

We started Pad for Pad because we saw that many women and girls in our area of Tamil Nadu have a lot of unanswered questions about their bodies and the menstrual cycle, mostly because menstruation is a topic that is not openly talked about. This observed need for safe learning spaces and the growing challenge of dealing with sanitary waste across India inspired us to replace silence with conversation and action. Since 2013 we have been partnering with government schools in Tamil Nadu and organisations across India to bring the Pad for Pad programme to girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.



The Pad for Pad sessions are designed to give girls the skills to manage their periods hygienically and with dignity, and the chance to relate to menstruation as a normal, healthy experience. In addition to providing menstrual health education and offering free cloth pads, we open up spaces for reflection on how menstruation is viewed in our communities and on related ritual practices that might impact girls and women. We use interactive teaching tools, like posters, felted model-uteruses, and ‘first period story’ sharing to create a fun and memorable session. In the coming years, we look forward to incorporating more creative expression and embodied learning in our sessions.

In the communities in which we work, the Pad for Pad session is often the first chance girls have ever had to ask questions and express their curiosity about menstruation in an open way—and they get answers, too!

Pad for Pad Kit includes: 4 pads (Eco Femme Day Pad Plus or option of foldable pads if preferred ) made from cotton flannel and with a leak proof layer; a travel/storage pouch; and instruction leaflet (available in Hindi and Tamil). Colour and pattern of pads and pouch may vary from that shown in the image.

We can also offer an option for providing materials for girls to self stitch an additional pad under this programme – an activity that girls love and feel proud of!



## How does Pad for Pad work?

We include a contribution in the price of our internationally sold pads—about 86 INR per pad; this money covers the cost of facilitation and educational materials for our sessions and allow us to offer 4 of our washable cloth pads and a carry pouch as a free choice (In India the 86 INR is not included in the price; customers can choose to add a pad purchase for a rural girl when they buy pads or contribute independently).

Watch our video to learn more about this programme and how it works:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCL7wepl80E>

## Why target adolescent girls?

- *Create informed choice:* In June 2011, the Indian government initiated a scheme to provide free disposable pads to adolescent girls (age 10-19) in rural India. This scheme means that at least 90 million disposable pads are tossed aside or burned each month! Considering that consumer patterns are set early on, we would like to offer girls in this age group information about alternative menstrual products that reduce sanitary waste, and the chance to access such a product.
- *Educational and developmental impact:* Knowing that menarche and menstruation are normal, healthy signs of growing up can help girls to experience less anxiety as development progresses. For this reason, we target adolescent girls who are still becoming familiar with their menstrual cycle in order to answer their questions and assuage fears. We have also learned that some girls miss school on their period days or drop out altogether because they do not have access to menstrual products or because they experience unmanageable discomfort.

Providing information, resources, and products mitigates this problem and allow girls to continue their personal development by staying enrolled and fully participating in school.

- *Independence:* Most girls do not have independent purchasing power. The choice of sanitary product is generally made by her parents, and limited to what the mother (or other female relative) already knows about—usually recycled cloth or disposable pads.

*Cultural context:* We work mainly with rural girls because in the rural areas there is still a strong culture of using cloth for menstruation, so switching to a revitalised form of cloth is quite feasible. Rural areas also have less access to sanitary products and there is no safe manner to dispose of them.



## **How can I support the Pad for Pad programme?**

In addition to the contributions that are built into our international sales we are happy to receive support from individuals around the world; your donations will go to covering the facilitation cost of sessions, Pad for Pad kits, and any training or support our implementation partners might need—all allowing an adolescent girl the chance to make informed choices and speak openly about menstruation in a safe context. You can make donations directly on our online shop or follow the instructions below.



## **Does Pad for Pad partner with organisations?**

Yes! We work with implementation partners and organisations across India to spread menstrual health education and washable cloth pads for free. You can see who we are currently partnered with at the bottom of this page. If you are interested in being an implementation partner and bringing Pad for Pad to your institution, please write to [valli@ecofemme.org](mailto:valli@ecofemme.org) to learn more about our program, our partnership requirements, how to donate and to download and complete our request form.

