



Ethiopia



## The Menstrual Dignity Project

Dignity Period 

The Menstrual Dignity Project aims to keep girls in school by providing menstrual hygiene kits that include reusable, washable menstrual pads, underwear, and soap. The project is being piloted in Tigray, with hopes to expand into other parts of Ethiopia.

Launched in 2014, Not-for-profit , Menstrual Hygiene Management , Women's Empowerment , East Africa: Ethiopia

Partners: Dignity Period, Mekelle University, Mariam Seba Sanitary Products Company, in collaboration with Tigray Regional Health and Education Authorities.

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### Problem Addressed

Menstrual hygiene is a socially awkward, taboo subject in Ethiopian culture. Adolescent girls, particularly in rural areas, have little access to adequate menstrual hygiene management supplies. As a result, they often miss 3-5 days of school each month, fall behind, are subjected to humiliation and abuse. Many end up terminating their education early, with deleterious effects on their families, communities, and country.

### Innovative Approach

Dignity Period makes a locally created, designed and produced menstrual pad available commercially, expanding the reach of that product through a distribution network of schools. Dignity Period subsidizes the cost to make these pads free for women and girls, and partners with various local stakeholders and academia through engineering and social science research related to the project. This includes researching a culturally acceptable, cost-effective model for extending access to latrine facilities in schools.

### Program Solution

Dignity Period works with trusted partners to promote access to menstrual hygiene management supplies and education for girls in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. They provide funds to Mekelle University to conduct research, purchase the pads from the Mariam Seba Sanitary Products Factory, and distribute the pads to girls in schools.

The Mariam Seba Sanitary Products Factory makes simple, effective menstrual pads. They are low cost, environmentally friendly, washable, and reusable. Mariam Seba pads are special because they last for 12-18 months. They are comfortable and made of cotton with a waterproof lining so they are reliable and leak-free. The pads are easy to launder and highly affordable; they cost 85-90 percent less than commercially available single-use pads. They are also environmentally friendly as there is nothing to dispose of each month.