

Sanitary Project in Zomba, Southern Malawi

This sanitary project, co-financed by Femmes d'Europe, in Zomba, southern Malawi, is one of the most successful projects in the area and is taking place at the HIV testing and counselling, education and community development Centre at Songani, where it started four years ago.

In the current round, some 700 washable sanitary kits (which include three pieces of protective material in each small bag) have been distributed to young women attending local schools. This current production cycle was kindly funded by Femmes d'Europe in 2021-2022 (with complementary funding from Mbedza, a charity partner, to provide staff salaries, travel expenses, soap and shared lunches for the young women).

On my visit to the project in August, I was taken through the process of how you make a kit from the measuring up, to the cutting, the assembling, the sewing (with a machine bought by Femmes d'Europe) and to the finishing off. How long is it since I did some sewing with a machine..... And indeed, the experience of making the kit imparts sewing skills to the young women, which could be a modest money-earner for them later on.



Once the “manufacturing” phase was over then came “the distribution”, with around 30 girls/young women from schools in the area. We began all together with an introductory Malawi-style celebration of dancing and

singing. The young women were going to be given reusable sanitary kits which would make them feel comfortable, more confident and able to sustain their education after all.....!

Then came a series of talks by counsellors/staff from the community development Centre at Songani (near Zomba), who addressed the importance of respectful, safe relationships (especially sexual). They also went through how young women can be exploited and how



not to become a victim of that. Finally, there was a demonstration of how to use the kit.

After that was the last part of the session, ie the handing out of the kits to the young women

present, who came forward gratefully, one by one. All distributions are recorded by staff at the Centre, so that the results of the project are known in quantitative terms and some assessment of impact can be undertaken.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the impact has been significant, with many stories of girls/young women benefitting from having this service available to them free of charge, which would not have been possible without the generosity of Femmes d'Europe.

On behalf of the young women benefitting from the sanitary project at the Songani HIV testing and counselling Centre, Malawi a big “thank you” to Femmes d'Europe!

*Sue Bird
UK group*

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