



**Championing #PediBure Campaign**

# **YOUNG GIRL'S JOURNEY FOR CHANGE**

# INTRODUCTION



Period Poverty Campaign **#PediBure #PediBilaKodi** is an impactful collaborative initiative between the Msichana Initiative (MIO) and the Pastoral Women's Council. This program is centered around girls and is led by their voices, focusing on advocacy aimed at securing government endorsement and implementation of a pads-free program designed to enhance educational outcomes across Tanzania.

Period poverty remains a significant barrier, hindering girls from accessing education equally and exposing them to various forms of violence and abuse, such as child marriage and teenage pregnancies.

Through this campaign, the powerful voices of girls from five diverse regions—Tabora, Dodoma, Arusha, the Coastal Region, and Dar es Salaam—are being amplified. Their stories vividly illustrate the challenges they face, their personal experiences, and their unwavering determination to confront societal obstacles. This movement embodies the resilience and strength of young women who are advocating for a brighter, more equitable future in education.

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Girl may receive only five thousands shillings for school expenses, which forces her to choose between buying sanitary pads or other essential items like soap, lotion, notebooks, or pens.

— Amina Songoy Leitura (16)

## STORY 01



Amina sharing her experience during the capacity-building session on MHM

### Arusha - Loliondo,

In my community, young girls often struggle to access sanitary pads during their periods due to their high cost, especially since many come from low-income households. For example, a **girl may receive only five thousand shillings for school expenses, which forces her to choose between buying sanitary pads or other essential items like soap, lotion, notebooks, or pens.** I was thrilled the first time I heard about the Pedi Bure/Pedi Bila Kodi Campaign because I believed the government would listen to our concerns and provide free sanitary pads in schools and at home.

I was inspired to become a champion in this program after seeing my peers face challenges during their periods. Many school girls lack access to sanitary pads, leading to stained skirts and teasing from others. This often causes them to miss school, harming their academic performance. Unfortunately, they often lack the confidence to advocate for themselves due to the absence of proper supplies.

Young girls who are supported by Pastoral Womens Council (PWC) in our schools have access to free sanitary pads, which makes them feel safer while at school. In contrast, at home, some girls use reusable hygienic pads but often lack sufficient water. This is because it takes a long time to fetch water from lakes or wells, making it difficult for them to use reusable pads comfortably at home.

After being empowered to effectively advocate for the Pedi Bila Kodi/Pedi Bure campaign, I was able to raise awareness among other young girls in my community, helping to strengthen their confidence. I find it much easier to discuss period-related issues with my mother and fellow young girls than with my father. This is mainly because my father does not prioritize supporting me in purchasing sanitary pads; he focuses more on providing food for our family.

I participated in the Pedi Bure Campaign by joining radio sessions and community meetings. I collected 35 signatures from community members in support of Pedi Bila Kodi/Pedi Bure. I learned the importance of engaging men and adolescent boys, as they can significantly support girls during their periods.

**STORY 02**

“I have been able to engage and educate my father, who now plays a significant role in ensuring I have access to sanitary pads at school, whereas I previously only discussed this with my mother.”

— Elizabeth Petro Saing'eu (18)

**Arusha - Loliondo,**

My name is Elizabeth Petro Sainge, and I am a student at Emanyata Secondary School. I am also a champion for the Pedi Bure / Pedi Bila Kodi campaign. After being selected as a champion, I received training on advocacy and awareness creation regarding Menstrual Hygiene Management. This training provided me with the opportunity to advocate for our needs directly in Parliament.

I was able to meet with members of the Health and Budget Parliamentary Committee and share our stories about the barriers and challenges we face as young girls during our periods. These include issues related to access to sanitary pads, clean water, and accurate information. I highlighted how the Health Parliamentary Committee has the power to influence the removal of taxes on sanitary pads through the financing parliamentary committee in the government budget.

Using this platform, I spoke on behalf of other young girls to raise our voices and share real-life stories, including the economic challenges that prevent some girls from affording pads. We also informed the parliamentarians about the health and gender-related effects that arise from a lack of access to sanitary pads. This led both committees to agree to support our motion and commit to advocating for the removal of the tax on sanitary pads.

The most significant challenge of not having access to pads is health-related. When a girl has limited access to sanitary pads, she is often forced to use reusable pads without an adequate supply of water for maintenance. Some resort to using options like cow dung. In schools, girls who cannot access pads may abstain from classes and spend time in dormitories, affecting their academic performance. This situation sometimes leads to girls engaging in sexual relationships to obtain money for pads, which unfortunately increases the risk of unwanted pregnancies and school dropouts.

Additionally, not having pads during menstruation can reduce girls' confidence. Some may engage in risky behavior, such as stealing pads from others, which can lead to negative consequences. After being empowered by the Pedi Bure/Pedi Bila Kodi advocacy program, I raised awareness in my community through small women's groups and discussions with my peers. Importantly, I have been able to engage and educate my father, who now plays a significant role in ensuring I have access to sanitary pads at school, whereas I previously only discussed this with my mother.

During our advocacy journey, I collected over 50 signatures to support our campaign and engaged men in my community, believing they can help address our challenges. During a visit to parliament, Severin, the chairperson of the Menstrual Hygiene Management Forum, advocated for us, highlighting that Menstrual Hygiene Management is a community issue, not just a women's issue..

We are proud to have a female president who I believe is fully aware of the challenges that young girls face today, as they will become the women of tomorrow. It would be advantageous if our government supports this movement and ensures that sanitary pads are provided freely. Community mobilization and awareness should also be prioritized, including engaging men to combat period poverty in pastoralist communities.



**"We are proud to have a female president who I believe is fully aware of the challenges that young girls face today, as they will become the women of tomorrow."**

— Elizabeth Petro Saing'eu (18)

**STORY 03**

**Name:** Ester Godfrey Mollel  
**Occupation:** Teacher

**Arusha - Loliondo,**

In our Maasai community, many parents lack adequate knowledge about the existence and proper use of sanitary pads. Young girls often feel scared to communicate with their parents when they start their periods. This situation becomes even more challenging for students who choose to stay home during their menstrual cycles.



The implementation of the period poverty program has raised awareness among students and the community, including parents and guardians, through a petition signing exercise of the given papers that provided an opportunity for the girls to explain more about Menstrual Hygiene Management. This effort has helped the community understand that menstruation is not something to be kept secret or viewed negatively; everyone should be informed about it. Additionally, the program has empowered girls by boosting their confidence and reducing their fears. It has also encouraged greater involvement from males, such as the fathers of students, who previously were less engaged in discussions about menstrual health, relying mostly on mothers or female relatives for information.

Apart from lacking sanitary pads, many young girls also struggle with confidence when it comes to discussing their periods. As a result, they often focus more on their situation of lacking pads than on their studies. As a teacher and guardian, my contribution to this movement involved ensuring that the selected champion of the **#PediBure #PediBilaKodi** campaign shared the lessons and experiences gained from training approximately to 290 students in our school, both female and male. I supported them in mobilizing and reaching out to people in the community.

I recommend our government support tax reduction in sanitary pads production to create comfortability for girls and women during our periods. Also, in our community, more awareness needs to be created to see menstruation as a normal thing and everyone has a role to play.

## STORY 04

## Nzega - Tabora

My name is Habiba Hassan Juma, I am an entrepreneur from Nkiniziwa village in the Nzega District of the Tabora Region. I first heard about **#PediBure and #PediBilaKodi** during a community meeting organised by the program champions in our Region. I felt excited because these topics address challenges that many women and girls experience, though I wasn't fully aware of the essential requirements for safe menstruation, such as access to sanitary pads, through this awareness I was able to fully understand. Menstruation for girls is a necessary part of life, not an option, regardless of whether one is prepared or not.

After gaining awareness, I felt motivated to educate my fellow young women in our small economic empowerment group. We discussed the challenges we face as women during menstruation and explored ways to overcome them. As a group, we decided to raise awareness in our community, by conducting two outreach sessions at a nearby dispensary. We were able to reach over 100 people, including men, at the RCH clinic, and we provided them with information on menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and the role men play in creating a supportive environment for women during their periods.

I identified an opportunity during a village meeting organized for various administrative activities, where I shared our **#PediBure** and **#PediBilaKodi** messages. After reaching out to many members of our community with this educational initiative, we observed some positive changes. Notably, men have become motivated to purchase sanitary pads for their young daughters. Many girls who lack access to sanitary pads often resort to using unhealthy fabrics, which can lead to health complications such as fungal infections. As a result of this program, men are now more willing to take on this responsibility within their families without feeling ashamed.

One of the barriers we encountered in educating the community about menstruation was the belief that it is a private matter that should not be discussed openly. Initially, when we began providing this education, older women would approach us and ask us not to address such topics in public, claiming it was unacceptable and humiliating for them.

To address this mindset, we would explain that if menstruation were truly a private issue, sanitary pads wouldn't be available for purchase in public spaces. Our goal is to help others understand that this is a community issue, not just a private one.

I aspire to see sanitary pads recognized as an essential product, similar to medicine. For example, a packet of sanitary pads currently costs around 2000 Tanzanian shillings. In families with six girls, each girl may require one or two packets, which can be prohibitively expensive for parents. This situation can force young girls to resort to using fabrics that may jeopardize their sexual and reproductive health.

Personally, when I was in school, I never used sanitary pads. During my periods, which occurred twice a month, I had to stay home and miss more than eight days of school because I was afraid of staining my skirt. Many young girls face a similar dilemma where the funds allocated for school expenses must be split between buying sanitary pads and other essentials. Therefore, **I sincerely wish for sanitary pads to be provided for free in schools so that young girls do not have to experience the challenges I faced during my education.**



"I sincerely wish for sanitary pads to be provided for free in schools so that young girls do not have to experience the challenges I faced during my education."

— Habiba Hassan Juma (27)



#PediBure#PediBilaKodi champion during a session at RCH

**STORY 05**

“One of the first things I did was raise awareness within my family, starting with my mother, who had never used sanitary pads in her life.”

— Wande Samwel Ishihi

**Nzega - Tabora**

My name is Wande Samwel Ishishi, and I am a Form 3 student at Nkiniziwa Secondary School in Nzega, Tabora. The first time I heard about the **#PediBure #PediBilaKodi** campaign, I was extremely excited because it provided me with valuable information about Menstrual Hygiene Management, including how to use sanitary pads. Before this training, I was not aware of the proper way to use sanitary pads during my period, but I learned a lot during the session.

When I returned from the Period Poverty Campaign training I also became familiar with the fact that menstrual hygiene management includes access to sanitary pads, the availability of safe disposal methods, clean water, and soap. Before the training, I was unaware of these important aspects. **One of the first things I did was raise awareness within my family, starting with my mother, who had never used sanitary pads in her life.** I also spoke to my sisters, who had been using traditional fabrics known as "madaso." Through the training, I learned that using such fabrics is not safe or healthy, and I shared this information with them.

I reached out to my community, particularly young girls, to educate them on how to take good care of themselves during their periods and the health consequences of using fabrics, such as bruises and other related issues. Along with my fellow champions of the campaign, we took the time to educate other girls at school. One challenge we faced was the lack of awareness in our community about using sanitary pads, as many people still rely on fabrics. Influencing them to change their practices was not easy.

Additionally, educating older men was difficult due to the social and cultural norms surrounding menstruation in our community, which sometimes made me feel less confident. I had to develop clear and convincing words to help them understand my message.

I humbly request that the government provide free sanitary pads in schools and at home, and create household awareness about how to use them, especially for parents. Men also play an important role in this campaign; if they receive proper education, they can support and help girls access essential supplies during their periods.



## STORY 06

### Kongwa - Dodoma,

My name is Jazira Janga, and I am from the Dodoma Region, specifically in the Kongwa District, where I live in Mmbande Village. I am an entrepreneur. When I first heard about the **#PediBure #PediBilaKodi** campaign, I was unaware of its true purpose and initially thought it was simply about providing free sanitary pads to the community. However, after receiving education on Menstrual Hygiene Management, I learned about the importance of changing sanitary pads regularly during a girl's period. I have observed many young girls using unsafe alternatives to manage their menstruation. For instance, some girls at school use their socks as pads, which is not safe at all.

After receiving training, I returned home as a champion and began to educate some of the young girls in my community through door-to-door outreach. Many girls felt uncomfortable discussing menstruation openly, and some were afraid due to the social norms and cultural attitudes surrounding this topic. In my community, menstruation is considered a secret, and only women—including our mothers and sisters—are allowed to know about it; fathers and brothers are excluded from this knowledge. As a result, most of the girls I reached out to were apprehensive about how their parents would react if they joined me in educating our community members about this important issue.

Throughout this **#PediBure #PediBilaKodi** advocacy journey, I am proud to have influenced one girl in my community to join me in the campaign. Convincing her was not easy due to cultural reasons, but she eventually understood and asked me to speak with her mother. I did so, and her mother gave us her full support to continue with the campaign. Together, we have been spreading the messages of the campaigns throughout the community.

The greatest challenge we faced was the community's perception that menstruation is not a topic for public discussion and that men should not be involved. However, thanks to the training we received, we were able to explain why menstruation is a social issue and highlight the role men play in ensuring period safety for girls. I strongly recommend that our government remove the taxes on produced sanitary pads to make them more affordable or provide them free of charge.

## STORY 07

My name is Mariam Mtagwa, and I live in Mmbande Village, located in the Kongwa District. I am an entrepreneur focused on livestock keeping. I first learned about the #PediBilaKodi #PediBure campaign through a friend who had trained as a champion for the initiative. She came to share the details with me, and I thought it would be a great opportunity to join her.



### Kongwa - Dodoma,

I was grateful for the campaign because I had previously struggled with a lack of accurate information, support, and access to sanitary pads when I got my period for the first time.

Here's my true story: 'The first time I got my period, I was visiting a relative. Since it was the agricultural season, we had gone to the farm to harvest groundnuts. When we returned home, I felt something unusual in my body and decided to check. To my surprise, I discovered I was bleeding. At that moment, I was wearing jeans and a gown. I had once heard that menstruation was a secretive matter, so I cut my jeans into pieces and used them as a makeshift pad for three days without anyone in the house knowing.

Later on, my Aunt came to find out, as the pieces of the jeans I was using as pads once they got dirty I used to clean them and put them beside the bed for them to dry up, therefore there was a day my Aunt came back home unexpectedly from work and found them around the bed. She called and asked and I told her everything. She brought me back home to my parents who did not even teach me how to use sanitary pads as they were not aware instead they taught me other grown-up staff. Then I continued using fabrics even when I was going to school such that I had to wear one piece for the whole day at school without changing. And when I get back home I change to another piece for the whole night'.

Therefore, after being sensitized with my friend on the #PediBure #PediBilaKodi campaign, I was so excited to change the narrative, especially for young girls and Women who are raising them including buying sanitary pads. We were able to reach around five wards in our village with Menstrual Hygiene Management education though still the community terms this issue as a private issue. We were able to use our leadership skills to convince and make them understand.

I am asking for the government to reduce tax for pads as they are very expensive such that sometimes with the little money we earn we have to choose between buying sanitary pads or water/food etc. But for students in school, I wish the pads could be provided free. Also, Men engagement is crucial as our Fathers are family economic drivers who can support us in buying of sanitary pads.

## STORY 08

**Bagamoyo - Coastal Region;**

My name is Shayrose Bechaman Mohamed, and I am in Standard 7 at Zinga Primary School. As the vice chairperson of the Msichana Club, I have the incredible opportunity to lead and inspire my peers. Recently, I was thrilled to be selected to participate in the #PediBure #PediBilaKodi campaign, an empowering initiative that brought together girls from various backgrounds to support one another.

Throughout this empowering experience, I learned invaluable lessons about the importance of using sanitary pads during menstruation and the potential health risks and social implications of not doing so. As a club leader I made it a priority to actively listen to the insight shared during our discussion. I was eager to bring this knowledge back to school, where I plan to raise awareness among my fellow club members, other students, and our dedicated teachers, fostering a community that prioritizes health and education for all.

I spoke with the Healthy Teacher focal person at our school to understand the importance of sanitary pads. They help build girls' confidence and ensure their safety. However, there are also consequences to using fabric (sodo) for example, in our school, some girls walk a distance of 1 km from home to school, while others have to walk as far as 5 km. Using fabric (sodo) can make them uncomfortable and may lead to bruises or other health issues.

Currently, the cost of sanitary pads ranges between TZS 2,000/- and TZS 4,000/- a price point that many girls simply cannot afford. As a result, some are resorting to using fabrics like "Sodo," which is not a safe or hygienic alternative. If we were allowed to receive pads for free, it would significantly improve our health and well-being. My earnest recommendation is for the government to listen to our concerns and take action by eliminating the tax on sanitary pads. This would make them much more accessible and affordable for everyone, ensuring that all girls have the necessary resources during their menstrual cycles.

## STORY 09

**Bagamoyo - Coastal Region;**

My name is Khadija Hija, and I am a champion of the **#PediBure** and **#PediBilaKodi** campaign from the coastal region. When I first heard about this campaign, I felt a sense of empowerment as it has helped us improve our self-awareness and confidence. Initially, it was uncomfortable to discuss these topics, but we are now encouraged to speak out. However, our mothers sometimes advise us not to talk about menstruation with our fathers.

Talking about menstruation in public is not something young girls are accustomed to, as it is considered a private matter. After receiving training on menstrual hygiene management, I learned the proper use of sanitary pads, including the importance of changing them every three hours to avoid health risks. However, in my community, many people still use fabric (often referred to as "sodo"), and after using it, we wash it and place it under the bed to dry instead of hanging it outside. This practice is rooted in the belief that hanging it out in public is not culturally acceptable.

I returned home to educate my fellow young girls about menstruation, emphasizing that it is a normal part of life. I encouraged them to use sanitary pads and, for those who prefer using fabrics, I taught them how to use them properly. During my outreach in the community, I met a family with two orphaned young girls living with their grandmother. As I educated them, they shared their experiences of using fabric (sodo), which made them uncomfortable, and they sometimes dealt with unpleasant odours during their menstruation. They expressed concerns about the cost of sanitary pads, which they found unaffordable. I encouraged them to save a small amount of the money they receive for school but also assured them that they could reach out for help if needed. They were very grateful and appreciative of the support.

The government needs to prioritize the issue of menstrual health by eliminating taxes on sanitary pads.

Additionally, providing these essential products for free would significantly benefit individuals who menstruate, ensuring greater access to hygiene products and promoting overall well-being.

**STORY 10****Dar es Salaam;**

My name is Firdaus Khalid Mchaga, and I am a University student at Public Service College. The first time I heard about **#PediBilaKodi** and **#PediBure**, I was very excited because I knew I would learn a lot. During the training, I learned how to take care of myself during menstruation so that I can be healthy and comfortable, including the importance of not wearing pads for too long. I also learned about the challenges that other young girls face during their periods, both those in school and those who are out of school.

For those in school, we learned that many young girls are often too scared to reach out to their teachers when they start their period. Through our education and collaboration with other champions, we organized outreach programs to connect with more young girls in Mabibo Barcelona. During these sessions, we facilitated an intergenerational dialogue where our elders shared their experiences and explained what they used during menstruation. In turn, we discussed the products we currently use.

We also conducted outreach at Mabibo Mpakani, where we met with students, teachers, and community members to explain the importance of supporting young girls in having safe menstruation experiences. I am incredibly proud of this campaign, as we have successfully provided education to more girls in schools about proper sanitary pad usage and safe disposal methods that protect both their health and the environment. Additionally, we encourage the girls to communicate with their parents and seek support, including asking for money to purchase sanitary pads. This is important to prevent them from being influenced to obtain money from others, which can expose young girls to risks such as unwanted pregnancies.

I recommend that the government reconsider its approach, particularly for girls in school who come from poor families and cannot afford sanitary pads. A family with one to three daughters may require more than six pads each month, and with each pad costing 4,000 TZS, this becomes quite expensive. If sanitary pads were provided for free, it would enable these girls to attend school without any challenges.

For girls who are out of school and remaining at home without any means of earning income, many parents struggle to provide the funds necessary to buy pads. This situation may lead some of these girls to enter into risky relationships in order to obtain money for purchasing sanitary pads.



Community Engagement Session at Mabibo on MHM