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expanding opportunities

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SUMMER 2018

# RACHEL'S INITIATIVE

## *Makini Pad Production Line Manufactures Opportunity*

There are two sides to every story. The Kenya Work's Makini Pad Initiative has one side with the girl students who receive the pads. They can continue their education uninterrupted and with dignity. Here is the other side: the women who manufacture the pads—the production line.

Rachel Wambui grew up in Kibagara slum in Nairobi. She was one of eight children. They slept four to a bed, often went hungry and shared one toilet with 30 other families. Not wanting a life like her mother's, selling vegetables on the street, she focused on getting an education as her escape.

She did well in school, and thus received government support, becoming the only girl in her family to go to high school. She married a good, hard-working man who had studied plumbing at the technical college, but was not able to afford college for herself. They had three children who are now 20, 16 and 13.

When Wambui was age 38, she began the 1-year dressmaking program at Kenya Works partner VICODEC. "When you learn how to stitch, you can stitch anything. Now I could make my family clothes and table mats, which I sell."

Wambui's quality work caught the attention of VICODEC's director as he and Kenya Works sought to establish Makini Pad production. She became the fourth person to join the production team, which has grown to 35 people.

"Now I can buy good clothes for my children. I can pay school fee costs and buy food for the family. It has changed our family."

Proud to be associated with Makini Pads, Wambui says, "When I was growing up, we didn't have sanitary pads. We used clothes, unclean items. When I see this opportunity, I am so thrilled to help our girls."

"I want girls to have confidence so they can become empowered and be anything in Kenya," she said. In addition to her work creating Makini Pads, Wambui has also become an advocate for Makini Pads, attending Kenya Works meetings with Kenyan government officials.



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**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS**

Kenya Works Initiatives support the UN Sustainable Development Goals—the universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Grow community impact!  
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## Did you know?

### ISSUES & IMPACT IN KENYA

#### A+ Graduation Rate

**Only 42%** of Kenyan secondary (high school) students complete the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education and graduate from high school.

Kenya Works Scholars more than double the national average with an incredible **90%** graduation rate! Guided by a strong social work team, our student enrichment program instills confidence and community service—strong foundations for tomorrow's leaders.

#### It's Time to Talk About Periods

Current challenges for girls in Kenya include inadequate education on menstruation and puberty, and lack of ongoing support and information through adolescence.

Kenya Works knows it is a basic human right to manage your body with dignity. Our Makini Pad Initiative combines both safe, reusable sanitary products along with important information about proper hygiene, puberty and positive self esteem. Combining the two translates into powerful and confident young women.

#### GBV Prevalence in Kenya

Kenya Demographic Household Survey (KDHS) indicate that Gender- Based Violence (GBV) occurs in all parts of Kenya. 47% of women and 40% of men aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence.

Kenya Works Community Works is leading the fight against GBV with powerful workshops focused on dialogue, prevention and gender equity. We arm community leaders with strategies and practices to end domestic violence.

### KWCW Human Rights Workshops:

#### *Dialogue & Information Accelerate Positive Change*

Throughout Kenya, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriage rates have declined while education rates have increased over the past decade.

But there is still significant need to ensure no more girls face "The Cut" and that human rights are extended to all. Kenya Works Community Works (KWCW) addresses this need through 4-day intensive workshops on positive parenting, conflict resolution and eliminating FGM and early marriage.



In our most recent workshop last April, despite the 3-week deluge that washed out roads in remote Kajiado County, more than 50 community leaders traveled through challenging conditions to participate—a clear indicator of the popularity of KWCW sessions.

The atmosphere was open and comfortable even though the issues were sensitive. In this Masaai Land region, where the colorful attire, the traditional beaded jewelry, the food and the language are all evidence of deep cultural preservation, FGM, early forced marriage and disciplining children by caning are practices deeply woven into the fabric of the traditional culture. And concern over eroding culture creates barriers for change.

Through KWCW workshops, those barriers are broken down. Men and women, young and old and people from varying subcommunities rarely discuss such problems together. Here they do.

A nurse from a local clinic spoke to the group about the medical effects of FGM—the lacerations, trauma, stillbirths and fistula that lead to ostracism from the family. A young man in traditional tribal shuka added to the medical details and explained the term fistula. Women nodded in understanding—they live with these fears and risks and know the women who have faced them.

An elderly woman stood at the conclusion of the conversation. Speaking to the young parents in the room she said it is time for them to lead on needed changes, further stating, "What is done is done. Moving on, there is need for all to agree to change."

Three young men in the group agreed. One asked directly of the women, "Will you agree to stop putting pressure on the girls to go for the Cut?" He then asked of the men, "Will you agree to marry girls who have not gone through the Cut?"

As in this workshop, the KWCW team skillfully facilitates all sessions to help communities drive consensus on accelerating positive change. Workshops are held several times throughout the year, and over 1,000 community leaders have been trained to date.

KWCW is one of Kenya Works four strategic initiatives—KWCW, the Makini Pad Initiative, KW Scholars and KW Community Center Partners. All are made possible through our donors.



*KWCW facilitator Ruth Jepchumba knows firsthand the horrors of FGM. She is a leading voice in Kenya advocating for Zero FGM.*

***Join us online to read the team's full report.***

Overcoming poverty  
is not a task of charity,  
it is an act of  
**justice**

-Nelson Mandela

## #MakeItMonthly

Kenya Works now accepts  
monthly recurring donations  
through our website.

Since programs run  
throughout the year, please  
consider this donation option.



### A Life-Changing Trip to Kenya

*Inspires a Donation for Safe Harbor*

"In March, I had the great fortune to be part of a US Venture trip to Kenya to experience firsthand the impact of our company culture of giving back to build stronger communities," said Anne Van Stralen, a US Venture customer service representative.

The team's visit was based around Victory Community Development Center (VICODEC), in Ongata Rongai, Kenya. VICODEC provides education, nutrition and health services to school-aged children, and vocational training for adults, serving the slums of Nairobi.

Kenya Works and USV both collaborate with VICODEC to provide student sponsorships and support for the nutrition program which feeds 2,850 children each day.

Additionally, Kenya Works Makini Pads are produced on the VICODEC campus, providing economic opportunity for a team of 35 people.



Anne Van Stralen, US Venture associate, on a recent trip to Kenya to experience the impact of USV's culture of caring and giving back.

"And yet, everywhere we went, we were greeted with huge smiles and hugs from the children we met. I just couldn't get over the conditions they were living in, and knew I needed to do something to help," she said. "But how can one person make a difference?"

The next day, she found her answer. The group was scheduled to visit Miale ya Tumaini, another Kenya Works partner community center serving Kware community.

"At Miale, we were greeted by the bright, smiling face of Diana Wambui, Miale's founder," Van Stralen recalls. Wambui told the group about how she'd long dreamed of providing a safe and enriching environment for the children in her community who she encountered daily begging for food. "After countless attempts to fund her vision, Diana said the one answered call was from Kenya Works. I knew immediately this is where my help was needed—investing in this safe harbor," Van Stralen stated.

Since the center was founded in 2014, Miale has consistently grown its services and outreach with nutrition, psycho-social support and, now a new emergency shelter. Van Stralen together with co-worker and fellow traveler Justin Lacerte, provided the beds and mattresses to furnish Miale's emergency shelter. "I feel so good knowing I was able to make a tangible contribution to helping kids find a safe harbor from the dangerous slum streets," she said.

"Even though we are separated by miles, I will forever hold Miale close in my heart," Van Stralen said. "As Diana says, 'In this gate walk the most beautiful people. The children of Kware are the reason we exist. Each day we give them a reason to smile and appreciate the beauty of life in themselves.'"

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— Diana Wambui  
Miale ya Tumaini

Because of the strategic relationship between USV and Kenya Work's efforts in Kenya, the USV group toured a variety of locations outside of VICODEC, including other Kenya Works programs.

"This was the opportunity of a lifetime," said Van Stralen. "From our arrival to farewell, the range of emotions I felt was incredible."

Of the VICODEC campus, Van Stralen says, "the grounds are beautiful, and

the services so comprehensive. It was inspiring to see firsthand that USV and our associates play an important role in bringing students to this center," she added.

But, what struck her most was seeing the conditions for the kids outside the VICODEC walls. "Nothing quite prepares you for seeing the horrific living conditions of the slums," she said.



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