



BE GIRL

Transforming menstrual health from an overlooked issue into a national priority

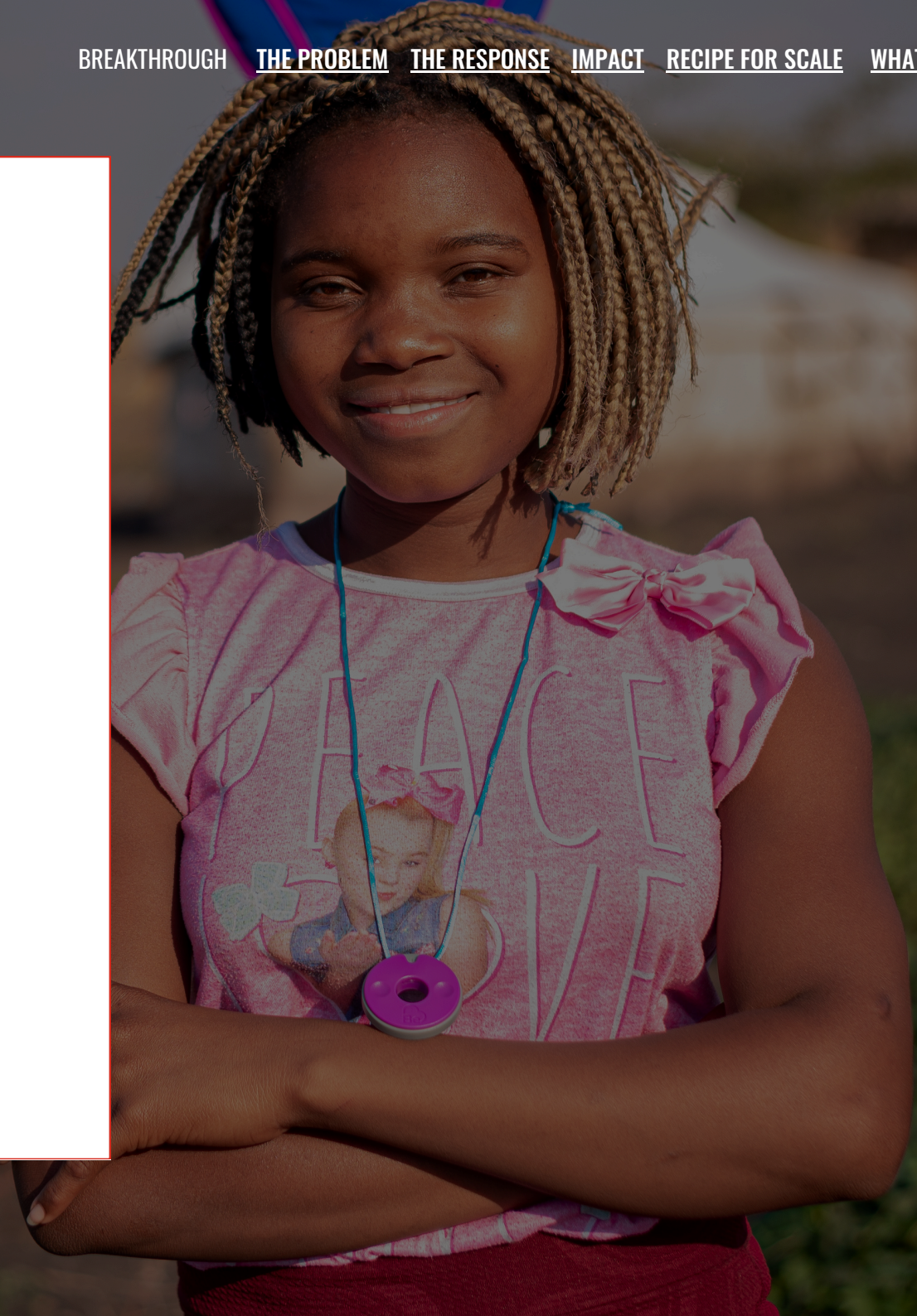


SCALE BREAKTHROUGH

1M+ reusable menstrual products distributed and 500,000+ adolescents reached with menstrual health education

In 2010, while on a practicum in Uganda, industrial designer Diana Sierra watched girls miss school when their periods started. With only a chalkboard for lessons, anything covered in the class was wiped clean by the end of the day. Over time, missed days became permanent learning gaps. Girls fell further behind every month because they had no effective way to manage their periods.

This experience shaped Diana's next chapter. In 2014, she founded Be Girl to elevate menstrual health from an **overlooked issue to a national priority** across countries in Africa.



SCALE BREAKTHROUGH

Initially, Be Girl focused on designing appealing, cost-effective reusable sanitary pads and building a distribution business model. But user feedback made it clear that a product alone wouldn't tackle the economic losses, missed school and health risks caused by period poverty, stigma, and inadequate sanitation.

In response, Be Girl evolved their approach and integrated product, curriculum, training and technical assistance into a single model that meets an array of needs:

- Girls need **age-appropriate** menstrual education to understand their bodies
- Teachers need **tools** to deliver menstrual health education
- Governments need **technical** support to integrate menstrual health into national curricula
- International development organizations, bilaterals and multilaterals need a **partner** who can supply products, deliver training, and manage logistics

What did it take to move menstrual health from an overlooked issue to a national priority?

| IMPACT | |
|--------|---|
| 1M+ | reusable menstrual products distributed |
| 500k+ | youth reached with menstrual health education in Africa |
| 1k+ | young adults trained as facilitators, delivering peer to peer menstrual health education to adolescents |
| 3+ | national menstrual health curricula adopted (Angola, Mozambique, Côte d'Ivoire, with Zimbabwe also in progress) |
| 8 | impact studies generated to build evidence and inform advocacy and investment in menstrual health across multiple countries |

THE PROBLEM

Globally, an estimated **500 million women and girls** lack access to menstrual products and adequate sanitation infrastructure to manage their periods. In parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, up to 75% of women and girls lack access to these basic resources.¹

Across low- and middle-income countries, around 55% of adolescents have limited knowledge about menstruation before they experience their first period, leaving many unprepared.²

Stigma, limited access to reliable menstrual products, inadequate sanitation and disposal facilities, and insufficient information can combine to disrupt girls' participation in school. In parts of West Africa, up to 23% of girls reported missing school because of menstruation.³

In many national markets in Sub-Saharan Africa, supply chains for menstrual products remain fragmented, local markets underdeveloped, and menstrual health is frequently overlooked in national policy.

1. Akoth, C., Wambiya, E.O., Kibe, P.M., Mbutia, G.W., Ng'ang'a, L., Otieno, P. and Oguta, J.O. (2024) 'Prevalence and factors associated with unmet need for menstrual hygiene management in six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: A multilevel analysis', BMC Women's Health, 24(1). [Available here.](#)

2. Dalberg Advisors (2023) Menstrual health and hygiene: a cross-cutting impact opportunity. [Available here.](#)

3. Hennegan, J., OlaOlorun, F.M., Oumarou, S., Alzouma, S., Guiella, G., Omoluabi, E. and Schwab, K.J. (2021) 'School and work absenteeism due to menstruation in three West African countries: findings from PMA2020 surveys', Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters, 29(1). [Available here.](#)

BE GIRL'S RESPONSE

Be Girl acts as a 'one-stop-shop' for menstrual products, education, and data.

WHAT BE GIRL DOES

Period products:

Designs and supplies a diversified portfolio of high-performing, sustainable, user-centered menstrual products.

Education and training:

Delivers menstrual health education through an engaging, age-appropriate curriculum. As part of the education package, girls receive a SmartCycle Menstrual Tracker – a wearable tool that tracks their cycle in a simple and engaging way. Menstrual health education is delivered in schools and communities through a training-of-trainers model, equipping teachers, health workers, and community leaders to deliver accurate, inclusive, and stigma-free menstrual health education.

Data for learning, advocacy, and resource mobilization:

Collects menstrual health and behavioral data through workshops and learning studies. Initially serving as a feedback loop, this data function was later strengthened to track access, usage, and behavior change among girls and boys.

IMPACT

Builds girls' agency and enables them to manage their periods with confidence.

Increases understanding of girls' bodies so they can make informed decisions. Engages boys, parents, educators, and community leaders to strengthen support for girls who menstruate.

Data is used to inform program design and strengthen national implementation, as well as to support multilateral, bilateral, and international development organizations.

BE GIRL'S REVENUE MODEL

Be Girl operates as a for-profit social enterprise, generating revenue primarily through institutional contracts with organizations such as United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF, and Population Services International (PSI) who run national programs and contract Be Girl to support program design and implementation. Contracts typically bundle product supply and various forms of technical assistance including curriculum design and training-of-trainers.

In addition to institutional contracts, Be Girl provides products and services to a range of delivery partners. These include local NGOs, international NGOs, and third-party distributors.



HOW THE SCALE MODEL WORKS (1/2)

Be Girl's model was shaped through early experience in Mozambique, where their menstrual health curriculum was first adopted nationally, supported by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the World Bank, in partnership with the government. Since then, they have developed a phased approach for entering new contexts, starting with a pilot to generate evidence and create buy-in and then expanding through ministry programs.

"When you have a national menstrual health curriculum, you've effectively sold a country on investing in menstrual health."

— Diana Sierra, CEO and Founder, Be Girl



HOW THE SCALE MODEL WORKS (2/2)

| PHASE | WHAT BE GIRL DOES | ANGOLA EXAMPLE |
|--|--|---|
| <p>01. Country entry and alignment</p> | <p>Conducts stakeholder and power mapping. Works through trusted local organizations to engage ministries and multilateral partners. Secures a formal agreement with the government, alongside a funded pilot contract typically supported by UNFPA or World Bank financing.</p> | <p>Engaged UNFPA Angola and the Ministry of Education prior to securing a funded pilot.</p> |
| <p>02. Pilot co-design and delivery</p> | <p>Agrees pilot scope with relevant ministries, tailoring it to national policy priorities, existing programs and available resources. Implements the pilot through public schools and community groups such as youth clubs.</p> | <p>In 2020, trained 27 facilitators and reached 2,000 adolescents through public schools and community centers across four provinces (UNFPA Angola, 2021 learning study).</p> |
| <p>03. Evidence generation to inform expansion</p> | <p>Collects pre- and post-intervention data on knowledge, attitudes and product usage. Produces formal impact reports for funders and ministries to assess feasibility and performance.</p> | <p>Generated data showing that the percentage of boys who believed it was normal to interact with a girl who is menstruating increased from 63% to 84%, which informed the national menstrual health strategy (UNFPA Angola, 2023 follow up study).</p> |
| <p>04. Institutionalization</p> | <p>Uses pilot results to support expansion within ministry programs. Transfers delivery capacity through training-of-trainers. Reduces direct day-to-day implementation while providing targeted technical assistance.</p> | <p>Reached 200,000 adolescents by 2024, through products and education delivered by the Ministry of Education with World Bank support.</p> |

IMPACT



Be Girl's education programs lead to measurable changes in how adolescents understand menstruation, fertility and family planning, and how confident they feel discussing these topics.

Evidence from Be Girl's 2025 impact study in Egypt with 92 girls and 22 boys showed statistically significant changes after just three sessions (UNFPA, 2025⁴):

Knowledge

- Girls recognizing the link between menstrual cycle and where babies come from increased from 45% to 87%
- Boys' understanding of the menstrual cycle increased from 31% to 82%
- Girls' and boys' recognition of menstruation as a natural biological process increased from 52% to 82%
- Understanding of ovulation as the most fertile time increased from 26% to 78%.

Confidence and stigma

- Girls comfortable discussing family planning with future partners increased from 46% to 81%
- Girls reporting discomfort discussing their menstruation decreased from 76% to 37%.

These results demonstrate that Be Girl's model shifts both knowledge and behavior. Increased confidence and openness to discuss menstrual issues reduce stigma-driven barriers that restrict girls' participation in education and household decision-making.

4. Be Girl (2025) Be Girl Impact Report – UNFPA Egypt. [Available here.](#)

LESSON 01

Adapt revenue model when the conditions shift

Since launching in 2014, Be Girl has deliberately avoided locking itself into a single revenue model, adapting as conditions have shifted and prioritizing diversification as a core strategy for scale.

In 2018, after securing USD \$600,000 in matching Transition to Scale grants from Grand Challenges Canada, Be Girl launched in Mozambique with a business-to-consumer retail model, selling sanitary products in 20 stores across the country. However, the model faced structural barriers, particularly high import taxes on period pants. Due to the lack of harmonized classification codes, the period pants were misclassified as luxury goods rather than essential menstrual products, increasing import duties from 2% to 20%. This made prices unaffordable for the most marginalized girls and the unit economics unviable.

In response, Be Girl pivoted to a business-to-institution model, partnering with organizations such as UNFPA who could import products tax free. This unlocked repeat, multi-year contracts, reduced distribution costs and created a more stable revenue base. It also opened the door for Be Girl to expand beyond products into menstrual health education, integrating product access with behavior change and awareness building.

Be Girl's model has evolved to include government engagement, with Be Girl providing technical assistance to embed menstrual health into national curricula, while also conducting market assessments to inform policy design. Grand Challenges Canada's USD \$450,000 SAFE investment, along with USD \$50,000 technical assistance funding, has supported this evolution. This includes a pilot in Zimbabwe, where Be Girl is working with the World Bank, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health to combine curriculum co-design, market research, and policy advice to support local manufacturing, access to raw materials and more enabling import duty frameworks.

Be Girl continues to be adaptive and is currently re-testing distributor and reseller networks, as well as direct-to-consumer models in Mozambique, Côte d'Ivoire, and Egypt. These channels represent a more viable revenue stream in 2026 than they did when Be Girl first entered these markets. This is due to the introduction of a new menstrual product category that is not subject to import duties, making it more affordable for marginalized girls, as well as increased demand generation through years of ecosystem-building work in education, advocacy and market development.

Takeaway

Avoid locking in a single revenue model. Remaining fluid allows organizations to adapt to changing external conditions, revisit previously unviable models, and build resilience through multiple revenue streams.

LESSON 02

Invest in understanding how end users engage

From the beginning, Be Girl invested deeply in understanding how adolescent girls engage with menstrual health. Through years of user relationships, co-design and feedback loops, Be Girl gathered evidence on menstrual health behavior, product use, attitudes and knowledge. **This gave Be Girl an in-depth understanding of girls' preferences, social realities and the barriers that shape engagement.**

Over time, Be Girl translated these insights into trusted communication methodologies that significantly improved uptake among marginalized adolescent girls, a segment that other actors often find hard to reach. This capability differentiated Be Girl, positioning them as a partner for behavior change and adolescent engagement rather than simply product distribution.

In 2019, PEPFAR commissioned Be Girl to create a national package to improve menstrual health knowledge and practices in Mozambique. To do this, Be Girl developed the first national menstrual health curriculum for the government of Mozambique, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and Human Development. This marked Be Girl's entry into education.

By 2022, Be Girl had trained 129 menstrual health facilitators who reached 260,000 adolescents in just 10 months through schools, health facilities and community centers across the country.

Takeaway

Deep understanding of end users can become an organization's key strategic asset and expand its value proposition to unlock new partnerships for scale.

LESSON 03

Find the balance between what stays fixed and what can be adapted

When entering a new country, Be Girl clearly defines and protects what must stay fixed, while allowing governments to adapt the rest of the intervention to fit their context.

A. FIXED ELEMENTS

These include: age-appropriate menstrual health education; access to high-quality menstrual health products; and a commitment to unlocking body literacy for girls and boys.

These non-negotiables protect quality, ensuring girls and boys receive accurate information and products grounded in their needs, regardless of context.

B. FLEXIBLE ELEMENTS

1. Choice of interventions:

Be Girl's menu of interventions:

- A. Supplying high-quality menstrual health products
- B. Co-designing menstrual health curricula
- C. Generating evidence and data through impact studies and market assessments

Be Girl presents governments with a menu of distinct interventions to choose from (A-C), allowing them to prioritize based on local strategies and resources. The menu provides a set of entry points, rather than a fixed package.

For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, Be Girl partnered with PSI to deliver a comprehensive intervention investing in A, B and C, while in Zimbabwe the focus is on B and C. Mozambique and Angola have predominantly focused on B.

Within a chosen intervention, governments can tailor implementation, for example by focusing on schools rather than health centers, so that the work aligns with local context.

2. Route to adoption:

Without changing the technical content, Be Girl adapts how its work is framed and introduced to communities and decision-makers, in order to secure legitimacy and access.

For example, in Egypt, Be Girl worked with CARE Egypt Foundation to engage mothers in conservative communities as an entry point, building trust before introducing menstrual health education for their daughters. This approach allowed Be Girl to deliver accurate, evidence-based content to girls while also creating space for discussions on more sensitive topics like sexual and reproductive health.

Takeaway

Protect quality by defining non-negotiable core elements, and flexing both delivery choices and routes to adoption to secure uptake.

LESSON 04

Structure partnerships around incentives and risks

As Be Girl scaled, they chose to work through existing government, multilateral, and civil society structures, rather than in parallel.

Governments retain legitimacy and policy decision-making authority, UN agencies and development partners manage financing and technical standards, and local organizations manage last mile delivery through schools and youth networks. **Be Girl's role is to absorb the technical, coordination, and financial risk that these actors struggle to manage through procurement processes.**

For example, when UNFPA placed an order for menstrual health products for 200,000 girls in Angola in 2023, Be Girl managed production and international shipping ahead of payment. In a geography where access to affordable credit is limited and expensive, Be Girl removed a key barrier for UNFPA without requiring them to take on financial risk.

This ability to take on upfront financial and operational risk has been underpinned by flexible capital from investors including Grand Challenges Canada, Halcyon, The Case for Her, Miller Center, Beneficial Returns, Open Road, A to Z and DRK, alongside targeted support in operations, board development and investment readiness.

“The single most important factor to scale has been our partnership approach - the way we do business development and build long-term partnerships”

— Tatiana Reyes Jove, Chief Operations Officer

Takeaway

Most organizations treat cost reduction as a finance problem. A more effective approach is to treat it as a design constraint, testing every operational decision against whether it reduces cost per user as the model scales. This makes models viable for governments to adopt.

WHAT'S NEXT

After more than a decade of building and refining their model, the question for Be Girl is no longer whether menstrual health solutions can work at scale, but how to create the infrastructure for menstrual health markets to grow.

The foundations are in place:

- Evidence of demand and impact: 1.5M+ adolescents reached across 35+ countries
- Government entry points: National curriculum in Mozambique, Angola, and Côte d'Ivoire, with Zimbabwe in progress
- Institutional routes to scale: Partnerships with UN agencies, the World Bank, and delivery partners
- An integrated model that links supply and demand: high quality products, education, and data designed to work together

By 2030, Be Girl aims to triple its impact and advance a future where menstrual health is no longer a barrier by:

- Reaching 4.5 million adolescents with menstrual products and education
- Embedding national menstrual health curricula in six additional countries
- Establishing commercial distribution channels across three strategic markets.

This marks a shift from delivery to market-building: moving menstrual health from fragmented, donor-led interventions to systems that governments and markets sustain.

What strategic investment would unlock:

Be Girl is seeking **USD \$500,000** in catalytic capital to expand its model. This investment will co-finance expansion with governments in six additional countries, embedding menstrual health into national curricula while establishing viable public and commercial distribution channels across three strategic markets.

By connecting policy, education and product access, Be Girl moves menstrual health beyond short-term distribution to infrastructure governments can own and deliver at scale.

GET IN TOUCH

Want to explore a partnership
with Be Girl or learn more?



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