



**SASA HARAMBEE**  
Now, Let Us All Pull Together!

**A Special Letter from  
Co-Founder, Carol Carper**



September 3, 2020

**Dear Supporter,**

I am grateful for your generous support as we approach our 14<sup>th</sup> year working with different programs in Sigomere, Kenya. Your donations and messages of encouragement are a source of energy, even in a difficult year. We continue to find opportunities for making a contribution here.

This summer, with schools shut down due to COVID-19, community leaders and teachers have shared their concern over the staggering increase of over 250% in teen pregnancies. In collaboration with our local partners we have pursued solutions to address this issue. In America, schools, parents, and healthcare agencies would be the logical partners to address this and targeted programs, education resources, distribution of condoms, and a public health campaign would apply. I have been humbled as I learn how challenging our work in this area is.

To be effective, young people have to be the ones to talk to their Sigomere peers about human reproduction, contraception, and also, sexually transmitted diseases. In partnership with local schools, community health volunteers, and local organizations, trainings with groups of teenagers began. A quick show of hands in our first sessions, though, taught me that young people were not obtaining necessary information from their parents or grandparents to make healthy decisions about sex and sexuality. So I am now working with our community leaders to expand this program with events for adults to bolster progress.

Just when I was taking a long breath in the fight against teen pregnancy, I have encountered another need that I need to share with you, one that would be inconceivable in America: *young women lacking underwear and sanitary napkins*. Here, girls frequently miss school and endure embarrassment and shame during their periods. To us, this is an issue of dignity. This is why I am sharing Maria's story with you in her own words.

*"I was 14 when I had my first period. I would go to class early, pull up my skirt and place a plastic sheet on my bench so that the menstrual blood did not stain my skirt. I was so stressed out about others realizing the truth that I barely focused on my education. All I was worried about was "What if it stains my skirt? What if the other students see it?" The next day, our maid gave me a piece of cloth and I used it as a sanitary tissue. But as I was returning to class from the break, the cloth dropped off my underwear. I walked off pretending that was not mine but it was in vain as some students had watched it drop off my skirt. They embarrassed me asking "What is that smell?" I did not return to school for three weeks.*



*It took me a while before I got used to managing this properly. Even if I was able to manage it, the period was always stressing me out. I did not want to go to school when I was in my period. I did not want to socialize or study during those moments.*

*My younger sister's menstruation started even earlier than mine. She was only 13 when she first*

experienced menstruation. She would sit in the restroom for a very long time so that, as she told me later, it would all flow out till the last drop before she went out of there. But because I was already experienced by then, I was able to help her.”

This is the heartbreaking situation that principals and teachers have brought forth.

Recently during a training to prevent teen pregnancy and talking about menstrual hygiene I asked how many had learned about menstruation from their mothers. Only 2 out of 9 girls had learned from their mother. Their lack of knowledge of their reproductive systems was a common deficit.

The challenges for these young girls and adolescents are compounded in that clean water is unusual. So if using rags or blankets, it is hard to get them clean. Furthermore, there is a cultural taboo here about hanging underpants and certainly any menstrual supplies outside. This means that the sanitizing effect of the sun does not take place. Urinary tract infections are common in girls and women.

Imagine not having underwear. Envision going through a menstrual period without sanitary napkins. Every day, girls in rural Kenya miss school because of menstruation. And if they attend, they have to arrive early, put a piece of plastic on their seat, lift their skirts and pray the teacher doesn't call them to the blackboard and betray they are on "one of those days". They really need our help.

**Your \$35 donation will provide 10 girls with four pairs of underwear and a year's supply of feminine products. Funds will be matched by local Rotary District grants.** So, dear supporter, I am asking: can I count on your support to help the young women of Sigomere, Kenya? This initiative is an important part of our program to fight teen pregnancy and promote healthy adolescent behaviors.

I hope you will join us in this fight. Your gift will truly make a difference in these girls' lives.

Sending joy, gratitude, and hope from Sigomere front lines,

Carol

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**Yes!** I would like to contribute to Sasa Harambee's youth programs in Kenya. I am enclosing a donation of:

\$35  \$50  \$750  \$100  \$250  \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check made payable to Sasa Harambee and mail to: **Sasa Harambee, 225 Union Blvd., Suite #150, Lakewood, CO 80228.**

*Sasa Harambee is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, #94-3435198. Your donations are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.*

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