



**INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN
AND
CEFAP CAMEROON**



Water and Pads for schoolgirls Project 2024



It was with the same passion and unwavering commitment that our organisation once again took to the field as part of the project 'Water and Pads for schoolgirls' for its 2024 phase, which brought us back to Medjo. It must be said here that going back to Medjo was very interesting because that's where everything started with this project, obviously as far as our organisation is concerned, which is not the only one in Cameroon for this project. We also have our colleagues from the BAWUFAG and RENATA organisations, who are also doing remarkable work in the field to restore the confidence of schoolgirls through this initiative, which has as one of its objectives to dismantle all the obstacles that prevent girls from going to school during their menstrual cycle in Africa and Asia, with a particular focus on IAW member countries.

The aim of this project is to make washable and reusable sanitary pads available from 2024, produced as part of a local project with our organisation CEFAP, which produces these pads with volunteer seamstresses.

These pads are then sent to the other RENATA and BAWUFAG organisations, which distribute them to schoolgirls during menstrual hygiene education activities, usually coupled with advocacy to break the taboo surrounding menstruation by involving the educational community (parents, teachers, etc.).

Deployment in the field

It's important to point out that our roll-out this year included an innovation: we produced washable and reusable pads which were distributed to schoolgirls in two schools in two villages, namely the CETIC in Medjo and the Mbemtum School in Tsebem. We were received with a warm welcome and very active and rewarding involvement from the educational community, including the rural women who are the mothers of our schoolgirls and who also worked with us to give our schoolgirls back their confidence. The teachers and administrative staff from both schools also joined us and together we carried out the activities in both schools.

The activities were as follows:

- Education on menstrual hygiene and the puberty period through our various brochures that were distributed
- Participatory discussions on girls' sexual and reproductive rights, on the taboo surrounding menstruation maintained by our ancestral traditions and customs on the one hand, and on the other, ways of strengthening community mobilisation and awareness with a view to changing behaviour in favour of girls' education. This also involves a better management of their puberty period and menstrual hygiene. The rural women, who have formed a committee, have formed two groups who will act as relays in their villages. They want to educate the schoolgirls at the age of puberty within their families, always focussing on actions to boost girls' self-confidence. At the same time, they want to be alert by denouncing cases of forced marriage which might hamper girls' education in rural areas.
- The schoolgirls took part in a quiz to make sure the message had got through, and the result was magnificent: 95% correct answers.
- Washable and reusable pads were also distributed to the schoolgirls.
- Finally, a cocktail party was held at the end of the activity in each school.

For both schools, we worked in 4 classes with a total of 150 pupils. We also carried out a capacity-building activity on menstrual hygiene education, as mentioned above, for 40 rural women whom we have involved in the initiative, as they are the main intermediaries in the communities. They work with these girls in their families, and they will stay attentive and monitor the schoolgirls after our visit and get in touch regularly with our office in this respect.

Thank you to Ursula and Heidi for the dynamic team we are!

Report by Anne Yotchou, Coordinator of CEFAP Cameroon
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