



## STUDENT ACTION TOOLKIT



Get your friends, family or classmates together to learn about the issues faced by girls in Ethiopia and raise awareness and funds to purchase pad kits for them. A party, get-together or school presentation is a fantastic way to spread the word about Dignity Period's work and inspire others like you to take action, too – because all girls deserve dignity – period.

# WELCOME!



## WHY DIGNITY PERIOD?

All girls deserve an education. It can change their lives. Education also transforms their communities and even their countries by strengthening households. According to [Girleffect.org](http://Girleffect.org) (amazing website – check it out), getting every Ethiopian girl to finish school would add billions of dollars to the country’s economy. Isn’t that incredible? But here’s the thing – in Ethiopia, **periods keep girls out of school**. Periods affect every aspect of a girl’s life – not only her education – her health, social life, family life, and self-esteem. What’s more, even talking about periods is taboo. Can you imagine having *no one* to talk to about your period?



Photo credit: Joni Kabana



Photo credit: Joni Kabana

**DIGNITY PERIOD IS DEDICATED TO STAMPING OUT MENSTRUAL STIGMA, KEEPING GIRLS IN SCHOOL, AND PROVIDING COMFORTABLE, WASHABLE, REUSABLE PADS AND UNDERWEAR (THAT ALSO HAPPEN TO BE REALLY PRETTY!).**





## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Get your friends, family or classmates together to learn about the issues faced by girls in Ethiopia and to raise funds to purchase pad kits for them. A party, get-together or school presentation is a fantastic way to spread the word about Dignity Period's work and inspire others like you to take action, too – because all girls deserve dignity – period.

**THIS GUIDE HAS EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GET STARTED.**

**WE'LL COVER:**

- Activities Planner 101
- Speaking of Periods...
- Party Plan
- Ideas and Inspiration
- Additional Tips and Info
- Sharing Your Success
- FAQs



*Photo credit: Joni Kabana*



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## ACTIVITIES PLANNER 101

*Let's start with the basics: The Who, What, Where, When and How. Here are a few to-dos to get the ball rolling:*

**DRAW UP YOUR GUEST LIST.** Consider recruiting a friend to co-host so you have more people to invite.

If you belong to any groups or clubs, see if they would like to get together for a cause.

**THINK ABOUT WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITY YOU WANT TO HAVE.** Will you have a good ol' fashioned girls' night in? A mini-fundraiser? A variety show? A virtual bake sale? Presentation in a class? Possibilities are endless!

**CHOOSE A PLACE TO GET TOGETHER.** Invite everyone over to your house or a friend's, or meet at school, church, the park, or a coffee shop.

**PLAN YOUR DECORATIONS, FOOD, DRINKS, AND ACTIVITIES.** Let's be honest, here - it's all about the nosh. Prep some fun nibbles and ask guests to bring snacks, too.

Check out the *Ideas and Inspiration* section for yummy, super easy recipes and decoration ideas (you don't have to decorate but it helps your guests get into the spirit of the event).

**SCHEDULE THE PARTY...THEN GET THE WORD OUT.** Start by creating an event page on Facebook (we have great pics, posts and sample invites to use) then tweet and gram all about it, with reminders up until the party starts.

Get crackin', Crafty! Break out the glue, paper, scissors and stamps to make DIY invitations (our Pinterest boards are loaded with samples). A handmade paper invitation lets your friends know that this party is extra special.

Last-minute Lizzie? Check out the downloadable invitations in the *Additional Tips and Info* section and make them your own.

Hand-deliver invitations to friends, classmates, teammates, anyone you might see face-to-face on a regular basis. An old school personal note on each one makes it extra special.



*Photo credit: Joni Kabana*

*Don't forget to check out the Ideas and Inspiration & Additional Tips and Info sections for activities, decorations, food, and more!*



## SPEAKING OF PERIODS...

Here in the U.S., talking about menstruation is entirely acceptable. Sure, it's not everyone's favorite topic. You may not have a monthly heart-to-heart with your dad about your hormones. We might skirt the issue with euphemisms like "Got a present from Aunt Flo today..." and it can help to inject a little humor with an eye roll – because periods just aren't fun.



Photo credit: Joni Kabana

Hopefully, periods are something that most girls feel they can talk about. Unfortunately, that's not the case for girls in Ethiopia. It's not just an uncomfortable topic that people tiptoe around. It's *taboo*. And when you can't talk about something, it's really hard to do something about that "something".

*When a topic is taboo, it is off-limits for discussion. Why? Because people can be afraid, super uncomfortable, or the subject matter goes against religious and social customs. Taboos are often deeply rooted in the culture, too, so taboo topics aren't the same all over the world. That's why we are free to talk about periods, but girls in Ethiopia don't feel they can.*

*You might've guessed it, but hosting activities for Dignity Period means you'll have to talk about periods. You may be totally fine with that, or it might make you kind of uncomfortable. If you're not excited about the idea of period-chat, take a little time to practice or get a few close girlfriends to talk through what you want to say at your get-together. Think about recruiting a co-host to share the job of leading the conversation. Still feeling uncomfortable? Dignity Period staff is ready to help or maybe even speak at your gathering – just ask!*



## SPEAKING OF PERIODS...

Getting people to talk about periods is just the beginning. We've got to share what we know about the challenges girls face, and learn that we can do something to give them dignity and the things they need – like pads, education and support, like bathrooms that provide water and privacy.

**DURING YOUR EVENT, YOU'LL SPEND SOME TIME TALKING ABOUT WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR A GIRL IN ETHIOPIA TO GET HER PERIOD, AND MAYBE SHARE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES, TOO.**



Photo credit: Joni Kabana

Here, getting your first period can be a little awkward, embarrassing, and inconvenient. In Ethiopia, girls' first periods usually take them totally by surprise. Many girls feel alone, ashamed, and afraid, particularly if they are in school when they first get their periods.

While we've got pretty easy access to pads and tampons (and other essentials like chocolate and ibuprofen), most girls in rural Ethiopia can't afford pads. They end up using things like old strips of cloth, dry grass, or nothing at all. This leads to accidents, embarrassment, and shame. Girls often stay home from school when they're on their periods - they fall behind in their studies and sometimes end up dropping out.

*What would it be like to miss 3-5 days of school every month?*



Photo credit: Joni Kabana



## SPEAKING OF PERIODS...



Photo credit: Joni Kabana

### TALK ABOUT HOW DIGNITY PERIOD IS WORKING TO CHANGE ALL THAT.

In 2009, an incredible woman named Freweini Mebrahtu founded The Mariam Seba Sanitary Products Factory. Freweini grew up in Ethiopia and went through puberty without access to pads. She remembers missing school, being isolated and embarrassed at home, and seeing the same thing happen to her friends.

After going to college in the U.S. and working here as a chemical engineer, she returned to Tigray. She saw that girls were still facing the same challenges she faced when she was young, so she decided to open the factory, which she named after her daughter, Mariam.

*“I needed to figure out a solution. I wanted to develop a product that was affordable, reliable, and environmentally friendly. It is my hope that this product will bring dignity to many more girls in Ethiopia.” – Freweini Mebrahtu*



Photo credit: Joni Kabana



## SPEAKING OF PERIODS...

Each year, the factory produces about 600,000 pads that are distributed to women and girls across Ethiopia and other African countries.

### THE PADS ARE SPECIAL BECAUSE THEY:

- Last for 12-18 months;
- Are comfortable and made of soft cotton with a waterproof backing so they are leak-free and reliable;
- Are washable and reusable, which makes them environmentally-friendly; and
- They cost 85-90 percent less than other pads that you'd find in a store or pharmacy in Ethiopia.



Photo credit: Joni Kabana



Photo credit: Joni Kabana

### DIGNITY PERIOD IS PROVIDING EDUCATION AND FREE PAD KITS TO GIRLS IN 15 SCHOOLS IN THE TIGRAY REGION IN 2016.

We hope this will serve as a springboard for more programs throughout Ethiopia in the future.

Along with Mekelle University, Dignity Period is also conducting ethnographic research into beliefs, attitudes, and practices surrounding menstruation in Tigray. When the study is completed in spring or summer of 2016, the findings will be used to improve menstrual hygiene practices and education in the region.

*Ethnographic studies involve research about the cultural beliefs in a particular society and how they fit together to create the “web of meaning” in which everyone lives.*



## PARTY PLAN

The flow of your get-together will depend a lot on the type of get-together you've decided to have, so we'll just explore an example here to give you a few ideas. Let's say you're having a group of friends over for a Dignity Period Girls' Night In. Once everyone has arrived...



Photo credit: Joni Kabana

### SETTLE IN AND START THE PARTY

Mingle, have some food, and then start gearing up to talk about why you're all there.

### GET SOME CONVERSATION GOING

Show the Dignity Period video – send the link to your guests or show it on your laptop.

Next, give a short presentation (about five minutes) of the information provided in the *Speaking of Periods* section.

- Tell your guests about what girls are facing in Ethiopia
- Talk about how Dignity Period is working to make things better for them.
- Break into small groups of two or three and use the questions below for more discussion.

#### Questions:

- What was it like when you got your first period?
- Where were you?
- How did you feel?
- Who did you talk to?
- What do you think would be most difficult about having to deal with your period in Ethiopia?

### ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS TO TAKE ACTION

Can one of your guests host their own party next month? Can you get something going at your school? Have a fundraiser at church or on campus? Brainstorm together about how you can continue to spread the word about Dignity Period.

**PARTY!** Don't forget it is a party – so make some popcorn, play some board games, watch movies – have fun!



## IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

### DÉCOR AND MORE

Unleash your inner hostess-with-the-mostest and make your party extra special! Check out our [Pinterest board](#) for decoration Ideas, recipes, invitations, and more.

### HOW WILL YOU CELEBRATE DIGNITY PERIOD?

*We know you know how to have a party, but just in case you need some inspiration...*

- Have friends over for a DIY flower party (these are so fun to make – check out [our Pinterest boards for ideas](#)), then use the flowers for an info table at school.
- Host a Throwback Thursday Party.
  - Throwback to Thirteen! Give a nod to puberty’s heyday. Dress the way you did when you were 13, play some silly games like Telephone and watch Thirteen Going on 30.
  - Pick a decade and run with it. You could have an 80’s theme, for example – play 80’s tunes and sport some side ponytails.
  - Throw(way)back – see who can come up with the best costume from days of yore – get a little Jane Austen-y or channel your inner Laura Ingalls Wilder.
- Have a Girls’ Night In – think board games, pajamas, movies, snacks, and mini-makeovers.
- Throw a Dinner Party.
- Party in Pink! Suggest head-to-toe and pink-to-red party attire – give prizes for the craziest, most fashion-forward, etc.



Photo credit: Joni Kabana



## IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

### HOW WILL YOU CELEBRATE DIGNITY PERIOD? (CONTD.)

*If a party isn't your thing, here are some unique ways to raise funds for Dignity Period and share what you know:*

#### ONLINE

- Have a virtual bake sale
  - Post a menu online, take orders, then have friends over to bake!
  - Deliver the baked goods the next day
- Have an eBay auction to benefit Dignity Period
- Host a virtual party

#### AT SCHOOL

- Have a talent show or variety show
- “I won't come down until...”
  - You'll need to recruit a faculty or staff member for this one – someone who's game to hang out on the school roof for a few hours... The idea is, someone's up on the roof and won't come down until a certain fundraising goal is met. If the person doing this with you is afraid of heights or you can't get roof access, they could just be “imprisoned” in their office or the teachers' lounge until the goal is met.
- Themed dress-up days at school
  - Wear pink or red, wear the colors of the Ethiopian flag, give prizes for the zaniest, most fashion forward, etc.
- Talk to your social studies, history, or English teacher about learning more in class; do a class project or final exam project, or even something for extra credit.
- Wage a penny war
- Radio takeover
  - Do you have a campus radio station? See if you can take over for a few hours to talk about Dignity Period, and of course play lots of Cyndi Lauper.



*Photo credit: Joni Kabana*

#### IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Put out a giving jar
- Wrap presents at Christmastime for a fee in a store or mall
- Set up a folding table and have a good ol' fashioned bake sale or smoothie stand

*Bonus! Want to learn more about just how powerful radio can be? Check out how [Yegna](#) is giving Ethiopian girls a voice.*



## ADDITIONAL TIPS AND INFO

### RESOURCES, ANYONE?

*Here are some links to Dignity Period materials that can help make your party a success:*

- [Sample invitations](#)
- [Info brochure](#)
- [Sign-in sheet](#)
- [Dignity Period video](#)
- [Slide presentation](#)
- [Notes for slide presentation](#)
- If you would like a sample pad for show-and-tell at your event, email [junger@dignityperiod.org](mailto:junger@dignityperiod.org)



*Photo credit: Joni Kabana*

### GUEST LIST A LITTLE SPARSE?

*You can invite:*

- Your family
- Friends and friends of friends and friends of friends of friends
  - As you invite the people you're closest to, encourage them to spread the word and bring others to the party
- Teachers/professors and their families
- Are you a member of any clubs, teams, or organizations? Invite leaders/moderators/coaches and other members
- Invite acquaintances from work and volunteer organizations
- Facebook and Twitter are great ways to get the word out about your event, and get in touch with people you may not see regularly
- If you're a member of a church, invite the youth group and any study groups, the head of the congregation, leaders, and other attendees
- Neighbors: Next door, upstairs, downstairs, one floor up, the whole block! Even locker neighbors! If you live in a dorm, make up a flyer and put it in the halls

### PLACES TO HOLD YOUR EVENT

- Your house or a friend's or relative's
- JoAnn Fabrics – if they're not using their classroom, you can use their space for free!
- School, church, a park, or a coffee shop
- Dorm and campus common areas
- Already in a group that gets together regularly? Ask for 10 minutes at the next meeting to talk about Dignity Period (that takes care of space and guest list all in one!)



## SHARING YOUR SUCCESS

We know your Dignity Period Party will be a smash, and we want to hear about it!

Fill us in on your get-together using [this form](#). We're eager to know how things went, so it would be awesome if you could send it our way within a day or two of the party. Also, send over your sign-in sheet if you used one, and any donations you might've gotten.

Mail all the goods to:

Dignity Period

P.O. Box 28343

St. Louis, MO 63146

Don't stop there! E-mail us pictures and stories and anything else you'd like to share. Please also let us know if we can share them on our website and Facebook page.



*Photo credit: Joni Kabana*



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## FAQs

*I raised money for Dignity Period! What should I do with it?*

First of all, awesome! Thank you!

You can send checks in the mail. If you receive cash, you will need to get a money order or cashier's check from your bank in exchange for the money.

Donations can be mailed to:

Dignity Period

P.O. Box 28343

St. Louis, MO 63146

*I'd love to have someone from Dignity Period come speak at my party or at my school – how can I make that happen?*

Great! This depends a bit on where you're located, but drop us a line and we'll see what we can arrange. E-mail Jane at [junger@dignityperiod.org](mailto:junger@dignityperiod.org) to get the ball rolling.

*How can I learn more about Dignity Period's work?*

- Our website is a great starting point and is a wealth of information: [www.dignityperiod.org](http://www.dignityperiod.org)
- While you're exploring the website, make sure you subscribe to our newsletter ([link](#)) and watch for new blog posts ([link](#)). Like and follow us Facebook ([link](#)) to stay in the loop.
- Also, keep an eye on our Events page ([link](#)) and see if any educational events pop up that you'd like to attend.
- If you're interested in learning more about girls' issues in general, check out [www.girleffect.org](http://www.girleffect.org).

*If you have other questions, please email Dignity Period at [info@dignityperiod.org](mailto:info@dignityperiod.org).*