Menstrual Health: the Issue, Evidence, & Gaps

Lessons from ZanaAfrica's work in Kenya since 2007

Quick overview

1. About ZanaAfrica's work and lessons learned
2. Overview of our Randomized Control Trial to fill in evidence gaps
3. Ideas for data collection

Quick overview of ZanaAfrica

Pads plus Menstrual, Sexual, and Reproductive Health and Rights Materials (MSRHR) for 4 in 5 who lack access – designed for scale, cost-effectiveness

Best value-for-money product on the market; resources on pad package to direct females to people and places for MSRHR → Fast Moving Educational Good

Five magazines deliver Comprehensive Sexuality Education based on UNESCO CSE Technical Guidelines – fun, referable, anchored in storytelling, comics, and role models. Paired with facilitated curriculum.

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REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND LIFE SKILLS TRAINING MANUAL
for young Adolescent girls

SESSION 3

ADOLESCENCE AND PUBERTY

OBJECTIVES

1. Define adolescence and puberty
2. List physical and emotional changes that happen during adolescence and puberty
3. Understand that sexual feelings are a normal part of growing up

TIME
1:35 mins

Introduction **(10 mins)**
Define Adolescence and Puberty **(10 mins)**
Activity: Changes during Adolescence **(30 mins)**
Discussion: Emotional Changes during Adolescence **(10 mins)**
Role-Play: Talking about Puberty **(25 mins)**
Wrap up **(10 mins)**

MATERIALS

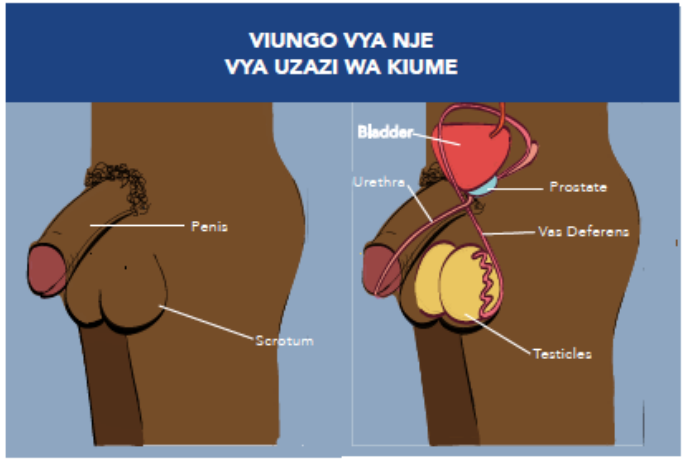
- Notebooks
- Pens
- Flipchart/ Black board
- Assorted felt pens/ Colored chalk
- Question Box
- Notecards (for Question Box)

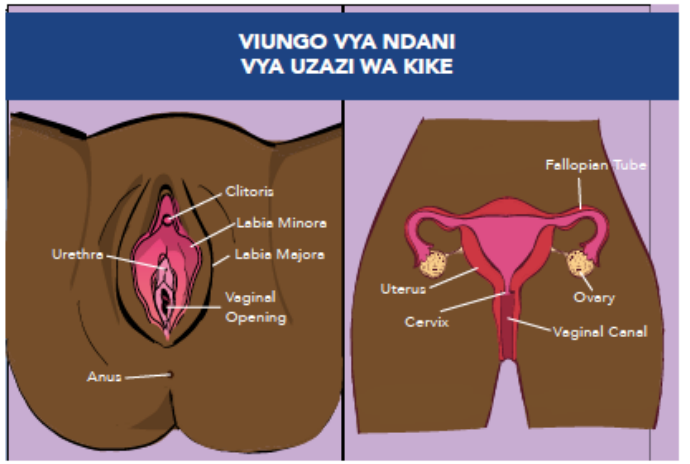
BEFORE YOU START

- Obtain the materials listed above
- Review the background information and session content
- Read each step of the instructions and think about how you will lead that part of the session

Adapted from: Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), Kenya Adolescents Reproductive Health Program (KARHP), and Population Council. 2006. Kenya Adolescent Reproductive Health Curriculum, Tuko Pamoja. pp.14-18.

APPENDIX 3: MALE AND FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM LABELS





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Nia Yetu Topics and Sessions

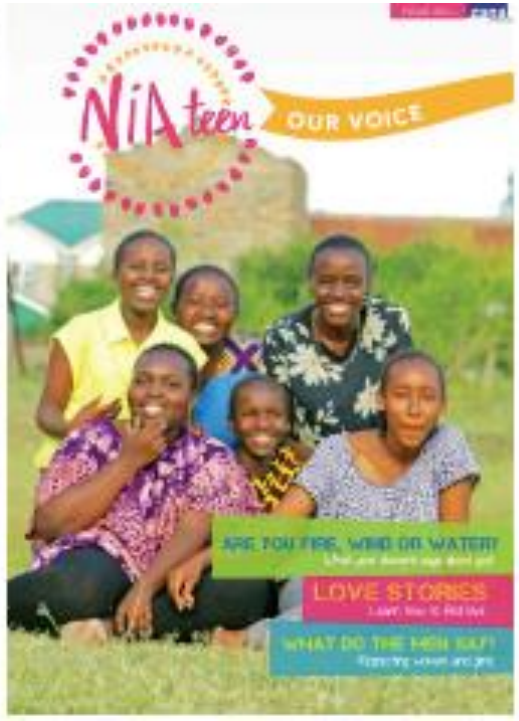
1. Welcome to Puberty!
- Getting Started, Values
- Setting Goals
- Adolescence and Puberty
- Menstruation
- Menstrual Health Management

2. Gender
- Male and Female Reproductive Systems
- Self Esteem
- Communication
- Introduction to Gender

3. Gender, Power and Rights
- Gender Stereotypes
- Human rights
- Sexual Violence and Exploitation
- How to Report & Avoid Cases of Sexual Violence
- Being Assertive & Decision Making

4. Relationship and Sexuality
- Healthy Relationships
- Romantic Relationships
- Sexuality and Behavior
- Teenage Pregnancy
- STIs and HIV

5. Being True to yourself
- Resisting Peer Pressure
- Drug Use and Abuse
- Managing Stress, Anger and Conflict
- Program Wrap up



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Lessons learned (MH = Products + Edu)

- Menstrual Products
  - 98% want single-use, disposable pad
  - Access = affordability + availability
  - Cheap is expensive (“pay half, buy twice” – value-for-money delivers quality +affordability
  - Dignity through choice: educate about (and offer) diverse menstrual products
  - Brand matters

- Health education
  - Menstruation as gateway into range of issues (consent and SGBV, family planning, social norms
  - Girls benefit from having materials they can read at home over time
  - Having a safe, trusted adult matters
  - *How* material is created matters: designed to be easily read for girls (magazine) and facilitators (manual)
  - Gap in curriculum in menstrual health within SRHR, gaps in gender and power

Overview of the Nia Project Program and Goals

The Nia Project: Goal

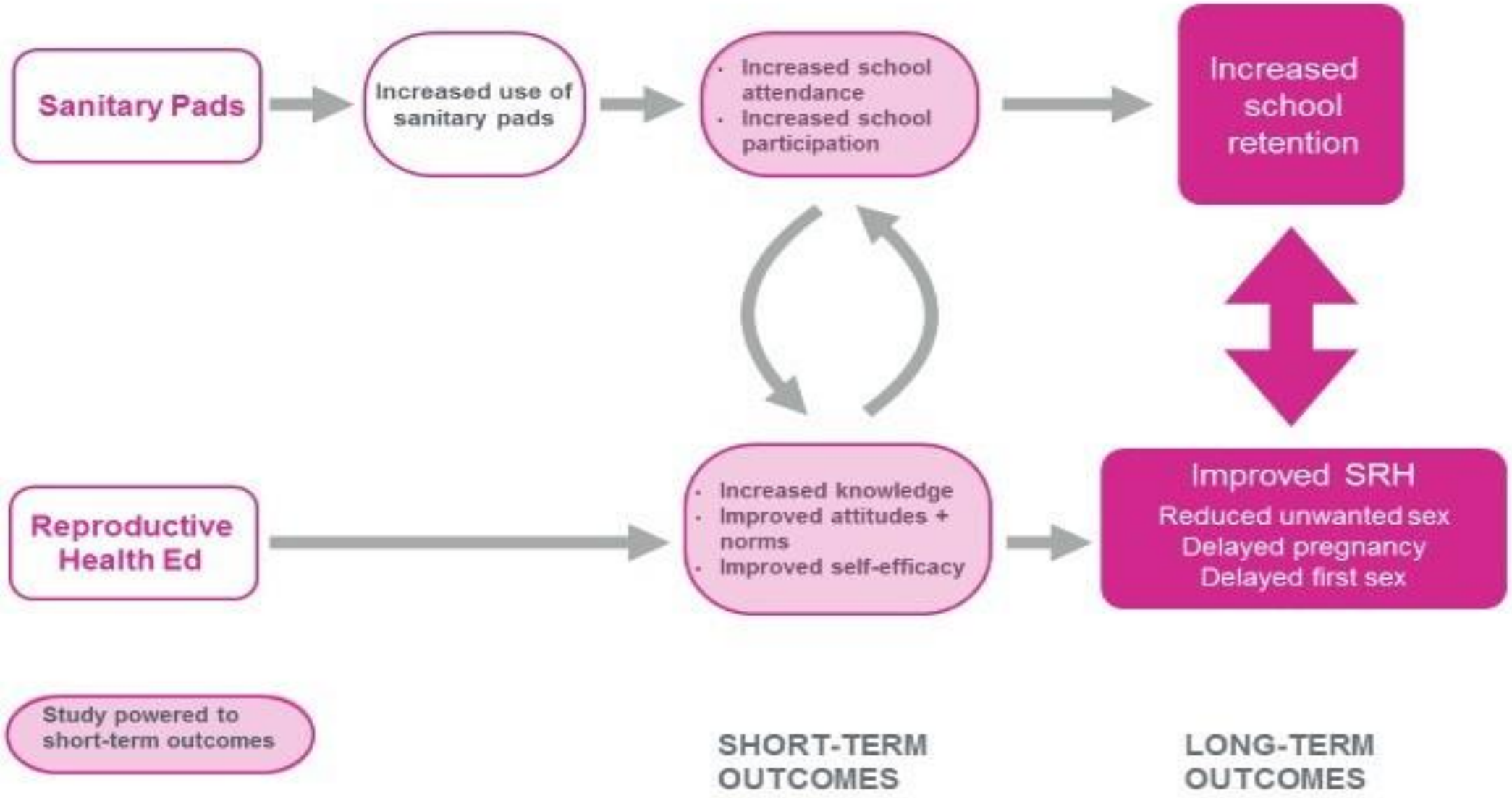
- Implement safe, accurate, and cost-effective reproductive health (RH) innovation for girls — in the form of disposable sanitary pads coupled with girl-centered RH information and resources
- Evaluate this approach against a control of current school-based pad and health education
- Assess impact over 2 years for Class 7 girls on:
  - educational attainment
  - sexual behavior
  - reproductive health
  - self-determination
- Expand the global evidence base surrounding the role of menstrual health-focused interventions in gender parity, health, and development

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of an MHM intervention combining software (reproductive health education) and hardware (sanitary pads) approaches on girls' well-being and education, versus software or hardware alone?

1. What is the cost-effectiveness of the combined approach, as compared to either software or hardware approaches alone, vis-à-vis the impact realized?

Our Theory of Change



Study Design

- Cluster-randomized controlled trial
- 140 schools in three sub-counties in Kilifi
- >3500 girls evaluated from Class 7 for 2 years

Arm 1 35 schools	Arm 2 35 schools	Arm 3 35 schools	Arm 4 35 schools
Control (No intervention)	Sanitary Pads	Reproductive Health Ed	Sanitary Pads Reproductive Health Ed

Baseline Findings (1 of 3)

1. **Gender Norms & Mobility**
   - **35%**: certain activities are self-restricted or prohibited for girls when on their period
   - **49%**: Do not think girls should have the same opportunities as boys
   - **59%**: Do not think girls should be as independent as boys
   - **74%**: Do not think girls should be able to move as freely as boys

2. **Violence & Social Norms**
   - Up to **29%** of girls had experienced male violence (physical, emotional, sexual) in the past 12 months
   - **75%** believe there are reasons that are okay for a man to beat his wife

3. **Reproductive Health and Sexual Behavior**
   - **5%** correctly identify that the most fertile time is half-way between periods
   - **13%** had had sex (ave age 12), BUT **90%** of sex was unwanted or girl was unsure
   - **17%** currently using modern contraceptive to delay/avoid pregnancy
   - **18%** of those who had had sex had engaged in transactional sex within the previous six months

Baseline Findings (2 of 3)

4. **School Participation & Engagement**
   - **18%**: reported they find it difficult to pay attention in class
   - **35%**: did not feel confident answering questions in class

5. **Decision Making**
   - **53%**: How much education you will get
   - **62%**: Decide who you will marry on your own
   - **63%**: Decide when to marry on your own

6. **Self Efficacy**
   - **23%**: My parents or guardians ask for my opinion on things
   - **33%**: My parents or guardians listen when I share my opinion
   - **42%**: I can speak up when I see someone else being hurt

Baseline Findings (3 of 3)

7. Menstruation & Menstruation Management

- **3%:** reported absenteeism due to menstruation (vs. 73% illness, 11% lack of school fees)
- **13.9 years**: Average age of menstruation (range - 6 to 17)
- **21%**: Felt they had enough pads to manage their period comfortably

8. Menstruation perceptions/shame/taboos

- **89%**: agreed it is important that they keep their period secret from anyone
- **70%** of girls agreed that they are proud that they have their periods
- **43%**: agreed that they feel ashamed of their body when on their period

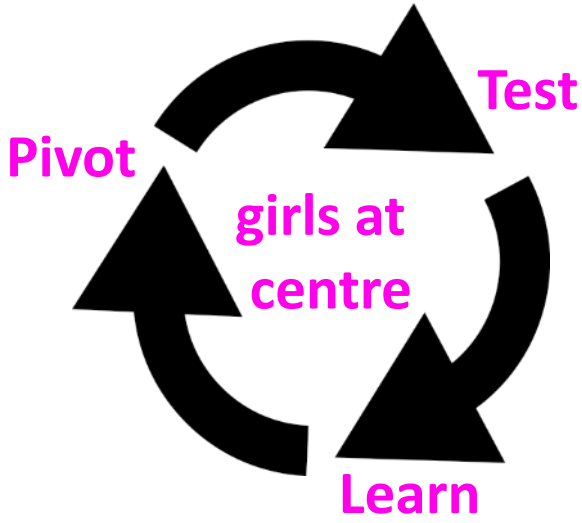
Notes on study timeline

Midline focus groups with girls and stakeholders just completed

Endline surveys beginning in October, school results and secondary school matriculation collected Jan-Feb 2019

Final results published August 2019

Practical suggestions for collecting data



1. **Determine why you are gathering data:**
   - What do you want to learn? Or what do donors want to see?
   - What is your theory of change? (TOC)
   - What is the simplest way to get the information you need?

2. **Research and adapt/adopt what already works:**
   - Take time to do some online literature reviews (see Pop Council; FSG)
   - Don't reinvent the wheel: need curriculum? Survey questions? – use what has been tested
   - Note: f you are interested in replicating our work, let us know! We are working on an M&E package to accompany the use of our magazine and curriculum

3. **Think about what is the minimum you need to prove what you are doing is working per your TOC**
   - Before and after surveys
   - Focus groups (good for qualitative insights; deeper understanding of survey results)
   - Don't collect more data than you can evaluate

Example of before-and-after survey questions

STATEMENT	% OF CASES (n=25)		
	BASELINE	ENDLINE	% change in desired direction
I feel ashamed of my body when I have my period	48%	35%	14%
I'm uncomfortable in my body when I have my period	83%	58%	25%
A girl can engage in sports activities during her periods	45%	69%	24%
I am less likely to answer questions in class when I am on my period compared to when I am not on my period	48%	35%	14%
I am less likely to attend school when I am on my period compared to when I am not on my period	28%	12%	16%
A girl should feel shy if she stains her dress in school	100%	85%	15%

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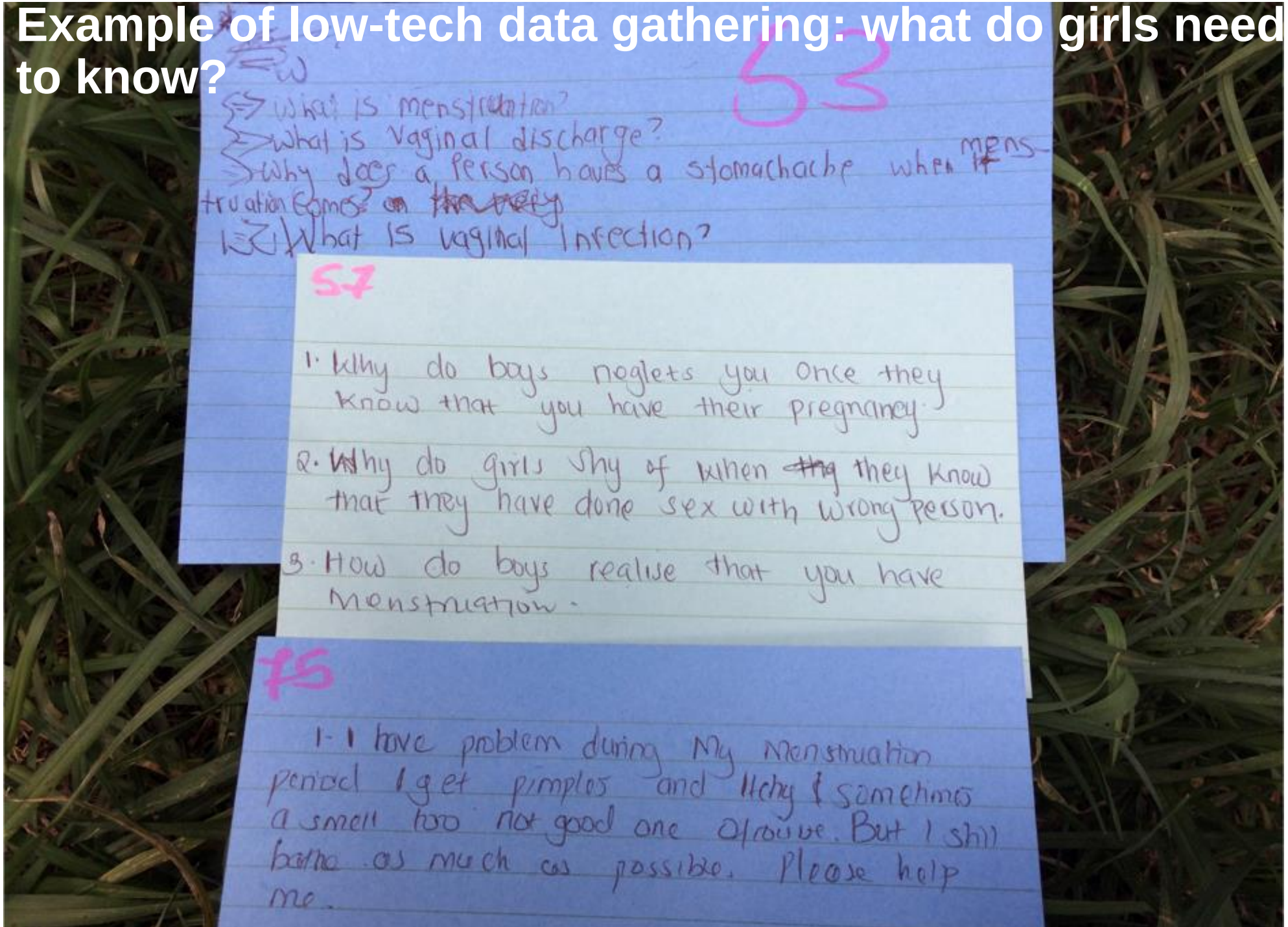
Example of low-tech data gathering: what do girls need to know?



megan@zanaafrica.com
@mwmukuria
Asanteni!

Working with Men and Boys

School attendance data collection for both boys and girls

Nia Teen Magazine content is girl-centered and not girl specific; consumption for both boys and girls.

Girls encouraged to share Nia Teen Magazine with their peers (girls/boys)

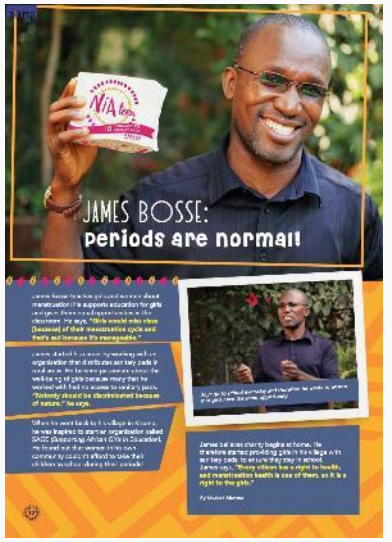
The content is developed not to create a them and us but with a narrative that will catalyze/ignite conversations between boys and girls.

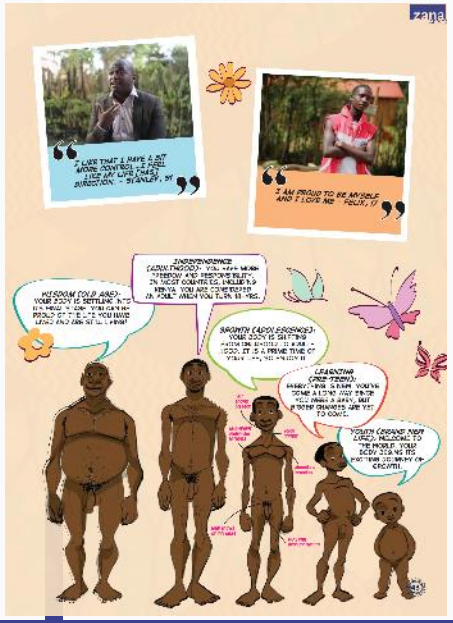
Nia Teen aims to reduce isolation- thus content shows how both adolescent boys and girls that they ALL face similar as well as varying challenges as the navigate adolescence. e,g. Puberty, relationships

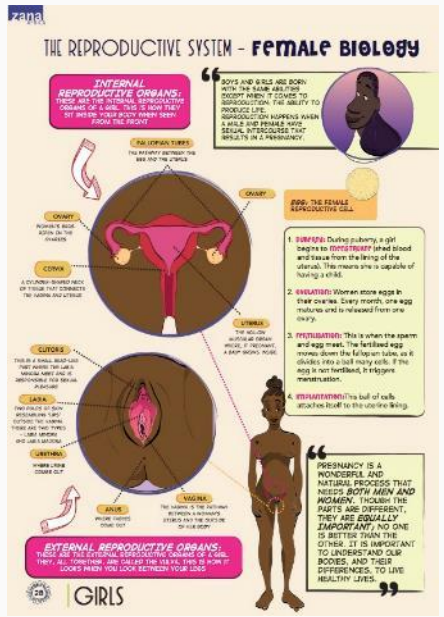
The Nia teen content also leverages the potency of male role models- who boys can model their behavior/perceptions e.g. power + gender dynamics, GBV, gender stereotypes

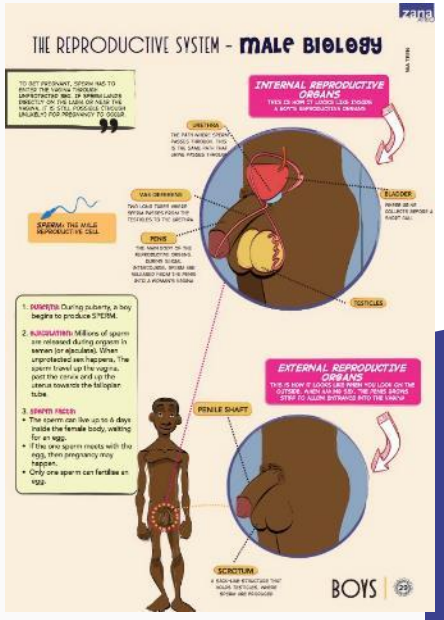
Community entry + engagement process: the role of guardians, gatekeepers and influencers in the girls space is often explored.

Learnings from Male Engagement









Measuring Agency

Sample of key questions asked to measure agency

- You always manage to solve difficult problems if you try hard enough (48%)
- If someone is against you, you can still find ways to get what you want (32%)
- It is easy for you to focus on your aims and accomplish your goals (64%)
- You are confident that you could handle unexpected events very well (33%)
- Because of the help you can get, you know how to manage unexpected situations (54%)
- You can solve most problems if you make the necessary effort (63%)
- You can remain calm when facing difficulties because you can rely on your own abilities(45%)
- When you face a problem, you can usually find more than one solution (65%)
- If you are in trouble you can usually think of a solution (77%)
- You can usually handle any situation that comes your way (56%)