

“Period. End of Sentence.”

Documentary Resource Guide

2019

About the Film:

As students at Oakwood High School located in Los Angeles, we participated in a club called Girls Learn International which was spearheaded by our English teacher, Melissa Berton. We fell in love with the club not only because we were discussing issues of gender inequality, but because we had the opportunity to connect and work with women and girls worldwide. Another unique aspect of the club is that the FMF selects student delegates from GLI chapters across the country to attend a two week conference called the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations. During our trip to the UN, we discovered that many countries were discussing the issues of girls dropping out of school due to their periods. When we returned to Oakwood, we were motivated to get involved with this important issue, one which we had never even had to consider.

In our research, we learned about an Indian man named Arunachalam Muruganantham who was dismayed by the lack of access women in his country had to sanitary pads, and despite his own wife leaving him and being shunned by his community in the process, invented a low-cost sanitary pad machine. Once we researched Muruganantham’s machine, we saw a potential solution. First, with the help of Action India, an NGO based in Delhi, we connected with a small village called Kathikhera, located in the Hapur District. Many of the girls had either dropped out of school or had missed so much class time due to their periods that they probably would never graduate. The young women in Kathikhera were eager to collaborate.

After getting to know the women of Kathikhera, we knew that we wanted to work together to make a change in the lives of girls and women all around the world. After much thought, we came to the conclusion that by documenting our partnership, we would be able to spread awareness on a much larger scale, shifting the conversation of menstruation from private to public. In October of 2016, we launched our first Kickstarter campaign which raised \$45,076 allowing us to purchase the pad machine, gather the first year’s supplies, and document the project.

Discussion Points:

Each group watching the film will have a conversation unique to their setting, depending upon age, location and organization. Here is a list of questions to spark your very own discussion!

- How did you learn about periods?

- Talk about the first time you got your period. What was that like? If you told someone after, who did you tell?
- How many people were aware that access to sanitary products is an issue all over the world?
- Has access to menstrual hygiene products ever been an issue for you?
- If you are in the United States, are you aware of the Pink Tax? If so, does your state have a Pink Tax?
- How can you be an advocate for menstrual equity?

Questions & Answers:

Q: Why was it so important to make the film? Why not just buy a machine?

A: After much thought, we decided that making the documentary would leave a bigger impact on a larger audience. By creating a documentary, we wanted to show the world that this is an issue that needs to be brought to its attention. We come from a “woke” liberal bubble in Los Angeles and considered ourselves well informed, yet we had never even considered the inherent risks of period poverty, in our own backyard, as well as around the world. We wanted to shatter the harmful silence that prevented these discussions.

Q: What is the value of having the machine in the village?

A: Having the machines located in rural communities fulfills multiple purposes. First, the machine creates pads that can then be sold to the immediate community, as well as any larger distributors, creating an influx of pads in areas where they might have been scarce. Additionally, the machines associated with The Pad Project are staffed and managed by local women, creating jobs and boosting the local economy. For many of these women, the difficult work of raising a family and making a home is overlooked, and certainly not compensated, therefore, their work on the machines would be their first paying job, as well as the first job that their husbands or fathers would consider to be true employment.

Q: What are the long term goals of the project?

A: The Pad Project aims to implement, educate, and advocate. While our goal is to place pad machines in communities all over the world, we ultimately aim to promote menstrual equity, but we know that cannot be achieved through one machine, or even many. Our organization takes a multi-pronged approach to achieving menstrual equity, combining pad machines with community partnerships, sexual and reproductive health education, and domestic advocacy work. We work to educate communities both on menstrual hygiene and management, but also on period poverty and the barriers to gender equality it presents. We also work to advocate for policy targeted at menstrual equity, whether that be the removal of the Pink Tax, (The Tampon Tax), or working with local school boards to mandate free period products in public school

bathrooms, or even just to provide the framework for barrier-breaking conversations about menstruation.

The cornerstone of our international work is our pad machines. Each partner community has different needs - some for manual, some for semi-automated, and some for automated machines. We work with local partners and NGOs to install machines that are easy to operate, use locally-sourced natural resources to function, and require minimal electricity. Each machine employs 6 women and 1 supervisor, enabling them to produce pads for their communities for approximately \$.05 each. Workers can decide how and where they would like to sell their pads in order to create more economic opportunities, but communities must partner with local NGOs on the ground to help monitor and ensure the success of their particular program.

At The Pad Project, we aim to promote gender equity throughout the world through various projects. We refuse to accept a world where women have to choose between buying a box of pads or buying their next meal. That's why we are committed to highlighting existing laws and regulations around periods in the United States and advocating for change. On a global scale, the pad machines we fund both expand access to pads and serve as a catalyst for gender equity. Their implementation helps grant women the personal, economic, and educational tools to spark conversations around menstruation and drive societal change. Access to pads allows girls to feel comfortable and confident in a learning environment, but it is critical to pair pads with comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education. Whenever we install a machine, we do so by partnering with established local organizations who can host community led workshops and start dialogue around menstruation and related SRHR education. For instance our film, *Period. End of Sentence.*, can serve as an entry point for these conversations.

Education about menstruation is important for everyone. This is why we've created educational toolkits for middle school, high school, college, and beyond. Using the toolkits provides a structure to explore the topics of menstrual health and menstrual hygiene issues women and girls face all over the world. Ultimately, we believe that our efforts to install pad machines and increase community understanding of menstrual health will promote global gender equity and ensure that a period ends a sentence, not a girl's education.

Q: Have the founders of The Pad Project visited India?

A: As we began working with Action India in Kathikhera, we were cognizant of respecting boundaries and did not want to insert ourselves into cultural systems we did not understand. As such, we kept the documentary crew as small as possible, and after filming for a few weeks, it became clear to our production team that having too many outsiders in the village would draw negative attention to the project. We are lucky to have a large team of students and adults working on the Pad Project, and in the years since filming the documentary, we have been able to send more of our LA based team to the village, both to screen the documentary and to foster

the relationships that are vital to the success of the project. Although not everyone has been able to visit the village yet, we hope to send more of our team there in the near future!

Q: What were difficulties that arose while filming?

A: One of the main difficulties that arose while filming was the language barrier. Our documentary team did not speak Hindi and had to experience their time in the village through an interpreter. Additionally, there were challenges to working in a community that had never worked with film equipment or foreigners before. We did as much as possible to establish trust with the community before filming, and our partnership with Action India was vital in that regard.

Q: Were women from Fly at the Oscars?

A: We were so fortunate to have six women from Kathikhera in the audience with us at the Oscars. Having a majority of our team together for the first time in three years was absolutely amazing and really solidified our partnership. We were not only lucky enough to celebrate our victory together but also to continue to build connections the following week in Los Angeles.

Q: What is The Pad Project doing now?

A: The Pad Project is focused on growth in all respects. Since the Oscars, we have received so much support from generous donors, which has given us the resources to look beyond anything we ever hoped and allowed us to expand our operations. That has come with some growing pains as well, and we have spent much of our time building our team and organizational capacities. We are so proud that this project began with a group of high school students and their English teacher. We have assembled an incredible team, and are continuing to foster relationships with communities, working together to eradicate period poverty. We have had inquiries from over 95 countries and are working diligently so we can reach everyone! We are excited to announce we will be installing a machine in Kabul, Afghanistan, two more machines in different regions in India, and supporting the production of cloth reusable pads in Sierra Leone.

The Pad Project is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization. Contributions are tax – deductible to the extent permitted by law. TAX ID # 82-2441730.

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<https://www.thepadproject.org/>