

Kimberly-Clark Celebrates Menstrual Hygiene Day, Highlights Global Efforts To Fight Period Stigma

Global menstrual health and hygiene programs benefitted 8.7 million people in 2021

DALLAS, May 27, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- Globally, more than 800 million women and girls are stigmatized, excluded and discriminated against simply because they menstruate. An additional 500 million lack access to basic period products and facilities needed for menstrual hygiene management.

As a result, these women and girls end up missing school and work, and they often become the target of gender-based violence due to misunderstanding and stigma.

"At Kimberly-Clark, we believe a period should never stand in the way of a woman's progress – a belief that started with the founding of Kotex® more than 100 years ago and continues to this day," said **Alison Lewis, Chief Growth Officer for Kimberly-Clark**. "Our purpose to provide 'Better Care for a Better World' resonates clearly in our support of Menstrual Hygiene Day and our ongoing work to champion the progress of women, fight period stigmas through education, and promote greater access to menstrual hygiene products. We are incredibly proud of the work we've done and are dedicated to the hard work still ahead."

Kimberly-Clark and its Kotex® brand are committed to challenging period perceptions and addressing stigmas around the world with women, men, girls and boys. Part of this commitment is the annual collaboration with WASH United to sponsor [Menstrual Hygiene Day](#) on Saturday, May 28, 2022, with a shared focus of making menstruation a normal fact of life by 2030.

"The WASH United partnership for Menstrual Hygiene Day is an ongoing and impactful campaign that Kimberly-Clark teams from around the world look forward to and rally behind," said **Juanita Pelaez, Vice President of Kimberly-Clark's Global Adult and Feminine Care Brands**. "Working with global partners such as WASH United, we are able to leverage the power of our brands to make a meaningful impact on the lives of millions of women and girls."

To date, Kimberly-Clark, Kotex®, the Kimberly-Clark Foundation, and various non-profit collaborators have made tremendous strides to elevate menstrual health and hygiene around the world.

Promoting a Global Conversation about Periods

Normalizing periods starts by promoting a global conversation around the need for education and the stigmas surrounding menstruation, and Kimberly-Clark's brand teams are delivering against this objective in a variety of ways that directly engage consumers.

In Brazil, Kimberly-Clark and Plan International partnered on a campaign to create highway signs, social media content and other media touchpoints to bring awareness to period stigmas, ultimately reaching hundreds of thousands of people in the city of Teresina.

Kotex® Taiwan invited 2020 Tokyo Olympic Gold Medalist Kuo Hsing-chun, current world record holder in the women's weightlifting category, to share her period stories with young college students – both women and men

- to ignite healthy and open conversations around periods among the younger generation.

In South Africa, Kimberly-Clark's Kotex® brand partnered with well-known music artist and megastar Boity Thulo to invite South Africans to submit lyrics addressing period stigma. With more than 500 lines of lyrics submitted by both women and men, the '[She Can Anthem](#)' hit the #19 spot on South Africa's music charts.

"Period stigma is not a new problem, but we must continue to bring new solutions to solving it," said **Morne Van Emmenes M, Marketing Director for Kimberly-Clark South Africa**. "With this campaign, we showed the value of experimenting with new ideas to integrate menstrual hygiene education into pop culture in a way that would reach a wide and diverse audience. Boity Thulo was an enthusiastic and supportive collaborator who was instrumental in our success in reaching both women and men."

Championing Her Progress

Since its launch in 2020, the [Kotex® She Can initiative](#) has worked to champion women's progress by fighting the barriers caused by period stigmas, promoting access to education in schools and communities, and by helping to open doors so women gain equal opportunity.

This year, the She Can initiative is launching a new partnership with [Girl Up](#) in Chile and Argentina. This partnership supports Girl Up's work as a global leadership development initiative that positions girls to serve as leaders in the movement for gender equality.

"At Girl Up, our mission is to advance girls' skills, rights, and opportunities to be leaders," said **Melissa Kilby, Executive Director of Girl Up**. "Around the world, access to menstrual hygiene and products is a barrier for girls to attend school and become leaders. We're excited to partner with Kotex® and the Kimberly-Clark Foundation to help remove those barriers and help more girls achieve their full potential."

Together, Girl Up and the Kimberly-Clark Foundation will provide leadership training and tools for participants to become gender equality advocates and activists for education around period poverty and period stigma. Through the partnership with Girl Up, Kimberly-Clark expects to positively impact more than 80,000 lives over the next three years.

"Unlocking doors for women requires all of us to share our voices and advocate for the women and girls in our lives," said **Jenny Lewis, Vice President of the Kimberly-Clark Foundation**. "Our work is critical to creating a more equitable world for women and girls. Because when women thrive, we all thrive."

Making a Positive Social Impact Through Education

Around the world, the [Kotex® She Can initiative](#) provides compelling educational resources that help girls, boys and parents understand period basics and abolish period stigma before it starts.

In 2021, the cumulative impact of Kimberly-Clark's various social impact programs reached more than 8.7 million women, girls, men and boys, and focused on menstrual health management.

Included in last year's social impact were eight projects supported by the Kimberly-Clark Foundation and [Plan International](#) that focused on creating a learning environment where women and girls have the confidence, knowledge, skills, materials and facilities necessary to overcome the persistent barriers to menstrual health education. These efforts led to a positive impact for over one million people in eight countries including Brazil, China, Colombia, Guatemala, India, Nigeria, Peru and Vietnam.

Building on consumer insights, the Kotex® She Can initiative created innovative new ways to deliver menstrual hygiene education, including a collaboration with popular YouTube and Instagram influencer [Simone Giertz](#) to help young women demystify the menstrual cycle in her trademark style that blends education and humor.

Addressing Access to Products and Sanitation

Access to menstrual hygiene products, as well as period-friendly sanitation facilities, remain a significant challenge for millions of women and girls each day.

"It's not enough to strive for awareness – we must fight for access to menstrual hygiene products if we have any chance of making a real impact for the countless women and girls in need of support," said **Mustafa Kudrati, Plan International USA President & CEO**. "The COVID-19 pandemic was a temporary roadblock to our success, but I'm proud to say we worked together to pivot our approach and deliver the critical everyday necessities needed by women and girls – not just menstrual hygiene products, but soap, water and food as well."

In fact, roughly one in three women in the U.S. struggles to afford period products. In response, Kimberly-Clark and its U by Kotex® brand became the founding sponsor of the [Alliance for Period Supplies](#) (APS) in 2018, and since then, they have donated more than 50 million period products through APS to women in need.

Additionally, one in five students in the U.S. struggle to afford period products, and report missing classes due to a lack of access to period products. This year, U by Kotex® provided additional funding to APS to administer a series of grants in the U.S. focused on advancing efforts in schools and benefitting school-aged girls. Recipients include [Sisters on the Street](#) for its work to provide free menstrual products in female and all-gender restrooms across its three existing partner high schools in Southern California, and [Giving the Basics Wichita](#) to advance its distribution efforts of period supply products to more than 51,000 people monthly and 130+ schools in Kansas.

To further address access to period products for students, [Thinx, Inc.](#) will donate 10,000 pairs of reusable period underwear for teens to APS. Thinx is the leader in the reusable period and incontinence underwear category, and Kimberly-Clark announced a majority investment in the company earlier this year.

"Period poverty is a solvable issue. By prioritizing menstrual equity, we're recognizing that access to period products should no longer be a barrier to an education, and through this donation, we're making a positive impact for thousands of young people who want to focus on school and activities that help them reach their full potential," said **Meghan Davis, Chief Executive Officer of Thinx, Inc.** "Sustainable menstrual equity is a key mission of Thinx, and we're proud to join with Kimberly-Clark and the Alliance for Period Supplies in the fight to eliminate period poverty in the United States."

Around the world, Kimberly-Clark's brand teams are working at the local level to improve access to products. Across Australia and New Zealand, Kimberly-Clark has developed and distributed resource kits and Kotex® product samples to educate students about menstrual health. In Korea, Kimberly-Clark has donated more than one million menstrual health products to low-income women and girls since 2016.

Educating Men about Periods is Key to Unlocking Equity

To unlock doors and build a better world for women and girls, Kimberly-Clark and its brands are working in innovative ways to build advocates among men to address period stigmas by educating men and boys about menstrual hygiene management.

A recent campaign in Vietnam, supported by the Kimberly-Clark Foundation in partnership with Plan International, reached more than 81,000 men through campaigns including the "Confident Puberty" initiative. Adolescents, fathers and community members were educated through a series of outreach programs to help promote education around menstrual health management, creating a stronger culture of acceptance for women and girls.

In India, the Kimberly-Clark Foundation supported educational activities led by Plan International that reached

thousands of adolescents with menstruation information, and more than 30 percent of participants were male.

"It is not just the job of women to educate on the importance of menstrual hygiene and health, nor should women and girls be the only focus of educational efforts," added **Pelaez**. "Men and boys need equal education to ensure we're creating a world in which people who menstruate aren't stigmatized or treated any differently. Menstruation is a component of everyday life and should not have to be hidden away."

A unique partnership in Korea led the Kotex® brand to collaboration with the Korea Consumer Agency and the Korean Health Teachers Association on consumer education to move beyond teenage girls to educate their male peers and parents. This collaboration includes in-school programs as well as gift packages and educational materials to celebrate a girl's first period.

Normalizing Periods by 2030

In commemoration of Menstrual Hygiene Day, Kimberly-Clark is partnering with WASH United and encouraging employees, partners, consumers and customers to show support by wearing the annual Menstrual Hygiene Day [Menstruation Bracelet](#) that's available via digital and social assets or printable paper versions.

The bracelet is made of 28 elements, with five of them red, representing the menstrual cycle.

"By wearing the Menstruation Bracelet or posting the digital and social assets, everyone can show that periods are nothing to hide and help push back taboos and stigma, one bracelet at a time," said **Thorsten Kiefer, Co-Founder and CEO of WASH United**. "It's time to normalize menstruation and by doing so help millions of women and girls to reach their full potential. Menstrual Hygiene Day and Kotex® are committed to ending period stigma. Are you with us?"

About Kimberly-Clark

Kimberly-Clark (NYSE: KMB) and its trusted brands are an indispensable part of life for people in more than 175 countries. Fueled by ingenuity, creativity, and an understanding of people's most essential needs, we create products that help individuals experience more of what's important to them. Our portfolio of brands, including Huggies, Kleenex, Scott, Kotex, Cottonelle, Poise, Depend, Andrex, Pull-Ups, GoodNites, Intimus, Neve, Plenitud, Sweetie, Softex, Viva and WypAll, hold the No. 1 or No. 2 share position in 80 countries. We use sustainable practices that support a healthy planet, build stronger communities, and ensure our business thrives for decades to come. To keep up with the latest news and to learn more about the company's 150-year history of innovation, visit kimberly-clark.com.

About WASH United

A unique crossbreed between an advocacy NGO and a creative agency, WASH United works to build a world in which all people benefit from safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), including menstrual hygiene. Our focus is on innovative solutions for advocacy and education. WASH United is behind Menstrual Hygiene Day, the global campaign to end period stigma.

About Plan International USA

Powered by supporters, Plan International USA partners with adolescent girls, young women and children around the world to overcome oppression and gender inequality, providing the support and resources that are unique to their needs and the needs of their communities, ensuring they achieve their full potential with dignity, opportunity and safety. Founded in 1937, Plan is an independent development and humanitarian organization that is active in 78 countries. For more information, and to learn about our commitment to safeguarding, please visit www.PlanUSA.org.

About Girl Up

Girl Up is a movement to advance girls' skills, rights, and opportunities to be leaders. Founded by the United Nations Foundation in 2010, Girl Up's leadership development programs have impacted 125,000 girls through 5,600 Clubs in 130 countries and all 50 U.S. states, inspiring a generation of girls to be a force for gender equality and social change.

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