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## NEW STUDY TESTS IMPACT OF SANITARY PADS & HEALTH EDUCATION ON LIFE OUTCOMES FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

### *ZanaAfrica Receives 4-yr Grant to Fund Groundbreaking Study in Menstrual Health Management*

**New York, March 8** – On International Women’s Day, ZanaAfrica Group, a Kenyan social enterprise, which manufactures high quality sanitary pads for women and girls in East Africa, announced that it is a recipient of a \$2.6M Grand Challenges Grant from the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** under their initiative, *Putting Women and Girls at the Center of Development*. This four-year grant will fund a groundbreaking study testing the impact of disposable sanitary pads packaged with girl-centered reproductive health information on the overall life outcomes of adolescent girls in Kenya.

Carried out with support from ZanaAfrica Foundation, the Group’s non-profit arm, this study will set a new precedent in Kenya and beyond by expanding the global evidence base on menstrual health management interventions on girls’ educational attainment, gender parity, and health, facilitating lasting impacts for women and girls worldwide

In East Africa, sanitary pads are out of reach for 4 in 5 women and girls, while there is also no mandated or reliable reproductive health education for girls as they enter adolescence. As a result, almost 1M girls in Kenya miss up to 6-weeks of school each year, contributing to girls dropping out of school at twice the rate of boys, starting at puberty. These conditions leave girls susceptible to human rights violations including unwanted sex and pregnancies, female genital cutting, and child marriage.

ZanaAfrica Group and ZanaAfrica Foundation work together to combat these dual and interrelated challenges. Using the power of the market, the Group designs and develops high-quality, affordable sanitary products designed specifically for women and girls in East Africa, while the Foundation creates innovative health education resources to equip girls with critical information about their bodies and human rights.

Together, the organization delivers a “Layered Approach” of menstrual and reproductive health education to support girls as they journey into adolescence. By coupling innovative health messaging created by the Foundation with the Group’s sanitary pads, ZanaAfrica is equipping girls with the information they need to stay in school and step into their potential.

This pioneering study aims to assess whether providing girls with pads *plus* health education will have quantifiable impacts on their educational attainment, reproductive health, and sexual

activity. The Population Council, an international research organization, will serve as the Group's research partner to conduct a randomized controlled (RCT) trial of girls ages 13 to 14 (grade 7) in 120 schools in Kisumu, Kenya for two years to evaluate ZanaAfrica's approach.

"To-date, menstrual health management evaluations have used a single indicator—school attendance—for a short period of time, up to six months, as a proxy for impact with little attention to other indicators. This study is groundbreaking in that it will expand the conversation beyond school attendance as a measurement for impact. It will re-frame how we're addressing menstrual health management. The results of this study may have far-reaching, global implications for girls. We cannot thank the Gates Foundation enough for believing in our work, they have been a true partner," said Megan White Mukuria, Co-Founder & CEO of ZanaAfrica Group.

ZanaAfrica was one of nineteen grantees selected by the Gates Foundation (out of over 1700 applicants) seeking funding to solve key global health and development problems for women and girls. Since 2011, ZanaAfrica has received scale-up grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This new grant is the third direct grant and largest investment by the Gates Foundation in ZanaAfrica.

Through its hybrid approach, ZanaAfrica has supported 20,000 girls with pads and reproductive health education. Its vision is a world where girls in East Africa live healthy, safe and educated lives while defining their own purpose—a world in which menstrual health management (MHM) is recognized as a human right, and the onset of puberty as the most effective time to engage girls in a range of personal health decisions.

"All women and girls deserve access to pads and health education. Leading human rights organizations are finally beginning to see menstrual health management as a human right. We are hopeful that this study will continue to move the needle so that it becomes a key topic of discussion related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals," said Gina Reiss-Wilchins, CEO of ZanaAfrica Foundation.

**About ZanaAfrica Group:**

ZanaAfrica Group envisions healthy communities where girls and women believe in their inherent power to define their purpose and live a life they choose. Based in Nairobi, Kenya, we offer feminine hygiene products designed for women, by women, which provide safe spaces to learn about health. We understand women's diverse needs and believe every woman deserves to feel confident every day of the month. For more information visit: [www.zanaafrica.com](http://www.zanaafrica.com).

**About ZanaAfrica Foundation:**

ZanaAfrica Foundation is a US based nonprofit organization that supports adolescent girls in Kenya to stay in school by delivering innovative reproductive health education and sanitary pads. For more information visit: [www.zanaafrica.org](http://www.zanaafrica.org).

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