

# Innovation Solutions, Mimi partner to keep 1,000 girls in school

Outsource solutions company, Innovative Solutions Group and SA black female-owned sanitary pad company, Mimi have partnered in a project that aims to keep 1,000 underprivileged girls in school.



Innovative Solutions Group has made a donation of R180,000 to Mimi to empower young women and reduce absenteeism in school. Their generous donation will buy 120,000 sanitary pads which will help keep 1,000 girls in school for the next year. The decision was in response to Mimi's call to action for corporate South Africa to pledge their support.

Innovative Solutions Group believes that their contribution will help to address the fact that more than two million schoolgirls miss up to 60 days of school a year as a result of not being able to afford sanitary towels. As a result of this donation, these girls now do not have to experience the abuse they would normally receive from their peers, parents and ['blessers'](#) because they cannot afford a basic necessity to manage a monthly menstrual cycle.

## Restoring dignity

"Poverty itself is a form of abuse," emphasises Ramona Kasavan, founder and CEO of Mimi. "At the very least these disadvantaged girls are forced to miss a number of school days every year because their peers bully them for leaking through their clothes. The embarrassment becomes overwhelming. Furthermore, it creates the potential for girls to drop out of school completely as they fall behind in their studies. What is more alarming is the risks that these girls are exposed to due to poverty, as many become prime targets for exploitation by 'blessers'; a particularly degrading form of abuse against girls."

Kasavan adds that many girls resort to using old cloths, tissue paper, rolled up socks or newspaper when they cannot afford sanitary towels. They become hugely embarrassed when these methods fail, and the blood stains on their clothes are seen by their peers. Many girls are ridiculed and mocked to the degree where they will do anything to avoid the social ostracism. Some stay at home during their periods, while other girls will go as far as to exchange sex for money or pads.



## **Innovative Solutions' involvement**

Liza Trollip, Innovative Solutions Group director, who is responsible for the company's corporate social investment (CSI), says: "When we learned about the struggles these girls face because of the lack of a supply of sanitary pads which cost just R180 for an entire year, we rearranged our CSI spend to enable us to participate in this worthy cause. We are closely involved in the communities in which our 5,500 staff members live and believe the best use of any discretionary money at this point, lies in initiatives that help uplift education. There are few things in life that can be more satisfying than participating in a venture which keeps thousands of learners at school."

"We can't address poverty in its entirety but we can help address one of the root causes of the poverty trap - the phenomenon of girls being abused through ostracism and exclusion due to their periods. With the assistance of Mimi, Innovative Solutions Group is happy that we were able to assist 1,000 school girls in Mamelodi, a community that houses many of our employees," continues Trollip.

Kasavan concludes, "Distributing affordable sanitary pads is an important activity for us, but the greater part of our activity is empowering and educating the youth on issues of hygiene and self-respect. Thanks to the corporate support of companies such as Innovative Solutions Group, our objective of moving girls and women from poverty to empowerment is a reality. We hope that more corporates will follow in their footsteps and support our country's girls."