



Tanzania-based Menstrual Hygiene Management Enterprise – WomenChoice Industries Secures \$ 200,000 Funding from Gray Matters Capital’s coLABS

Prospect of its Reusable Sanitary Pads being accessed by 500,000 women by 2022; reducing menstrual costs by 75 – 90% annually, and the employment of socially disadvantaged women from local communities as vendors and distribution agents were the driving factors behind this funding round

TANGA (TANZANIA) / ATLANTA (USA) 11th MARCH, 2020: US-based impact investor – [Gray Matters Capital](#) has today announced its funding of Tanga (Tanzania) based manufacturer and distributor of low-cost, affordable menstrual hygiene management (MHM) reusable sanitary towels – [WomenChoice Industries](#) under its sector agnostic gender portfolio – [coLABS](#).

The funding of US\$ 200,000 is aimed at helping WomenChoice Industries reach out to 500,000 women and girls from low-resource settings, to use its reusable sanitary towels by December 2022. This will entail the funding amount to be used for ramping up its production capacity, recruiting and training of vendors and sales & distribution agents.

Prior to this funding, WomenChoice Industries received a grant of US\$ 1,000 from the Pollination Fund; a soft loan investment of US\$ 11,500 from the Tanzania Post Bank (TPB) and a total of US\$ 5,000 from Rock Flower Inc. of USA.

Product USP

“Young women and girls aged 9-24 in schools and colleges in Tanzania from low-income families earning less than US\$ 1.5 a day, face a myriad of menstrual hygiene management health challenges ranging from lack of information to lack of access to products and services. They, perforce, use unhygienic materials such as sisal fibres, old cloth rags, animal skins, sand and pounded tree barks to manage their menses. Some are also compelled to trade “sex for pad” with men twice their age thus, exposing them to unintended pregnancies, abortions, HIV/AIDS & STIs”, said **Lucy Achieng’ Odiwa, Co-founder and CEO, WomenChoice Industries**, outlining her company’s problem statement. “Our ‘Salama pad’ reusable sanitary towels, which come in a pack of five affordably priced at US\$ 2.2 as compared to one-time use, disposable sanitary towels, are an innovative solution to these problems”, she added.

These reusable sanitary towels are made by locally trained tailors, volunteers, and staff employed by WomenChoice Industries from locally sourced soft cotton, absorbent towelling and Polyurethane Waterproof (PUL) fabrics materials, making them soft, light and easy on the skin. Due to its high absorbency and fluid retention capacity, each pad can be used for 6-12 hours and can be cleaned by



hand washing, using locally available soap or detergent with water, sundried and re-used after 4 – 6 hours. These pads not only save menstrual cost by 75%-90% annually but can also be reused for a period of 3 years.

Distribution Model

WomenChoice Industries recruits socially disadvantaged and vulnerable young women such as teenage mothers, commercial sex workers, people living with HIV/AIDS and widows from local communities as vendors and sales agents empowering them with MHM models along with business and financial management skills. These recruits are sourced through partners and stakeholders such as NGOs, Community based Organizations, women and youth groups, the local community village and wards leadership and the local government authorities.

NGO partners such as Services Health and Development for People Living with HIV/AIDS, and Community Volunteers Services Tanzania have been consistently supporting its program through organised recruitment, access to quality MHM information, products distribution and advocacy work.

WomenChoice Industries also partners with schools, colleges and universities, healthcare facilities and transport hubs for setting up distribution kiosks.

As on date, WomenChoice has recruited, empowered and employed 700 women with 90% retention rate with specific regional retails and wholesale shops with legal business licenses and tax compliances.

Besides 'Salama Pad' reusable sanitary towels, WomenChoice Industries have other products in its line such as post-partum maternity pads, reusable child and adult diapers, travellers reusable vomiting pots and in and out patient urinal leaks packets. It has been profitable since its inception in March 2018 clocking net annual income in excess of US\$ 100,000.

Speaking about the funding, **Jennifer Soltis, Portfolio Manager, Gray Matters Capital coLABS**, said, "We came to know about how menstruation is making girl students in Tanzania and across Africa abstain from school for 48-84 days annually, impacting their school attendance and academic performances. Reusable sanitary towels like WomenChoice Industries' Salama Pad' have shown to reduce incidences of MHM related school dropouts and menstrual health problems resulting from the use of unhygienic materials. In addition, it is also creating a market opportunity for women and girls from vulnerable low-income families by recruiting them as part of its distribution model and imparting them with essential skills such as business and financial management, book and record keeping, and sales. With the coLABS funding, I'm confident that this enterprise will amplify impact both from an employment and end-user benefit standpoint."

The funding of WomenChoice Industries marks coLABS' first investment in Tanzania and its sixth portfolio company to be added from Africa following Rwanda's ARED, Ghana's Redbird Health Tech, Nigeria's Sonocare and Kenya's Taimba and Farmshine.

WomenChoice Industries has several accolades to its credit. It has been the winner of Invest2Impact East Africa competition and was awarded the 1st Place in SDGs and HER Global Competition, New York



for Women Micro-entrepreneurs helping to achieve the SDGs. It was placed second & third at the Seedstars World Africa in November and December 2018 respectively.

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

About GMC coLABS

GMC coLABS is an early-stage investment portfolio seeking to invest in innovative and scalable for-profit enterprises that have the potential to dramatically improve the lives of women and girls around the world.

Launched in 2018, this sector agnostic investment portfolio of impact investor Gray Matters Capital (GMC) has committed \$5 million over the next 3 years to help early-stage entrepreneurs with seed capital and strategic advisory support to scale their enterprises.

GMC coLABS has so far invested in a diverse portfolio of companies across sectors ranging from civic engagement, to health, to livelihoods spanning 4 continents. The investment ticket size is up to \$250,000 per enterprise.

To know more about coLABS, visit <https://gmccolabs.com/>

About WomenChoice Industries

WomenChoice Industries is a social enterprises that manufactures and distributes low cost, affordable menstrual hygiene management reusable sanitary Towels to women and Girls from low resource settings in, Tanzania, established in January 2017 and finally registered as profit making company under the Company registration Act 2013 of the United Republic of Tanzania,

The Enterprise Envisions a world where young women and girls aged 9-24 years in Africa have access to low cost, affordable menstrual hygiene management care products and are going to school and a mission of ensuring that every girl from low resource settings in Africa stop using in hygienic materials by accessing them with low cost, affordable and high quality reusable sanitary towels

For more information, visit <http://womenchoice.co.tz/>

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PHOTOGRAPHS for PUBLICATION



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Employees at WomenChoice Industries production facility in Tanga (Tanzania)