Ruby Cup

And rural locations, Kenya
Nairobi, Kenya

Veronica D'Souza

Organization type:
for profit

Budget:
$100,000 - $250,000

Website:
http://www.ruby-cup.com

- Education
- Income generation
- Poverty alleviation
- Reproductive health
- Girls' development
- Sanitation
- Women's issues

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

“Ruby Cup is improving menstrual hygiene and raising the quality of life of women and girls worldwide.”

Women and girls living in developing countries face problems when they menstruate, because they cannot afford sanitary pads. Instead they use whatever they have at hand such as bark, mud, newspaper, cloth, and pieces of mattress. The lack of menstrual hygiene products has an effect on education, gender equality and basic human dignity.

Ruby Cup is a healthy, high quality and long-lasting menstrual hygiene product made of 100% medical grade silicone that can be re-used up to 10 years and will be sold through local women vendors on the ground.

Solving the problem: We provide a long-lasting affordable and environmentally friendly solution to all women and girls, who today struggle every month with managing their menstruation.

Generating Income and Increasing Education: Through our unique distribution model we generate income for female entrepreneurs who sell Ruby Cup while educating their peers about menstrual hygiene.

Global Awareness: Through our online platform, we tell the story of the often neglected topic of menstrual hygiene in developing countries.

Sustainability: By selling Ruby Cup online to women worldwide, we do not only address social and environmental needs, but also strive to create a financially sustainable business that will allow us to expand and reach more women and girls.
Menstruation should not be a barrier for any girl and woman on this planet to pursue their life opportunities. If you vote for Ruby Cup you will be part of starting the conversation about menstruation and help girls and women in developing countries pursue their career and dreams.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

UNICEF (2010) and UNDP (2007) call menstruation an overseen issue that hinders reaching the Millennium Development Goals: education, gender equality and economic development. Women in developing countries face challenges when dealing with menstruation, as disposable menstrual hygiene products are often unavailable or too expensive. Moreover, making disposable hygiene products available to women in developing countries poses a serious environmental problem, as there is rarely an appropriate infrastructure to handle this type of waste. As a result, girls miss school and women are unable to attend work while menstruating. This amounts to 20% of days missed in school and consequently girls often drop out because they are unable to follow their courses any longer.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Ruby Cup is a menstrual cup made of medical grade silicone that is affordable, healthy, and environmentally friendly, as it can be re-used for up to 10 years. We will reach low-income markets through a low-cost pricing and women to women distribution model, which will enhance peer to peer education, generate income for local women, addressing the problem of menstrual hygiene and help de-stigmatize menstruation.

Benefits of Ruby Cup:

- ECONOMICAL: It is an affordable one-time investment that will last up to 10 years.
- HEALTHY: Medical grade silicone is a material with no side-effects, suitable for all girls and women and contains no harmful chemicals, absorbency gels, additives or perfumes.
- RE-USABLE: Investment in a Ruby Cup means a positive environmental impact, since the waste created from disposables is eliminated.
- SAFE & CONVENIENT: Ruby Cup can be worn for up to 12 hours, which for many means that the cup does not have to be emptied during a whole school or workday.

Sustainability

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Menstrual cups are a proven success with a retail price between $25 to $45 per cup, focusing on high profit margins in middle and high-end markets. Among the strongest brands are Mooncup (UK, 2000), DivaCup (Canada, 2004), LadyCup (Czech Republic, 2008). Only a few companies sell in developing countries but they also target high-end markets. Currently, Makit Ltd. is the only menstrual cup company targeting developing markets. Re-usable or bio-degradable pads are other alternatives benefiting women in developing countries. However, they also hold challenges: Re-usable pads require much water for cleaning and cause problems in water scarce areas, Bio-degradable pads still need to find a suitable scaling model to make them available.

About You

Organization:
Ruby Cup

Background Information

First Name
Veronica

Last Name
D'Souza

Twitter URL
https://twitter.com/#!/RubyCup

Facebook URL
http://www.facebook.com/pages/Ruby-Cup/173508669390896

The competition is only open to people between 18-34 years-old and resident in UK, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark or the Netherlands. Does this apply to you

Yes.

Country of residence of entrepreneur

Denmark

Tell us about your personal background. Why are you passionate about this issue? Making an idea a reality takes innovation, dedication and strong leadership. Do you have the necessary entrepreneurial skills to realize your vision?

I am co-founder together with my two partners Julie and Maxie. The three of us met at Copenhagen Business School and always dreamt of starting a social business together to prove that the future of capitalism lies in creating social and environmental positive change. When we read about the problems that girls and women face during their menstruation, we knew that this was where we could make a difference as young female entrepreneurs. We are a strong team and are already realizing our vision. The idea started less than one year ago, and since we moved to Kenya in September, we have developed our own product, tested cultural acceptability, obtained funding, and are now ready to pilot our first commercial sales through women to women sales.
About Your Organization

Organization Name
Ruby Cup

Organization Country
, NA, Nairobi

Country where this project is creating social impact
, NA, And rural locations

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen.

Innovation

The Model: Walk us through a specific example of how your solution makes a difference; include your primary activities

Kendy is 15 years old and lives in Kibera, a huge slum in Nairobi. Before she met us, she never had a conversation about menstrual hygiene. When she can afford it, she uses pads. But most often she uses anything at hand such as bark, mud, cloth, newspaper or pieces of mattress. She does not go to school when she has her menstruation because she fears leaking. Today, she is a happy user of Ruby Cup and can freely go to school. Her older sister wants to become part of our female vendor network, where we train women in sales and menstrual hygiene. They go out into the community and sell Ruby Cups while earning a commission. This way, we help start the conversation about menstruation, generate income for the women vendors, solve the problem for Kendy, and distribute our product so we can achieve financial sustainability.

Select the stage that best applies to your business

Operating for less than a year

Social Impact

What is the social impact you have had to date and how you measure it?

To date, we have done acceptability studies with women and girls in Kenya and our users are happy and recommending our product to their friends and relatives. Our potential social impact is huge, as the need is great all over the world for sustainable and hygienic menstrual hygiene protection. For every girl or woman that becomes owner of a Ruby Cup, one more girl or woman can move freely, attend school, and pursue her career. This will, by result, increase gender equality for women and benefit the economy as a whole. We will directly impact the income level of the Ruby Cup Female Vendors. In addition, scale-up of Ruby Cup users has the possibility to save the planet for a vast amount of CO2 emissions from the pads/tampon industry and the waste management required to handle the disposal.

What barriers might hinder the success of your business? How do you plan to overcome them?

Our main barrier lies in the acceptability and understanding of our product. We will overcome this through peer to peer education and marketing on the ground. With one happy user, word of mouth will spread quickly. Handwashing is a potential hygiene threat, as users must have clean hands before insertion or removal of Ruby Cup. However, an acceptability study of menstrual cups in Kenya by the African Population and Health Research Center showed that a positive spill-over effect of using a menstrual cup was that users increased their general hygiene level and understanding. Education is the key for making Ruby Cup a success.

Sustainability

How does your model address financial, social, and environmental sustainability?

Economic: We will improve the livelihoods of our female vendors and customers as we increase income by offering a commission for each Ruby Cup sold and by saving money for Ruby Cup users that they otherwise would spend on pads/tampons.
Social: We will increase the life quality for our female vendors and customers, since a purchase of Ruby Cup concurs with increased health, freedom to study/work and the ability to pursue opportunities. Also, education about menstrual hygiene leads to less stigmatization, increased self-esteem and empowerment of girls and women. Environmental: On average, girls and women use 11,000 pads/tampons in a lifetime. Ruby Cup will have a positive environmental impact from the CO2 emissions and waste saved from girls and women that switch to a Ruby Cup.

Awareness & Learning

How do you see social entrepreneurship contributing to the improvement of developing countries?

I believe SE is a catalyst for disruptive innovation and change. Often, SE can take more risk than other entities and are driven by passion and illogical drive. Too many people in the developmental and corporate sector have become cynical about solving the worlds major issues. The last ten years show a new generation induces change through seeking financial sustainability while doing good for society. This is often being done in partnership with a variety of sectors and co-creation with the communities involved. I believe SE to be the key to social innovation both for for-profit businesses and for the development sector that will bring sustainability and positive change to society at large.

What aspects of your stay in Uganda as part of the competition do you think you will find most challenging and rewarding?

Meeting the other inspiring social entrepreneurs and learning from judges and participants

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