



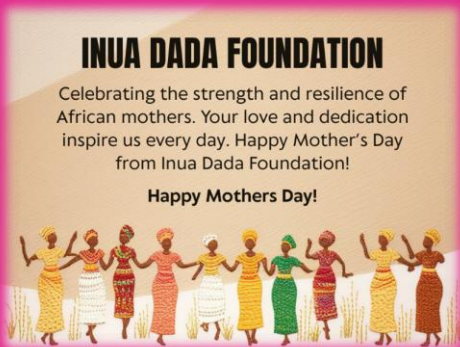
**DADA DIARIES**  
NEWSLETTER  
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**Volume No. 5**



**WELCOME!**

Happy Mother's Day and Menstrual Hygiene Day! This May, we honour the strength of mothers and the dignity of every girl and woman. At Inua Dada, we remain committed to menstrual equity, health, and empowerment. Thank you for being part of this journey.

*Janet Mbugua*  
FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR



Read more about IDF's Romanus Owuor's  
Journey from a  
a simple Act to a Menstrual Health  
Advocacy



Visit YouTube:  
[@OfficialJanetMbugua](#)  
"Discover how our Founder keeps vital conversations on current affairs alive and impactful."

# A Message from Our Founder: Restoring Dignity Behind Bars

Dear Friends,

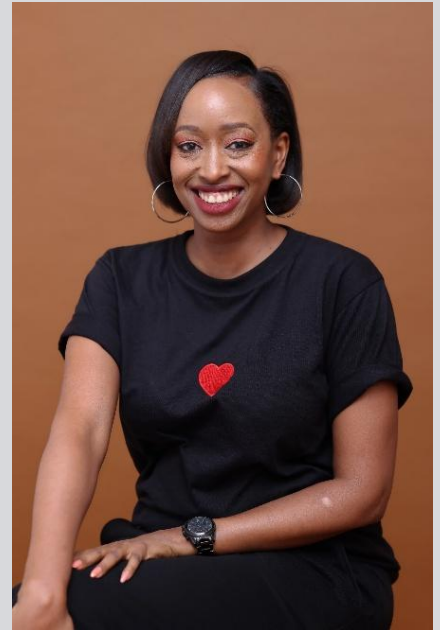
As a woman and social advocate, I have met countless girls and women whose resilience humbles me—but few stories stay with me like those shared by incarcerated girls and women in Kenya. Behind bars, managing menstruation becomes a monthly struggle for dignity. Limited access to sanitary products, privacy, and compassionate care only deepens their isolation. Inua Dada Foundation, believes that even in confinement, **no woman should bleed in shame or silence.**

Menstrual health is a basic human right—one that should never be compromised by circumstance. This month, I invite you to walk with us as we advocate, with our partners, for menstrual justice in correctional facilities across Kenya. Together, we can shift policy, inspire empathy, and ensure that every woman—everywhere—bleeds with dignity. Happy Mother's Day as we celebrate Menstrual Hygiene Month this month!

With hope and resolve,

*Janet Mbugua*

Founder/Executive Director



## Access | Advocacy | Agency: The Inua Dada Way

At the **Inua Dada Foundation**, we are committed to creating a world where girls and young women live with dignity, confidence, and the freedom to dream without barriers. Our work across **Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH)**, **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**, and **Youth Advocacy Network** is rooted in a powerful and transformative three-pronged approach: **Access, Advocacy, and Agency.**

**Access:** A Right, not a Privilege

**Advocacy:** Changing Systems, Shaping Minds

**Agency:** Power From Within

**A Future Where Every Girl Thrives:** By combining access, advocacy, and agency, we are building a holistic ecosystem of support around every girl we serve. It is not just about solving problems—it is about transforming lives. We envision a future where no girl is held back by her period, silenced by stigma, or excluded from opportunities. A future where girls are not just seen but celebrated, not just supported but empowered.

**This is the Inua Dada promise. This is how we rise—together.**



## Inua Dada Foundation Hosts Tanya Mahajan (Menstrual Health Action for Impact, The Pad Project)

### Strengthening Menstrual Health Through Innovation and Partnerships



The Pad Project is a global nonprofit that expands access to menstrual care products, combats period stigma, and champions menstrual equity for all. In 2013, eight students and a teacher founded The Pad Project with the belief that “a period should end a sentence, not an education.” What began as a documentary film became a global movement for menstrual equity. After winning an Oscar in 2019 for *Period. End of Sentence.*, the organization has expanded its impact—installing pad machines in multiple countries, launching washable pad programs across six nations, and creating U.S.-based initiatives like Pads for All and Pads for Schools. Partnering with NGOs and schools, The Pad Project continues to combat period poverty and unite global activists through its Ambassador Programme and to date

they have placed 9 pad machines in two countries including Inua Dada Foundation in Kenya.

On May 10, 2025, Inua Dada Foundation’s Program Manager, Romanus Owuor, met with Tanya Mahajan, Co-Founder of Menstrual Health Action for Impact (MHAI), to review the Foundation’s menstrual health initiatives, particularly the Kakamega project supported by USAID-WKSP and The Pad Project.

The discussion highlighted the impact of Inua Dada’s disposable sanitary pads production, which has improved access to menstrual products for women and girls in underserved communities. The initiative also empowers local women as entrepreneurs by integrating them into the supply chain—selling pads at subsidized rates while generating income.

Tanya commended the progress but flagged sustainability concerns around in-house production costs. She recommended forming partnerships with established pad manufacturers to reduce costs and scale impact.

Key takeaways included the need to refine the business model, strengthen revenue-generation strategies, and capture compelling impact stories to attract future funding. A revised funding proposal to The Pad Project was also recommended.

This meeting reaffirmed Inua Dada’s commitment to menstrual health equity and economic empowerment through strategic collaboration and innovation.



## Did You Know: Incarcerated Girls/Women in Kenya Are Facing Unique Health and Dignity Challenges"



As of 2023, Kenya's prison population comprises approximately 8,828 women and 71,243 men, totaling 80,071 incarcerated individuals. This indicates that women account for about 11% of the total prison population in the country.

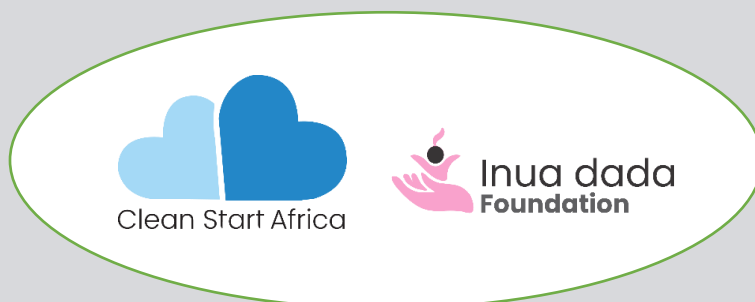
Majority of these women are held in remand (pre-trial detention) or convicted status. In 2023, there were 10,963 female remandees, and 8,828 female convicts, highlighting a

significant number of women awaiting trial or serving sentences. Despite comprising a smaller proportion of the overall prison population, incarcerated women face unique challenges, particularly concerning menstrual health and hygiene (MHH). Limited access to sanitary products, inadequate facilities, and inconsistent healthcare services exacerbate their vulnerabilities. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring the dignity and well-being of incarcerated women in Kenya.

Advocacy for **policy reforms** and **better healthcare access** is crucial in ensuring that incarcerated women receive the **dignity and care** they deserve. By addressing menstrual health and improving conditions in prisons, we can protect the well-being of these women and ensure their human rights are upheld.

### Dignity Behind Bars - Championing Menstrual Health for Incarcerated Women in Kenya

Restoring dignity together



In Kenya's prisons, menstruation remains a silent crisis affecting hundreds of incarcerated women and girls. Though the Constitution upholds every citizen's right to health and dignity, these rights often vanish behind bars—especially when it comes to menstrual hygiene.

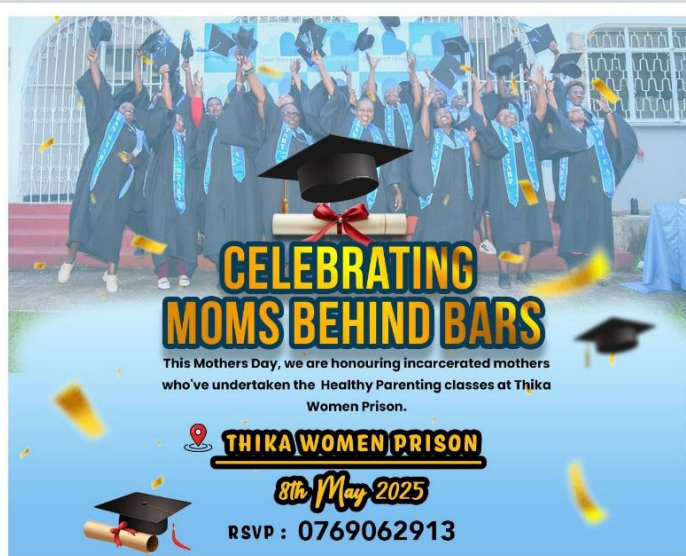
Access to sanitary products in prisons is limited and inconsistent. Many incarcerated women depend on irregular donations or family support to receive basic supplies. When pads are unavailable, they are forced to use tissues, rags, or other unsafe alternatives, increasing the risk of infections, discomfort, and shame. These challenges are made worse by the lack of clean water, private spaces, and proper sanitation—conditions that strip women of dignity and compromise their well-being. This is not just a hygiene issue - it is a pressing human rights concern. While progress has been made—like the 2017

policy to provide free sanitary towels to schoolgirls—incarcerated women continue to be excluded from these national efforts.

At Inua Dada Foundation, in partnership with Clean Start Africa, we believe that dignity should not be a privilege—even behind bars. Menstrual health is a basic need, not a luxury. We advocate for inclusive policies and sustained action to ensure every woman in prison has consistent access to safe, hygienic, and dignified menstrual care. Dignity must never be imprisoned.

## IDF Pad Distribution with Clean Start Africa (Thika Women Prison)

### Empowering Women Behind Bars: A Step Toward Rebuilding Lives



On May 8, 2025, Thika Women Prison witnessed a powerful moment of transformation as 20 incarcerated women graduated from a one-year Positive Parenting program. Led by Clean Start Africa, this life-changing initiative addresses the systemic and socio-economic injustices that lead to incarceration, while equipping women with the tools to rebuild family bonds and successfully reintegrate into society post-release.

The program focused on emotional, psychological, and social aspects of parenting, helping women heal and prepare for life beyond prison walls. By nurturing these skills, the initiative breaks cycles of trauma, disconnection, and recidivism.

Key stakeholders joined the celebration, including Assistant General Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. Mutiso, who emphasized the power of collaboration. Superintendent Madam Avisi, Officer in Charge at Thika, thanked Clean Start and partners—Inua Dada Foundation, Africa Collaboratives, and God Behind Bars—for their holistic support.

Inua Dada Foundation, represented by Romanus Owuor and Domi Osodo, donated 150 sanitary pad packets, affirming its mission to promote menstrual dignity for all women—even behind bars. Although media documentation was restricted, the impact was profound.

Stakeholders recommended scaling up menstrual health education, post-release support, and stigma-reduction campaigns. This graduation stands as a beacon of hope, showing that with compassion and empowerment, incarcerated women can reclaim their dignity and rebuild their lives. You can be part of this journey.

Join us in calling on policymakers to fully implement menstrual hygiene support in prisons. Support organizations working to donate sanitary products. Talk about period equity—not just in schools or slums, but in prisons too. Every voice matters.

***Because a woman doesn't lose her dignity when she loses her freedom—and no girl should ever bleed in silence.***



## Breaking the Cycle: My Journey from a Simple Act to Menstrual Health Advocacy (By Romanus Owuor (Programme Manager, IDF))



My first experience with menstruation didn't come from my own body, but rather from someone I cherished deeply, my cousin Sharon. Sharon (may she rest in peace) was so much more than just a cousin; she was my closest friend, my sister, my rock. We were practically inseparable, sharing laughter, stories, and countless life lessons. One day, when we were still quite young, she pulled me aside and asked me to do something that would change my life forever:

"Can you please go buy me pads?"

At that moment, I had no idea what pads even were. But I could see the urgency in her eyes and the trust she had in me, and I simply couldn't say no. I dashed to a nearby shop, feeling a mix of uncertainty and confusion, and asked the shopkeeper for pads. After a brief, awkward pause, he handed me a blue packet, and I hurried back to Sharon. She smiled, visibly relieved. That was it. A small moment, yet it ignited something within me.

Back then, I didn't grasp the silence that surrounded menstruation. I had no idea how many girls missed school because they couldn't get their hands on pads, how shame could prevent someone from even asking for help, or how boys like I once was often stood on the sidelines of a reality that impacted their sisters, classmates, and friends every month. Now, years later, I am working in a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) program, dedicating my life to tackling menstrual inequity. As we observe Menstrual Health and Hygiene Day 2025 under the powerful theme "Breaking the Cycle: How Period Poverty Impacts Learning," I can't help but reflect on that first moment with Sharon. It marked the beginning of my understanding of how menstruation, when shrouded in stigma and silence, can become a barrier to education, dignity, and opportunity.

Every month, far too many girls are kept from going to school simply because they don't have access to safe, affordable menstrual products or clean facilities. This ongoing cycle of poverty, shame, and lost opportunities will keep spinning unless we take action to change it. That is why my mission has evolved beyond just distributing products. It's about sparking conversations, especially with boys and men. Real change won't happen if only girls are left to shoulder the responsibility of understanding menstruation. We need to raise boys who won't snicker when a classmate has an accident, who can confidently walk into a store and buy pads, just like I once did, but this time, fully informed and without shame. We need fathers, brothers, teachers, and leaders to join the menstrual health movement. Not as bystanders, but as true allies.

Sharon's memory inspires me every day, reminding me that compassion can ignite courage, and courage can fuel movements. In her honour and for the millions of girls still missing school because of their periods, I'm committed to speaking out, collaborating with communities, and helping to create a future where no girl's education is interrupted by something as natural and beautiful as menstruation.

Let's break the cycle. Let's put an end to period poverty. Let's make this a collective effort.

***"It's a disservice to girls to think that just a product—whether putting it in their hands or removing a tax—would solve all the barriers in their life. But I also want to caution us not to ignore it. It should be part of the package, but it's not a silver bullet."— Karen Austrian, Population Council***

# Empowering Youth, Transforming Futures: The Impact of the IDF Youth Advocacy Network

Launched in July 2024, the pilot project of Inua Dada Foundation's Generation Parliament sought to drive transformative change in Kenya by empowering young people to lead on menstrual health and hygiene (MHH), sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and youth leadership.

In a country where adolescent SRHR challenges are urgent—including the alarming statistic that 15% of unsafe abortions occur among 15–19-year-olds—this initiative offered timely and impactful solutions. The pilot project engaged 41 students (34 girls and 7 boys) in intensive sessions on SRHR, gender-based violence, advocacy storytelling, and movement building. Participants reviewed and contributed to IDF's advocacy toolkit, ensuring it remains relevant and youth responsive.

Over the six months, these youth advocates gained vital knowledge and skills, enabling them to champion social justice issues in their communities. Following the conclusion of the pilot project in December 2024, the IDF Youth Advocacy Network was born and has quickly become a platform for meaningful youth engagement and leadership. By equipping young people with the tools to lead change, IDF is fostering a generation of informed, confident advocates ready to shape policies and create a more just and equitable Kenya.

**Meet some of our champions below who are steering the Network and drive change through their own individual initiatives:**

## 1. FROM SHAME TO STRENGTH: BREAKING THE SILENCE ON INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



Shame. Shame on you. Shame on us. How is it so that we have attached shame to the things that should not be shameful? '*Chunga boma yako*,' is what women in abusive marriages would- and still- are told. 'You are shaming the family!' is what they say when you leave. Shame thrives in silence and may be the one thing that continuously keeps violence alive in our communities and everyday too many people; our sisters, our friends, even ourselves carry the secret of abuse by an intimate partner with the belief that it is their fault, no one would understand or even a 'what will people say?' keeping them caged in those situations. The sad truth is, over 40% of women in Kenya have faced Intimate Partner Violence [\[1\]](#).

This is not a personal failure but a national crisis that is rooted in stigma and silence.

I believe it is time we break the shame. When one speaks out it is not a sign of weakness and only when we can share our stories, listen without judgment, can we then shatter the barriers that keep survivors afraid and isolated? We should strive to create space for justice, healing, and hope.

You are not alone, and you are not to blame. Your voice matters. Let us all stand together, call out violence and offer support to survivors. The cycle of violence ends when we refuse to be silent.

Break the shame. Speak. Support. Stand up!

**(By Chepkemboi Mitchell)**



## 2. MORE THAN JUST PADS: ENHANCING COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION IN KENYAN HIGH SCHOOLS



Hey there! My name is Veronica, I'm passionate about empowering Kenyan Teenagers with the necessary knowledge about SRHR matters. Teenagers undergoing adolescence are considered a key population and thus require additional support and attention.

In a country where the education curriculum doesn't encompass comprehensive sexual education training, it is important that teenagers are empowered to fend for themselves in what is, unfortunately, such a harsh world.

So here are 5 things I wish I knew when I was 14 years old, that I am telling the teenagers I engage with at Mbagathi Girls' High school:

- a) Body autonomy, my body is my own, I get to fully decide what happens to it.
- b) Periods aren't dirty – periods happen when your uterus sheds its lining and blood, it is regulated by hormones.
- c) There are different forms of gender-based violence: verbal, physical, financial, sexual, psychological, and emotional. Where to get help from - GBV hotlines [1195] and centers - GVRC
- d) Everything contraceptives, condoms, contraceptive pills to intrauterine devices – condoms not only prevent pregnancies but also decrease the risk of STI transmission.
- e) Seeking reproductive health services in accredited health facilities, most of which have youth-friendly centres.

(By Esther Veronica)

## 3. FINDING MY VOICE, EMPOWERING OTHERS: WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS TO ME



One of the core reasons I hold advocacy close to my heart is the power it gives me—and others—to speak up, take agency, and claim autonomy over issues that directly affect us. Growing up as a young girl in the slums, I longed for the chance to be heard, to own my story, and to have a say in matters that shaped my reality. That desire has fueled my passion for advocacy over the years.

There is no greater fulfillment than seeing a young girl find her voice, gain knowledge about menstrual health, and feel safe enough to speak about her mental well-being. I firmly believe that empowering children at the grassroots is critical—many of the struggles that adults face today are rooted in childhood experiences.

Advocacy not only equips young people with tools to navigate life, but also instills hope, purpose, and a sense of belonging. I've lived in environments where my voice was silenced, where vulnerability was mistaken for weakness. But I've also found spaces that embraced my truth and uplifted my voice.

Today, I choose to speak—loudly and proudly—because for me, empowerment lies in being heard, having agency, and standing in my truth.

(By Domi Fenny)



# Dada Culture 2.0



"Dada Culture" refers to a movement and initiative, particularly associated with Janet Mbugua and Inua Dada Foundation, focused on women's empowerment, shifting narratives, and promoting positive cultural change. It is a term often used to describe discussions and actions aimed at challenging outdated social norms and creating spaces where women's voices are heard and valued.

## 1. Meaning and Origins:

- "Dada" in the Kenyan context can mean "sister" or "lady".
- Dada Culture of Inua Dada Foundation are examples of organizations using "Dada" to signify women's power and agency.
- The term "Dada Culture" is used to denote conversations and initiatives that address social issues affecting women and girls, particularly in the realm of education, economic empowerment, and reproductive health.

## 2. Key Themes and Focus Areas:

- **Shifting Narratives:** Dada Culture aims to challenge and redefine how women are perceived and represented in Kenyan society.
- **Empowerment:** The movement focuses on empowering women through education, economic opportunities, and access to information and resources.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Dada Culture embraces diversity and strives to create inclusive spaces where all voices are heard and valued.
- **Social Justice:** Inua Dada Foundation uses their approach to foster social justice by creating safe spaces for open dialogue, particularly on issues like menstrual health, sexual and reproductive health rights, and gender-based violence.

## 3. Examples and Initiatives:

- The **What Women Want Summit** serves as a platform for discussing women's needs and aspirations, including the launch of Dada Culture conversations.
- Inua Dada Foundation organizes discussions on a Leso, a traditional African fabric, to foster open dialogue on social justice issues.
- Janet Mbugua and the Inua Dada Foundation are involved in research to identify barriers to learning and working to implement sustainable solutions for girls and women.

In essence, Dada Culture in Kenya represents a movement that seeks to empower women, challenge outdated societal norms and create a more equitable and just society for all.

(Follow us on Instagram: @\_dadaculture or on <https://www.youtube.com/@OfficialJanetMbugua>)

## Join Us – Empower Women & Girls!

### CALL TO ACTION:

- **Youth Advocacy Network** - Join us in amplifying the voices of women and girls across Kenya! Through our programmes in Menstrual Health and Hygiene, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, and Youth Advocacy Network, we create lasting change in communities. Your support, whether through donations, partnerships, or service, helps us reach more beneficiaries and drive impactful changes. "Together, we can rewrite the story. Follow Inua Dada's Youth Advocacy Network on our social media platforms and help us create a future where every woman lives free from fear."
- **Support a Girl, Restore Her Dignity** - You can join us by donating sanitary pads in cash or kind. Additionally, you can support a girl with a **Dignity Kit at Kshs 3,000.00** per kit, providing essential menstrual supplies for at least three months. Every contribution counts in ensuring that no girl is left behind. To donate or learn more, reach out to us today at [info@inuadadafoundation.org](mailto:info@inuadadafoundation.org)
- Follow us on our social media pages to stay updated, engage in meaningful conversations, and be part of a movement that empowers women and girls. Together, we can create a more just and equitable world.

Email: [info@inuadadafoundation.org](mailto:info@inuadadafoundation.org) or visit our website: [www.inuadadafoundation.org](http://www.inuadadafoundation.org)

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