

International Women's Day: We're talking periods!

Myth 1: Once a girl gets her period she should drop out of school and get married.

Myth 2: Sanitary pads can cause infertility.

Myth 3: When a girl gets her period it means she has started having sex. *"If I had told my aunty at that time, she would say I have started sleeping around with men."* – program participant.

Myth 4: When girls get their periods they are now mature and ready to have sex or to become lovers.

MARCH 2019 // Australian not-for-profit, [One Girl](#) has today released a report which reveals the shocking myths about menstruation that are holding girls back. The report assesses the impact of One Girl's LaunchPad program, which educates women and girls about safe periods and their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

You couldn't imagine telling your daughter at age 12 she can no longer attend school because she got her period. That she is now ready for sex, and her primary reason for being is to reproduce?!

But new research from One Girl suggests these myths are gradually being overcome by the One Girl [LaunchPad program](#), which is committed to paving the way for gender equality in Sierra Leone.

Access to safe and dignified periods is essential to keeping girls in school (**only 16% of girls in Sierra Leone complete high school vs 92% here in Australia – ABS**) and achieving gender equality. Our program is working with both women *and men* to increase knowledge of menstruation and reproductive health, and it's working:

- 85% of LaunchPad group members (who sell pads subsidised by One Girl) had at some point sold pads to *men*, suggesting a broader shift in community attitudes around who is aware of, responsible for and involved in menstrual hygiene management.
- *"Before when we were using the pieces [pieces of old cloth and rags eg] it gives us wounds and rashes and infection, but now when we are using the pads we are okay and free."* – Program participant.

One Girl CEO, Sarah Ireland says, "The research shows that our program is giving women access to affordable sanitary products, educating whole communities and allowing women to take their power back by economically empowering them."

"This gives them new confidence and reduces feelings of shame in their relationships and in their communities around menstruation."

With this training, and with access to products, there is no reason why a girl would need to drop out of school to cope with their period. Educating girls is one of the most powerful forces for change in the world ([Bill and Melinda Gates Annual Letter 2019](#)) and is also the most effective way to combat climate change globally ([Drawdown project 2018](#)).

One Girl is [raising funds](#) in the lead up to International Women's Day to support this program and others that tackle the barriers girls face to education.

For more info or to set up an interview time, please contact One Girl's Communications Director. Contact Meabh Friel mf@onegirl.org.au or 0424 714 608