

Clicks Helping Hand Trust and Novartis donate sanitary towels to school children for World Menstrual Hygiene Day ^[1]

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Johannesburg, May 28, 2019 : 28 May is globally recognized as Menstrual Health Day (MHD). Under this year's theme, The Clicks Helping Hand Trust and Novartis have partnered to donate re-usable sanitary towels to 1000 school going children in Midrand. The two schools, Diepsloot Combined School and Diepsloot Primary in Midrand, will greatly benefit from the initiative.

The Clicks Helping Hand Trust has committed to reach 5 000 girls since its inception in 2016.

MHD is a global advocacy platform that brings together the voices and actions of non-profits, government agencies, individuals, the private sector and the media to promote good menstrual hygiene management for all women and girls. More specifically, MH Day aims to address the following: breaks the silence, raises awareness and changes negative social norms around menstrual health management and engages decision-makers to increase the political priority and catalyse action for menstrual health management, at global, national and local levels.

The South African Human Rights Commission reports that the lack of access to sanitary towels not only has adverse effects on school attendance but it also has ripple effects on the economic development of communities and countries as a whole. In May 2018, the South African government took steps towards easing pressure on women by scrapping value added tax on sanitary towels. It is reported that, on average, females spend at least R600 a year on sanitary towels.

Re-usable sanitary towels have provided an alternative to the high cost of disposable sanitary towels, minimizing the cost of purchase as they can be washed with clean water and re-used for 3 to 5 years.

Renee Thompson, Manager of the Clicks Helping Hands Trust, says: "While most of the funds we raise are spent in Clicks clinics, we could not ignore the dire need in communities for sanitary products for girls who would otherwise stay out of school during their menstrual cycles. We have encouraged a large number of companies to come on board, collecting sanitary products for distribution in the most needy schools in the country."

The Clicks Helping Hand Trust is a registered non-profit organisation that aims to provide health education, awareness and support. It provides free wellness services through the retailer's clinic network around the country to mothers and babies.

Novartis' involvement in the initiative is spurred by its corporate responsibility commitment which aims to make an important contribution to society through its business.. Sibonile Dube, Head of Communications & Public Affairs for Novartis' Africa Cluster said: 'As a player in the health sector, we are proud to be partners in the distribution of re-usable sanitary towels. Novartis collaborates with others to help address some of the world's greatest health challenges. We aim to have a transformational and sustainable impact on finding solutions for some of the social challenges in the communities we operate in.. By partnering with the Clicks Helping Hands Trust, we hope to see the number of girls in our communities missing school due to their menstrual cycle being reduced and eradicated in the near future.'

Media that is interested in attending the event can contact Sibonile Dube : Head of Communications and Public Affairs on

Globally, MH Day was initiated by the German non-profit, "WASH United" in 2013. WASH United is the overall global coordinator of MH Day and acts as its international secretariat.

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References

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