

Menstrual Hygiene Management in Rural Kenya

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is an important public health issue for adolescent girls worldwide. Menstruation is associated with stigma and marginalization for millions of girls, especially among girls living in low-income countries, such as Sub Saharan Africa. The inability to adequately address the MHM needs of adolescent girls in Kenya results in 850,000 girls missing 6 weeks of school every year. Interventions that address the MHM needs of adolescent girls have the potential to empower girls to achieve their full potential. In addition, they create important opportunities to provide other health promotion information related to sexual and reproductive health.

Challenges to adequate menstrual hygiene management include:

- ♦ Secrecy and taboo regarding menstruation and issues of sexuality
- ♦ Lack of guidance and information about adolescent growth and development
- ♦ Inadequate access to sanitary pads and underwear
- ♦ Lack of clean water and private sanitation facilities, especially at school

Although the Kenyan government and other nongovernmental organizations have increased efforts to address the menstrual hygiene needs of girls in Kenya, these efforts rarely reach the most remote, rural areas of the country.

In partnership with the Faraja Family Resource Center located in Chogoria, Kenya, faculty and nursing students at North Dakota State University have implemented community-based programming and outreach to girls in remote areas of Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya to provide education regarding puberty, menstruation, hygiene and sexual health. In addition, nursing students have worked with student-led organizations and community supporters to collect girls' panties and make washable, reusable sanitary pads.

In 2013, NDSU faculty and student nurses visited schools in Kaare and Makengi and provided education to over 250 girls between the ages of 11 and 20. Over 1,000 pairs of panties and nearly 3,000 sanitary pads were distributed. The simple act of providing a basic health necessity made a big impact for girls in this area. Prior to the visit, girls were using socks, mattress fibers, raw cotton, or leaves as barriers during their monthly menstruation. Many of them stayed home and did not attend school or participate in daily activities during menstruation for fear of embarrassment. Most girls had not received any education regarding puberty or sexuality. This lack of information makes girls especially vulnerable to coercive and unwanted sexual encounters often resulting in devastating consequences.

Armed with information and a basic sanitation need met, these young girls were empowered to participate fully in their education and communities. They now report feeling knowledgeable and prepared to make informed choices. And they can attend school all month long!

— Molly Secor-Turner, PhD, RN

Give a girl her wings...



Help girls of Kenya so every day can be a school day —

Faraja Family Resource Project: Panties and Pads

“Faraja” is Swahili for Comfort

Use Your Fabric Bits and Pieces for this Faraja Family Resource Panties and Pads Project, and You'll Give a Girl Her Wings....

1. RECOMMENDED MATERIALS for Pad Holder:

Please Prewash All New (or Gently Used) Materials!

Top and Bottom Layers — flannel or soft cottons

Vinyl Liner — light, flexible fabric such as PUL or lightweight oilcloth

Holding Strips — two 1/2" x 3" strips of lightweight fleece or folded flannel

Closure — Velcro dots or squares (alt: snaps)

for Pad Inserts:

Pad Inserts — six rectangles of 8" x 18" flannel, folded to give finished size 3" x 8" each (no sewing needed on inserts)

2. CUT: Pattern is finished size. Cut identical top and bottom layers of flannel (and fluidproof liner layer).

Cut two holding strips of 1/2" x 3" each.

Cut six 8" x 18" rectangles to fold for pad inserts.

Be sure to prewash all fabrics to prevent shrinkage.

3. ASSEMBLE the Pad Holder:

1. Stack top, liner, and bottom layers together and serge around entire edge of pad holder. (Alt: zigzag stitch and topstitch.)

Be sure that vinyl liner is facing up for comfortable wear and reliable fluid-proofing.

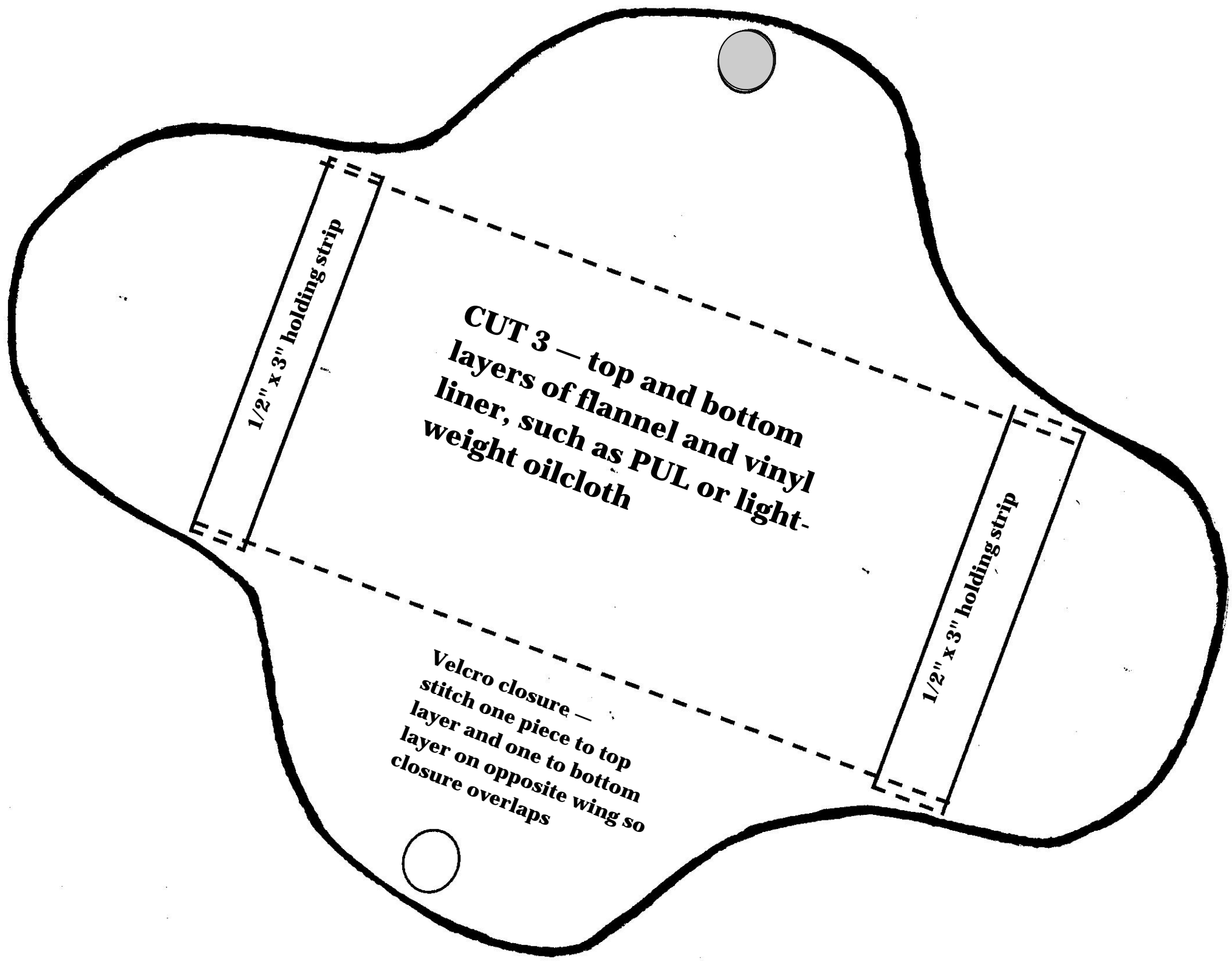
2. Position holding strips on top layer and stitch in place. Topstitch again across ends of front holding strip and in straight line to topstitch across back holding strip ends.

3. Position Velcro on top side of one wing and bottom side of other wing to form closure. Stitch in place.

The Finished Pad Kit is one pad holder with six pad inserts in a quart-sized plastic zip-top bag.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT: Dr. Molly Secor-Turner**
molly.secor-turner@ndsu.edu

*“Asante Sana—Thank You—for Helping
Give a Girl Her Wings!”*



**CUT 3 — top and bottom
layers of flannel and vinyl
liner, such as PUL or light-
weight oilcloth**

**Velcro closure —
stitch one piece to top
layer and one to bottom
layer on opposite wing so
closure overlaps**

1/2" x 3" holding strip

1/2" x 3" holding strip