BeGirl are reusable sanitary pads and underwear, with a waterproof pouch that can be filled with materials such as cloth or toilet paper.

Menstruation is enough of an inconvenience for women in the developed world, where there is easy access to sanitary products. But in sub-Saharan Africa, pads and tampons are often unaffordable or unavailable, which leads to one in ten girls missing school during their period, and contributes to the widening gender gap in education. Now, BeGirl are reusable sanitary pads and underwear, with a waterproof pouch that can be filled with readily available materials such as cloth or toilet paper.
BeGirl was created by Diana Sierra, an American who noticed the problem while studying in Uganda. The two menstruation products are highly durable, flexible and designed to be used multiple times. To begin, the wearer simply fills the waterproof pouch with materials at their convenience — this can be something disposable, such as toilet tissue or wool, or something reusable such as cloth or cotton. Then, when the material is saturated, they simply remove the filling and refill the pouch. The products do require washing, but their quick-wicking fabric means they need less water than reusable menstrual cups and they can dry quickly indoors.

Producing underwear rather than just a pad tailors to the unique needs of young African girls. Since there is a level of taboo around sanitary pads, the girls will feel much more comfortable talking about panties. While they are the primary audience, the products will also be available in the US — the pants cost USD 12 while the pad costs USD 6 — with sales in the West helping to fund a large pilot test in Ethiopia next year. Anyone can also sponsor a girl for USD 12, which BeGirl will match, providing menstrual management supplies for her for three years. Could other hygiene products be adapted to better suit the needs and environment of their users?

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