

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



THE COVA PROJECT LIMITED



**ACCESS.
EDUCATION.
DIGNITY.**

WHO IS THE COVA PROJECT?

The Cova Project provides menstrual cups and menstrual health education to menstruators in developing communities around the world, aiming to bridge the school attendance gap, caused by barriers due to menstruation. We create and distribute educational materials, with accurate visual representation of the girls, to build confidence as they strengthen their knowledge around personal health and development.

PURPOSE

The principal purpose of The Cova Project is:

To provide benevolent relief to girls and women of reproductive age across the world who are experiencing poverty, suffering, distress and disadvantage due to lack of financial resources and access to basic necessities.

Solely in furtherance of this purpose, The Cova Project may:

- a)** Purchase and supply feminine hygiene products, including menstrual cups, to local community partners for distribution to girls and women who cannot afford these products
- b)** Work with local community partners to provide menstrual health education materials tailored to cultural norms and language
- c)** Work with donors and supporters to raise funds to conduct the above activities, and promote awareness of the suffering experienced by girls and women in impoverished communities caused by menstrual health related issues, and
- d)** Do any other activities which will contribute to the achievement of the principal purpose.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- The Cova Project brought its grand total of distributed cups to 19,200
- Telstra Best of Business Award State Finalist
- We began early development of an Australian based project
- We started development on an open source resource hub for menstrual health management around the world

19,200
MENSTRUAL CUPS DISTRIBUTED



CHAIR & CEO'S REPORT

The FY 21/22 was a transition year. It was far enough away from the acute stage of the pandemic, that you could take your mask off and breathe but still close enough to feel the rocking of the economic instability that follows two years of global lockdowns.

Our team and partners have been fearless the last two years. The issues of period poverty, school dropout, child marriage and teen pregnancy have grown exponentially. With schools in East Africa closed for countless months and movements restricted, Cova's partners moved on foot, door to door, ensuring our beneficiaries were well supported and cups were still making it in the hands of those who needed them.

Back in Australia, we continued our work with virtual campaigns and began exploring innovative strategic fundraising in web3. We also brought together a small team of passionate young women with expertise in women's health, policy making and indigenous communities and started to plan for a project on home soil. This was, of course, significantly delayed by another round of lockdowns in the Northern Territory but it triggered reflection around our current model.

The Cova Project supports grassroots efforts within developing communities. We complete our work to an extremely high standard and hold ourselves accountable for every area of improvement. We are simply not scalable with the standards we have in the communities we work in. Every couple of weeks we receive an email from a fellow NGO asking for support,

pleading for a supply of cups for the girls in their community. To date, our answer has been 'we are not able to accept new partners at this time' but each time I type it, a part of me knows that that closes the door on menstrual health support for that organisation.

So we decided to start Cova Affiliate. Cova Affiliate will be a free Resource Hub and support mechanism for organisations wanting to start menstrual cup projects in their region. The learning curve for us, back in 2018 was so steep, no one was distributing cups as a solution. If we can streamline that learning and pare it with open sourced educational booklets, surveys, all of our materials, we can create a step by step guide for implementing a project. This has become a real area of interest for us and one that we're spending a lot of time and energy on. Our hope is that we can support other organisations to do this work effectively and help more of the 500 million girls and women experiencing period poverty.





CHAIR & CEO'S REPORT CONT.

I am extremely proud of how we have managed during the pandemic. We have two very skilled menstrual health consultants who have supervised and supported our partners on the ground in West Africa and East Africa.

We strengthened our partnership with Irise East Africa, moving towards advocacy with the Cova Conference, a virtual menstrual health management (MHM) conference that brought Cova's learnings to over one hundred women's health advocates worldwide. Irise East Africa did an outstanding job engaging the Ugandan government and eventually bringing them on as a partner for the conference. This advocacy work is becoming increasingly important as we gain further proof of concept and move towards a need for institutional support to see MHM efforts scale up in East Africa.

One of the most moving moments in the conference was hearing from the beneficiaries directly as they credited Irise East Africa and The Cova Project with changing their lives.

I also have to credit my incredible board of directors for being so willing to explore new opportunities in FY21/22. I am known for bold strategies and ambitious ideas that feel big for an organisation of our size but their willingness to support my vision allows me to tackle solutions and achieve our goals.



"THE BEST INNOVATION IS BORN OUT OF THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE"

It has been another challenging year but I'm a believer that the best innovation is born out of the toughest challenges. We continue to operate as a lean and efficient team that focuses on impact. Our goal was always 20,000 cups distributed by 2023, and finishing FY21/22 with 19,200 cups distributed puts us well ahead of schedule. We look forward to an equally exciting and impactful FY22/23 and to investing in our strong and passionate partners to continue to provide **access, education and dignity!**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



GEENA DUNNE
CHAIR AND CEO



LOUISA BEALE
DIRECTOR



DR SAMANTHA MALCOLM
DIRECTOR



NELL ANDERSON
COMPANY SECRETARY

WHERE IS THE COVA PROJECT ACTIVE?



 Liberia West Point 3,800 cups	 Ghana 1,200 cups	 Uganda Nakivale Jinja 7,000 cups	 Malawi 4,000 cups	 South Africa Mobile clinics 2,500 cups	 Australia (coming soon) 700 cups
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FUTURE STRATEGY - COVA AFFILIATE

FY22/23 will be an exciting and adventurous year for The Cova Project. Our plans to move towards a more sustainable 'distribution and consulting' model will see thousands more girls gain access to menstrual cups, while our existing projects continue to do their incredible work.

The Cova Affiliate Program is essentially The Cova Project franchising our resources, learnings and project model, and making it available to organisations who believe menstrual cups are a viable solution for girls in their communities. Although the Affiliate Program has always been part of The Cova Project's ten year plan, the push for the Program to move up as a priority has come from communities in need. More on page 12...



OUR PARTNERS



UGANDAN LOCAL PARTNER - IRISE INSTITUTE EAST AFRICA

Irise Institute East Africa (IIEA) is our most significant local partner. IIEA has successfully distributed 5,200 menstrual cups to date. The Cova Project and IIEA's partnership has extended past project work and into advocacy, with the organisations collaborating to change the menstrual health landscape across East Africa. Together we held the Cova Conference, which engaged the Ugandan Government as a partner. Our combined efforts displaying effective menstrual health solutions in Uganda have local and national government excited about the ability to increase school attendance and reduce the gender gap. Irise continues to distribute menstrual cups in the Jinja area and educates other grassroots organisations on our work so they can implement projects themselves.



MALAWIAN LOCAL PARTNER - BETTI AND ELUBY

The Cova Project's project in Malawi, led by mother/daughter team, Betti and Eluby, has continued to grow. Distributing a further 2,000 menstrual cups, Betti and Eluby have continued their work locally, in Mzuzu, and expanded nationally to support organisations in Southern Malawi and introduce them to the benefit of menstrual cups.

With the support of our Menstrual Health Consultant, Casey English, The Cova Project Malawi performs some of the most successful and thoughtful MHM trainings in the world.



GHANAIAN LOCAL PARTNER - THE KYEREH FOUNDATION

The Cova Project Ghana in partnership with The Kyereh Foundation distributed 500 cups in FY21/22. Reaching rural communities, the Kyereh Foundation goes to great efforts to get menstrual cups into the hands of the girls who need them most. Supported by our Menstrual Health Consultant, Abena Benewaa, who is based in Ghana, the project was able to put an emphasis on feedback and improving our sensitisation by seeking to include mothers and teachers in discussions.



LIBERIAN LOCAL PARTNER - EDUCATE WEST POINT

Educate West Point (EWP) is a well respected NGO in Liberia's largest slum, West Point. Started by changemaker, Musa Sheriff. Educate West Point distributed 500 cups in FY 21/22 with an emphasis on strong feedback collection. The team has invested time in improving their training sessions to become comfortable and confident with the educational content, especially the free flowing conversation that comes in the Q&A portion of training sessions. This effort to improve in these areas has seen better community buy in and we are so proud of Educate West Point's passion and commitment to the girls of West Point.



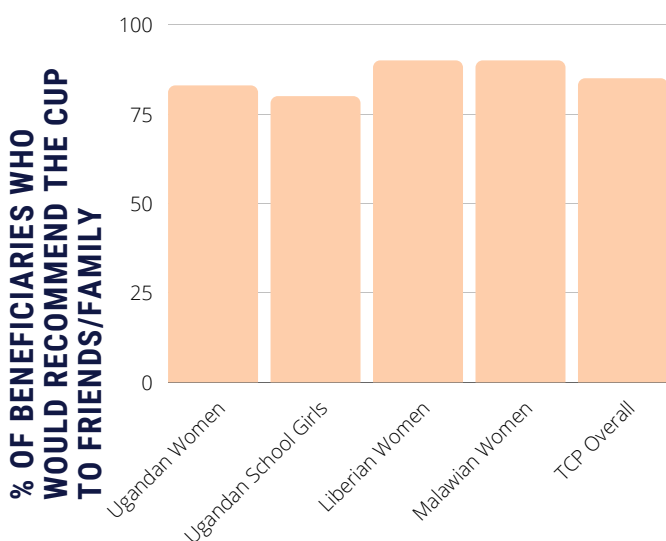
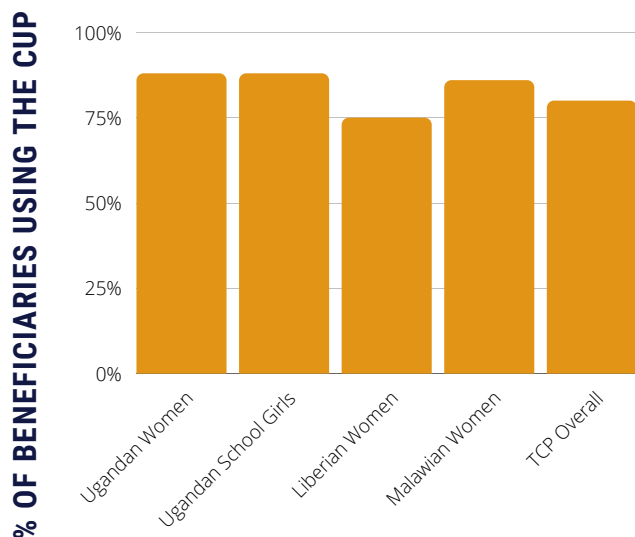
UGANDAN LOCAL PARTNER - WE EMPOWER HER

We Empower Her is a refugee run organisation in Nakivale refugee settlement, started by Cova Project advisor, Gabriella Amini. We Empower Her is a wonderful organisation that empowers and encourages women to understand their bodies and their potential. We Empower Her has distributed 500 cups and with the mentorship of Irise East Africa, has moved towards formalising their organisation. This is an exciting step forward for this community based organisation with the potential to have a massive impact.



WHAT DO THE GIRLS THINK?

Data collection is done roughly 4 months after the education/training session where a cup has been provided to a girl. This allows her time to have tried the cup several times because studies show that it takes up to 3 menstrual cycles for a woman to be comfortable with cup usage.



MALAWI

- 21% of girls stopped being absent from school, 44% felt more comfortable in class
- 97% of girls are comfortable with the cup
- 76% of girls are more confident with the cup
- 95% of girls could do more activities with the cup

LIBERIA

- 75% improved confidence
- 75% can do more activities
- 64% used to miss school but almost none miss school post cup usage

In summary, girls and women are clearly more confident and able to do more things in life with the cup than when they were using other sanitary items. Other key benefits include comfort, no leakage and hygienic. More data is required to better understand the impact on school attendance, which is very important, but data indicates school attendance is significantly improved.



THOUGHTS A MOTHER WANTED TO SHARE WITH OUR DONORS....

“The Flowcup given to my daughter helped reduce the family budget, allowing me to cater for other requirements like scholastic materials.”

-**Kyazike Janet**, 46 year old mother to Nabirye Marion

STORIES OF CHANGE

Hear from the girls first hand how the cup has changed their lives

"My name is Joy Dorcus Kampi, I am 17 years old. I am using a flowcup with passion because my past experience before the cup was not good. I used to use clothes and disposable pads that used to burn, produce a bad smell, and were very expensive for my mother to provide as a single mother. I find the flowcup is comfortable and does not burn me. Because of the flowcup, my mother has been able to save some money for other things like food."

"It has saved me from using dirty latrines while changing pads."

"I used disposable sanitary pads before and they used to burn and were expensive for my parents to provide hence I would miss school, sometimes when I was in my periods. Upon receiving the flowcup, I feel more comfortable using it. Thanks to The Cova Project for helping me stay in school even during my periods."

"It has changed my whole life experience."

"I used to find difficulties accessing pads. This pushed me to use rags or clothes sometimes, these came with many challenges like infections which were caused by using damp clothes. Thanks to the Cova project for loving a girl child, the flowcup does not burn, is easy to use, and has enabled my family to save money for other household necessities."

"I use it with confidence."

"I used my old nickers once in a while and old pieces of cloth that used to burn and I would get wounds. This is because I could not afford other safe options. Irise and Cova changed my whole story with a flowcup. It is good, light, and does not burn. Irise and Cova should continue supporting us so that girls stop dropping out of school."

"My grandmother used to provide me with her old pieces of cloth during my periods but they could burn, could not be used for many hours, and taking long hours without changing meant soiling and a bad smell. The flowcup does not burn, no blood stains on my pants, and I can use it for many hours before changing."

"I am grateful to The Cova project for the flowcup because I can now menstruate with confidence and my family can save some money for other requirements like scholastic materials."

"The flowcup has helped me stay comfortable at school just like other girls. I encourage Irise and Cova to continue supporting girls with flowcups."

"I use the flowcup and it is flexible and allows me to do other activities like playing netball, and participating in athletics."



CLIMATE RIPPLE EFFECTS

How does giving a menstrual cup change the world?

The problem of adequate access to not only Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) but the education surrounding it, is a vital piece in the quest for gender equality, environmental stewardship and ultimately decreasing poverty. **"If a girl is provided with sanitary towels, her chances of staying in school are 30-50 percent higher"**, Katrina Hansa-Himarwa, Minister of Education, Arts and Culture, Namibia. However, over the course of a lifetime, a single menstruator will use somewhere between **5 and 15 thousand pads and tampons**, the vast majority of which will wind up in landfill as plastic waste.

Our programme is built around sustainable menstrual health solutions and reusable menstrual cups which can be used for up to 10 years. One menstrual cup has significant environmental benefits compared to 10 years of single use pads or tampons, or recyclable pads (that only last 2 years). Further, supporting women is a known win for the environment. Cate Owren, executive director of WEDO (Women's Environment and Development Organisation) states **"Because of women's relationship with the environment, they can be critical agents of environmental conservation, sustainable development and adaptation to climate change"**.

Strong family planning and education combined with slower global population growth can contribute to reduced carbon emissions over time. Project Drawdown states, **"When levels of education rise (in particular for girls and young women); knowledge of, access to, and use of contraception increase; and women's political, social, and economic empowerment expand, birth rates typically fall."** Across the world and over time, this impacts population at a global level which will slow climate change.



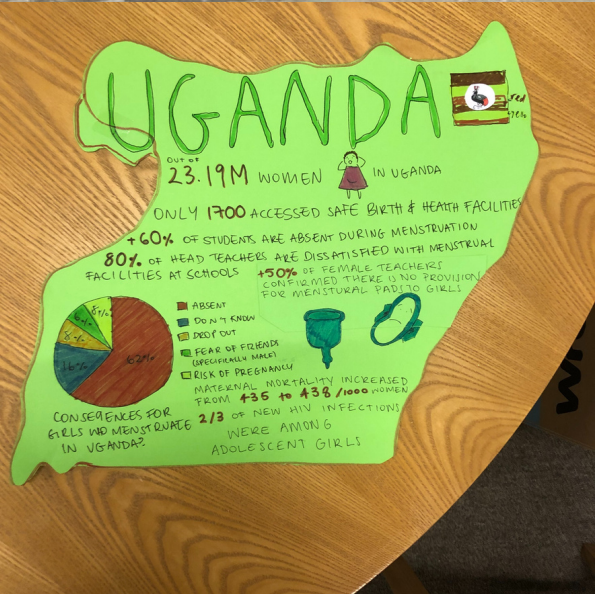


FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Yup to The Cup. Cova Dignity Collection. Live Events. Menstrual Hygiene Day March. Cova Conference. School fundraisers.



SAY YUP TO THE MENSTRUAL CUP



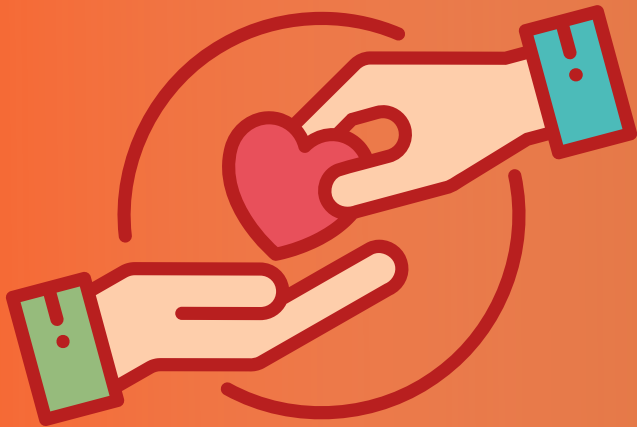
FINANCE REPORT

21 - 22

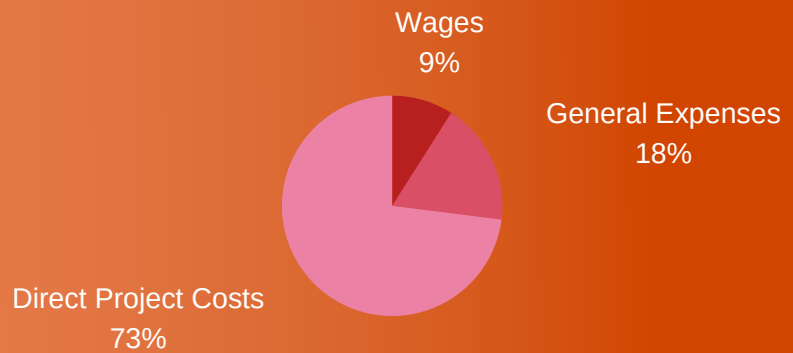
REVENUE

\$250,461

(DONATIONS AND FUNDRAISING)



EXPENDITURE



DIRECT PROJECT RELATED EXPENSES (\$141,113)

Purchase and distribution of cups	38%
Education and training	62%

GENERAL EXPENSES (\$37,565)

Marketing (including events and software subscriptions)	75%
Admin	9%
Insurances	16%

EXPENDITURE*

\$291,650

*COST OF SALES + EXPENSES

(SURPLUS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS WAS USED TO FUND \$41,189)



FUTURE VISION THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

FY22/23 will involve significant investment in the partners who share our vision, passion and have the infrastructure to become industry leaders and mentor other organisations in their region.

Cova's plans to move towards a more sustainable 'distribution and consulting' model will see thousands more girls gain access to menstrual cups, while our existing projects continue to do their incredible work. The Cova Affiliate Program is essentially The Cova Project franchising our resources, learnings and project model, and making it available to organisations who believe menstrual cups are a viable solution for girls in their communities.



Roughly every fortnight a new organisation makes contact with The Cova Project looking to fill out a partnership application and receive cups (the above map shows the countries where organisations have reached out to us with a need for cups/support).

By launching a public resource hub and support service like Cova Affiliate, we hope to help grassroots organisations learn how to effectively implement a project and empower people to enter the MHM space.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

KING & WOOD
MALLESONS
金杜律师事务所



THE
FUNDING
NETWORK
AUSTRALIA

We would like to acknowledge our **hardworking team of staff, consultants, partners and volunteers**. Your commitment to this work during a difficult financial year is why we continue to grow and be able to do this work successfully.

Funding in FY21/22 has been exceptionally difficult and so we must thank our loyal donors who continue to support us and thousands of girls across Africa.

Special thanks to **Nicole and the team at Kin fertility, The Saville Foundation, TFN, the SWAUS Foundation, The Lamble Family Foundation and our incredible leadership donors**. Without your consistent financial support, we would not be able to make the strategic decisions required to thrive during these periods.

We must acknowledge **King & Wood Mallesons** for providing outstanding pro bono legal support over the last 3 years, that continues to allow us to innovate and explore partnerships, with confidence.

Finally, we wish to thank **Telstra** for awarding The Cova Project with a **Telstra Best of Business State Finalist Award** in the category of Accelerating Women. Being acknowledged by such an iconic Australian brand is incredibly encouraging and we look forward to continuing to accelerate women globally!

2022 Telstra Best
of Business Awards

New South Wales
State Finalist



#TelstraBestofBusinessAwards