**Press release**

**The National Postcode Lottery supports a new program by Simavi, Rutgers WPF and Women on Wings**

**WOMEN IN INDIA ARE ENTITLED TO NORMAL PERIODS**

Austerlitz, 5 februari 2014 - **During the ‘Goed Geld Gala 2014’ held on Tuesday evening, February 4, the Dutch National Postcode Lottery awarded an Extra Draw of more than two million euros to Simavi, Rutgers WPF and Women on Wings. This support will be used by the organizations to improve the situation in India regarding menstruation. The program ‘Making periods normal’ has a duration of three years.**

**Excluded during periods**

In India, many girls and women are unable to take part in public activities each month on account of their menstruation. Maria van der Heijden, co-founder of Women on Wings, explains: “As a result, girls go to school three weeks a month instead of four. This causes them to fall further behind in their studies, with many girls eventually dropping out of school. Menstruation is a taboo subject, which makes women feel uncomfortable every month for 30 years. In addition, hygienic products like sanitary pads are only available in rural villages in limited quantities.”

**Business model**

Based on its research and experience in India, Women on Wings has developed a business model with a view to producing and distributing sanitary pads at local level. Simavi and Rutgers WPF have considerable experience of bringing taboo subjects out into the open and providing information on physical development and personal hygiene. Good information creates awareness and breaks down taboos. Maria: “This then boosts demand for sanitary pads. A solid business model creates small profitable businesses that have their production and distribution up to par. It also helps generate employment for a group of women in India in the production, distribution and sale of sanitary pads.” In this way, creating demand and making available a hygienic solution go hand in hand.

**An integrated approach**

The main focus of the approach is to provide information and share knowledge. “Not only do we provide information on menstruation and the importance of good hygiene to 660,000 women, but also to 200,000 men and boys. This can help break down the taboo.” Additionally, the three organizations ensure that sanitary pads can be produced and distributed locally. Ten local companies are being set up to make affordable sanitary pads available to 165,000 women and girls. The program also provides employment for 815 women.

**Also in the Netherlands**

Thanks to the Dutch National Postcode Lottery, we can also draw attention to this problem in the Netherlands. Our aim is to make women in the Netherlands aware of the mental, social and medical consequences that arise when women in India are excluded from what we consider to be normal everyday activities just because of their menstruation. This campaign, entitled ‘Making periods normal’, will be launched in 2015.

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