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

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Removing Period Poverty As a Barrier to Participation


Theme:
Participation

 Removing Period Poverty As a Barrier to Participation

 [Roxanna Holdsworth](#)

[Roxanna Holdsworth](#)

Co-authored by Lisa Bishop, Dr Amy Marfell

 This is ME

This is ME® is Sport Waikato’s targeted women and girls initiative which aims to encourage, support, and celebrate women and girls of all ages getting out there and being active THEIR way. Conversations with Kotahi Aroha’s Erina Wehi-Barton, led to the implementation of workshops for a total of thirty-six young women (11-16 years old), in partnership with AWWA Period Care, to remove barriers to physical activity associated with menstruation and period poverty.

A conversation between Kotahi Aroha’s Erina Wehi-Barton and Sport Waikato’s women and girls initiative This is ME® revealed that period poverty was a significant factor in preventing young waahine from the Waitomo district being physically active.

Waahine account for 49% of the Waitomo district’s overall population; 16% are young women (New Zealand Census, 2018). Te Kuiti is a small town within the Waitomo district and is considered a high deprivation area. It is not uncommon for whaanau to have to prioritise their spending, especially when it comes to sanitary products.

Early conversations with Erina revealed that period poverty was a significant issue for young women in Te Kuiti, and was preventing their participation in education, sport and physical activity. Barriers to women and girls’ participation in physical activity are complex and interconnected, and have ongoing implications for other areas of life.

In response, This is ME® partnered with national period underwear brand AWWA to deliver workshops to young women identified by Erina. Kotahi Aroha operates out of a facility called the “Puna” (well or pool), which acts as a community hub. The first workshop was hosted in this space to provide a sense of comfort to allow the young women to share their feelings and experiences. The second workshop took place online due to COVID restrictions, and despite this, received great engagement. So far, thirty-six young waahine between 11 and 16 years old have participated in a facilitated workshop.

AWWA generously donated three pairs of underwear to each of the young women who attended the workshops. The ability to remove period poverty as a barrier and empower women to participate in physical activity despite their period was the motivation behind the initiative.

“AWWA’s partnership with This is ME® represents our commitment to ensuring no individual misses out on opportunities to engage in sport, recreation or education due to having their ikura (period). We believe everyone should have the opportunity to participate in activities that are good for their wellbeing, and AWWA want to help remove the barriers preventing some wahine from doing so,” said Kylie Matthews, AWWA co-founder.

During the workshops, the young women learnt about ikura, how to use and care for the underwear provided by AWWA, and participated in sessions facilitated by local providers, such as yoga at the Puna, or breath work online. Erina says physical activity is important for young women as it empowers them.

“If we’re able to be the example, or the taura, for other communities to do what we’re doing, then we’re doing our job. We’re breeding more than whaanau champions, we’re breeding a great society like we have in Te Kuiti,” Erina said.

The young women left the workshops with an understanding of how to use the underwear and increased confidence in their ability to manage their period. Their confidence to participate and be active has since increased further through using the period underwear provided by AWWA.

“What Erina is doing to promote, support and encourage young women in her community to be physically active is just incredible – she’s an absolute powerhouse and positive influence on all those around her. This is ME® has been proud to support Erina and partner with AWWA, making a real difference to the young women she inspires,” said Roxanna Holdsworth, Sport Waikato’s This is ME® Women & Girls Initiative Advisor.

The workshops and the resulting impact on the young women that participated shows the value of collaborative partnerships and what can be achieved when organisations work together at the local, regional and national level to address personal and practical barriers to females’ participation in physical activity.



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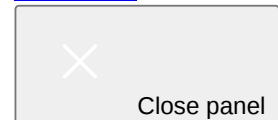
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