

“The Madamsew/Pachamama challenge”

It's sew easy to help!

Let's make Sanitary Pads

Recently we discovered this beautiful charity project, called The Pachamama Project that was founded by Ella Lambert (a Bristol University student from Essex) during the first Covid Lockdown.

The Pachamama Project is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization making and distributing reusable sanitary pads for refugees around the world and growing a network of volunteers around the world to make them.

With the help of charities and groups in the countries where they are currently distributed, Ella distributes her sanitary product - Pacha Pads. Women are given four to six pads each, which are washable and can be reused for about five years.

“The Pachamama Project is a lockdown story, born out of a desire to do something good in a time of bad news. The main aim of the project is to end period poverty”

<https://www.thepachamamaproject.org/>



So, what is period poverty?

In simple terms, period poverty refers to the struggle that many low income women face while trying to afford menstrual products. How does this affect the women in question?

- Girls can often miss out on their education and are unable to leave their homes during their periods; due to lack of resources.
- Using alternatives such as dirty rags increases the risk of bacterial infection.
- Lack of awareness and resources leads to social stigma which makes the women feel persistent shame and fear during periods.



“The World Bank estimates that 500 million women and girls globally lack access to adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management”

Pachamama has been supporting refugees in Greece, in both Lesbos and Athens, in Lebanon in the Bekaa Valley and in Beirut (where Pachamama also supports a refugee Pacha Club making the pads themselves) and in the UK, Turkey and Syria. They have now started helping women in the US as well. They partnered with Food Justice DMV in Washington DC who supports Latina women, the majority of whom are unemployed single mothers. They focus on food packages and are now partnering with Pachamama to take this community out of period poverty. The distributions are being carried out by women from the community itself to make the recipients feel as comfortable as possible and all the educational infographics on how to use and wash the pads are translated into Spanish. They received some incredible initial feedback. The women receiving the pads were super enthusiastic and now they are going to need a lot more US made pads! They feel a huge amount of relief that they will no longer have to worry about the expense of disposable pads and tampons.

At MadamSew we decided to put our shoulders under this beautiful project, convinced that with our big community of sewing addicts (a lot of them sitting on a lot of scrap fabrics :-)), we can make reusable sanitary pads and make a difference, help and create awareness. In this post we gathered all the information on how you can help. Because, yes, you can also make a difference!

Of course, we would love to be able to send Pachamama a truckload of pads. We don't know if it's realistic, but how fantastic would it be to send Pachamama a huge amount of pads in September?

The more pads MadamSew receives the more we will donate to Pachamama!

- 250 dollars for 500 pads!
- 500 dollars for 1,000 pads!
- 750 dollars for 2,000 pads!
- 1,000 dollars for 3,000 pads!

Will you help us reach this goal? Please share pictures of the pads you are making on Instagram, Facebook or Twitter with the hashtags **#thepachaproject and **#madamsew****

How to participate?

By making reusable sanitary pads, lots of them :-). If you make 4 pads, you help 1 woman for 5 years!

- **WHEN**
The Madamsew/Pachamama challenge runs from **the 15th of June until the 15th of September**, which means you can send us your homemade pads until the 15th of September.



- **SHIPPING**

We have a **PO Box in Georgia** where you can send the pads. We will keep track of all the pads that were sent to us. Just keep an eye on our social media channels and mailings to stay informed. You can also go to

<https://madamsew.com/pages/pachamama-project-info-page>, our campaign page.

Shipping address:

Shelby - Madam Sew

10701 Abercorn St.

PO BOX #61207

Savannah, GA 31420

Please be sure to add your name, address and email to your shipment. We would like to know all of our benefactors!

At the end of this special campaign we will close the PO Box, publish the result, and hand over the pads made by our MadamSew community to Pachamama.

Of course, you can keep on supporting Pachamama after September 15, 2021 and send them pads directly. If you are in Europe, you can send the pads to the Pachamama office in the UK. You can find all of the information on how to do this on their website (note: you will have to register). <https://www.thepachamaproject.org/>

- **THE SUPPLIES FOR THE PADS**

To make pads, you need clean, good-as-new scraps of cotton fabric, new fleece (for the top layer that touches the skin), towel material (absorbent), and plastic snaps (plastic poppers or Kam snaps).

These snaps can be bought on Amazon or Ebay, and in local notions stores or on MadamSew.com. If you are struggling to get hold of these notions and the tool just get in touch with us by sending us an email hello@madamsew.com and add a picture of finished pads without the snaps (minimum 8) and we will get in touch with you!

- **DRAWSTRING BAGS**

Pachamama is also happy to receive little drawstring bags to store 4 pads for 1 woman.

They are very easy to make. You can find the YouTube tutorial for the drawstring bags here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyIjvQMKRLI>

- **SHARING IS CARING**

And please share this project as much as you can with friends and family and on your social media pages! The more people hear about this, the better! Use the hashtags #thepachaproject and #madamsew

How to make a pad?

I used the Pachamama tutorial and adapted the description here and there, making it as clear as possible for you. I used my own pictures and changed the measurements from centimeters to inches.

What do you need to make 1 Pacha Pad?

- a print-out of the pattern that you can download **on our website**. There are 3 pattern pieces, A, B and C.
- 2 plastic snaps (and the tool to pinch them onto wings of the pad)
- 5 fabric pieces in different types of fabrics: see box below.

ABOUT THE 5 FABRIC PIECES

1. The main body : Cotton : 2 pieces of 10 ½ inch - 7 ½ inch
This cotton can be recycled but of course it has to be clean material, e.g. cotton from a light-weight curtain, a dress, a shirt. It would be nice if one of the 2 pieces could be pretty looking, for the outside. You can opt for a plain material facing the inside of the pad.
2. The outside of the Gusset : Dark coloured (micro)fleece or anti-pill, sweatshirt or brushed cotton flannel: 2 pieces of 10 inch - 3 inch
*Piece 1: The colour of the layer facing the skin is relevant and needs to be dark (black, red, navy, etc.). This layer has to be new fabric, and should not pill or bobble. There are different kinds of fleece materials and any that are non-pilling and non-bobbling can be used - 100% polyester, 100% cotton, cotton rich, 100% bamboo, bamboo rich, etc.
Piece 2: The other layer, facing the main body, can be a lighter material as it will not be visible and this one doesn't need to be new.*
3. The inside of the Gusset : towel material: 1 piece of 9 inch x 2 inch
The more absorbent this material is, the better. This material can be recycled, but clean, e.g. towelling, thick microfibre. It can be any color as it will not be visible. Old towels or bed sheets can be used as long as they are in good condition. They can be used for the back and middle of the pads.

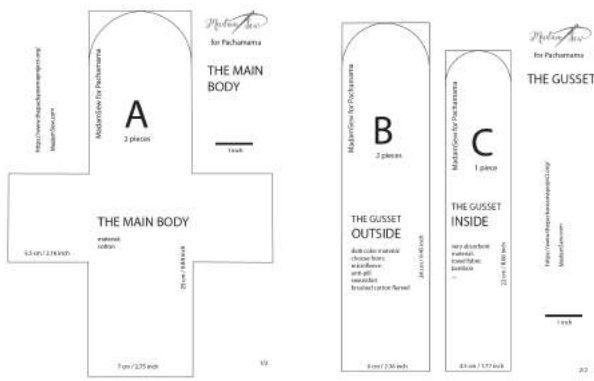
THE STEPS

PREPARATIONS

Copy pattern pieces A, B and C onto cardboard if you're planning to make more than 1 pad and cut out. Use the inner curved line at the top parts of the pattern pieces.

- PATTERN PIECE A = the Main Body - 2 pieces: 1 pretty + 1 plain cotton. You need to add seam $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{8}$ inch allowance, what is most convenient for you.
- PATTERN PIECE B = the outside of the Gusset - 2 pieces: 1 fleece + 1 lightweight cotton. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{8}$ inch seam allowance.
- PATTERN PIECE C = the inside of the Gusset - 1 towel piece. No seam allowance needed.

Download the free printable pattern on our website



THE MAIN BODY

STEP 1

Place the two pieces of cotton fabric together, right sides facing and pin them together. Draw around the main body pattern piece A onto the fabric on one side (adding seam allowance).



STEP 2

Sew the 2 pieces together (at $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{3}{8}$ inch from the edge) making sure to back stitch at the beginning and end to keep your stitching strong. Trim the edges. If you have pinking shears, use those so the edges will fray less.



STEP 3

In order to stop the inside corners from pulling once it is turned inside out, give them a little snip with the scissors. Make sure not to cut into any of the stitching.



STEP 4

Cut a slit through the middle on the side you drew the outline (or the non-patterned side if you are using one). Be careful to only cut one layer and not the one underneath. This will be your turning hole. This part will be covered by the towel later on.



STEP 5

Turn the pad inside out, making sure you push out the seams at the corners with your fingers, a stiletto, or a pen to create clean edges.



THE GUSSET

STEP 1

Copy and cut out pattern piece B on the fleece (2 pieces). Add seam allowance. Copy and cut out pattern piece C on the towel fabric (1 piece), no seam allowance needed.



STEP 2

Position the towel piece (C) on the wrong side of one fleece piece (B), pin together. Sew together along the edge of the towel piece.



STEP 3

Now take a second piece of fleece (or brushed flannel, in a dark color), put it right sides together with the first piece of fleece and sew around at the edge. Leave a turning hole of about 1 ½ inch in one of the long edges.



STEP 4

Cut excess fabric off and turn it right side out. The towel is now on the inside and you have one fleece side with stitches and one without stitches.



STEP 5

Close the turning hole with a hand stitch or topstitch with your sewing machine. If you are able to tuck in the edges nicely, you can also skip this step and just close the opening when you are sewing the gusset to the main body in step 2 of the next part.

ASSEMBLE GUSSET AND MAIN BODY

STEP 1

Pin the gusset to the main body. The stitches of the towel piece of the gusset and the slit of the main body are facing each other.



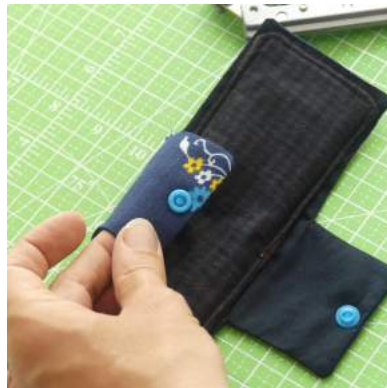
STEP 2

Topstitch around the edge with a running stitch on the fleece side of the pad and remove the pins.



STEP 3

Attach the plastic snaps on the 2 wings so the snaps can close. On one side the flat part of the snap should be facing the fleece, on the other the male or female part is facing the main body fabric. You can see this clearly in the pictures.





More information on how to apply snaps in general you can find in this tutorial:
<https://madamsew.com/pages/plastic-snaps-manual>

That's it!
PAD 1 IS READY!

If you make 4 pads you will help 1 woman for about 5 years! Let's do this!

Thank you so much for participating and helping women around the world!!!

An
For MadamSew.com

<https://www.thepachamaproject.org/>
<https://madamsew.com/pages/pachamama-project-info-page>