

Idda Joseph

“Being a champion involves facing your pain - and overcoming it.”

Idda’s life changed at age four, the instant she lost her mother to Malaria. Prior to her mother’s death, Idda lived in a loving, caring environment in Tanzania, but when her father remarried, Idda suffered abuse from her stepmother and was left to fend for herself. She was lucky to survive several bouts of Malaria, and luckier still when her aunt agreed to let her live with her.

However, without her mother to help guide her and no information or education available to her, Idda grew up unaware of the changes her body would go through during puberty. Curious about menstruation, Idda pretended her period started at age 13 in the belief she would then be given information about menstrual health and hygiene. Instead, her aunt just told her she had to stay home from school whilst menstruating. A year later, when Idda’s period did start, she was still none the wiser. Due to a lack of education about sanitary products and how to use them, safe disposal after use and how the menstrual cycle works, Idda soon fell ill with an infection and had to seek urgent medical treatment.

Idda’s experience has shaped her commitment to ensuring all girls have access to sexual and reproductive health education and services. She now works with LifePackage solutions, an organization that equips girls and young women with sexual and reproductive health education and ensures access to health services and products. Her story seeks to remind us of the importance of SDGs 3 and 5, and the role of education for girls and young women so they understand – and have control over – their own bodies.