



# PROJECT REPORT

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## MamyPlan

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KATE KYRYCHENKO

MamyPlan is a forthcoming social entrepreneurship product developed in collaboration with MamyGłos, a feminist NGO promoting women's rights and the empowerment of teenage girls across Poland. Designed to provide inspirational and educational content on a daily basis, this new and innovative planner combines the best parts of a calendar, agenda, and diary, in a personal and practical object. Users of MamyPlan will engage in a series of activities focused on body positivity, women's rights and HERstory, STEM experiments, positive psychology, artistic expression, and self-reflection.

# >> MEET THE TEAM



Hailing from Poland, Ukraine, and the United States, our team combines expertise in human rights and female empowerment with extensive experience in digital marketing and campaign design.



## MILENA ADAMCZEWSKA

Milena, born in Poland, holds a Polish law degree and an LLM in International Human Rights Law from the Netherlands. Her academic and activist interests focus on women's rights. Previously she volunteered and worked in the South African, Australian and Polish NGO sectors.



## MEREDITH BLAKE

Meredith is from the United States. She holds a dual degree in Government and International Relations and was a volunteer mentor for middle school girls through the Strong Women, Strong Girls program. She currently works for the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative.



## KATE KYRYCHENKO

Kate was born in Kyiv, Ukraine. She holds a Master's degree in Human Rights. After graduation, she spent time volunteering in Vietnam and working in the humanitarian law sphere in Ukraine. She is passionate about sports and women's empowerment.

# >> THE CHALLENGE

The recent rise of the Polish feminist movement, as well as its associated protests, has elevated the conversation surrounding women's rights in contemporary Polish society to a global level. International media livestreamed the 2016 Black Protest, while Human Rights Watch fervently condemned the proposed curtailment of reproductive health services.<sup>1</sup> Newspapers announced thousands of women were taking to the streets alongside headlines declaring: "Nothing is Right About Women's Rights in Poland."<sup>2</sup> Institutionalized sexism, female autonomy, and the consequences of pervasive discrimination dominated the news. Polish women rose up, their concerns (for once) at the center of national discourse and the legislative agenda. However, very little of this new dialogue concentrated on the challenges faced by an equally affected and emergent demographic: teenage girls.

The exclusion of the needs and concerns of teenage girls is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the environment where these girls spend the vast majority of their time: school. Across Poland, children and youths consistently do not receive gender-balanced curriculum focusing on the achievements of both men and women. Limited space, sometimes as little as 3,6%, is devoted to women's history or herstory, and women often appear as background to famous male historical figures or are not even named at all.<sup>3</sup> This lack of representation can "reinforce, legitimate and reproduce patriarchal gender systems"<sup>4</sup> and even extends to the implementation of the curricula itself, when female students are actively discouraged from pursuing careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields.<sup>5</sup>

Instead of providing a nurturing and encouraging environment, school can also have a persistent, negative influence on female self-esteem and confidence. Ninety percent of Polish teenage girls report disliking or hating their bodies<sup>6</sup>—making Poland the country with the lowest level of body positivity in Europe. This rampant negative self-perception will have an undeniable influence on the future of the women's rights movement in Poland, and as such deserves the direct attention of modern feminists.

The aforementioned deficiencies in confidence and self-esteem, combined with an absence of positive female role models in current curricula, demands interventions that can foster the creation of safe spaces and dialogue with the aim of empowering teenage girls to feel comfortable and confident in their own potential and self-worth. We believe we are up to this challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> "Poland No Friend to Women | Human Rights Watch," accessed July 4, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/03/poland-no-friend-women>.

<sup>2</sup> Karolina Zbytniewska, "Polish Activist: Nothing Is Right about Women's Rights in Poland," *Euractiv.Com* (blog), April 5, 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/freedom-of-thought/news/polish-activist-nothing-is-right-about-womens-rights-in-poland/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Gender w Podręcznikach" (Zespół badawczy „GENDER W PODRĘCZNIKACH” realizowany przez Interdyscyplinarne Centrum Badań Płci Kulturowej i Tożsamości Uniwersytetu im. A. Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> "Effects of Gender Relations in Textbooks," *The Borgen Project* (blog), July 9, 2015, <https://borgenproject.org/effects-gender-relations-textbooks/>.

<sup>5</sup> Rae Lesser Blumberg, "Gender Bias in Textbooks: A Hidden Obstacle on the Road to Gender Equality in Education," n.d., 54.

<sup>6</sup> "Growing up Unequal: Gender and Socioeconomic Differences in Young People's Health and Well-Being" (WHO/HBSC, 2016).

# >> THE SOLUTION

*How do we empower teenage girls to feel comfortable and confident in their own potential and self-worth?*

Ten days and three women from three different countries. The task: design a social entrepreneurship product addressing the challenges of teenage girls in contemporary Polish society. Only one team member is Polish. Everything from market research to cultural context seems as if it will be stalled by the divergent experiences immediately evident in the group makeup.

Yet within minutes of the first meeting we had a (somewhat painful) realization: our experiences as women, and more specifically as former teenage girls, were markedly similar. From Ukraine to the United States, with Poland in between, each member of the group had struggled amidst an adolescence riddled with sexism and anti-feminist backlash. All of us knew what it was like to grow up searching for self-identity in spaces where every message seemed designed to tell you the same thing: you, as a teenage girl, as a future woman, are less.

Less capable, less valuable, less essential than your male counterparts. Gender inequality hidden in plain sight and pervasively restrictive, no matter where or when you grew up. Our data on teenage girls in

Poland presented an eerily comparable picture: they were still facing many of the same challenges we had faced at their age.

So, we decided to design the product we would have wanted when we were teenagers. A judgement-free space for self-development accentuated by the stories of female activists, novelists, engineers, and educators—basically everyone our history books left out. Alongside would be directions for at-home science experiments and creative corners for coloring or designing your own campaign posters. We would highlight important dates in herstory and encourage civic engagement, activism, body positivity, and mental health.

But how could we combine all of these things into an everyday object girls would *actually* use? Wasn't everything digital now?

In consultations with MamyGłos we learned there was one thing teenage girls still used: planners. Thus, MamyPlan was born.

MamyPlan is a portable and affordable self-esteem booster filled with activities and content suggestions crowdsourced

directly from teenage girls themselves. Designed and written initially in English (our common working language) and subsequently translated into Polish, our goal is to combine practicality with pragmatism and capitalize on the current rise of Polish feminism as it coincides with the opening of MamyGłos's first online store.

**HUMANITY IN  
ACTION**  
POLSKA



# >> THE TEAM IN ACTION

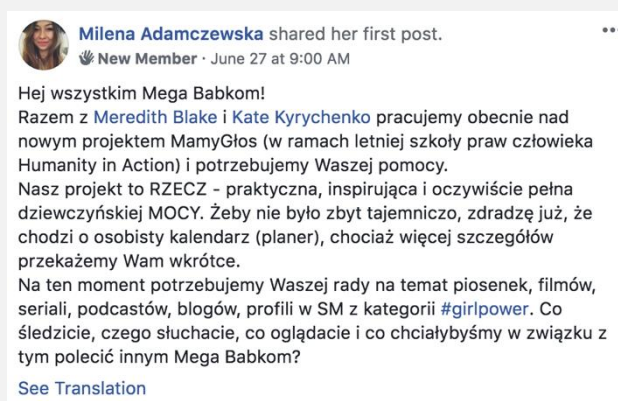
Excited about our idea, we very quickly moved from brainstorming to action. The plan was ambitious – not only did we want to develop the concept of MamyPlan, but also to propose a draft design, collect and prepare the content for all the 12 months of the planner, and to prepare a prototype of one month.

We dove into the creation of the planner's content so deeply, that we completely forgot about one small, yet highly important element of the project – its name! This is where the only real struggle we faced started. Should we name it in Polish or in English? How could we make it sound catchy, appealing and hashtagable? Two stressful days, hours of brainstorming and thousands of post-its later, we finally came up with the best idea: ask the teenagers themselves!

Thanks to the Facebook group MegaBabki, moderated by MamyGłos, we got a chance to both ask the teens for recommendations to fill the planner with relevant and relatable content, and to create an online poll for the best name. Over 100 teenage girls participated in the poll and when the votes were counted "MamyPlan" won by a landslide.



>> Day 2 of the project. From left: Meredith, Kate, and Milena discuss design and layout of



>> The team turned to the teens and asked for recommendations to fill the planner with relevant content, as well as consulted the ideas of the name

# >> FINAL THOUGHTS

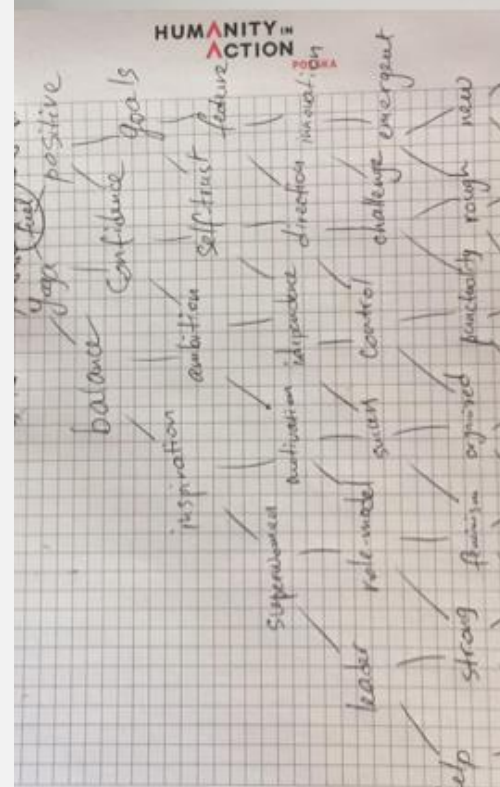
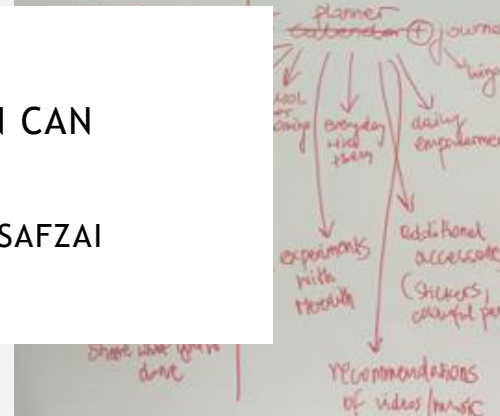
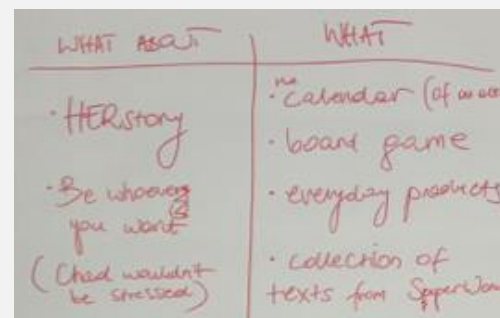
As we reach the end of our time in Warsaw, we believe that—even despite numerous time constraints—we are leaving behind a comprehensive prototype that can easily be assembled into a finished project.

“ONE CHILD, ONE TEACHER, ONE BOOK, ONE PEN CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.”

-MALALA YOUSAFZAI

By concentrating the first few days of our project's development entirely on research and content creation, we are able to leave MamyGłos with a Google Drive complete with enough documents, graphics, activities, positive psychology prompts, women in history, and inspirational quotes to fill MamyPlan for an entire calendar year. Our team will also remain available to help complete the planner and collect and incorporate feedback from Polish teenage girls during the beta test phase of the project.

In the following page, you can find photos of our prototype of, which highlights the fully prepared month of September and provides a glimpse of what the finished planner will look like. We have also included a letter at the beginning of the planner to personalize the user experience and highlight our intention to remain active in the MamyGłos online community by engaging with users of MamyPlan throughout various social media outlets.



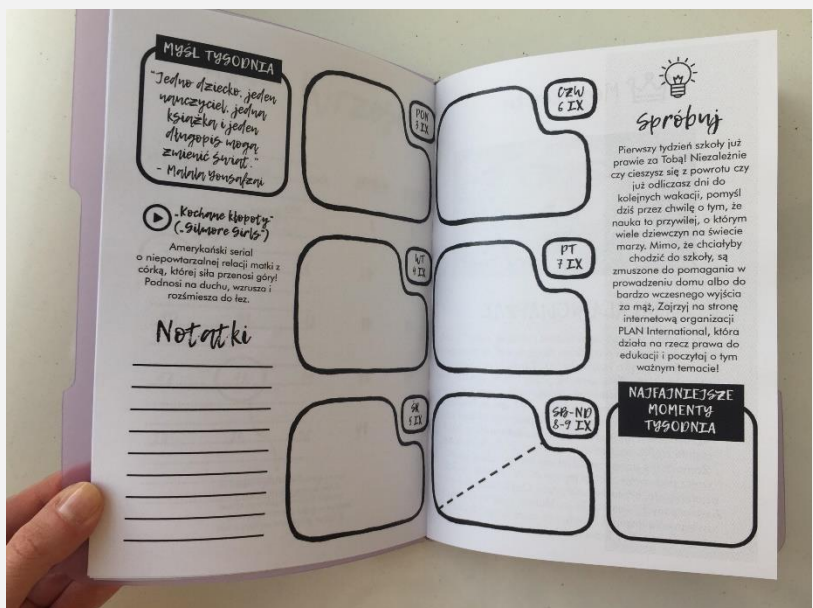
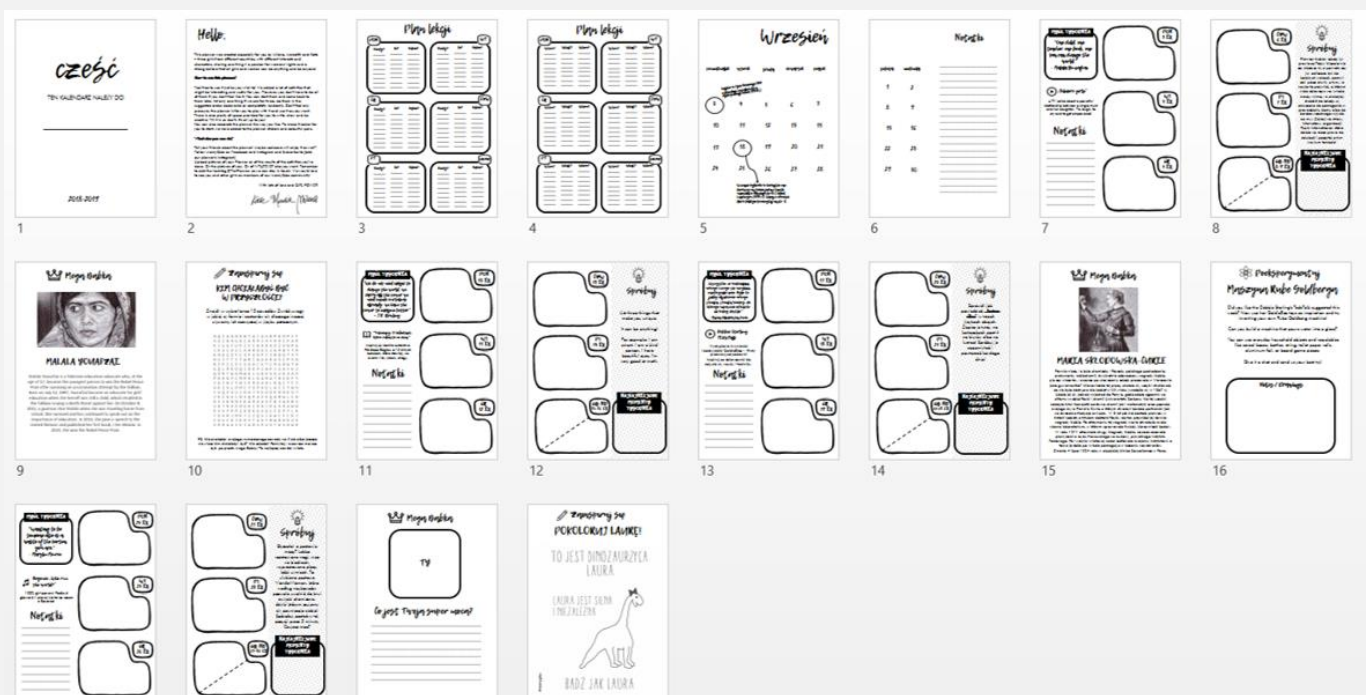
## Lessons learned?

- There is no such thing as “too little time.” We were extremely passionate about working for MamyGłos and committed to achieving a good outcome. In just ten days our team managed to

design the planner, gather content for the whole year, and create a prototype of the first month. It's impressive what you can accomplish even in a short time crunch!

- You don't need to be a designer to create awesome visuals. In our group, none of the members had any design experience, but our project demanded them! Luckily, we got quite creative and thought of ways to produce a professional-looking layout for MamyPlan without using complicated software programs. In the end our prototype consisted of hand-drawn or open-source graphics and the layout was entirely designed in PowerPoint.
- Having certain problems is inevitable. For our group, the biggest complication was a lack of feedback from our partnering NGO. At some points we had to make our own arrangements and find alternative ways of approving our decisions (such as asking the teenagers for opinions). Although these challenges definitely did not help our work, we managed to complete the project and we were happy with our result.
- Our top advice for future fellows would be to stay open-minded and creative. Don't be afraid of obstacles that might appear. And last but not least: enjoy the experience!

## >> THE FINISHED PROTOTYPE



## >> BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## GET TO KNOW US BETTER

### INSTAGRAM

[instagram.com/mamyglos](https://www.instagram.com/mamyglos)

### E-MAIL

[kontakt@mamyglos.com](mailto:kontakt@mamyglos.com)

### WEB

[mamyglos.com](https://mamyglos.com)