



PILOT STUDY FINDINGS ON THE PROVISION OF HYGIENE KITS WITH REUSABLE SANITARY PADS

Testing the appropriateness and acceptability of AFRIpads reusable sanitary pads
in southwestern (Ugandan) refugee context among schoolgirls



Implemented by UNHCR – Mbarara Sub-Office, Field Units: Kyaka II, Rwamwanja, Nakivale
With support of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), AFRIpads Ltd., and field-teams of
Danish Refugee Council, Windle International Uganda, Finn Church Aid,
Lutheran World Federation, Save the Children and Accord

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Photo: AFRIpads Ltd. stock picture

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ANNEX OVERVIEW

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Annex 4: MHM Curriculum explanation

Annex 5: MHM and the SDGs

ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|---|
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| HH | Households |
| MHM | Menstrual Hygiene Management |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| OPM | Office of the Prime Minister |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SRHR | Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights |
| ToT | Training of Trainers |
| UNBS | Uganda National Bureau of Standards |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past two years, Uganda has responded to an immense influx of refugees from its neighbouring countries. While new arrivals from South Sudan have slowly reduced, Congolese refugees are crossing the border in large numbers. As a result, Uganda is currently hosting the largest number of refugees in the country's history. It's estimated that there will be 300,000 Congolese refugees in Uganda by the end of 2018 and the vast majority of them are women and children.¹

Globally, girls and women often lack the ability to manage their menstruation safely and with dignity due to a lack of adequate facilities, products and knowledge, which can be further exacerbated in refugee settings. In many cases, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is overlooked in emergency situations, which has an impact on areas like personal hygiene, education, gender equality and health. Reusable pads in this context have rapidly gained interest from development and humanitarian partners as a more sustainable, cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution for MHM related challenges in emergencies.

Pilot intervention

In collaboration with AFRipads, UNHCR Sub-office Mbarara implemented a three month pilot intervention in three southwestern settlements to test the appropriateness and acceptability of introducing reusable sanitary pads to schoolgirls in the refugee context. Product distribution (AFRipads Menstrual Kit with 4 reusable sanitary pads, underwear, soap and bucket) was accompanied by a menstrual hygiene training as well as instruction for the appropriate use and care of AFRipads. Data collection for the pilot evaluation was carried out at baseline and endline via individual interviews and focus group discussions.

Figure 1: Intervention activities



Appropriateness

Results from the baseline study indicated that schoolgirls in the southwestern refugee settlement context lacked access to the menstrual hygiene knowledge and products required for them to manage their menstruation in a healthy and dignified manner. Although UNHCR mandates that all women and girls of reproductive age are to receive distributions of disposable sanitary pads, soap and underwear, 71% of the girls reported not having enough menstrual products, 65% reported not having enough soap and 59% reported not having enough underwear. 44% percent also reported that they didn't have enough information about menstrual hygiene. Access to water was not, however, reported to be a major challenge with 65% reporting they always had enough water to manage their menstruation (the remaining 35% reported "sometimes") at baseline.

Participants generally reported being satisfied with the facilities available for changing, washing and drying their AFRIpads. **The number of girls that reported missing school during their period was cut in half when using AFRIpads and the girls indicated a significant drop in the number of leaks they experienced (59% to 9%) as well as a significant decrease in itching or burning (73% to 24%).** During the wet season, when drying times are longer, girls mentioned they need more AFRIpads to manage their cycles. However, respondents generally reported being satisfied with the infrastructure and facilities available to them to wash and change their pads at school.

Prior to the intervention, girls reported that **their main challenge was not having enough products and 20% even admitted reusing disposable sanitary pads** because they had no other options. Many refugee girls could not remember the last time they had received disposable pads from a general distribution. This underscores the ongoing logistical challenge that UNHCR currently struggles with in sustaining timely replenishments. After the intervention, not having enough products was no longer reported to be a top challenge, implying that the AFRIpads provided in the MHM kits met that challenge for many.

Access to enough soap and underwear remained top challenges even after the intervention, indicating that there is a larger, structural challenge in providing enough supplementary MHM necessities. It is important to note that access to enough soap and underwear is crucial, irrespective of the solution used (disposable or reusable). **Reported access to water, however, went up at endline with 73% reporting they always had enough water to clean their AFRIpads.**

Acceptance

Product uptake among the study participants was 99% and respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the AFRIpads. **The girls retained the instructions provided during the MHM training and adherence to the use and care guidelines was also close to 100%.** Even before AFRIpads were introduced, 52% of the participants indicated a preference for reusable pads over disposables.

Product Uptake:

- 99% of the girls tried the AFRIpads
- 92% used them during their last period
- 99% of the respondents indicated they would continue to use the AFRIpads
- 97% said they would recommend them to a friend

At endline, 84% indicated they'd prefer to use AFRIpads over disposable pads (8% preferred a combination of both kinds of products and 8% chose disposable only). **Reusable menstrual pads were clearly culturally and socially accepted in this refugee context.**

Considering the difficulty of continuously distributing disposable pads throughout the settlements and the waste management challenge disposable pads create, AFRIpads reusable sanitary pads are an appropriate, highly preferred and effective solution to managing menstruation in a safe, dignified and culturally acceptable way.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

MHM in Emergencies

Over 68 million people around the world have been forced from home, among them nearly 25.4 million refugees, many of them women and children.² An especially important issue is one of the most basic parts of life for a woman – menstruation. Globally, girls and women often lack the ability to manage their menstruation safely and with dignity due to a lack of adequate facilities, products and knowledge, which can be further exacerbated in refugee settings. In many cases, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is overlooked in emergency situations, which has an impact across sectors including: Education, Gender, Protection, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) and Health. Reusable pads in this context have rapidly gained interest from development and humanitarian partners as a more sustainable, cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution for MHM related challenges in emergencies.

MHM and Education

Challenge: In many resource poor settings, menstruation can negatively impact a girl’s education. This is especially the case in emergency contexts where a lack of private and safe WASH facilities, information about MHM, and adequate menstrual supplies may negatively impact a girl’s ability to participate in school.³ Dropout rates of girls in these settings are high and the gender disparity between boys and girls is significant.

Development and humanitarian organizations as well as governments around the world, and in East Africa and Uganda specifically, are acknowledging MHM as a way of keeping girls in school. The provision of durable reusable products is a widely accepted method for millions of school girls, especially in refugee contexts where distribution gaps result in girls often having no products at all. (SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all & SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)

MHM and Health

Challenge: If women and girls lack access to affordable, hygienic menstrual products, they often use old rags, cloths or other unhygienic materials. This can lead to reproductive tract infections (RTIs) and other negative health conditions. (see Annex 5: WASH United and Simavi MH-Day document on SDGs) Having access to safe and hygienic menstrual products is a basic human right, therefore more and more organizations are focusing on integrating MHM into sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education programmes. (SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages)

MHM and WASH

Challenge: Maintaining safety and dignity while accessing sanitation facilities remains a widespread challenge in humanitarian contexts. Hygiene and health is in jeopardy when women and girls lack access to enough and adequate menstrual products, related supplies such as soap and water and menstrual hygiene promotion. As a result, women and girls are often not able to manage their menstruation hygienically and comfortably. The revised goals of UNHCR set out by the High Commissioner, address MHM as one of the 5 key priorities of any WASH intervention. Inspired by this fact, the UNHCR Mbarara Sub-Office felt compelled to take the lead on this pilot project. (WASH and gender equality are represented in SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainability of water and sanitation by all)

MHM and waste management

Challenge: Used menstrual materials contribute significantly to waste flow in refugee settlements, and inadequate waste disposal systems often lead to waste management issues (i.e. clogging of WASH facilities). On average, a woman will use up to 200 disposable pads in a year, significantly straining the waste management systems in refugee contexts which have to absorb millions of pads per year. (SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns)

MHM and supply chain

Challenge: The MHM Toolkit in emergencies - the premier resource guiding MHM response in emergency contexts, published by Colombia University and International Rescue Committee, points out the importance of considering the product cycle of usage, which has influence on procurement, distribution and disposal frequency as well as budget.³ Disposable pad distribution requires ongoing consistency in distributions or else a girl will run out of products quickly. Several distribution moments a year take a lot of logistical resources and planning and there is widespread acknowledgement among field staff that disposable pads, when distributed in bulk to cater for several months at a time, are frequently sold off, exchanged for other items, or shared with other household members.

High quality reusable cloth pads have a life cycle of usage of a minimum of 12 months and are usually considered to be more cost effective compared to a year-supply of disposable pads. Distribution would only occur once a year, saving on logistical resources. Once a pack is opened and used, it is significantly less likely for a girl to share her personal cloth pads and selling them off at this point becomes a non-issue.

Pilot justification

Uganda is currently hosting the largest number of refugees in the country's history. The majority of the refugees in the southwestern settlements of Rwamwanja, Kyaka II and Nakivale, are from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The vast majority of the 284,265 Congolese refugees in Uganda (as of October 31, 2018)⁴ are women and children.¹ It is UNHCR's mandate to provide lifesaving and life improving services and products, and this includes the central procurement and nationwide distribution of sanitary materials as well as related items such as soap, underwear and buckets.

The challenges that UNHCR Uganda faces in the area of menstrual hygiene management are similar to those mentioned above. The main emphasis lies on budgetary constraints, therefore not being able to procure and distribute enough sanitary pads on a regular basis, leaving gaps in distributions, and waste management issues, including disposable pads filling up latrines - rendering them useless - and not enough incinerators to manage the waste flow. In recent years, the humanitarian sector has embraced an innovation in the space of menstrual hygiene products that helps to address and overcome these challenges. Reusable sanitary pads are now widely distributed in the Sub-Saharan African context by a range of UN Agencies and NGOs. UNHCR Global also recognizes reusable pads as a core relief item, which shows the widespread acceptance and implementation of reusable solutions in refugee contexts.

Although reusable menstrual products are widely distributed within refugee settlements, no evidence on the introduction of AFRIpads reusable pads in the southwestern refugee settlement context is currently available. UNHCR's Sub-Office in Mbarara therefore expressed an interest in collecting feedback from beneficiaries about the appropriateness and acceptability of reusable pads. The outcomes will support future programming decisions on the supply of suitable menstrual products based on the beneficiaries' own choice and preference.

UNHCR Uganda and UNHCR Mbarara therefore partnered with AFRIpads Uganda Ltd. to implement a pilot with the aim of [“testing the appropriateness and acceptability of reusable sanitary pads in the southwestern refugee context, specifically among schoolgirls”](#).

AFRIpads is a social business that was selected to be a partner in this pilot because of its role as a leader in the menstrual space, as evidenced by international partners' recognition of their work in the region over the past ten years. As the only local manufacturers of UNBS-certified reusable pads on the market, AFRIpads has worked in collaboration with over 200 NGO's in Uganda, and supplied millions of menstrual kits to humanitarian organizations across East Africa, including UN agencies. There is an existing partnership between AFRIpads and UNHCR, whereby AFRIpads holds a Regional Framework Agreement for the supply of reusable sanitary pads to The Horn, East & Central Africa region and also serves as a knowledge and training partner at a global level. Over the past 4 years, UNHCR has implemented programs distributing AFRIpads' reusable sanitary pads to over 100,000 refugee women and girls, most of them to Burundian refugees in Tanzania with very positive results.

With support of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and field-teams of Danish Refugee Council, Windle International Uganda, Finn Church Aid, Lutheran World Federation, Save the Children and Accord, UNHCR's Sub-Office Mbarara and AFRIpads completed a pilot intervention in Rwamwanja, Kyaka II and Nakivale. The study was comprised of a baseline survey to assess the current MHM facilities available as well as challenges and preferences with regards to menstruation; MHM training/capacity building; distribution of hygiene kits including reusable sanitary pads (AFRIpads); endline survey and focus group discussions. The findings of these interventions are presented and discussed in this report.

Partner information

About UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the global organization dedicated to protecting the rights of refugees, displaced communities and stateless people. In Uganda, UNHCR is responding to three concurrent emergency influxes from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. The profile of new arrivals is characterized by a high proportion of women and children.

It is UNHCR's mandate to centrally procure and distribute hygiene materials including sanitary pads and other supplies (soap, underwear, buckets etc.). Even though the global technical lead for MHM lies within the WASH department, the community-based protection department has historically been responsible for choosing and distributing menstrual hygiene materials. Women and girls of reproductive age are nationally mandated to receive 6 bars of soap, 6 packets of disposable sanitary pads and 3 pairs of underwear bi-annually (Juliet Mwebesa, Associate WASH Officer Sub-Office Mbarara).

The caseload for the Sub-Office in Mbarara, where the study was based, consists of three settlements, which are all included in the pilot: Rwamwanja, Nakivale, and Kyaka II.

Number of women of reproductive age (12-49 years) that are eligible to receive menstrual product distributions:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Kyaka II | 17,879 (as of November 15, 2018) |
| Rwamwanja | 19,200 (as of October 30, 2018) |
| Nakivale | 28,496 (as of October 30, 2018) |
| Total: | 65,575 |

About AFRIPads

AFRIPads is a social enterprise that has worked for nearly a decade on addressing and removing the barriers menstruation imposes on many girls and women across Sub-Saharan Africa. The organization introduced an innovative menstrual product that addresses key challenges of access, affordability and sustainability. AFRIPads locally manufactures its products, creating gainful employment to over 200+, 96% of whom are women. This impactful solution is now supplied globally to humanitarian partners to address the menstrual hygiene needs of women and girls in this context.

AFRIPads' menstrual products

AFRIPads' Menstrual Kits consist of four reusable sanitary pads and a storage bag, which are designed to support a girl to manage her period for at least twelve months. All AFRIPads reusable sanitary pads are certified for quality and safety by the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) and provide leak-proof and comfortable protection for girls during their periods.



Partner support

AFRIPads recognizes that providing a menstrual product on its own does not address the complex needs women and girls face during menstruation. Designing a comprehensive MHM intervention requires an integral approach that takes into consideration the perspectives of WASH, Protection and Education. AFRIPads therefore offers key services to further enhance the effectiveness of its partners' programs. These include interactive MHM trainings and capacity building in the field, as well as an extensive M&E framework with data collection tools and support.

AFRIPads' MHM curriculum

AFRIPads developed this curriculum to provide partner organizations with a tool to easily and accurately train their respective field staff, thereby addressing some of the parallel MHM needs of their beneficiaries, beyond pads. (See Annex 4: MHM Curriculum explanation)



About WoMena

WoMena Uganda is a non-governmental organization focusing on bridging the gap between reproductive health innovations and implementation of these innovations. WoMena promotes the use of evidence-based, effective reproductive health technologies and solutions such as menstrual cups and reusable pads through research, advocacy, awareness raising and project implementation. Currently focusing on MHM in Uganda, WoMena specializes in creating supportive environments for innovations at both the local and national level through high-quality program design, training and follow-up.

WoMena co-developed the AFRIPads' Girl Talk MHM curriculum (in line with the National MHM reader) and co-developed AFRIPads' current MHM baseline and endline surveys and the FGD guide used in this pilot intervention.



METHODOLOGY AND INTERVENTION DESIGN

To address the menstrual hygiene needs of female beneficiaries, UNHCR and its partners currently distribute disposable sanitary pads to women and girls of reproductive age throughout Uganda’s refugee settlements. Every six months, 6 packs of disposable pads, 6 pieces of soap (250g) and 3 pairs of knickers are mandated to be distributed by the UNHCR Protection Unit and its partners.

In collaboration with AFRIpads, WoMena and Danish Refugee Council, UNHCR Sub-office Mbarara implemented a pilot intervention in three southwestern settlements to test the feasibility of introducing reusable sanitary pads to schoolgirls in this context. Product distribution was accompanied by a menstrual hygiene training as well as instruction for the appropriate use and care of AFRIpads. Data collection for the pilot evaluation was carried out at baseline and endline via individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). UNHCR and OPM were jointly responsible for coordination and mobilization in the field.

Project goal

To test the appropriateness and acceptability of reusable sanitary pads in the southwestern refugee context, specifically amongst schoolgirls.

To measure the appropriateness of the intervention, participants were asked about their current needs, their challenges in managing menstruation and if they have access to the necessary facilities and amenities required to properly use AFRIpads reusable sanitary pads. To measure the acceptance of the intervention, participants were asked about their satisfaction with different aspects of the products and how well they were able to follow the product use and care instructions.

Figure 1: Intervention activities



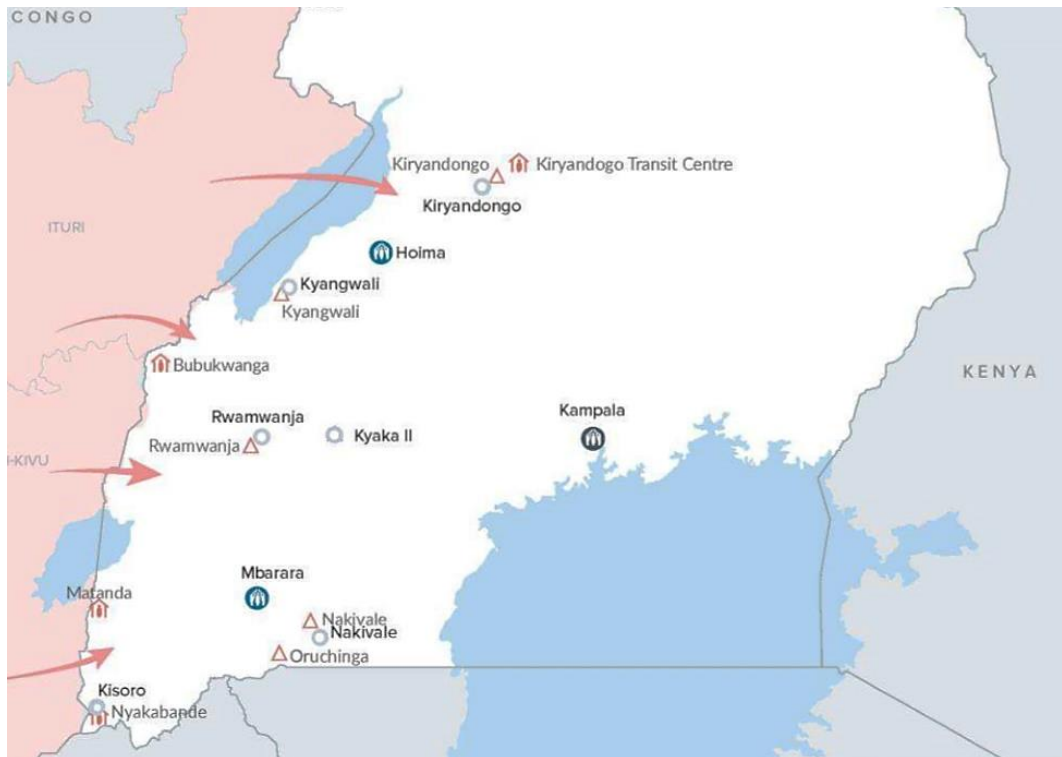
Intervention Details

Survey Development

In collaboration with WoMena, two surveys were developed: a baseline survey (See Annex 1: Baseline survey) to assess the status of the situation before the intervention (July/August 2018) and an endline survey (see Annex 2: Endline survey) to assess the impact of the intervention after three months of product use (November 2018).

Pilot Participants

Ninety schoolgirls were randomly selected by UNHCR in each of the three refugee settlements located in southwestern Uganda: Rwamwanja, Kyaka II, and Nakivale for a total of 270 girls.



Map Source: *Congolese Situation: Responding to the Needs of Displaced Congolese and Refugees, January-December 2018 (UNHCR, 2018)*

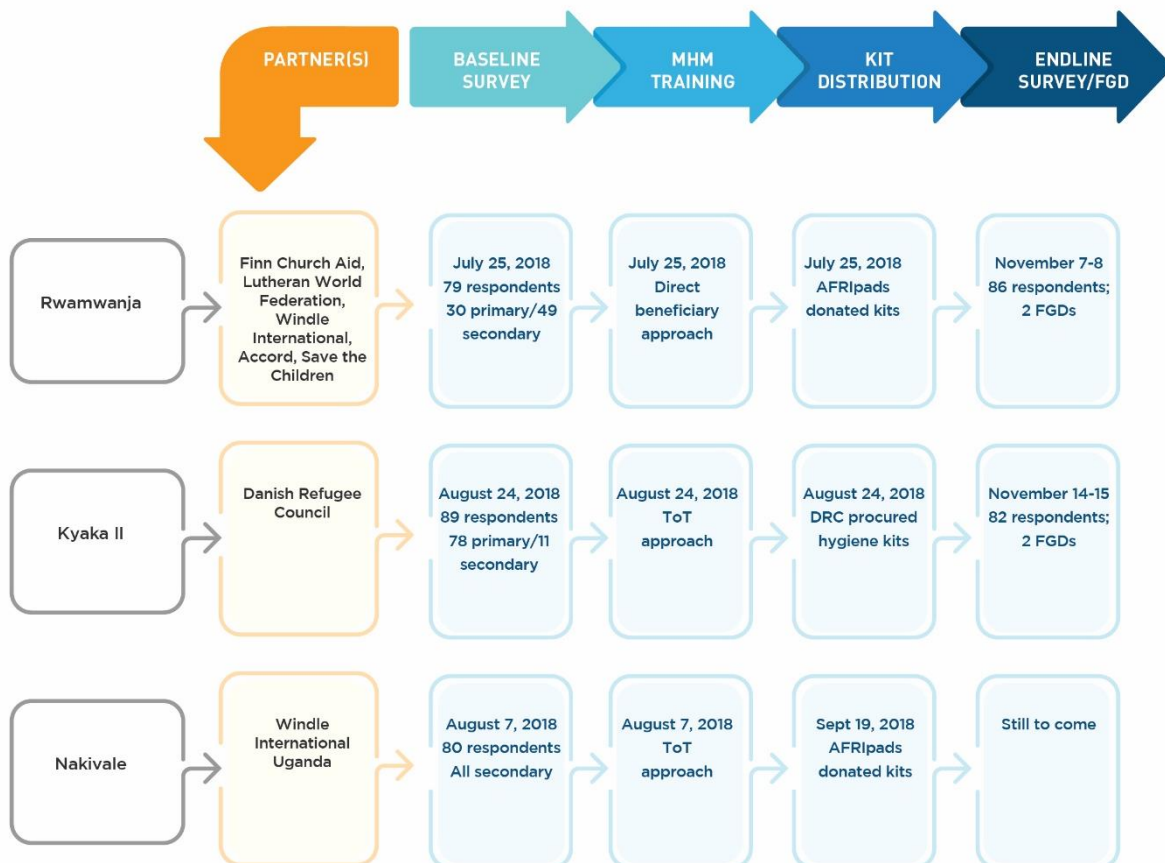
The pilot participants were all menstruating schoolgirls, some in primary and some in secondary school (age range of 13-20 years). The groups were split between the host - Ugandan - and refugee populations of the settlements (3:7 ratio). Vast majority of the refugees were Congolese. Participants were individually interviewed in English, or via a translator as needed, and enumerators entered their responses into EchoMobile, an online data collection platform, in real time. The girls were provided with information on the pilot study and evaluation process and asked for their consent to participate prior to both the baseline and endline interviews.

Training

After the baseline survey was conducted, participants received AFRIpads' three hour MHM training which covered, among other topics, the menstrual cycle, the reproductive system, personal and menstrual hygiene, as well as instructions for the proper use and care of AFRIpads reusable sanitary pads. In Rwamwanja, the participants were directly trained by AFRIpads staff. In Kyaka II and Nakivale, a ToT (Training of Trainers) approach was used whereby UNHCR partners and school teachers (senior women) were trained by AFRIpads to carry out the MHM training for the pilot participants. (See Annex 4: MHM Curriculum explanation)

Intervention Approach by Settlement

Figure 2: Intervention approach by settlement



Product Distribution

All settlements received 90 hygiene kits to distribute to the study participants; Rwamwanja and Nakivale received donations from the AFRIpads Foundation while the Kyaka II group was given kits that were procured by the Danish Refugee Council as part of a larger distribution.

Figure 3: Intervention package

| The AFRIpads donated intervention package included: | The DRC hygiene kit included: |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Deluxe AFRIpads Kit (3 Maxi Pads, 1 Super Maxi, 1 Storage bag - enough products for 1 year)• 1 backpack• 3 pairs of underwear• 750g of laundry soap (enough for approximately 3 months)• 1 small bucket with lid | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Deluxe AFRIpads Kit (3 Maxi Pads, 1 Super Maxi, 1 Storage bag - enough products for 1 year)• 3 pairs of underwear• 1 kg of laundry soap• 1 large bucket (10L) |

Figure 4: Contents of the AFRIpads donated intervention package



Data Collection

Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected at baseline and endline. NGO field staff that conducted data collection received a training on AFRIpads products, how to conduct individual interviews, and the use of EchoMobile, the platform used to collect data.

In early November 2018, the study participants were interviewed again using the endline survey on the EchoMobile platform. Unfortunately, due to a delay in hygiene kit distribution in Nakivale, that group was not ready to receive the endline survey in time for this report but their baseline responses were still used in the baseline analysis to get a broader understanding of the initial MHM situation. Nakivale's endline responses will be collected and analyzed after three months have elapsed.

Endline Focus Group Discussions

To ensure a deeper understanding of the participants' opinions and experiences with the training and products, four endline focus groups were conducted in Rwamwanja and Kyaka II, two with primary and two with secondary school girls. NGO staff that assisted in the endline focus group discussions received an additional training developed by WoMena on effective guidelines for leading focus group discussions. (See Annex 3: Focus group discussion guide)

The main goals of these small group (8-10 girls) discussions were to highlight any recurring themes that came up and to expose any gaps in the survey content. By allowing girls to speak freely, the aim was that they would openly discuss the challenges they face - some of which may not have been considered during survey development. A translator was used as needed (particularly for the younger participants). Notes were taken for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Surveys were conducted using EchoMobile via mobile phones and tablets. Responses were stored securely and downloaded at the end of each day. The quantitative data was then collectively organized and analyzed using a spreadsheet application. Qualitative thematic data from the focus group discussions was also reviewed to draw conclusions and make comparisons between baseline and endline.

Study Limitations

Although the study provides preliminary insights into the participants' experiences of using AFRIPads and their acceptability in the refugee settlement context, the following pilot limitations should be noted:

- Pending endline data from the Nakivale group, total endline sample size was smaller for this analysis: 249 total at baseline vs 167 at endline.
- Respondents were chosen at random; however the group was more distributed at Kyaka II (girls were chosen from 8 different schools) compared to Rwamwanja (girls were only chosen from two schools).
- The Kyaka II group consisted predominantly of primary schoolgirls, while the Nakivale girls were all in secondary school, limiting the level of comparison possible within the settlements between the age groups. (The Rwamwanja group was a good combination of both primary and secondary girls).
- While the three settlements provide similar contexts (refugee settlements in southwestern Uganda), the population is more varied in Nakivale. In Kyaka II, 91% of the participants were Ugandan or Congolese (split by a ratio of 3:7) and in Rwamwanja, 98% of the participants were either Ugandan or Congolese (split 3:7). In Nakivale, only 54% were either Ugandan or Congolese. The rest included refugees from Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. This difference may impact the cultural context and will need to be taken into account when Nakivale's endline data is received.
- For some respondents, particularly those in primary school, speaking and understanding English was difficult. While many of the baseline surveys were translated into local languages, most of the endline surveys were not.

FINDINGS

Pre-intervention (baseline survey) interviews were conducted in July and August of 2018 to obtain data on perceived challenges and potential opportunities related to the participants' menstrual hygiene. Post-intervention (endline survey) interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in early November 2018 to determine the appropriateness and acceptance of AFRIpads reusable sanitary pads and MHM training in this context. The following findings are based on the 249 interviews conducted at baseline in Rwamwanja, Kyaka II and Nakivale, the 167 interviews conducted at endline in Rwamwanja and Kyaka II as well as focus group discussions in Rwamwanja and Kyaka II.

Appropriateness

In order to evaluate if the MHM training and AFRIpads products are an appropriate solution to mitigate the menstrual hygiene challenges faced by schoolgirls in the southwestern refugee settlement context, study participants were asked about their menstrual hygiene knowledge, the MHM related challenges they face and the WASH facilities they have access to.

Menstrual hygiene knowledge

When first interviewed, 44% of the respondents said they did not know what their first period was when it happened and 50% percent of the girls reported that they did not have enough information about menstruation. After the intervention, only 23% of participants indicated that they still felt that they did not have enough information about menstrual hygiene. In focus group discussions, when asked about the MHM training they received as a part of the intervention, girls responded very positively using words like “helpful” and “correct”. Although the training had taken place several months earlier, the girls appeared to have retained the information.

Main Challenges Faced During Period

Respondents were asked to indicate the main challenges they faced during their period. There was no limit to the number of selections and there was also an option to write in a challenge that was not listed (although no respondents elected to do so).

Question: “What are the main challenges you face during your menstrual period?”

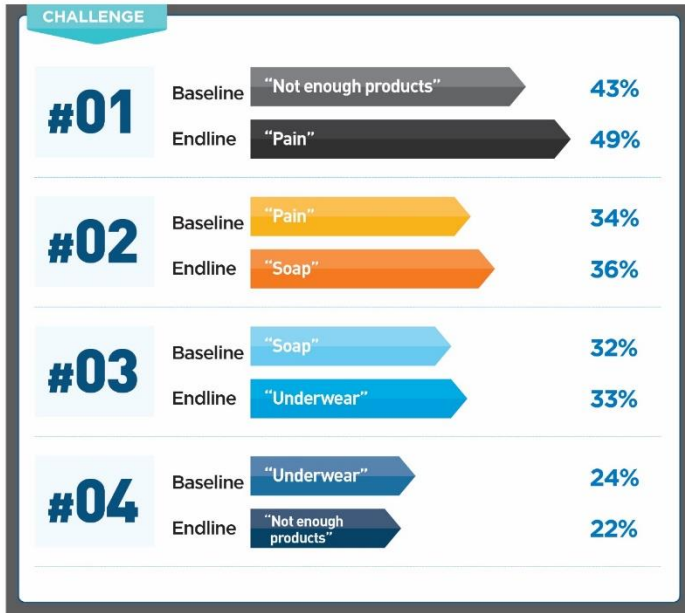
Answer choices:

- I Don't have enough menstrual products
- I Don't have enough underwear
- I Don't have enough water to clean myself/my products
- I Don't have enough soap to clean myself/my products
- I Don't have privacy to change my products
- There are cultural/religious restrictions during my period
- I get teased at school during my period
- I feel embarrassed
- I experience a lot of pain
- Don't know
- Other

#1 BASELINE CHALLENGE: Not having enough menstrual products

At baseline, the respondents reported that not having enough sanitary products during their period was their top challenge (chosen by 43% of the girls). This number dropped to 22% (#4 on the list) after the intervention, implying that the AFRipads provided met that challenge for many. Girls revealed in focus group discussions that in some situations (heavy flow, rainy season increasing drying time, being asked to share pads) the 4 reusable sanitary pads per AFRipads pack were not sufficient.

Figure 5: Main Challenges Faced During Period

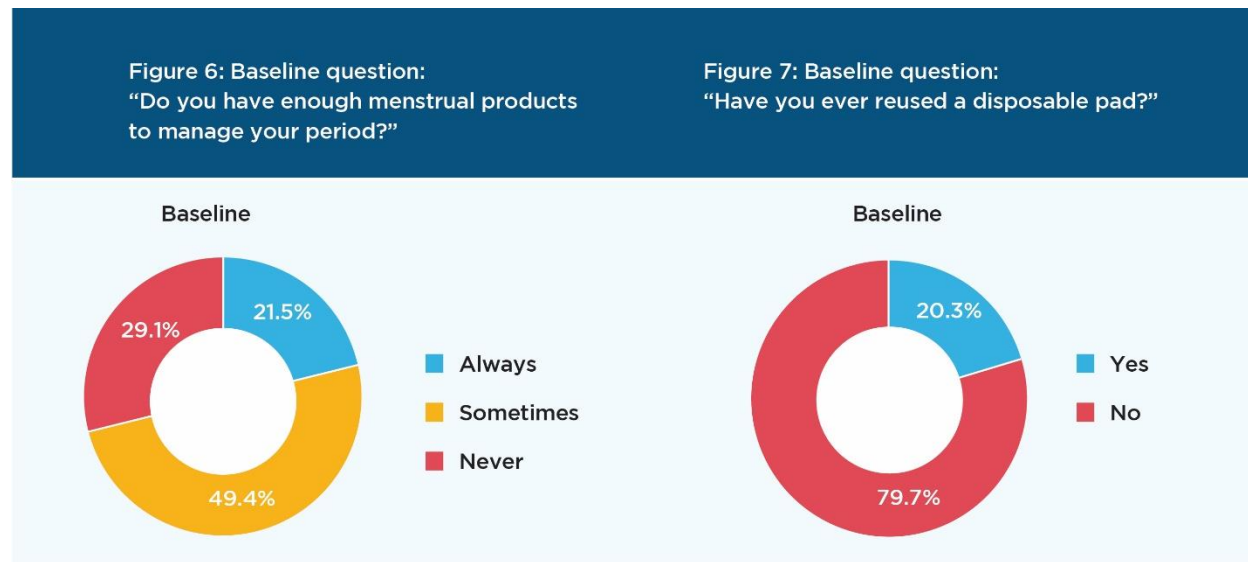


Individual interview, endline survey
Rwamwanja

In a separate question, when the girls were directly asked if they had enough menstrual products at baseline, only 21% indicated they had enough and a third of the girls reported that they NEVER had enough products. Although UNHCR and its implementing partners have a mandate to distribute disposable pads to all women and girls of reproductive age every 6 months (totaling 120 disposable pads per year), gaps in such logistically complicated continuous distributions are inevitable and on average, women use approximately 200 disposable pads in a year. While the vast majority of respondents claimed to be using disposable pads before the intervention, in focus group discussions they revealed they had not received any sanitary products in over one year and some couldn't remember the last time they received any products. One respondent said she would "use whatever she could find" when she didn't have any products. This could explain why, when asked how often they preferred to receive distributions of menstrual products, many chose monthly over quarterly or bi-yearly.

20% of surveyed girls even admitted to *reusing* disposable menstrual pads at baseline.

It is also important to note that although only refugees receive menstrual hygiene products via UNHCR-mandated distributions, survey responses given by Ugandan nationals when compared to refugees were not statistically different (at baseline or endline), further implying the distributions are not having their intended impact.



1 ENDLINE CHALLENGE: Pain

Experiencing a lot of pain was the second most-selected challenge prior to the intervention and replaced “not having enough products” as the top challenge in endline interviews. 80% of respondents reported having pain during their period. Of those, 44% reported the pain was “severe”. This statistic remained unchanged by the intervention highlighting the importance of discussing pain management as a part of the MHM curriculum.

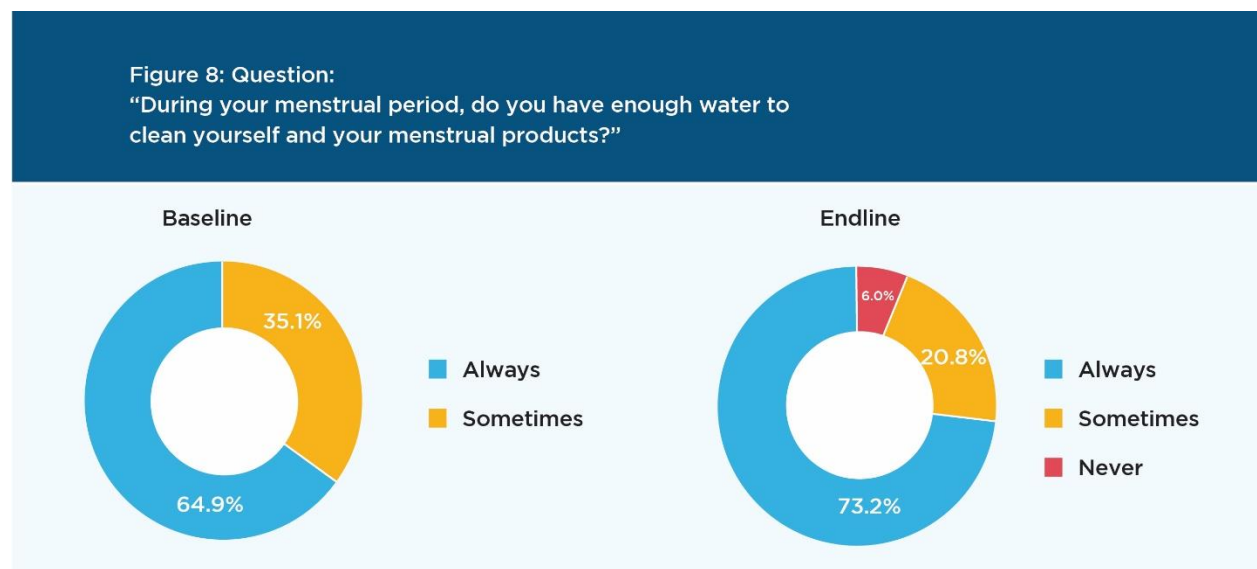
CONSISTENT CHALLENGES: Soap and Underwear

Having enough soap was also indicated to be a challenge, both before and after the intervention, with the percentages remaining similar: 35% reported always having enough, 53% sometimes and 12% never having enough. Although the girls were given 750g of soap with their AFRIpads kits, they reported in focus group discussions that they had to use the soap for washing other belongings as well so each 250g bar only lasted about one week.

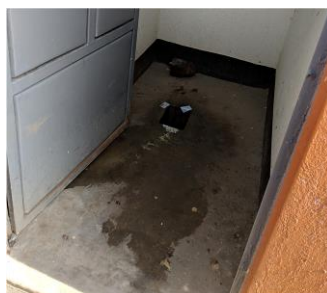
Although the girls were given 3 pairs of underwear as part of the hygiene kits, 60% reported not having enough, both before and after the intervention. The majority reported to own 5 or more pairs of underwear and it’s unclear as to how many would be considered enough.

WASH Context

Having access to enough water to clean themselves and their menstrual products was not reported to be a challenge for most of the girls, with 65% indicating they always had enough water prior to the intervention and 73% indicating they always had enough water at endline. Considering using AFRIpads requires approximately 1 liter of water per wash (assuming one wash per day, this is approximately 3-5 additional liters of water per month depending on the length of the period), it appears that the extra water needed does not cause any added hardship for the girls. One important point to make here is that while water is sometimes rationed in the settlement communities, it is not limited in school settings. Boarding schoolgirls did report always having enough water (83%) more than day students (70%) however, the percentages for both groups are promising.



Although not asked about in the interviews, the latrines in each of the visited schools were inspected. The girls and boys latrines were always separated for privacy, however, the hand washing containers were always empty - there was no soap or water readily available for handwashing. That being said, many of the girls also reported in focus group discussions that they could easily change their AFRIpads in either “changing rooms” or bath/wash rooms available to them at school and that those facilities were adequate.

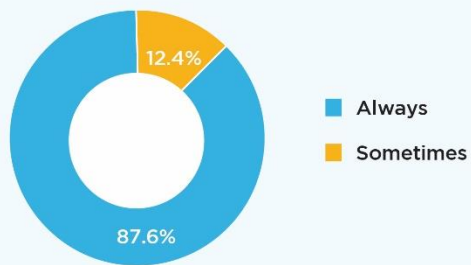


Toilet facilities in one of the schools in Rwamwanja

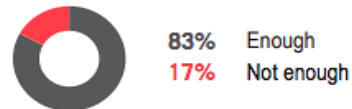
ABOUT KYAKA II

Although the three settlements provided similar contexts for this pilot study (refugee settlements in southwestern Uganda), Kyaka II stood out in several respects. Access to water facilities was reported to be significantly better in Kyaka II by both the study participants as well as the August 2018 UNHCR Needs Assessment reports ([Kyaka II](#), [Nakivale](#) and [Rwamwanja](#)). In Kyaka II, 83% of households (HH) reported having enough water compared to 53% in Rwamwanja and 26% in Nakivale.⁵ For cleaning menstrual products, 88% of Kyaka II girls reported always having enough water at baseline, compared to about 50% in the other two settlements. These percentages remained consistent at endline (although Nakivale remains to be surveyed).

Figure 9: Kyaka II results. Question: "During your menstrual period, do you have enough water to clean yourself and your menstrual products?"



% of HHs reporting not having enough water to cover the basic HH needs during the 7 days prior to data collection:



Graphic source: Multi-sector Needs Assessment Kyaka II, UNHCR Aug 2018

Similarly, Kyaka II girls also reported better supplies of soap (45% saying they always had enough compared to 26% in Rwamwanja) and underwear (50% saying they had enough, compared to 26% in Rwamwanja), both before and after the intervention. Kyaka II girls reported having less difficulty attending school during their periods and reported that they felt they had enough information regarding menstrual hygiene (when compared to Rwamwanja and Nakivale). Kyaka II girls also reported a significantly higher preference for reusable pads (79% compared to 42% in Rwamwanja) over disposable at baseline, indicating that they had previous experience with reusable pads. Product satisfaction and uptake was also higher in Kyaka II at endline with 88% preferring reusable pads (although the jump from baseline was less dramatic than at Rwamwanja where 80% preferred reusable pads at endline) implying that exposure to AFRIpads over a longer period of time improves product experience.

According to UNHCR and DRC focal persons, the findings implying better conditions at Kyaka II may be because that settlement is currently in "emergency status"- accepting new arrivals and gaining more attention.

Available facilities for the use and care of AFRIpads

80% of the respondents reported changing their AFRIpads at least twice per day with the vast majority using the school latrines, washrooms or “changing rooms” to change. When asked how satisfied they were with how easy it was to change their pads at school, 80% responded “very satisfied” or “satisfied”. That percentage grew to 95% when they were asked about changing their AFRIpads at home.

While 69% of respondents indicated that they dried their AFRIpads on a clothesline outside, clothes pegs did not seem readily available. Upon visiting a secondary school dormitory, only a few clothes items were seen drying on a line outside. Most girls were using small hooks inside the dormitory - along the ceiling and by the windows - to dry their underwear and other personal items.



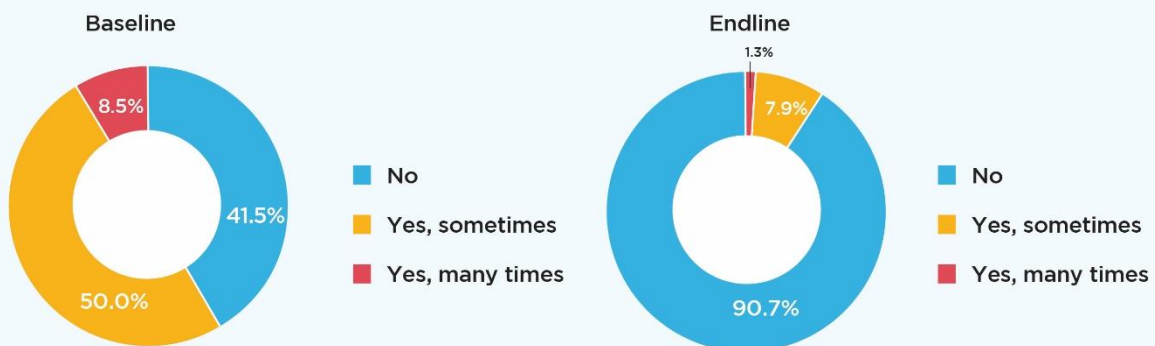
Inside a girls' dormitory at a school in Rwamwanja

In focus group discussions, the girls clearly expressed comfort in changing, washing and drying the pads while at boarding school “because we’re all girls, we’re all going through the same thing” according to one respondent.

Leaks

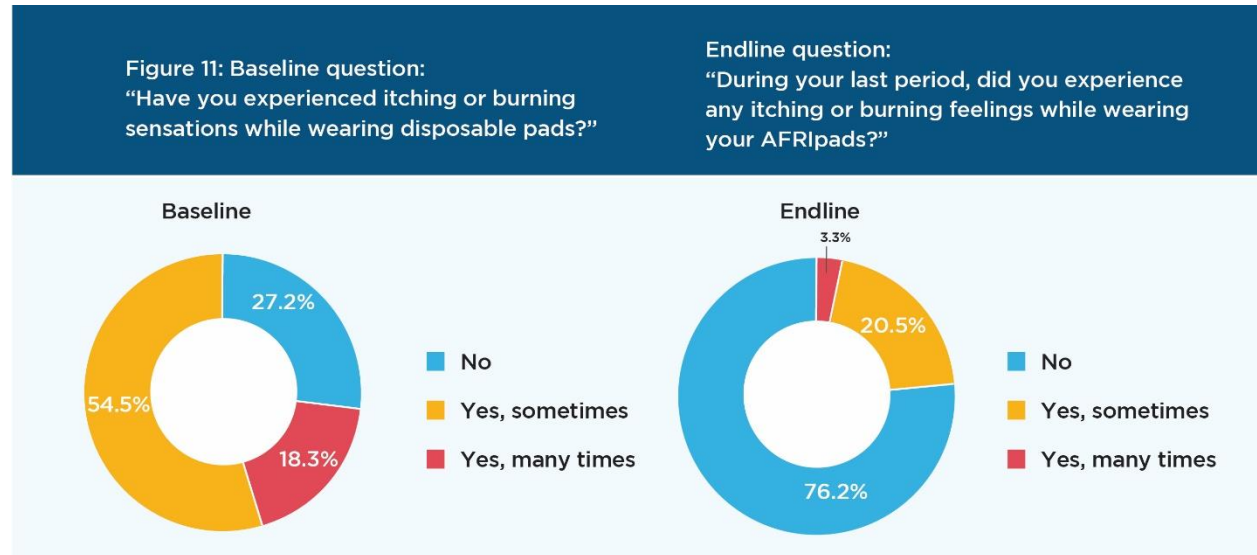
Before the intervention, 59% of respondents reported they experienced leaks either “sometimes” or “many times” during their periods. This dropped to 9% after AFRIpads were introduced. Since most respondents reported that disposable pads were their main menstrual hygiene method at baseline, this indicates that AFRIpads were able to significantly mitigate a major issue the girls were facing on a monthly basis. During focus group discussions the girls used words such as “free” and “relaxed” when describing how they felt when using AFRIpads. Some girls also mentioned that they felt much more comfortable taking bodas when using AFRIpads because they wouldn’t worry about the pads shifting around.

Figure 10: Question:
“Have you experienced leaks while wearing your current menstrual product/method?”



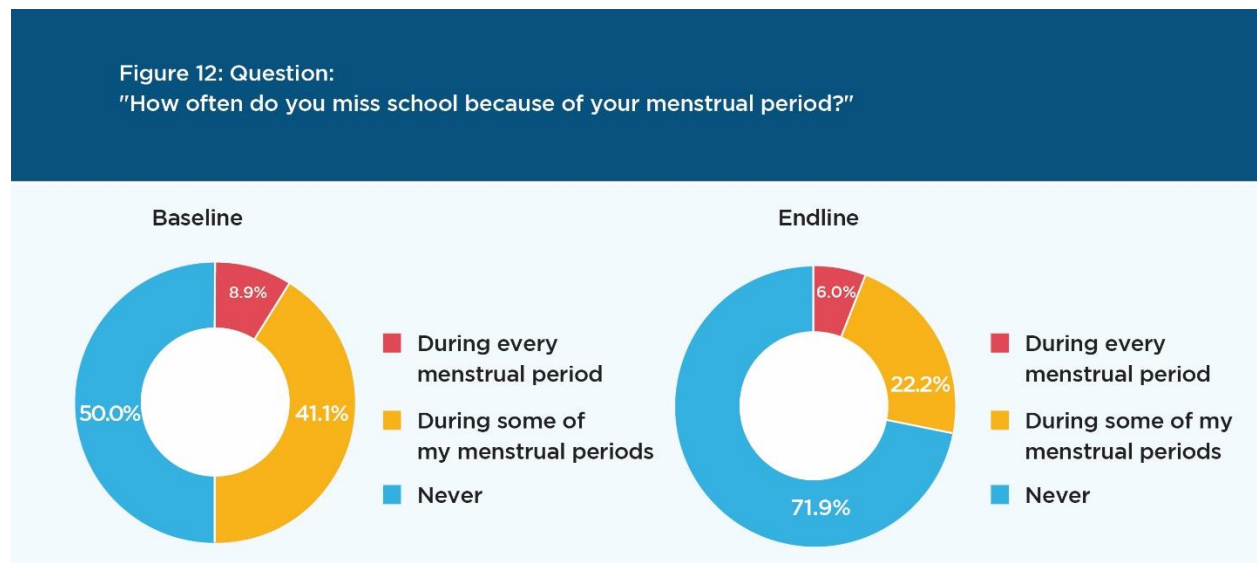
Itching/burning

Prior to the intervention, almost 3/4 of respondents reported that they experienced itching or burning at least sometimes during their periods. After the introduction of AFRIpads, that number dropped to less than 1/4, indicating they found reusable pads significantly more comfortable.



Difficulty attending school during menstruation

Before the intervention, approximately 50% of respondents reported missing at least some school during their periods. This number was cut in half by the introduction of AFRIpads. Although the girls were not asked why they missed school at baseline, when asked after the intervention, the vast majority indicated that pain or feeling unwell were the reasons why they did not attend school. Challenges such as not having enough products or leaking were not indicated.



Time to dry

Drying the AFRIpads was reported to be a challenge, particularly in the rainy season. 40% of the girls indicated that the pads took more than 4 hours to dry in the wet season (compared to 1-2 hours being the most reported drying time in the dry season), and many of those said it sometimes took more than a full day to completely dry. 12% even reported that the pads never properly dried when it rained.

During focus group discussions it became clear that because the girls would often not have time to wash the pads until after school (or when they came home from school close to sunset), if they used 2-3 pads during the day, they would not be dry for use by the next morning. That being said, 90% of the girls claimed they never wore a damp pad. They said they would go without or try to find disposable pads until the AFRIpads dried. Understandably, only 24% indicated that they felt the 4-pack of AFRIpads was sufficient for their needs. Most requested 6 pads (4 maxi and 2 supermaxi) as a minimum, 8 would be better for those with a heavy flow.

Challenges to accessing menstrual products

High cost was the main challenge reported by the participants when asked what difficulties they had accessing menstrual products. This was relatively consistent when comparing pre (45%) and post (39%) intervention. Other challenges mentioned included: products were not available at their local market, products were not distributed often enough or in enough quantity, and they were embarrassed to ask for the products. It's also important to note that after the intervention, the number of girls that reported they had "no challenges" to accessing menstrual products more than doubled (from 10% to 21%).



Training of enumerators in Rwamwanja

Acceptance

In order to evaluate whether the MHM training and AFRIpads products were accepted by the study participants as a feasible and positive solution for their menstrual challenges, the girls were asked to give their product feedback and preferences, relate their user experience and ability to adhere to the use and care instructions, and share how successfully AFRIpads were able to meet their menstrual challenges.

The reasons given by those who didn't use them included: they had a light flow and didn't need to, they were in exams and didn't have time to wash them, and they didn't have enough soap or water to wash them. Only one girl mentioned not using them because they itched/burned.

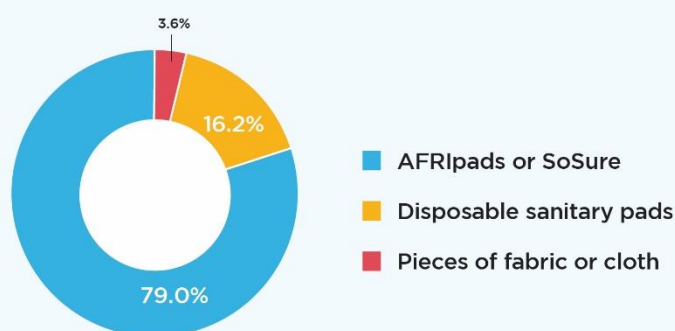
Prior to the intervention, most of the girls (71%) reported disposable pads as their main menstrual hygiene product. After the pilot intervention, an even higher percentage - 79% - indicated AFRIpads as their main menstrual hygiene product.

Having only approximately 3 months to get used to reusable sanitary pads, such a reported uptake is significant.

Product Uptake:

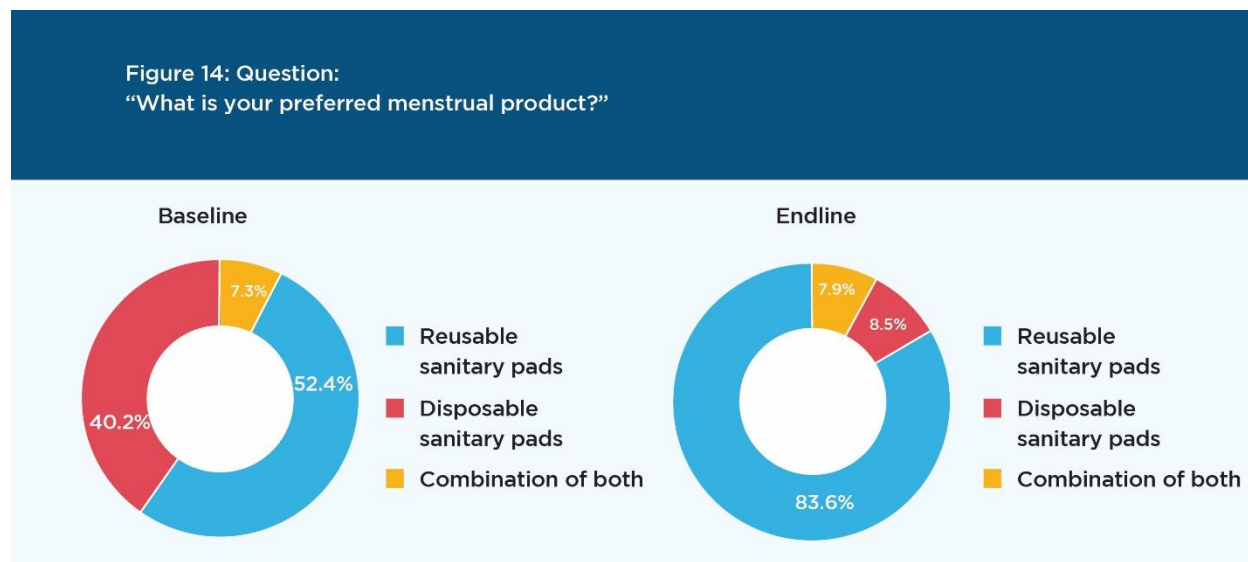
- 99% of the girls tried the AFRIpads
- 92% used them during their last period
- 99% of the respondents indicated they would continue to use the AFRIpads
- 97% said they would recommend them to a friend

Figure 13: Endline Question:
"What was the main method you used during your last period?"



Preferred menstrual product

At baseline, before most of the girls had been exposed to reusable pads, over 50% of the girls reported they preferred using reusable pads over disposable pads, when given a choice between the two product categories. 40% chose disposable pads at baseline and 8% preferred a combination of products. **After receiving AFRIpads reusable pads, the percentage that preferred reusable pads over disposable pads grew even more: from 52% to 85%. At endline, only 8% preferred disposables and the remaining 8% indicated they preferred a combination of both.**



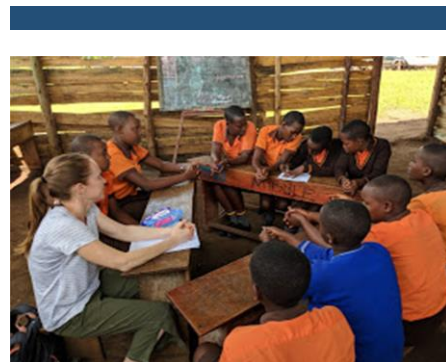
Prior to the intervention, only 39.6% indicated they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their main menstrual hygiene product (disposable pads). This more than doubled to 86.1% once AFRIpads were introduced.

Adherence to use and care guidelines of AFRIpads

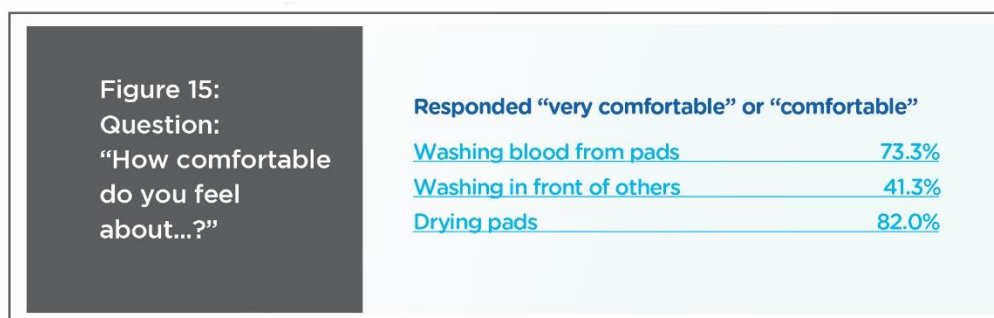
99% percent of the participants reported that they remembered receiving a menstrual hygiene training and information about how to use and care for AFRIpads. **The girls had retained the instructions extremely well with 95% reporting they washed their products in cold soap and water (many also mentioned pre-soaking as well) as directed.** 86% percent reported that they washed their pads prior to first use as directed. The girls were eager to show focus group leaders how they fold and put away their used pads in the storage bag they were provided as well as how they cover their pads with the provided cloth (kitenge) when drying. These are very positive findings considering some of the younger girls seemed to have trouble understanding English. Translators may be useful for future trainings if available.

Comfort level with use and care

73% percent of respondents indicated that they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” washing blood from their pads. When asked to elaborate in focus group discussions, many girls said they had no concerns about it because “it’s my blood so it’s fine!” 82% percent of respondents also reported they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” drying their AFRIpads. A smaller percentage (41%) reported they were “very comfortable” or “comfortable” washing their pads in front of others indicating that privacy when washing is important. However, when focus groups were asked about washing and drying in front of others, boarding students indicated that they had no issues caring for their AFRIpads because everyone around them was going through the same thing and understood.

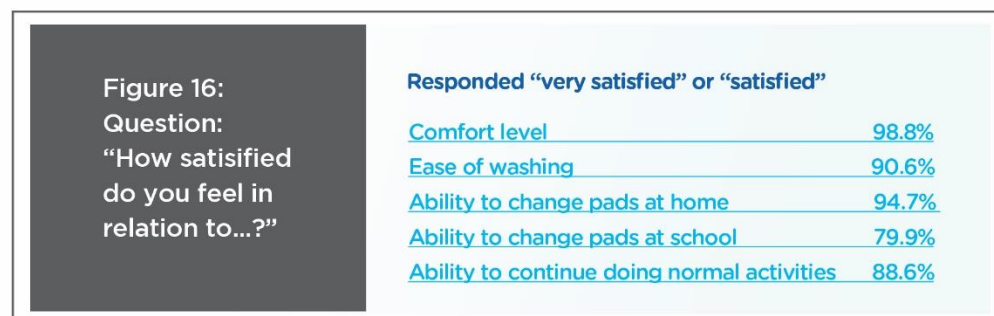


FGD, primary girls Kyaka II



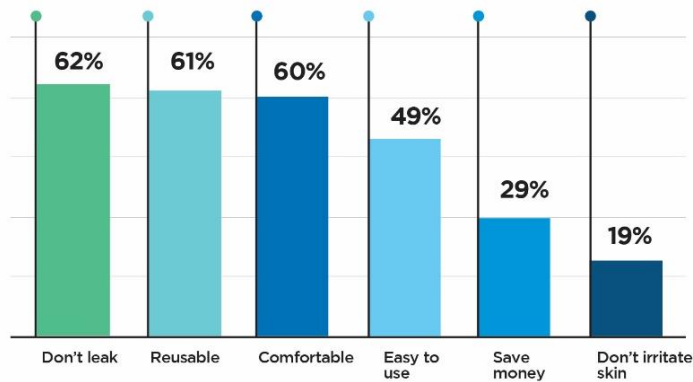
Satisfaction with AFRIpads

When asked to report on their level of satisfaction with regards to different aspects relating to AFRIpads, the results were overwhelmingly positive.



Participants reported a number of benefits of using AFRIpads. The most common responses included that they were comfortable, reusable, didn’t leak and easy to use. When asked what they didn’t like about AFRIpads, the most common selection was “I don’t know”. Drying time and not having enough pads were also mentioned.

Figure 17: “What are the things you like about your AFRipads?”

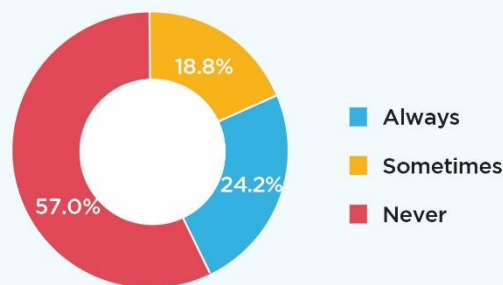


In focus group discussions, the girls mentioned the fact that they had problems with other girls or female family members either stealing their donated AFRipads or insisting that they share the pads they were given, leaving them with less than 4 reusable pads in total for themselves.

They also mentioned that even with the full pack of AFRipads, they didn't feel like 4 pads was sufficient to manage their periods, particularly during the rainy season when drying times were significantly longer. Not having enough pads was the only commonly reported complaint in focus group discussions as well.

As previously mentioned, only 24% indicated that they felt the 4-pack of AFRipads was sufficient for their needs. Most requested 6 pads (4 maxi and 2 supermaxi) as a minimum, although said that 8 would be better for those with a heavy flow.

Figure 18: Endline question:
“Did you feel that the AFRipads provided were enough AFRipads to manage your periods?”



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Appropriateness

Results from the baseline study indicated that schoolgirls in the southwestern refugee settlement context lacked access to the menstrual hygiene knowledge and products required for them to manage their menstruation in a healthy and dignified manner. Although UNHCR mandates that all women and girls of reproductive age are to receive distributions of disposable sanitary pads, soap and underwear, 71% of the girls reported not having enough menstrual products, 65% reported not having enough soap and 59% reported not having enough underwear. 44% percent also reported that they didn't have enough information about menstrual hygiene. [Access to water was not, however, reported to be a major challenge with 65% reporting they always had enough water to manage their menstruation \(the remaining 35% reported "sometimes"\) at baseline.](#)

Participants generally reported being satisfied with the facilities available for changing, washing and drying their AFRIpads. **The number of girls that reported missing school during their period was cut in half when using AFRIpads and the girls indicated a significant drop in the number of leaks they experienced (59% to 9%) as well as a significant decrease in itching or burning (73% to 24%).** During the wet season, when drying times are longer, girls mentioned they need more AFRIpads to manage their cycles. However, respondents generally reported being satisfied with the infrastructure and facilities available to them to wash and change their pads at school.

Prior to the intervention, girls reported that **their main challenge was not having enough products and 20% even admitted reusing disposable sanitary pads** because they had no other options. Many refugee girls could not remember the last time they had received disposable pads from a general distribution. This underscores the ongoing logistical challenge that UNHCR currently struggles with in sustaining timely replenishments. [After the intervention, not having enough products was no longer reported to be a top challenge, implying that the AFRIpads provided in the MHM kits met that challenge for many.](#)

Access to enough soap and underwear remained top challenges even after the intervention, indicating that there is a larger, structural challenge in providing enough supplementary MHM necessities. It is important to note that access to enough soap and underwear is crucial, irrespective of the solution used (disposable or reusable). **Reported access to water, however, went up at endline with 73% reporting they always had enough water to clean their AFRIpads.**

Acceptance

Product uptake among the study participants was 99% and respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with all aspects of the AFRIpads. **The girls retained the instructions provided during the MHM training and adherence to the use and care guidelines was also close to 100%.** Even before AFRIpads were introduced, 52% of the participants indicated a preference for reusable pads over disposables. **At endline, 84% indicated they'd prefer to use AFRIpads over disposable pads** (8% preferred a combination of both kinds of products and 8% chose disposable only). **Reusable menstrual pads were clearly culturally and socially accepted in this refugee context.**

Considering the difficulty of continuously distributing disposable pads throughout the settlements and the waste management challenge disposable pads create, AFRIpads reusable sanitary pads are an appropriate, highly preferred and effective solution to managing menstruation in a safe, dignified and culturally acceptable way.

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ANNEX 1: Baseline survey

1. What is your full name?

Unsure

2. How old are you? (in years)

3. Which country are you from?

Uganda

Rwanda

Burundi

Democratic Republic of the Congo

South Sudan

Somalia

Other

3b. Other: Which country are you from?

4. How long have you been living in the refugee settlement?

Less than 1 year

1 year to less than 3 years

3 years to less than 5 years

5 years or more

5. Which class are you in?

Primary 3

Primary 4

Primary 5

Primary 6

Primary 7

Senior 1

Senior 2

Senior 3

Senior 4

Senior 5

Senior 6

6. What type of learner are you?

Boarding (sleep at school)

Day (sleep at home)

7. When you experienced your first menstrual period, were you aware of what it was?

Yes

No

8. What did you think was causing your first menstrual period?

Normal/natural body function

Curse

Sin

Injury

Disease

Witchcraft

Did not know

Other

8b. Other: What did you think was causing your first menstrual period?

9. Where did you learn about your first menstrual period?

(Foster) mother

(Foster) sister

Other female family member

(Foster) father

(Foster) brother

Other male family member

Female teacher

Male teacher

Senior matron/senior woman teacher

Community health worker or agency staff

Friends

Neighbors

Media

I taught myself

I have not learnt about it yet

Unsure

10. Do you feel you have information about menstruation?

Yes

No

Unsure

11. Who do you feel comfortable speaking to about menstruation? (check all that apply)

(Foster) mother
(Foster) sister
Other female family member
(Foster) father
(Foster) brother
Other male family member
Female teacher
Male teacher
Senior matron/senior woman teacher
Community health worker or agency staff
Friends
Neighbors
No one
Unsure

12. During your menstrual period, how many days in total do you normally bleed?

2 days
3 days
4 days
5 days
6 days
7 days
8 days or more
Unsure

13. Do you ever experience pain during your menstrual period?

Yes
No
Unsure

13b. What is the average level of pain you experience during your menstrual period?

Mild pain
Medium pain
Severe pain

14. Do you have enough water to meet your general needs?

Always
Sometimes
Never

15. Is the water that you use/have access to safe and clean?

Always
Sometimes
Never

16. During your menstrual period, do you have enough water to clean yourself and your menstrual products?

Always
Sometimes
Never

17. Do you have enough soap to meet your general needs?

Always
Sometimes
Never

18. During your menstrual period, do you have enough soap to clean yourself and your menstrual product?

Always
Sometimes
Never

19. What would be your preferred frequency of soap distribution?

Monthly (1 piece every month)
Bi-monthly (2 pieces after every 2 months)
Quarterly (3 pieces after every 3 months)
Bi-yearly (6 pieces after every 6 months)

20. During your menstrual period, do you have enough underwear to manage your period?

Yes
No
Unsure

21. How many pieces of underwear do you have?

0
1
2

- 3
- 4
- 5
- More than 5

22. What do you use to manage your menstrual period? (check all that apply)

- Cotton gauze/wool
- Pieces of cloth or fabric
- Natural material (grass, leaves, mud, etc.)
- Toilet paper or newspaper
- Mattress stuffing
- Smooth papers
- Disposable sanitary pads
- Menstrual cup
- Tampons
- AFRipads or So Sure
- Nothing

23. Have you experienced leaks while wearing your current menstrual product/method?

- Yes, many times
- Yes, sometimes
- No

24. Have you experienced itching or burning sensations while wearing disposable pads?

- Yes, many times
- Yes, sometimes
- No

25. Have you ever reused a disposable pad?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

26. When you need to change your menstrual product/method during the school day, where do you change it?

- In school facilities
- Behind school facilities
- In community facilities
- I go home to change
- Other

26b. Other: When you need to change your menstrual product/method during the school day, where do you change it?

27. On average, how many times do you change your menstrual product/method during the daytime?

- I do not change
- 1 time per day
- 2 times per day
- 3 times per day
- More than 3 times per day
- Unsure

28. On average, how many times do you change your menstrual product/method during the night?

- I do not change
- 1 time per day
- 2 times per day
- 3 times per day
- More than 3 times per day
- Unsure

29. Where do you dispose of your used menstrual product/method? (check all that apply)

- Pit latrine
- Toilet
- Dustbin
- I burn it
- I bury it
- I reuse my menstrual product
- Other

29b. Other: Where do you dispose of your used menstrual product/method?

30. Do you have enough menstrual products to manage your period?

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

31. How satisfied are you with your current menstrual product/method?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

32. *What are the most important things to you about a menstrual product? (check all that apply)*

Having enough products

It is reusable

It is disposable

It is easy to you

It is comfortable

It is affordable

It does not leak

Other

32b. *If other, please specify.*

33. *What is your preferred menstrual product?*

Disposable sanitary pads

Reusable sanitary pads

A combination of disposable and reusable sanitary pads

34. *How do you access menstrual products? (check all that apply)*

I buy them

Someone else buys them for me

They are donated to me

I do not have access to any

Unsure

35. *What are your main challenges in accessing menstrual products? (check all that apply)*

I do not have any challenges

Menstrual products are not available in the local market

Menstrual products are too expensive to buy

I am embarrassed to buy or ask for them

Menstrual products given at general distribution are not enough

General distribution does not occur regularly

I sometimes miss the general distribution

My parents/guardians sell the products donated to my family

36. *How would you like to receive menstrual products?*

Cash-based intervention (receive cash or voucher to buy products)

Product donation (receive general distribution of products)

Unsure

37. *What would be your preferred frequency of pad distribution?*

Monthly (1 pack of disposables every month)

Bi-monthly (2 packs of disposables after every 2 months)

Quarterly (3 packs of disposables after every 3 months)

Bi-yearly (6 packs of disposables after every 6 months)

Once a year (reusable pads that last for 1 year)

38. *Is it difficult to go to school during your menstrual period?*

Always

Sometimes

Never

39. *How often do you miss school because of your menstrual period?*

During every menstrual period

During some of my menstrual periods

Never

39b. *On average, how many days per menstrual period do you miss school?*

40. *In the last 3 months, what daily tasks have you stayed away from because of your menstrual period?*

None

Household chores (laundry, dishes, etc.)

Sports (football, running, swimming, etc.)

School activities

Income-generating activities

Religious activities

Socializing

Unsure

41. What are the main challenges you face during your menstrual period?

I do not have any challenges

I do not have enough products to manage my period

I do not have enough pieces of underwear to manage my period

I do not have enough water to clean myself or my menstrual products

I do not have enough soap to clean myself or my menstrual products

I do not have privacy to change my menstrual product

There are cultural or religious restrictions during my period

It is difficult to go to school/do tasks

I get teased in school during my period

I feel embarrassed

I experience a lot of pain

42. Any other comments?

43. Was this survey translated?

No, it was conducted in English

Yes, it was conducted in a language other than English

ANNEX 2: Endline survey

Section A: Participant characteristics

1. *Participant Name*

2. *How old are you?*

3. *What country are you from?*

1= UGANDA

2= KENYA

3= TANZANIA

4=RWANDA

5=BURUNDI

5= DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

6= SOUTH SUDAN

7= SUDAN

8= SOMALIA

9= SOMALILAND

10 = YEMEN

11 = ETHIOPIA

88= OTHER [SPECIFY]

99= DON'T KNOW

4. *If respondent in a refugee: how long have you been living in the refugee settlement?*

1 = Less than 1 year

2 =1 year to less than 3 years

3 =3 years to less than 5 years

4= 5 years or more

5=None (I am not a refugee)

5. *Which class are you in?*

1 = Primary 3

2 = Primary 4

3 = Primary 5

4= Primary 6

5= Primary 7

6 = Senior 1

7 = Senior 2

8= Senior 3

9= Senior 4

10 = Senior 5

11= Senior 6

88 = Other (specify)

99 Don't know

6. *What type of learner are you?*

1 = BOARDING (sleep at school)

2 = DAY SCHOOL (sleep at home)

7. *Did you receive AFRipads as a part of this project?*

1= YES

0=NO

99 = DON'T KNOW

8. *How many AFRipads do you still have/use?*

1 = 1

2 = 2

3 = 3

4= 4

5 = None

9. *What other materials did you receive with your AFRipads? (multiple choice)*

1= Disposable pads (e.g Always)

2 = Other Factory made reusable pads

3 = Clothes/rags/fabric

4 = Extra pair of knickers

5 = Menstrual cup

6 = Soap

7 = Bucket

8 = Pegs

9 = Painkillers

10 = Have not received any other MHM materials

88 = Other (specify)

99 = Dont know

10. *Did you receive instructions about how to use your AFRipads?*

1 = YES

0=NO

99 = DON'T KNOW

11. *Did you receive any information about menstrual health with the products?*

1 = YES

0 = NO

99 = DON'T KNOW

MENSTRUAL KNOWLEDGE

12. *Do you ever talk about menstruation with friends/family?*

1 = YES

0 = NO

13. *Who do you feel comfortable speaking to about menstruation (check all that apply)*

1 = (Foster) mother

2 = (Foster) sister

3 = Other female family member

4 = (Foster) father

5 = Foster) brother

6 = Other male family member

7 = Female teacher

8 = Male teacher

9 = Senior matron/senior woman teacher

10 = Community health worker or agency staff

11 = Friends

12 = Neighbors

13 = Noone

99 = Don't know

14. *Do you feel like you have enough information about menstrual health?*

1 = YES

0 = NO

Menstrual Experiences and Product use

15. *During your menstrual period, how many days in total do you normally bleed?*

1 = 2 days

2 = 3 days

3 = 4 days

4 = 5 days

5 = 6 days

6 = 7 days

7 = 8 days or more

99 = Don't know

16. *How many periods have you had since your received your AFRipads? Hint: Remind participant of when the project started*

1 = 1

2 = 2

3 = 3

4 = 4

5 = 5

6 = 6

7 = 7 or more

8 = None

99 = Don't know

17. *On average what is the level of pain that you experience when you are menstruating?*

1 = Mild pain

2 = Medium pain

3 = Severe pain

4 = I don't have any pain

99 = Don't know

18. *What are the main challenges you face during your menstrual period? (Select all that apply)*

1 = I do not have any challenges

2 = I do not have enough products to manage my period

3 = I do not have enough pieces of underwear to manage my period

4 = I do not have enough water to clean myself or my menstrual products

5 = I do not have enough soap to clean myself or my menstrual products

6 = I do not have privacy to change my menstrual product

7 = There are cultural or religious restrictions during my period

8 = I get teased in school during my period

9 = I feel embarrassed

10 = I experience a lot of pain

88 = Other (specify)

99 = Don't know

19. In the last three months, what daily tasks have you stayed away from because of your menstrual period? (Select all that apply)

- 1= None
- 2 = Household chores (laundry, cleaning etc..)
- 3= Sports (football, running, swimming etc..)
- 4= School activities
- 5 = Income generation activities
- 6= Religious activities
- 7 = Socializing
- 88 = Other (Specify)
- 99 = Don't know

20. Is it difficult to go to school during your menstrual period?

- 1 = Always
- 2 = Sometimes
- 3 = Never

21. In the last three months, how often have you missed school because of your menstrual period?

- 1= During every menstrual period
- 2 = During some of my menstrual periods
- 3 = Never

22. In the last three months, on average, how many days per menstrual period did you miss school?

- 1 =One day
- 3= Two days
- 4= Three days
- 5 = More than three days
- 6 = I haven't missed any days
- 99 = Don't know

23. If you stayed away from school because of your menstruation in the last three months, why? (Select all that apply)

- 1= I do not have products to manage my menstruation
- 2= I am afraid of leaking
- 3= I am afraid someone will tease me
- 4 = Feel unwell or comfortable
- 5 = Menstrual pains
- 6 = Nowhere to change menstrual materials at school
- 7 = Told to stay at home/Not allowed

8 = I haven't stayed away from school because of my menstruation

88= Other (Specify)

99 = Don't know

Menstrual materials

24. Have you tried using your AFRIpads?

- 1= Yes
- 2 = No

25. Did you use your AFRIpads during your LAST PERIOD?

- 1= Yes
- 2 = No

26. During your last period, which other method or methods did you use to manage your menstruation? (Select all that apply)

- 1= Cotton wool and gauze
- 2 = Pieces of cloth or fabric
- 3 = Natural material (grass, leaves, mud, etc..)
- 4 = Toilet paper or newspaper
- 5 = Mattress stuffing
- 6 = Smooth papers
- 7 = Disposable sanitary pads
- 8 =Menstrual cup
- 9 = AfriPads or SoSure
- 10 =Nothing
- 88 = Other (specify)

27. If you did not use your AFRIpads during your last period, why not? (Select all that apply)

Skip Logic - Only ask if responded NO to Q 25

- 1 =I do not like using them
- 2 =I do not know how to use them
- 3 =They are difficult to wash
- 4 =They are difficult to dry
- 5 =I lost them
- 6 =I gave them away
- 7 =I had access to other preferred products
- 8 =It leaked
- 9 =It smelled
- 10 =Other (Specify)
- 11= Don't know

28. *If you have not tried using your AFRipads, why not? (Select all that apply)*

- 1 = I have not gotten around to it
- 2 = I was afraid it would cause infections/illness
- 3 = I do not like the thought of it
- 4 = I lost the AFRipads
- 5 = I have the AFRipads away
- 6 = I sold the AFRipads
- 7 = They were taken away from me / I was not allowed to use them
- 8 = I have not had my period
- 9 = I had access to other preferred products
- 88 = Other (Specify)
- 99 = Don't know

29. *What was the main method you used during your last period?*

- 1= Cotton wool and gauze
- 2 = Pieces of cloth or fabric
- 3 = Natural material (grass, leaves, mud, etc..)
- 4 = Toilet paper or newspaper
- 5 = Mattress stuffing
- 6 = Smooth papers
- 7 = Disposable sanitary pads
- 8 =Menstrual cup
- 9 = AfriPads or SoSure
- 10 =Nothing
- 88 = Other (specify)

30. *During your last period, how many times during the DAY did you change your AFRipads?*

- 1= I do not change
- 2 =1 time per day
- 3= 2 times per day
- 4 = 3 times per day
- 5 = More than 3 times per day
- 99 = Don't know

31. *During your last period, how many times during the NIGHT did you change your AFRipads?*

- 1= I do not change
- 2 =1 time per night
- 3= 2 times per night
- 4 = 3 times per night
- 5 = More than 3 times per night
- 99 = Don't know

32. *When you need to change your menstrual product/method during the school day, where do you change it? (Select all that apply)*

- 1 = School latrines
- 2 =Behind school facilities
- 3 = In community facilities
- 4 = I go home to change
- 88 = Other (specify)
- 99 = I don't know

33. *If you do not change your menstrual methods/products at school, why not? (Select all that apply)*

- 1 = School facilities are not private
- 2 = School facilities are dirty
- 3 = No water at school facilities
- 4 = No soap at school facilities
- 5 = Did not want to carry the dirty pad around
- 6 = Did not have an extra AFRipads with me
- 6 = There is not enough time to use the latrines
- 7 = I did need to change my pad during school time
- 88 = Other (Specify)
- 99 = Don't know

34. *During your last period, did you experience any leaks while wearing your AFRipads i.e has any blood leaked onto your outer garments?*

- 1= Yes, many times
- 2= Yes, sometimes
- 3= No
- 99 = Don't know

35. *During your last period, did you experience any itching or burning feelings while wearing your AFRipads?*

- 1= Yes, many times
- 2= Yes, sometimes
- 3= No
- 99 = Don't know

36. *Have you shared your AFRipads with anyone?*

- 1= Yes
- 0= No
- 99 = Don't know

37. *If yes, with whom?*

- 1= Mother
- 2= Sister
- 3 = Other female relative
- 4 = Friend
- 5 = Other (specify)
- 99 = Don't know

38. *During your last period, how did you wash your AFRIPads after use? (Select all that apply)*

- 1= Cold water and soap
- 2 = Cold water only
- 3 = Ash
- 4 = Boiling or warm water and soap
- 5 = Boiling or warm water only
- 88= Other (Specify)
- 99 = Don't know

39. *During your last period, did you have enough water to wash yourself and your AFRIPads?*

- 1= Always
- 2= Often
- 3= Sometimes
- 4 = Never
- 99 = Don't know

40. *During your last period, did you have enough soap to wash yourself and your AFRIPads?*

- 1= Always
- 2= Often
- 3= Sometimes
- 4 = Never
- 99 = Don't know

41. *Did you wash the AFRIPads before using them for the first time?*

- 1 = Yes
- 0 = No
- 99= Don't know

42. *How do you feel about washing the blood from your pads?*

- 1 = Very comfortable
- 2 = Comfortable
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Uncomfortable
- 5 = Very uncomfortable
- 99= Don't know

43. *How comfortable do you feel washing your AFRIPads where others can see you?*

- 1 = Very comfortable
- 2 = Comfortable
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Uncomfortable
- 5 = Very uncomfortable
- 99= Don't know

44. *Where do you dry your AFRIPads? (Select all that apply)*

- 1 = On a clothesline, in the sun
- 2 = On a clothesline, in the sun, covered by a cloth
- 3 = Somewhere else outside (on a bush etc..)
- 4 = Inside in a ventilated space
- 5 = Inside - hidden
- 88 = Other (specify)
- 99 = Dont' know

45. *How many hours does it take for your pads to dry in dry season?*

- 1 = 1 -2 hours
- 2 =3 -4 hours
- 3 = More than 4 hours
- 4 = They do not dry properly
- 88 = Other (Specify)
- 99 = Don't know

46. *How many hours does it take for your pads to dry in rainy season?*

- 1 = 1 -2 hours
- 2 =3 -4 hours
- 3 = More than 4 hours
- 4 = They do not dry properly
- 88 = Other (Specify)
- 99 = Don't know

47. *How comfortable did you feel drying your AFRIPad?*

- 1 = Very comfortable
- 2 = Comfortable
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Uncomfortable
- 5 = Very uncomfortable
- 99= Don't know

48. *If you are uncomfortable hanging your AFRIpads to dry, why is this?*

- 1= There is nowhere to hang them
- 2= It is not proper/acceptable to hang them outside
- 3= I am embarrassed to hang them outside
- 88= Other (specify)
- 99 = Don't know

49. *During your last period, did you ever wear you pad when it was still damp/not dry?*

- 1 = Yes
- 2 = No
- 99 = Don't know

50. *During your last period, did you have enough underwear/pants/knickers to manage your period?*

- 1= Yes
- 2= No
- 3= Unsure

51. *How many pieces of underwear do you have?*

- 1= None
- 2= One
- 3= Two
- 4 = Three
- 5= Four
- 6= Five
- 7= More than five
- 99 = Don't know

52. *How satisfied in general are you with your MAIN menstrual product?*

- 1= Very satisfied
- 2= Satisfied
- 3= Neutral
- 4 =Unsatisfied
- 5= Very unsatisfied
- 99 = Don't know

53. *What are the most important things to you about a menstrual product? (Select all that apply)*

- 1 = Having enough products
- 2 = It is reusable
- 3 = It is disposable
- 4 = It is easy to use
- 5 = It is comfortable

- 6 =It is affordable
- 7 =It does not leak
- 88 = Other

54. *What is your preferred menstrual product?*

- 1 = Disposable
- 2 = Reusable
- 3 = Combination of both

55. *What are your main challenges in accessing menstrual products? (Select all that apply)*

- 1 = I do not have and challenges
- 2 = Menstrual products are not available in the local market
- 3 = Menstrual products are too expensive to buy
- 4 = I am embarrassed to buy or ask for them
- 5 = Menstrual products given at general distribution are not enough
- 6 = General distribution does not occur regularly
- 7 = I sometimes miss general distribution
- 8 = My parents/guardian sell the products donated to my family

How satisfied do you feel with AFRIpads in relation to the following factors. Please let me know if you are very satisfied, satisfied, neither, unsatisfied or very unsatisfied.

56. *Comfort whilst wearing*

- 1 = Very satisfied
- 2 = Satisfied
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Unsatisfied
- 5 = Very unsatisfied

57. *Ease of washing*

- 1 = Very satisfied
- 2 = Satisfied
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Unsatisfied
- 5 = Very unsatisfied

58. *Being able to do normal activities*

- 1 = Very satisfied
- 2 = Satisfied
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Unsatisfied
- 5 = Very unsatisfied

59. *Changing pads at home*

- 1 = Very satisfied
- 2 = Satisfied
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Unsatisfied
- 5 = Very unsatisfied

60. *Changing pads whilst at school or away from home*

- 1 = Very satisfied
- 2 = Satisfied
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Unsatisfied
- 5 = Very unsatisfied

61. *Did you feel that the AFRIpads provided were enough AFRIpads to manage your periods?*

- 1= Always
- 2= Sometimes
- 3 = Never

62. *What are the things you like about your AFRIpads? (Select all that apply)*

- 1= I cannot run out/ I always have something to use
- 2= I save money
- 3 = It is comfortable
- 4 = It is easy to use
- 5 = It is reusable
- 6 = It does not leak
- 7 = Does not irritate my skin
- 8 = Does not smell
- 9 = I can do more things (go to school, work etc...)
- 88= Other (Specify)
- 99 = I don't know

63. *What are the things you don't like about your AFRIpads? (Select all that apply)*

- 1= Uncomfortable
- 2= Difficult to wash

- 3 = Don't like touching my blood
- 4 = The blood does not come out when washing
- 5= Takes long to dry
- 6 = Smell
- 7 = Leaking
- 8 = Not enough pads to manage my period
- 9 = There is nothing I don't like about AFRIpads
- 88 = Other (specify)
- 99 = Don't know

64. *Do you plan to continue using your AFRIpads?*

- 1 = Yes
- 0 = No
- 99 = Don't know

65. *If you do not plan to continue using your AFRIpads, why not? (Select all that apply)*

- 1= Uncomfortable
- 2= Difficult to wash
- 3 = Don't like touching blood
- 4 = The blood does not come out when washing
- 5= Takes long to dry
- 6 = Smell
- 7 = Leaking
- 8 = Not enough to manage my period
- 9 = Prefer to use other products
- 88 = Other (specify)
- 99 = Don't know

66. *Would you recommend AFRIpads to a friend?*

- 1 = Yes
- 0 = No
- 99 = Don't know

Was the survey translated?

- 1 = No, it was conducted in English
- 2 = Yes, it was conducted in a language other than English (Specify)

ANNEX 3: Focus Group Discussion guide

Objectives:

1. Understand communal perceptions of girls' menstrual experiences and practices
2. Capture communal perceptions of the challenges to product use, including acceptability and contextual appropriateness
3. Capture communal perceptions of impact of product distribution

Introduction: *Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today. My name is _____ . I am working with (Name of Organisation). We are working on a project to help girls/women with their menstruation. The purpose of this discussion is to explore girls/women's experiences of the project and AFRIpads. We are having this discussion to explore a range of different views and attitudes to menstruation, and perceptions of the new menstrual products distributed. We would like to get your sincere opinions and thoughts on the different subjects. There are no right or wrong answers. Your name and answers will be kept strictly confidential, and your name will only be known to our small group of project team members and will not appear anywhere.*

Introduction questions to the group (ask them to raise their hands):

- Had you ever seen reusable pads before you received them from us?
- Had you ever seen AFRIpads before you received them from us?
- Do you still have all 4 pads that we gave you? (Ask those that say no why they don't have all of them anymore).
- What were you getting from the distributions before we gave you AFRIpads? How often were you getting them?

Perceptions of AFRIpads, benefits of and challenges to product use:

- You have all received AFRIpads, in general, what did you think about the AFRIpads when you were first introduced to them/received them?
- What aspects of the reusable pads were you excited about? What aspects were you doubtful about?
- After having used them for 3 months, what challenges have you experienced/heard about?
 - Probe: Give examples of challenges: Not enough soap, underwear, water, privacy for washing/drying, etc.
- How do you wash and dry your AFRIpads?
- Do you feel safe and comfortable washing your reusable menstrual materials in existing washing facilities or in your homes/shelters? (Why or why not?)
- Where do you change their pads?
- What do you think other community members think about AFRIpads?
 - Probe: What about boys and men, do they know about AFRIpads, what do they think?

Impact of Product Distribution

- How do you think receiving AFRIpads has impacted girls' everyday lives in your community?
 - *Probe:* Have you seen any change in girls' ability to attend school during their periods?
- Have you seen any change in how confident girls are in talking about menstruation?
- What do you think needs to be done to further support you and other girls in your community in managing their menstruation?

Closing

- Is there anything else you think we should talk about in relation to AFRIpads that would be important to mention?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME !

ANNEX 4: MHM Curriculum explanation



AFRipads is a social enterprise that specializes in the local manufacture and global supply of reusable sanitary pads as a cost-effective, feminine hygiene solution. Having reached hundreds of thousands of schoolgirls with its AFRipads Menstrual Kits, AFRipads understands that providing a product solution alone does not address the complex needs of schoolgirls during menstruation. AFRipads, in collaboration with WoMena Uganda developed the **GIRL TALK Toolkit**, which is now provided **free of charge to AFRipads' partners**.

THE GIRL TALK TOOLKIT

GIRL TALK HANDBOOK

Includes a 2-3 hour curriculum on menstrual hygiene management and AFRipads use and care

FLIP CHART PACKAGE

Includes 10 flipcharts to support visual learning on complex topics like the menstrual cycle

GIRL TALK BOOKLET

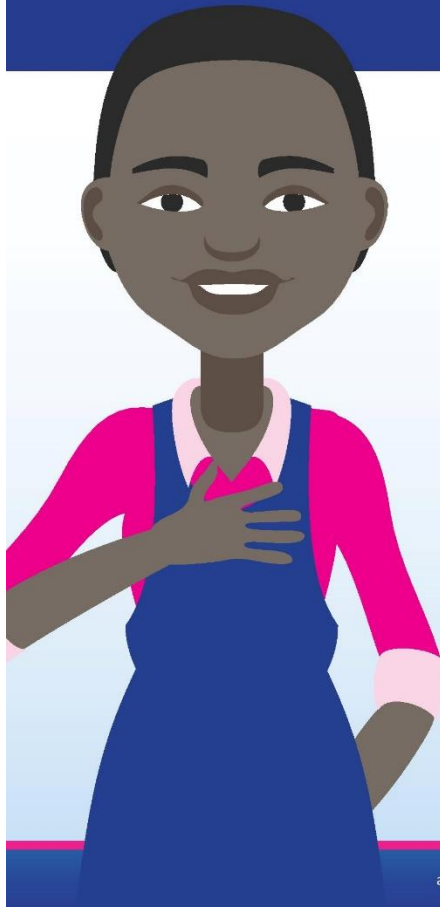
Gives girls something to take home with important information to refer to in the future

GIRL TALK POSTER

Acts as a reminder of what the girls learned and remains hanging at the school

TOT PRESENTATION

Takes partners through the toolkit and includes pointers on creating a safe environment



The **GIRL TALK Toolkit** follows the journey of a school aged girl named Sandra and uses easy-to-understand visuals to break down the barriers around menstrual hygiene education. With content catered for both primary and secondary school ages, the **GIRL TALK toolkit** can be used with any group of school aged girls in or entering into puberty.

MY PERIOD TRACKER

| MO | TU | WE | TH | FR | SA | SU |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 29 | 30 | 31 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

Menstrual Cycle & How I Feel

HAPPY & HEALTHY DURING YOUR PERIOD

- Hand washing
- Wipe from front to back
- Clean & dry knickers
- Do not share AFRipads
- Washing
- YOGIENE
- Y RELIEVE
- Drink lots of water
- Stretching & physical exercise
- Drink water
- Good time to stretch

ANNEX 5: MHM and the SDGs

Menstruation matters to everyone, everywhere



ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS SHOULD BE ABLE TO MANAGE THEIR MENSTRUATION HYGIENICALLY, SAFELY, IN PRIVACY AND WITH DIGNITY.



Good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) requires the following:



Additional systemic factors that impact good menstrual hygiene management (MHM):

MENSTRUATION MATTERS TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS

While there is no specific goal or indicator for MHM, menstruation matters to the following goals:

Goal 3



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

FACT ASK



If women and girls lack access to affordable, hygienic menstrual products, they often use old rags, cloths or other unhygienic materials. This can lead to reproductive tract infections (RTIs) and other health conditions.



Integrate menstrual hygiene management into sexual and reproductive health education programmes, especially for adolescents.

Goal 4



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.

FACT ASK

41%

Girls in developing countries miss up to 5 days of school per month when they menstruate. In a study from Nepal, 41% of girls reported missing school during their menstruation.



Integrate education about MHM and puberty into school curricula.

Build the capacity of teachers to teach about these issues with comfort.

Goal 5



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

FACT ASK



Taboos and myths related to menstruation often portray women and girls as inferior to men and boys.



Ensure that all women and girls can manage their menstruation safely, hygienically and with dignity.

Address taboos and promote positive social norms around menstruation.

Goal 6



Ensure availability and sustainability of water and sanitation by all.

FACT ASK

2.4 billion

... people have no access to improved sanitation facilities.

Lack of access to facilities, or inadequate facilities that do not ensure privacy and hygiene, particularly affect women and girls.



Ensure that all women and girls have access to water and sanitation facilities that are safe, socially and culturally acceptable and allow for the safe disposal of menstrual products.

Goal 8



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

FACT ASK



Workers in Bangladesh use birthcontrol pills to stop their menstruation, so that they can avoid having to stop work or having to manage their menstruation in inadequate facilities.



Ensure that employers provide adequate sanitation facilities at the workplace, including water and soap for washing, as well as options for the disposal of menstrual products. Menstruation should not limit a woman's ability to work.

Goal 12



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

FACT ASK

25%

Research from Ethiopia shows that 25% of girls in both rural and urban settings do not use any commercial menstrual products. Commercial products are often subject to sales and import taxes, making them unaffordable to many poorer women and girls.



Encourage policies and quality standards that promote safe and affordable options and dynamic markets for menstrual products.

Promote sustainable, environmentally friendly menstrual products and their disposal.

MAKE MENSTRUATION MATTER TO THE SDGS, TO YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR PROGRAMMES!

