GRADUATING TO RESILIENCE

Reusable Sanitary Pads and Baby Diapers Assessment Report

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1.0 Introduction

Graduating to Resilience (the Activity) is a USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance funded activity led by AVSI Foundation in partnership with Trickle Up and IMPAQ International. The Activity seeks to test the Graduation Approach's ability to graduate ultra-poor refugee and host community households in Western Uganda from conditions of food insecurity and fragile livelihoods to self-reliance and resilience. As part of the implementation, the Activity's utilizes a light-touch facilitative approach to Private Sector Engagement (PSE) to improve access to critical goods and services for refugee and host community populations cost-effectively and sustainably. Utilizing a women-plus approach, meaning that women are the primary participant of interventions, females' needs must be considered to address barriers or challenges to ensure the Activity can actively promote and achieve gender equality. As such, the Activity sought to better understand and identify the need and feasibility of gender-specific PSE linkages for female participants. Specifically, based on identified opportunities for linkage the Activity sought to understand female participants and their household members' current behavior around menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and baby care practices, interest in MHM and baby care products, as well as interest in related income-generating activities (IGA).

2.0 Background

Despite nearly half the world's population (females) experiencing menstruation on a monthly basis, it is often left undiscussed. However, lack of access to sanitary products often dubbed period poverty can have far-reaching and lasting effects on women and young girls, affecting mental health, confidence, and economic empowerment, among other factors. Alternatives to disposal sanitary pads are increasingly common, such as reusable pads or a menstrual cup, which provide cost-effective, environmentally friendly, and sustainable options to manage menstruation. From a gender empowerment perspective, the Activity recognizes that this cannot be achieved without addressing unequal workloads and identifying solutions to optimize time in unpaid care work (UCW). One such aspect that women often shoulder is child caring responsibilities, this is extremely important work, but for certain aspects such as fetching water, collecting firewood, etc. there are solutions to optimize and reduce time spent on tasks, such as laundry. Furthermore, due to women's child-caring responsibilities, they often cannot travel from home easily with a young child, which reduces their freedom of movement and in turn community engagement. Reusable baby diapers have the potential to reduce labor on washing and increase freedom of movement, which can have social and economic benefits for women.

3.0 Methodology

The assessment used a stratified sampling technique, taking into consideration subpopulations among participants, such as women of reproductive age, children under 5 in the household, and

engagement in tailoring. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the target sample frame as divided among refugee and host community participants.

Table 1: Sampling Frame

Category	# Host	# Refugee	Total
Women of reproductive age (15-49 years) not	123	123	246
involved in the tailoring business and with children			
<5 years of age.			
Women of reproductive age (15-49 years) involve	24	41	65
in the tailoring business and without children			
<5years of age.			
Women of reproductive age (15-49 years) not	48	48	96
involved in the tailoring business and without			
children <5 years of age.			

While the Activity targeted 407 participants, 323 participants (137 host and 174 refugee) were reached and administered the survey from 29th June to 10th July 2020. Given the sensitive nature of questions, female coaches and Program Officers with the necessary language skills led the data collection, which was carried out remotely by phone interview due to COVID-19 public health prevention measures.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Reusable Sanitary Products

To better understand current MHM practices, sampled participants were asked what the most common type of material they or a female household member uses to manage their period each month. The most commonly cited sources of materials were reusable sanitary pads (58%), disposable sanitary pads (52%), and old clothes (43%). Among the host community, the most commonly used materials used were old clothes (69%), reusable sanitary pads (60%), and disposable sanitary pads (40%). Among refugee respondents, the most commonly used materials were reusable sanitary pads (89%), disposable sanitary pads (46%), and old clothes (23%); notably, 60% stated that they do not use any material. Within a vulnerability and essential needs (VENA) assessment carried out in November 2019, it was noted that 14.1% of refugee households with women/girls reported not using sanitary materials, with the main reasons being cost (49%), did not know how to make sanitary materials (5%), and lack of availability (2%). This finding among our participants and more widely in the VENA is interesting, as UNHCR Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement (RRS) Protection Focal Point noted UNHCR distributes reusable sanitary pad kit (Afripad brand) to all women and girls of reproductive age each year as part of the non-food item (NFI) package; they also receive a bar of soap and six pieces of

underwear per month during food distribution. It is worrying that refugees who are meant to be supplied reusable sanitary products by UNHCR have noted the inability to afford sanitary products, this should be investigated further to ensure access to this entitlement is available. The next distribution of reusable sanitary pads is scheduled for September 2020, thus close follow up with UNHCR should take place.

When asked about materials they or a female household member *preferred* for MHM, 69% of host indicated a preference, as compared to 24% of refugee respondents. Of the preferred materials, 64% indicated reusable sanitary pads, 31% disposable sanitary pads, 4% old clothes, and 1% other; this was similar across refugee and host with the exception that zero refugees indicated a preference for old clothes. Among preferred materials, products were preferred due to saving money, reducing washing work, lasting longer/reusable, and host respondents indicated comfort. It is positive to note the wide use and preference of reusable sanitary pads among both host and refugee participants. Interesting, and slightly contradictory from the above information, in a vulnerability and essential needs (VENA) assessment carried out in November 2019, it was noted that 89.4% of refugees interviewed in RRS indicated using disposable sanitary materials in the previous months, while only 10.6% used reusable products.¹ Across all settlements in Uganda, 84% of refugees indicated using disposable sanitary products, while 14% used reusable materials; this could hint at either low distribution rates among refugees, a potential reluctance to use reusable sanitary products, or a lack of awareness on how to use the product.

For those that commonly used reusable sanitary pads (n=187), they were asked their preferred brand of this product to support private sector linkages. In line with the above, 60% of respondents noted UNHCR provided the products, thus they did not know the brand; 71% of refugee and 4% of host community indicated this. Preferred brands included Afripads (12%), Days for Girls (10%), and Sosure (4%), with a further 3% indicating that they make or buy them locally. Among the host community, 64% of respondents indicated other, while zero refugees indicated other. Interestingly, 23% of host community respondents said that they make their own or buy locally, while zero refugees indicated this. Refugee respondents were more likely to have a preferred private sector brand of reusable sanitary products, 14% preferred Afripads (4% host), 11% Days for Girls (0% host), and 4% Sosure (7% host). The above highlights potential differences in penetration of MHM private sector actors, as well as the potential gap in availability in both areas, which depending on demand, could provide IGA opportunities.

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¹ VENA, November 2019:

The majority (98%) of respondents were satisfied with the reusable sanitary pad product they were using, with 96% indicating that they had a good experience with the product, while 4% indicated a bad experience; this was similar across refugee and host community respondents. For those that selected having a good experience with reusable sanitary pads (n=183), this was attributed to saving money (63%), availability (63%), comfort (54%), durability to not spoil clothing (49%), being easy to clean (35%), and reducing washing (14%). A breakdown of responses by refugee and host is seen in Figure 1 below, with more hosts noting cost savings and comfort, whereas refugees indicated greater availability. Among those that had a bad experience using reusable sanitary pads (n=7), respondents noted not having a private place to dry the product (57%), a dislike for cleaning the cloth (57%), felt dirty/unclean (43%), expensive (29%), and 14% respectively noted lack of availability, lack of comfort, and other. While a small sample size, it is interesting to note that zero refugees indicated dirty/unclean, lack of a private place to dry, and discomfort with using the product.

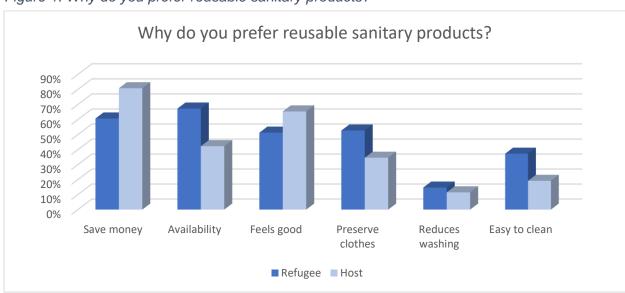


Figure 1: Why do you prefer reusable sanitary products?

For those that did not mention using a reusable sanitary pad, but had heard of them (31%), the Activity asked why they never tried to use this product. The top two responses for refugee and host respondents were availability (73% host/50% refugee) and cost (43% host/13% refugee); of note is only 3 refugees noted cost as a barrier for not using the product. For those that indicated cost as a factor in using reusable sanitary pads and whether this would be solved if respondents could pay for the product in installments, an overwhelming 97% indicated yes (n=82 host/n=3 refugee). This provides insight into the feasibility of linkages between MHM private sector actors and operationalizing within the Activity approach, perhaps leveraging the Village Savings and Loan Association (VLSA) as a potential financing model for participants.

Among primary participants sampled, 44% indicated that they had a girl child in the household that had started their menstrual period; similar across refugee and host respondents. Participants were asked if girl children missed schools during their menstrual period each month, positively 61% (67% refugee/53% host) indicated that girl children do not miss school during this time. However, 15% (16% refugee/13% host) indicated that the girl child was not enrolled in school. Among girl children and enrolled in school, 2% noted that young girls missed 7 or more days of school during their menstrual period, 3% noted 5 days, 4% missed for 4 days, 10% missed 3 days of school, 4% missed 2 days and 1% missed 1 day of school. While a small sample size, it appears that within participants' households more host community girl children miss more days of school each month due to their period than refugee girl children. The World Bank (2005) estimates that school absences related to menstruation were approximately 4 days every month.² Among respondents, the reasons for the missing school were noted as pain or cramps (82%), lack of material to manage menstruation (29%), the worry of leaking on cloths (29%), smell (18%), lack water (9%), lack of toilet facilities (6%), lack of means to dispose of sanitary products (6%), and other (3%). Among host community respondents, 45% noted lack of materials to manage menstruation as compared to 8% in the refugee community, and worry of leaking (45% host/0% refugee), potentially indicating a greater need for sanitary products among host community household for girl children. Of note among refugee respondents which was not seen in the host community was lack of toilet facilities (15%) and lack of water (15%), which could indicate a gap in school facilities within the refugee community.

When asked if they or someone else in their household would be interested in using reusable sanitary pads, 87% (93% host/84% refugee) indicated that they would be. Host respondents indicated a willingness to pay between 5,000-10,000 Uganda Shillings (UGX) for a kit (8 reusable sanitary pads/liners, 2 pad holders/shields, 2 storage bags) that last for approximately 12-months, while refugees indicated a willingness to pay 3,000,5000 UGX for the product. While these products typically range from 15,000 (Afripads) to 25,000 (Days for Girls) UGX, willingness to pay coupled with financing options could create an enabling environment for MHM private sector linkages for female participants and female household members. While a product targeted at females, the Activity should also not overlook that male primary participants should also be engaged as they will most certainly have female household members that may benefit from such linkage.

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² World Bank (2005). Toolkit on Hygiene Sanitation & Water in School: Gender Roles and Impact. http://www.wsp.org/Hygiene-Sanitation-Water-Toolkit/BasicPrinciples/GenderRoles.html

4.2 Reusable Baby Diapers

Respondents were also asked about whether they had young children (under 3 years of age), of which 65% (72% refugee/56% host) of respondents did have young children. Among those with young children, about half (48%) had heard of reusable cloth diapers; 56% host and 44% refugee respondents. For those that had heard of reusable cloth diapers, but decided not to use them, the reasons for not trying them included cost (26%), lack of absorption (14%), availability (13%), uncomfortable for baby (10%), it increased washing (9%), unclean (6%), do not fit the baby well (3%), do not last long (2%), and dislike for cleaning them (1%). While cost was a similar factor across refugee and host community participants, more host community respondents noted not fitting the baby well, unclean, uncomfortable for the baby, and lack of absorption. Among those that noted they had used a reusable cloth diaper for their children (n=101), 84% noted that they used these in the past, and 74% indicated that they still use them; this was similar across refugee and host community respondents. For those still using reusable baby diapers (n=85), 91% (86% host/96% refugee) indicated they have a good experience with the product, while 9% (14% host/4% refugee) indicated a bad experience. For those that noted a good experience (n=77), this was attributed to saving money (91%), availability (69%), easy mobility with the baby (62%), good fit on the baby (53%), appearance 'look nice' (51%), caregivers clothes do not get spoiled (30%), proud of using cloth diapers (17%), reducing washing and easy to clean (12%), reducing the likelihood of baby getting sick (9%) and other (3%). This is further disaggregated by refugee and host community responses in Figure 2 below. For those that had a bad experience (n=7), this was due to the baby not being comfortable (75%), lack of absorption (75%), increasing washing work (38%), unclean or dirty (25%), do not fit well (25%), cost (13%), and dislike for cleaning the product (13%). Among respondents, 75% noted that they would reconsider using reusable cloth diapers.

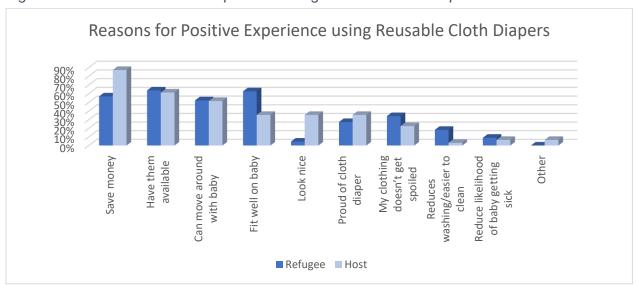


Figure 2: Reasons for Positive Experience using Reusable Cloth Diapers

If cost was a factor for not using reusable cloth diapers, the Activity asked if this could be solved if respondents were able to pay in installments, 73% indicated (100% host/60% refugee) that yes paying in installments would solve the challenge of cost. For those interested in the product, their willingness to pay was around 5,000 UGX for a reusable diaper kit (shell and absorbent pad); willingness to pay was the same across refugee and host respondents. The price of reusable baby diapers from the private sector actor, Kijani, ranges from 15,000 to 26,000 UGX. However, given the willingness to pay participants may be interested in purchasing parts of the kit, such as the absorbent pad (6,000 UGX), kitenge diaper shell with strings (9,000 UGX), or the waterproof imported fabric shell with snap closure (20,000 UGX). While the Activity staff engaged two VSLA groups to gauge their interest in the products visually, there was concern over the limited market for the products and reduced people's financial capacity to buy given the public health restrictions due to COVID-19.

An additional factor for linkage to the private sector is for an IGA, as two of the private sector actors identified (Kijani and Days for Girls) has an option for a training program to support participants to make the items locally for sale. Thus, the Activity wanted to understand participants' interest and ability in utilizing tailoring skills to learn to make reusable sanitary pads or cloth diapers. As such, respondent's ability to do tailoring work was assessed, of which 14% (18% host/12% refugee) indicated that they know how to tailor/sew. Of those that could do tailoring (n=46), 70% noted that they owned or had access to a sewing machine; this was marginally lower among refugee participants. As part of COVID-19 adaptation and prevention measures, UNHCR in RRS has reached out to partners in the area to identify potential participants that could provide tailoring services to make personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks. The Activity carried out an analysis to identify any/all participants that are engaged in tailoring as a business. The findings indicated that among refugees, 52 participants (40 women/12 men) were engaged in tailoring; 5 are household members of primary participants. Among the host community, there are 41 participants (36 women/5 men) engaged in tailoring; 3 are household members of primary participants. While Days for Girls provides training, at a cost, on how to make the reusable sanitary pads, they also provide training on additional IGAs (soap making/vaseline) as part of the tailoring training. Afripads currently does not provide tailoring training on how to make reusable sanitary pads, but they do provide training on MHM. Among respondents, 93% indicated that they would be interested in paying for training to learn how to make and sell reusable sanitary pads, 93% to make and sell reusable cloth diapers, 96% to make and sell liquid and bar soap, and 92% to make and sell vaseline. Refugee and host community respondents had similar responses on interest in engaging in and paying for the above IGA training opportunities, which bodes well for linkage to private sector firms that can provide such training. A conscious effort should be made to understand the materials needed for such IGAs to

ensure availability on the local markets in the area of operation to ensure IGAs are sustainable and viable post-training.

5.0 Conclusion

Private sector linkages for participants, especially females around MHM and baby care are needed as necessity and demand are present based on the information above. This linkage can also provide an opportunity for an IGA. While beyond the parameters of this survey to understand the knowledge of basic sexual reproductive health (SRH) knowledge around menstruation, linkages to private sector actors for tailoring will also provide a learning opportunity for participants in this area, which may be beneficial to them, as well as young girls within the households. To raise further awareness of menstruation, the Activity should consider engaging local authorities to participate in International MHM Day (May 28th), as well as identifying opportunities to increase access and awareness (ex. roadshows) between communities (participants) and such private sector actors. While amid a global pandemic, linkages to private sector actors should not be halted as women and girls have a monthly necessity to MHM such materials, and daily needs for baby care if a young child in the household. Additionally, given the potential economic strain of households during COVID-19, disposable and often costly sanitary products may be the first items deprioritized in a household for expenditure. Similarly, households may be looking for options to cut expenditure costs and with training and awareness could shift from disposable to reusable sanitary and baby products. Furthermore, partnership linkages between participants and UNHCR should be explored around the production of reusable sanitary pads for NFI distribution, as well as potential subsidizing of training costs if allowable within UNHCR budgeting. Reusable sanitary pads and baby diapers are cost-effective, environmentally friendly options that can contribute to greater gender equity.

Annex 1: Survey Tool

1	Date of data Collection	
2	Name of the Coach	
3	Coach ID (X2)	
4	Household ID (X2)	
5	Primary Participant ID (X2)	
6	Respondent Name Enter the name of the respondent	
7	Dear \${Name_of_Respondent}, I would like to ask you some questions about menstrual hygiene and infant care so that we can identify potential partnerships and solutions to support you to meet the needs of you and your family. There is no risk in completing this questionnaire. In no way will your participation in the survey or refusal affect your involvement in Graduating to Resilience. Are you willing to participate in the survey?	□ Yes □ No
8	What is the most common material you or female HH members use for your menstrual period each month? (can tick multiple)	 □ Disposable sanitary pads (use 1 time) □ Reusable sanitary pads (use multiple times) □ Toilet Paper □ Old clothes/cloth □ Leaves □ Newspaper □ I do not use any material □ Other
8a	If you selected other, please explain	
8b	If you selected reusable sanitary pads in question 8, what brand/product do you prefer?	 □ Afripad □ SoSure □ Days for Girls □ I make my own □ UNHCR provides, I do not know the brand □ Other
8c	If you selected other, which brand/product not listed do you prefer?	
8d	Are you satisfied with this brand/product?	□ Yes □ No
8e	If you selected reusable sanitary pads in question 8, is your experience generally good or bad?	☐ Good☐ Bad
8f	If you selected good in question 8d, tell us why.	 Saved money Always have them available Feel better than disposable sanitary pads My clothing doesn't get spoiled It reduces my washing work It is easier to clean

			Other
8g	If you selected other, please explain		
8h	If you selected bad in question 8d, tell us why.		Cost is expensive They do not last long (fall apart, stop
			absorbing well) They are not available in the nearby market
			I don't like cleaning them by hand I think they are dirty/unclean
			There is no private place to dry them I don't like the way they feel
			Other
8i	If you selected other, please explain		
0;	If did not select reusable in question 8, have you ever		Yes
8j	heard of a reusable sanitary pad before?		No
			Cost is expensive
	If you selected yes in question 8j, what are your reasons for never trying reusable sanitary pads?		I hear they do not last long (fall apart, stop absorbing well)
			They are not available in the nearby market
8k			I don't like the idea of cleaning them by hand
			I think they are dirty/unclean
			There is no private place to clean and dry
			them
			Other
8l	If you selected other, please explain		
8m	If cost is a challenge in question 8k, would this challenge be solved if you could pay for the reusable sanitary pad		Yes
	kit in installments?		No
			Disposable sanitary pads
	You previously mentioned the materials/items most commonly used by you and women in your HH, but what is the preferred material/item for you or female HH		Reusable sanitary pads Toilet Paper
			Old clothes/cloth
9			Leaves
	members to use for your menstrual period?		Newspaper
			No material
			Other
9a	If you selected other, please explain		
9b	Please explain why you or a female HH member would prefer this material/item?		
10	Do you have girl children that have started their menstrual period?		Yes No
10a	penou:		1 day
	If yes, how many days in a month, do girl children in your HH miss school as a result of their menstrual period?		2 days
			3 days
			4 days
			5 days
			6 days
			7 days
		П	More than 7 days

		They do not miss school during their menstrual period
10b	If they miss some days, what is the reason for girl children to miss school during their menstrual period? (tick all that apply) If you selected other, please explain	They do not have materials to manage their menstrual period Lack of toilet facilities at school Lack of water supply at school Lack of means of disposal for sanitary products at school They are worried about blood leaking to their clothing They are worried about smelling Pain or cramps Other
100	Would you or someone in your house be interested in	
11	using reusable sanitary pads? (note: they can be used again and again for approximately 12-months)	Yes No
11a	If yes, how much would you be willing to pay for a pack of 8 reusable sanitary pads for yourself or someone in your household? (note: they can be used again and again for approximately 12-months)	
12	Do you currently have young children between the ages of 0-3 years of age?	Yes No
12a	If yes, have you ever heard of reusable cloth diapers for infants?	Yes No
12b	If you have heard of reusable cloth diapers but decided not to use them, what are your reasons for not trying them?	They are expensive They do not fit other children well I feel they are unclean/dirty Babies will not be comfortable They do not absorb well/there are leakages I won't like cleaning them It will increase my washing work They are not available in the market I heard they do not last long (fall apart, stop absorbing well) They are culturally unacceptable Other
12c	If you selected other, please explain	
12d	If you selected not culturally appropriate, please explain	
12e	If yes in question 12a, have you ever used a reusable cloth diaper for your young children before?	Yes No
12f	If yes in question 12b, do you still use reusable cloth diapers?	Yes No
12g	If yes in question 12e, was your experience bad or good?	Bad Good
12h	If your experience using reusable cloth diapers was good, please tell us why.	Saved money Always have them available Can move around easily with the baby Fit well on the baby They look nice

		I feel proud that my baby has a cloth diaper My clothing doesn't get spoiled It reduces my washing work/It is easier to clean Reduces the baby getting sick Other
12i	If you selected other, please explain	
12j	If your experience using reusable cloth diapers was bad, please tell us why.	They are expensive They did not fit my child well They are unclean/dirty Baby was not comfortable They did not absorb well (leakages) I didn't like cleaning them It increased my washing work Other
12k	If you selected other, please explain	
121	Would you consider trying reusable diapers again?	Yes No
12m	If cost was a reason you have not used reusable diapers, would this challenge be solved if you could pay for the reusable cloth diapers in installments?	Yes No
12n	If yes, how much would you be willing to pay for these items for yourself or someone in your household? HINT: Reusable diapers consist of 1 Kitenge diaper shell with string ties, 1 Waterproof Imported Fabric shell with snap closure, and1 absorbent diaper pad. This product can be used again and again for approximately 12-months.	
13	Do you know how to do tailoring?	Yes No
13a	If yes, do you own or have access to a sewing machine?	Yes No
13b	Would you be interested in paying for training to learn how to make and sell reusable sanitary pads?	Yes No
13c	Would you be interested in paying for training to learn how to make and sell reusable diapers?	Yes No
13d	Would you be interested in paying for training to learn how to make liquid and bar soap to sell?	Yes No
13e	Would you be interested in paying for training to learn how to make Vaseline to sell?	Yes No

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