



SANITARY PAD

ACCEPTABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY STUDY

Girls' education is now known to play a key role in the development of healthy, peaceful, and prosperous nations. All over the developing world, more girls than ever are attending primary school, but they do not continue on to secondary school at nearly the same rates as boys. Oxford University researchers think that one reason may be linked to the cultural and economic decisions triggered by a girl's first menstruation.

Unfortunately, when families and communities discover that a girl has begun to menstruate, she is often considered ready for marriage and no longer receives support for her education. A girl's menstruation is inadvertently made visible to her community in at least two ways: first, because poor, rural girls do not have access to sanitary pads, they use cloth

rags as makeshift pads that usually lead to accidental leaking. Second, crowded school and home environments make it difficult for girls to maintain privacy when they wash and change their pads.

Would patterns of academic enrollment and achievement at the secondary school level change if girls had more control over how, when, and to whom they revealed that they had begun to menstruate? Oxford researchers are investigating how simple interventions such as providing puberty education and sanitary pads to adolescent girls may increase their chances of staying in school. In 2012, they sampled four locallymade, eco-friendly pads among rural schoolgirls in Uganda to see which ones they preferred most.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD



PRODUCT & PERFORMANCE

Girls use discarded cloth that is neither absorbent nor secure in underwear. These makeshift pads "leak" or fall apart during long school days and on long walks to and from school in rural areas.



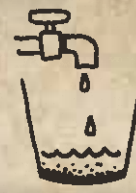
PEER FEARS

At school, girls worry about "accidents" in the classroom and on the playground. It is also embarrassing to change pads in crowded, co-ed water closets.



LACK OF PRIVACY

Whether at home, day school, or boarding school, girls lack privacy to clean and dry menstrual cloths. Drying menstrual cloths inside crowded dormitories or small, shared homes where everyone can see is embarrassing.



KEEPING IT CLEAN

Without access to clean water or soap, cloth methods can be unhygienic. In humid countries like Uganda, it takes days for cloths to dry even when the sun is out. It is embarrassing to hang soiled cloths out where anyone can see.



INADEQUATE DISPOSAL

Disposal is a fundamental concern. Community garbage piles are burned infrequently and incompletely leaving used pads exposed. Without a method to privately dispose of pads, girls put them directly into latrines causing them to block frequently.



PAD DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

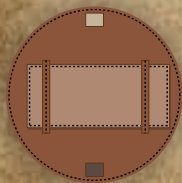
- ✓ DEPENDABLE
- ✓ STURDY

- ✓ ABSORBENT
- ✓ PROTECTIVE BARRIER

- ✓ COMFORTABLE
- ✓ FASTENS TO UNDERWEAR

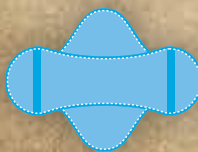
- ✓ EASY WASH / QUICK DRY
- ✓ EASY DISPOSAL

PRODUCTS TESTED



Mwezi Pads

- Locally made fabric
- 1 base pad / 4 removeable inserts
- Women's collectives, Kenya
- www.access-collective.com



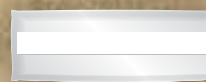
AFRipads

- Soft, quick-drying fleece
- 2 base pads / 6 removeable inserts
- Village employment, Uganda
- www.afripads.com



KMet Pads

- Washable terry cloth
- 6 thick pads
- Teenage mothers, Kenya
- www.kmet.co.ke



Makapads

- Recycled paper, rainwater, and papyrus
- Owned, produced in Uganda
- www.t4africa.com



Mak1 Incinerator

- Individual incinerator, no fuel required
- Attaches directly to latrine wall
- Owned, manufactured in Uganda
- www.t4africa.com

OBJECTIVE

The results of the following study were intended to assess the acceptability of locally produced, eco-friendly sanitary alternatives among primary and secondary schoolgirls in rural Uganda.

FINDINGS

	SECONDARY SCHOOL	PRIMARY SCHOOLS
SITES	The secondary school is located in a remote, poor town among mountains near the border with Kenya.	The two rural, poor primary schools are located in the mountains above the secondary school.
DESIGN	402 secondary school girls participated. All received MakaPads and were instructed to use the Mak1 Incinerator to dispose of pads. In addition to MakaPads, 1/3 received AFRIpads; 1/3 received MakaPads; 1/3 received a package of 6 KMET Pads.	55 girls from each primary school participated. Girls from one school tested AFRIpads. Girls from the other school tested Mwezi Pads.
METHODS	Surveys on demographics, knowledge of menstruation, and past practices were conducted. At the end of the trial, the girls were interviewed on their experiences. Focus groups and a survey about wealth and spending money were conducted with girls and boys.	Pads were distributed by the headmistresses at both schools. At the end of the trial, Oxford researchers visited both schools and conducted focus groups using interpreters.
FINDINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 92.8% of secondary girls used commercial disposables at the start of the trial.• Girls' average monthly allowance was less than USD \$5.00/month.• Girls spend 20-25% of their allowance on pads purchase.• At the end of the trial, 46.2% said MakaPads were the same as commercial pads, 57.1% said they were better.• At the end of the trial, 46.4% planned to switch to cloth.• Data on Mak 1 Incinerator inconclusive due to a local taboo linking infertility to burning menstrual blood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only one girl had ever used a disposable sanitary pad. Most used wool, cloth scraps, or extra underwear.• In both schools, girls said the cloth pads they had been given were more reliable than customary methods.• AFRIpad had sturdier design than Mwezi Pad, but Mwezi has open patent available for free to anyone.• There is a potential health and safety risk from poor hygiene resulting from lack of access to soap and clean water.

CONCLUSION

Cloth Pads for Primary Schools: Given the improved reliability and stability of cloth pads reported by primary schoolgirls and the difficulty of access to disposable pads in rural areas, researchers chose AFRIpads to test at rural primary schools in a larger study investigating the effects of free sanitary care and puberty education on girls' schooling.

Disposable Pads for Secondary Schools: At the secondary school level, researchers expect disposable pads will be chosen by the girls even when cloth pads are provided for free. Not only did secondary schoolgirls continue to buy pads even after we had provided cloth ones for free, but two-thirds knew how to sew their own before we arrived and yet nearly all of them were regularly using disposable pads.

Given secondary schoolgirls' overall preference for disposable pads, it is important to focus on providing less expensive pads with a better environmental profile, as well as to continue working on individual-level incineration. As the MakaPads were judged to be equally good as other commercial pads, it would make sense to further support these kinds of technologies, helping the businesses that produce them to scale up and reach more girls.

Full report at: <http://www.doublexeconomy.com/publications-projects-2/sanitary-care-and-girls-education/>