

150,000 REFUGEE WOMEN AND GIRLS TO RECEIVE TRANSFORMATIVE MENSTRUAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

RWAMWANGA, Uganda: The UN refugee Agency, [UNHCR](#) and [AFRIPads](#) have begun the largest rollout of reusable sanitary pad distribution and Menstrual Health Management (MHM) sensitization of refugees in Uganda. The project aims at benefiting some 150,000 women and girls in south-western Uganda. With this, UNHCR Uganda is putting critical spotlight on the challenges refugee women and girls face during their periods. In addition to providing the AFRIPads kit to refugee women and girls which begins in October, they have been providing MHM capacity building since late September to equip hundreds of NGO field staff with the appropriate knowledge and tools dedicated to breaking taboo and stigma around the topic of menstruation.

Globally, refugee 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. Reusable pads in this context have rapidly gained interest as a more sustainable, cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution. AFRIPads is a Uganda based social enterprise and MHM advocate that specializes in the local manufacture and global supply of reusable sanitary alongside critical MHM education delivery.

The project is in response to the [2018 UNHCR and AFRIPads pilot study](#) in South West Uganda, which tested the *appropriateness and acceptability of introducing reusable sanitary pads* to schoolgirls in the refugee context. The report indicated that considering the difficulty of continuously distributing disposable pads throughout the refugee 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** in the South West region.

Moreover, the pilot study findings revealed:

- The number of girls that reported missing school during their period was cut in half when using AFRIPads reusable pads
- 84% of refugee schools girls indicating they would prefer to use AFRIPads over disposable pads

The scale-up of the pilot will begin with UNHCR and AFRIPads ensuring all field level staff within Nakivale, Kyaka II and Rwamwanja settlements in Uganda are given a comprehensive training on MHM. This is to ensure all the refugee women and girls have the knowledge on how to use and care for their reusable sanitary pads and to empower them with information about their periods and bodies.

Mahoua Parums, Deputy Representative (Protection) of UNHCR, said:

“Lack of adequate sanitary materials can lead to serious hygiene, protection, and health problems for women and girls, and hinders their ability to engage in daily activities such as work or school. This pilot distribution of reusable pads in the South-West region of Uganda will enable us to strengthen our support to women and girls to manage their menstrual hygiene safely and with dignity, through an environmentally friendly, sustainable, and cost-effective solution. Importantly, this initiative responds to the views and preferences of women and girls collected during the pilot study conducted in settlements in this region.”

Sophia Grinvalds, Co-Founder of AFRIPADS, said:

“Our decade of experience tells us that providing a product solution alone does not address the complex needs of girls and women during menstruation. We are therefore so thrilled by the opportunity to do a large-scale MHM sensitization with UNHCR alongside this largest reusable pad distribution Uganda has ever seen. Also, by making all the 150,000 reusable kits (close to a million pads) locally in Uganda, we ensure 150 women of meaningful employment. We are so grateful UNHCR is recognizing the importance of local partners that create local economic impact.”

- **Ends** -

- **Notes to Editors** -

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Photography documenting the project launch will be available upon request on email: sarah@afripads.com



AFRIPADS Trainer, Gloria giving Use and Care training at Rwamwanja Vocational Centre. Photo ©AFRIPADS / Edward Ram