Menstrual Products and Access

Nancy Muller,
Senior Program Officer, PATH
June 14, 2018
Why are menstrual products important?

- **Human right**: Dignity and safety.
- **Education**: Mixed evidence of increased absenteeism during menstruation.
- **Health**: Some evidence of increased risk of reproductive tract infections and transactional sex to obtain menstrual products.
- **Employment/performance**: Poor sanitation infrastructure and access to products undermine privacy, concentration.
- **Gender equity**: Stigma, discrimination, restrictions.

Menstrual products are part of the solution.
What does a menstrual product need to do?

• Support girls and women to live with dignity and confidence.
• Absorb or retain menstrual blood.
• Prevent leaking.

Requirements for use:

Disposable sanitary pad or tampon: Disposed of, replaced.

Reusable cloth and period panties: Stored after use without leaking/producing odor, replaced, washed, dried, stored.

Menstrual cup: Emptied, cleaned, boiled/disinfected, dried, stored.
Menstrual products

What do girls/women want?
Research indicates disposable sanitary pads are preferred.

What is in the market?
Disposable sanitary pads.

What about reusable cloth, period panties, menstrual cups, and tampons?

- Insufficient research, awareness, marketing.
- Cultural views, misinformation.
- Lack of information on willingness and ability to pay.
- Insufficient distribution channels.
- Cost.
- Lack of standards.

All product types are needed.
Some of the evidence about menstrual products

- **Improvised cloth**: Increased incidence of RTIs.
- **Reusable sanitary pads**: Higher perceived reliability than cloth.
- **Menstrual cups**:
  - 3-6 months to adopt.
  - BV less prevalent among girls using cups (12.9%) vs. using disposable pads (20.3%).
- **Period panties**: Reduced stigma, increased perception of self-efficacy.
- **Economics**: Having private, indoor place to change products reduces likelihood of BV.
- **Education**: Urban women with higher education more likely to use commercial products.
- **Misinformation**: No evidence of cervical cancer linked to poor menstrual hygiene.
Sector barriers

- Insufficient rigorous data on what products girls and women want and can afford.
- Many small entrepreneurs make products of varying quality.
- Lack of organized supply and distribution systems.
- Markets don’t address the middle or bottom of the economic pyramid.
Country support for menstrual products

- Subsidies for school girls
- Single product focus
- Evaluations of subsidy programs
- Standards
- Taxes
- Lack of organized systems and policies on disposal
Considerations for selection of a menstrual product

Performance
  Quality standards
Acceptability
  Price
  Comfort, odor
  Ease of use
  Appearance
  Care
Context of use
  Water access, space to dry
  Cultural acceptance
  Underwear
  Disposal
Supply

Products need to fit the needs of the user.
Considerations for support systems

- Information/education
- Water
- Sanitation
- Hygiene
- Containment and disposal

Products don’t introduce themselves.
# Menstrual Hygiene Product Information

## Menstrual Hygiene Products—Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product type</th>
<th>Cloth rags - single use</th>
<th>Cloth rags - reusable</th>
<th>Disposable sanitary pad w/ non-biodegradable plastics</th>
<th>Reusable sanitary pad w/ reusable insert</th>
<th>Tampon w/o applicator</th>
<th>Tampon w/ cardboard applicator</th>
<th>Tampon w/ plastic applicator</th>
<th>Reusable menstrual cup</th>
<th>Disposable menstrual cup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example product photos</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image9.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of use: Reusable</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of use: Single-use</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of materials: Biodegradable</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of materials: Non-biodegradable</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of materials: Mixed materials</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of wear: External wear</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of wear: Internal wear (insertion)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage of product: Consumer product</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage of product: Informal material</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage of product: R&amp;D prototype</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Menstrual Hygiene Products—Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example products</th>
<th>Confidential</th>
<th>AFRipad*</th>
<th>Hybrid Pad*</th>
<th>Li-Lets Super w/ applicator</th>
<th>Tampax Pearl Ultra</th>
<th>Diva Cup*</th>
<th>Instead Softcup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of uses per unit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65 (inserts) 65 (shells)</td>
<td>1 (core) 65 (shells)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry volume per unit (cm³)</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>113.2</td>
<td>108.3</td>
<td>117.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry mass per unit (g)</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual dry loading rate (cm³/person/yr)</td>
<td>20,649</td>
<td>2,082</td>
<td>44,254</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>32,334</td>
<td>2,715</td>
<td>5,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual dry loading rate (g/person/yr)</td>
<td>5,436</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>3,606</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>2,561</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>1,586</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Product details used for calculations are as follows: AFRipad's 1 year kit includes 6 inserts and 2 shells; Hybrid pad includes 2 reusable shells; Diva reusable menstrual cup's product life is estimated at 5 years.

For additional inquiries, please contact Robyn Wilmouth at rwilmouth@path.org.
Who is purchasing the menstrual product?

• Total market approach – market segmentation.
• Ability/willingness to pay:
  • Urban middle upper income: Commercially available products.
  • Moderate income: Products may not be readily available, limited choice and ability to pay.
  • Remote, lower income: Subsidized or free products, reusable.
Sustainable business models

High income:
- Shops
- Online

Middle income:
- Basket of goods
- eCommerce, apps
- Social enterprise
- Franchise – local production
- Work for products
- Financing; mobile money

Lower income:
- Government or NGO subsidies
- Donations
- Self-help groups
- Work for products
Key takeaways

- Menstrual products are part of the solution.
- There is no one right product.
- Product choice is important.
- Consider product performance, acceptability, context of use.
- Ensure feedback from women and girls in designing products.
- Products don’t introduce themselves.
- Understand what products girls and women want and what they are willing and able to pay for.
THANK YOU!