

A photograph of a rural Ugandan shop. The shelves are filled with various goods, including bags of flour, packets of instant noodles, and other packaged food items. Two young girls are sitting in the foreground, smiling and holding packets of MakaPads. The girl on the left is holding a stack of packets, while the girl on the right is holding a single packet. The background shows more shelves with goods, including a bag of 'VICTORY' brand flour and a bag of 'KERRY BOY' brand flour. The overall scene is brightly lit and shows a typical rural market setting.

# A launch strategy to increase awareness and availability of MakaPads in rural Uganda

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# Project Summary

Girls and women in Uganda lack Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) information, and proper tools and facilities to manage their periods. There are different methods that girls in rural areas use to manage their menstruation such as cloths or pads. This project focuses on menstrual pads as they are hygienic, absorbent, and comfortable. Therefore, pads enable girls to have a better experience during their period. Girls who live in rural areas of Uganda are the main users this project focuses on. Older women in rural areas are considered as the target consumers who purchase the pads.

Currently, the women who live in rural areas of Uganda only have access to the commercial expensive pad brands. Therefore there is a need of affordable menstrual pads to be accessible in the villages. MakaPads produces affordable menstrual pads. However some years ago they lost their biggest client who was doing the distribution of the product and they were left to rethink their distribution strategy. Presently, MakaPads wants to change their strategy from B2B to B2C and therefore, distribute the pads directly to the end consumer in the rural areas of Uganda.

Thus, the goal of the project is to design a launch strategy for MakaPads to increase the availability and accessi-

bility of menstrual pads for women and girls in rural areas of Uganda. The project was scoped using the framework of the four A's of marketing: Acceptability, Awareness, Availability and Affordability. Acceptability and Affordability were left out of the scope. Awareness and Availability were subdivided after desk research and context interviews were conducted. Awareness subdivisions were MHM communication and product communication, and Availability was subdivided into information distribution and product distribution.

Interviews were conducted in Uganda and a workshop was performed with the MakaPads team to decide on the direction of the project. The project findings brought key partnerships with opinion leaders in the villages and added crucial consumer groups for the company. By adding these two stakeholders, MakaPads can increase their reach in the villages using less resources. The strategy created is designed for MakaPads to establish in new markets and replicate in rural villages of Uganda. Finally, communication directions were created to increase MHM and product knowledge in the communities of rural Uganda.

The full process of the project shown in *Image 1* and *2*, describes all the steps from the problem statements until the design proposal (*Image 2* has a more detailed version of the process).

The challenges of menstruation management in Uganda and the setup of the project can be found in *Chapter 1*. *Chapter 2* contains other similar solutions and successful campaigns. The first solution hypothesis and the contextualization of the topic in Uganda are illustrated in *Chapter 3*. *Chapters 4* and *5* explain the field research and findings from the context of Uganda. *Chapters 6* and *7* show the design proposal and project outcomes. The conclusions of the project can be found in *Chapter 8*. Finally, the author's reflection on the project are explained in *Chapter 9*.

## Design Process

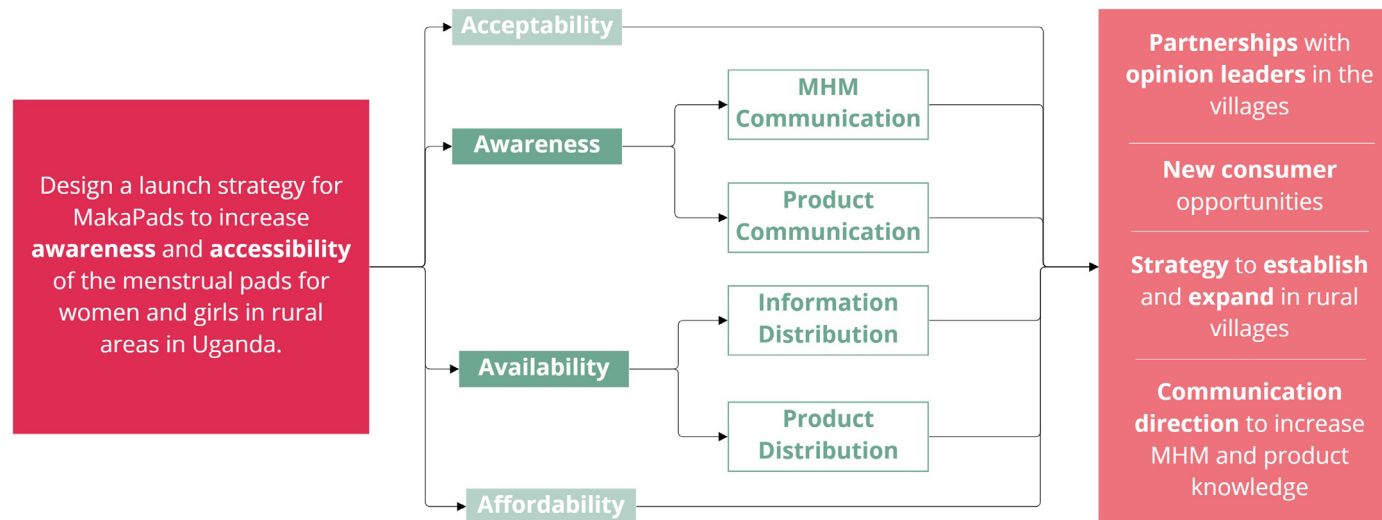


Image 1: Design Process

## Detailed Design Process

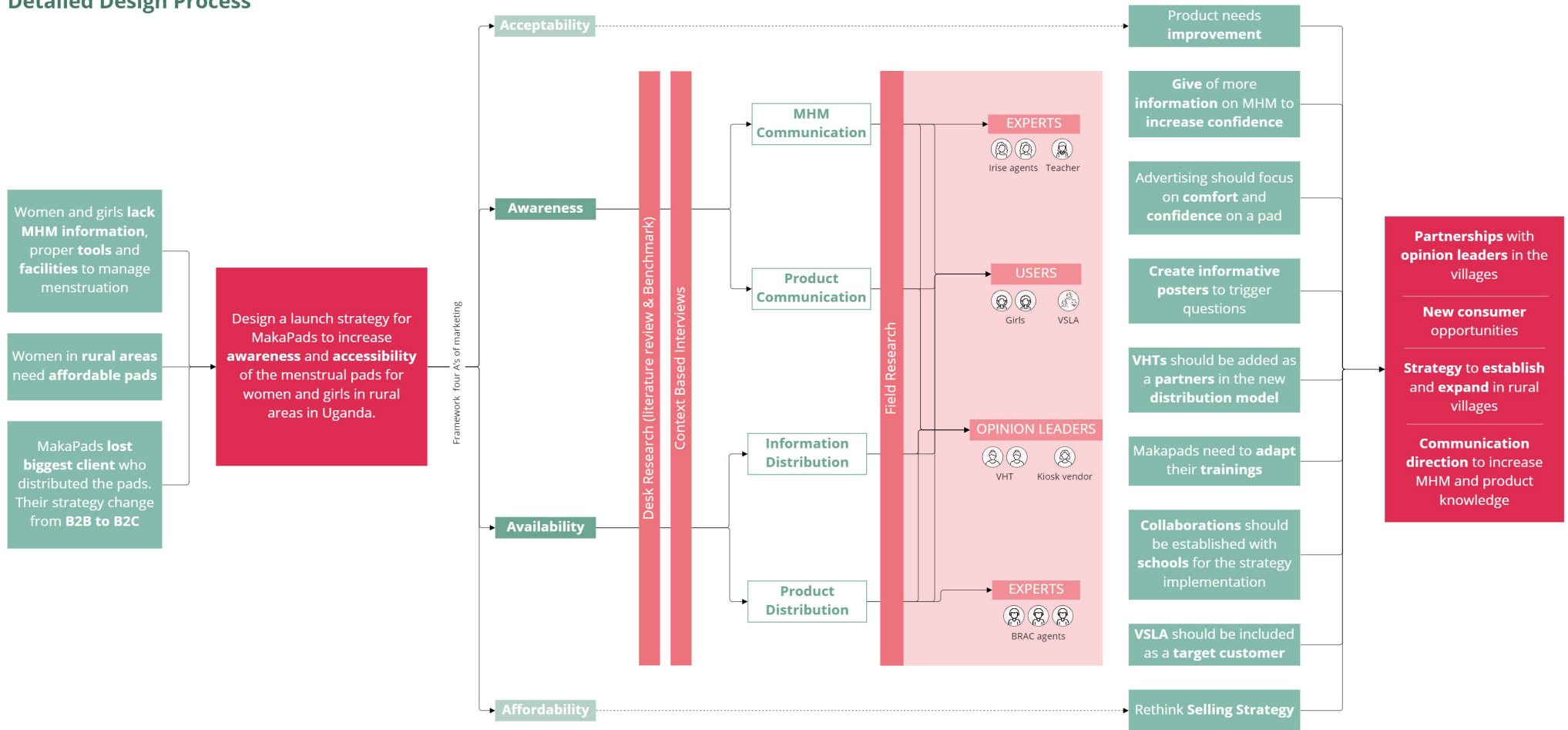


Image 2: Detailed Design Process

# 1

## Project Setup

The project kickstarted with a literature review to analyze and understand the situation of menstruation for girls and women in Uganda which was followed by an exploration of the company MakaPads to understand and map their structure and values. This resulted in problem statements that helped define the scope of the project.

## 1.1 Menstrual Hygiene Management in Uganda

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) differs between girls depending on their socioeconomic status, their access to water and sanitation, and the traditions and beliefs in which they were brought up in (Das *et al.*, 2015). It is crucial for girls and women to have proper hygiene methods to manage their menstruation with dignity (UNESCO, 2014). However, girls and women in low-income contexts (especially in Africa) lack information on menstruation and struggle to find hygienic and effective ways to manage their menstruation (Garg *et al.*, 2012; Hennegan *et al.*, 2016; SNV & IRC, n.d.; Sommer *et al.*, 2015; Sumptner & Torondel, 2013), which might hinder their capacity to go to school or work (Winkler & Roaf, 2014).

According to a research by Hennegan *et al.* (2016), girls and women should have access to clean absorbents which collect blood and can be changed regularly; access to soap and clean water, proper disposal systems and facilities to manage their menstruation privately. Additionally, girls should also have proper menstrual health education to make informed decisions and know how to deal with menstruation without fear (UNFPA, 2021).

Menstruation is a significant change in girls' lives (Garg *et al.*, 2012). It is a transition into womanhood, when the support of the family becomes especially important (UNICEF, 2018). This new phase brings physical and psychological changes, barriers, and challenges for schoolgirls in peri-urban and rural areas of Uganda (Miiro *et al.*, 2018). Many girls lack support from their families which leaves them unprepared to confront this new period of their lives (UNESCO, 2014).

In recent years, the challenges that schoolgirls in low-income countries face during menstruation, have gained more attention (Sommer *et al.*, 2015). According to research from the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC), 60% of schoolgirls in Uganda suggest that they need better facilities and material to manage their menstruation. Furthermore, 50% of teachers claim that schools don't provide girls with these facilities (SNV & IRC, n.d.).

Research indicates that due to poor menstruation management, up to 60% of girls are absent from school during

their period and miss up to 11% of their school days (SNV & IRC, n.d.). Eventually, due to the missing days, they cannot keep up with their studies and drop out of school completely. Dropping out of school impacts the girls' and women' wellbeing and quality of life, reducing their education level and increasing gender inequality (Winkler & Roaf, 2014).

Studies show that the school drop-out percentage for girls in peri-urban areas of Uganda is highly correlated to the years when they start menstruation (Miiro *et al.*, 2018; Wilson *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, having access to a good sanitary infrastructure, menstrual education and pads will benefit girls to successfully develop in school and in their lives (Hennegan *et al.*, 2016; Montgomery *et al.*, 2016; Sommer *et al.*, 2015). This will give girls better tools to manage their menstruation with hygiene, dignity and without embarrassment (Kwame Ameade & Majeed, 2015; Montgomery *et al.*, 2016; Sivakami *et al.*, 2019; Winkler & Roaf, 2014).

## 1.2 The Organization: MakaPads

MakaPads is a product of the company 'Technology for Tomorrow (T4T)' that was founded in 2007 with the sole purpose of reducing the school dropout percentage of girls and allow them to participate in economic activities. They want to achieve their goal by producing affordable menstrual pads for girls and women in Uganda (Technology for Tomorrow, 2016). The end product is shown in *Image 3*.

The factory of MakaPads is located in the district of Kawempe, an informal settlement/slum area in the northern part of the capital city of Kampala (Kawempe District, n.d.). The factory

was established there to provide employment for local women population and train them to earn different sets of skills.

The pads are manufactured by hand by women using local resources such as papyrus (see *Image 4* and 5). MakaPads offer two different pad packs: the first contains 3 pads worth 1000 Ugandan shillings (less than €0.5). This pack is for customers who cannot afford to buy more. The second pack contains 10 pads worth 2500 Ugandan shillings (less than 1€) for customers who prefer to buy in bulk and can afford to pay a higher sum of money (see *Image 6*).



*Image 3: MakaPads End Product*



*Image 4: MakaPads Factory in Kawempe*



Image 5: Process to Mix the Papyrus



Image 6: 10 Pads Package and 3 Pads Package

## 1.2.1 MakaPads: Distribution Model and Strategy

Until recently, MakaPads sold their pads to intergovernmental organizations and subsequently, these organizations distributed the pads for free to women in refugee camps or in rural areas in Uganda (see *Image 7*). Their main client was the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and when their contract ended in 2015 it was not renewed (Namara, 2016).

MakaPads also sold their pads to the women who live in Kawempe and other rural areas like Mityana located near the capital city. However, selling directly to consumers was not their focus. Therefore, when MakaPads lost their main client, they were left in the need to explore other business models and strategies to keep the business running.

### Previous Distribution Model



Image 7: MakaPads Previous Distribution Model

MakaPads is changing their strategy to sell directly to consumers, shifting from a Business to Business (B2B) to Business to Consumer (B2C) model. MakaPads needs to make the business economically viable with a new strategy to engage and retain future users and increase the product purchase.

At the same time, MakaPads aims to improve the accessibility of sanitary pads in rural areas of Uganda. By doing this, MakaPads will get closer to their goal as a social enterprise: to increase school attendance and permanence of girls in Uganda.

MakaPads has tried different distribution approaches since 2015 (see *Image 8*). They work with sales agents and retail shops in different localities, where the sales agents currently account for 70% of the product sales. Their current approach is informal without a specific process which makes it a costly model for them because they train every sales agent separately and have a middleman in every transaction. In addition to this, there are no specific hubs where consumers can return to purchase the product.

MakaPads also gives MHM trainings in schools to teach girls about menstruation and hoping to make some product sales. This helps them fulfill their goal to increase the information girls have

about MHM. However, parents are not involved in the sales and information campaigns. Therefore, even though girls want to buy the pads, it is rather unrealistic to expect that girls will be able to buy the pads if parents don't understand the benefits of purchasing such a product.

After different distribution approaches, MakaPads hasn't been able to reach a profitable business model. Moreover, they do not have sufficient inhouse capacity to develop the strategy for this new commercial model. To that end, the author will be working as a consultant for MakaPads for this strategy to re-launch their product in the villages of Uganda and get to their desired end user.

## 1.2.2 Consultant: Bopinc

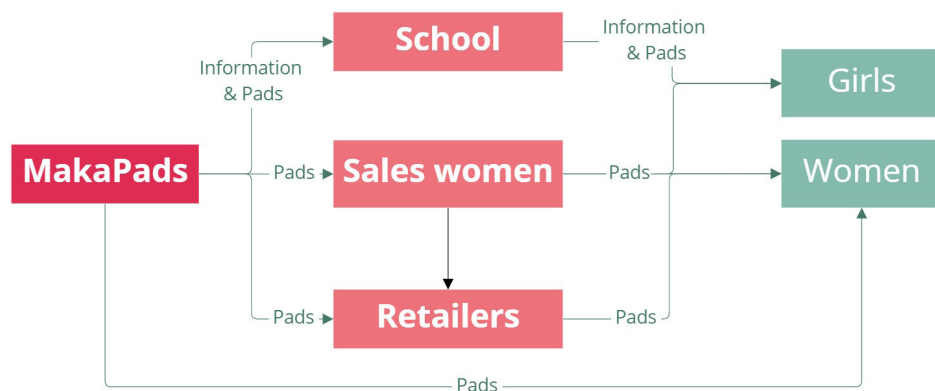
Bopinc (BoP Innovation Center) is a non-profit foundation based out of the Netherlands founded in 2010. From NGOs to SMEs to multinationals, they help organizations to design and deliver inclusive and commercially viable business models. At Bopinc, they believe the best products and services should be available where they matter most, while making a profit and give organizations the capacity to succeed in low-income markets. They shape inclusive business strategies and train key actors in the value chain. Bopinc has experience building and implementing consumer-centric toolkits around nutrition, women empowerment, and behavioral change. They do this through three expertise areas: inclusive innovation, marketing & distribution, and inclusive business empowerment.

to boost economic productivity and growth in emerging economies by unleashing women's potential as entrepreneurs working in, and being consumers of, beneficial products and services. Women entrepreneurs are vital in boosting economic productivity and growth in emerging economies and they should be included as viable and trusted economic actors in value chains. Bopinc boosts the potential of women entrepreneurship through the design and implementation of UNITE: Uncover business opportunities, Nurture women-led SMEs in your program, ignite female micro-retailers to reach the last mile, Trigger change through gender inclusion awareness, Expand innovations for women, by women.

With the expertise and guidance of Bopinc, the author will take on this project to support MakaPads in creating this new strategy.

Women Entrepreneurship is one of their focus dimensions. Bopinc wants

### Current Distribution Model



*Image 8: MakaPads Current Distribution Model*

### 1.3 Project Scope

The project will focus on creating a launch strategy for new markets in rural Uganda. Referencing Ansoff's Strategic Opportunity Matrix (see *Image 9*), this project will focus on creating a Market Development Strategy (Loredana, 2017). MakaPads already has the product (pads), and they want

to develop a new market segment to sell to a new customer type. It will be a tactical launch strategy, as it is created after the product is already developed. At this stage, decisions are made to create a marketing mix to increase profitability of the product. The mix may include pricing, branding, advertising, promotion and distribution (Hultink et al., 1998).

To scope the project, the framework of the four A's of marketing will be used (see *Image 10*). The A's stands for Acceptability, Affordability, Availability and Awareness. This framework is used

in marketing to accentuate the main values that are important to customers and will help to think in a customer-centric way (Sheth & Sisodia, 2011).



Image 9: The Ansoff Growth Strategy Matrix



Image 10: The Four A's of Marketing (Sheth & Sisodia, 2011)

MakaPads is more **Affordable** than most of the commercial brands offered in Uganda. Brands like Kotex and Always, sell a pack of 6 pads for 3500-5000 Ugandan shillings, compared to MakaPads who sells a pack of 10 pads for 2500 Ugandan shillings: up to 50% less expensive. As the target user and consumer of this product are girls and women in the villages of Uganda, MakaPads is a more suitable pad for them.

The project will focus on girls in rural areas as the end user of the product, which was determined following the philosophy of MakaPads. This does not exclude older women, thus the research will be open to explore their needs as well. Older women in rural areas will be considered as the consumer, a stakeholder who purchases the pads.

Even though there are many methods that girls in rural areas use to manage their menstruation this project will focus on menstrual pads. Pads are hygienic, absorbent and comfortable, contrary to the use of a cloth which might present rashes, infections and blood leakage. MakaPads indicates that their pad is highly absorbent as it can absorb blood for up to 8 hours. This accounts into the **Acceptability** of the product. Although certain aspects of the pad could improve, these two aspects (**Affordability** and **Acceptability**) are beyond the range of this work, so they are kept out of the scope. The focus of the strategy developed, is on creating **Awareness** and **Availability** of the pads.

Creating **Awareness** ensures that the consumers have adequate information on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and information of menstrual hygiene products such as menstrual pads. Together, this will give girls and women a full understanding about their period and how to manage it (Garg et al., 2012). Moreover, this aims to increase the purchase intention and use of such pads by girls and women. In a study from Dongre and collaborators, after implementing MHM programs for 3 years there was more awareness of menstruation and the use of pads increased by 25% (Dongre et al., 2007).

Rural areas limit the menstrual pad choices for women as the costs are high and the accessibility is low (UNESCO, 2014). The pads found in villages are generally big commercial brands such as Kotex or Always. Making low-cost sanitary pads available in rural areas will improve the MHM problems and school attendance of girls (Crofts & Fisher, 2012). Therefore, focusing on Availability will ensure that MakaPads can be easily acquired and used by vulnerable consumers.

In conclusion, the assignment for this thesis project will be to:

Design a launch strategy for MakaPads to increase **awareness** and **availability** of the menstrual pads for women and girls in rural areas of Uganda.

## Design a launch strategy for MakaPads to increase awareness and availability of the menstrual pads for women and girls in rural areas of Uganda.

# 2

## Awareness and Availability Contextualization

A case study on commercial pad companies was performed to understand the strategies they used to enter the markets with menstrual products. The aim of the case study was to gain knowledge on awareness campaigns that pad companies used in the past. The information gained in the case study served as inspiration for the communication direction of MakaPads.

An analysis of affordable pad companies in East Africa was conducted. This benchmark helped to understand the availability of similar products in Uganda and other close by countries. The strategies of these companies were analyzed which helped position MakaPads against their closest competitors.

## 2.1 Creation of Awareness of Pads in the Past

Books and information about menstrual education have existed for decades. However, it is only in recent years that 'western' parents feel comfortable to talk about menstruation to their children. Even though the scientific information has been available in the western society since the beginning of the 20th century, some misconceptions and taboos about menstruation have been present until recently (Freidenfelds, 2009).

By the 1920's, menstrual pads companies like Kotex started to create informational pamphlets to engage women and boost brand loyalty. This made information of menstruation accessible for the public in United States. Due to the availability of information, the awareness on menstruation and menstruation management increased, which changed the views and expectations for women in the western society. Pamphlets were distributed in workplaces and schools, educating women about menstruation. The pamphlets gave different types of information, some were made to explain how the pads work and how to use them. Others described menstruation as something natural and the pads as a "modern advancement" (Freidenfelds, 2009). An example of this pamphlets and communication materials are shown in *Images 11 and 12*.

Similar to the introduction of the menstrual pads in the western society, the benefits of menstrual pads are still

new and unknown to many people in the villages of Uganda. MakaPads already has campaigns to educate girls about MHM and menstrual pads. However, comparing the strategies done by Kotex, MakaPads can develop the distribution of information as a main strategy to increase awareness of menstrual pads and therefore increase the purchase intention of the product. Reviewing the case study of Kotex, MakaPads could target women for such information at the beginning. This will get the attention of their user and consumer. Afterwards, the information can be given to boys and men which will gain further acceptance of the product from the society in the villages.



Image 11: How to Dispose a Kotex (Finley, 1920)



Image 12: Kotex Advertising on the Comfort of Using the Pad (Eschner, 2017)

## 2.2 Benchmark of available companies

A benchmark of affordable pad companies in East Africa was conducted to study their propositions. The aim is to discover other companies' structures and analyze the differentiation MakaPads has with their closest competitors. At the same time, it also helps understand how MakaPads can include some of the existing solutions into their own strategy. The companies were explored and analyzed using the framework of the four A's.

### 2.2.1 Afripads

Afripads are reusable sanitary pads established in 2010. They have a production center in rural Uganda where they employ local women to produce the pads. Their main objective is to gain gender equality by removing menstrual barriers. Their products are shown in *Images 13* and *14*.

Afripads offer different product packages. The first is a pack with four reusable pads, which includes one super maxi pad (for heavy flow) and three maxi pads (for medium heavy flow). The second is a pack with six reusable pads, containing one super maxi pad and five maxi pads. The third is a "Schoolgirl kit" which they co-created with schoolgirls to meet their needs. This kit has five pads which includes one super maxi pad, two maxi pads and two mini pads (for light flow).

The reusable pads consist of a top layer that gives a dry feeling, absorbent layers in the middle and an anti-leak layer at the bottom. The pad can be reused for more than twelve months if its properly washed and dried. This makes the product affordable, as women need to purchase the product only once a year.

To compliment the pads, Afripads also develop underwear to fit African women's bodies. The aim is that women are comfortable and feel assured during their period. Afripads covers different needs by having different product bundles with different pad sizes. This variety increases the acceptability of the brand. MakaPads in contrast, offers only one pad size. Creating at least one more pad size can make MakaPads more appropriate and accepted for a wider variety of users.

For the availability of the product, there

are two sales streams that Afripads uses. One is selling to organizations (B2B), then the organizations distribute mainly in refugee camps: similar to the previous model of MakaPads. The other stream is selling to consumers and businesses through a website. However, it seems that this sales stream is for a different target consumer, such as people who want to support the brand economically.

Similar to MakaPads, Afripads is involved in programs to increase awareness of MHM. Collaborating with NGOs, they have an effective, high-quality product to create awareness. They produce and distribute an animated booklet telling a story of a girl who goes through her period. MakaPads can also collaborate with local institutions to create together valuable and quality trainings.



Image 13: Afripads Product (Afripads - Products, n.d.)



Image 14: Afripad Reusable Pad (Afripads - Products, n.d.)

## 2.2.2 BanaPads

Banapads produces low-cost and eco-friendly disposable pads made of banana pseudostem waste. The pads are produced in Uganda and Tanzania. By using local waste material, the pads are affordable to produce and purchase. See the product in *Image 15*.

One of their objectives is to keep girls in schools. However, their main goal is to train and give jobs to women. The aim is that women become micro entrepreneurs to produce and sell the pads in their villages. As their efforts are placed elsewhere and the product fulfills its function, they don't focus on increasing the acceptability of the product.

Banapads therefore, increases availability and awareness of the product by using local women as sales agents. Having local women as partners to distribute pads and teach about MHM is an interesting strategy for MakaPads to explore further.



*Image 15: Banapads Product (iBAN, 2014)*

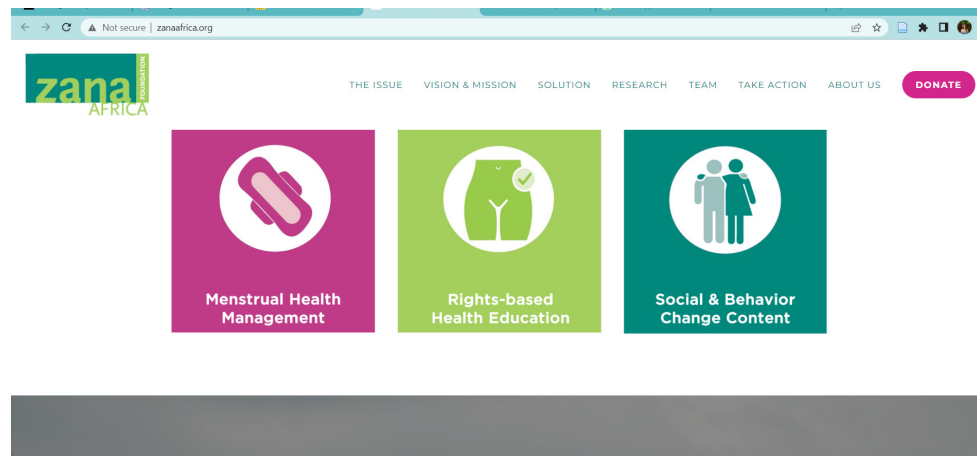
## 2.2.3 Zana Africa

Zana Africa is a Kenyan based foundation established in 2013. Their goal is to give healthy lives and empowerment to all girls in East Africa. To that end, they combine education of girls' rights, education on menstruation and distribution of sanitary pads.

This company has programs to distribute pads and information for free (see their website with their programs in *Image 16*). This takes away any barriers of affordability for girls. The pads and information are made available by non-profit programs in Kenya.

Zana Africa focuses on creating awareness by curating information on MHM. They collaborate with an external brand called Nia and distribute their pads. Therefore, the acceptability of the product is out of their scope.

Zana Africa gives away underpants alongside the menstrual pads. This is an interesting product bundle for low resource customers. Rural women in Uganda, in its most extreme cases, don't have underpants to put the pads on. Therefore, such bundles might be interesting for MakaPads which may result in a higher user engagement and product purchase.



*Image 16: Homepage and Services of Zana Africa (ZanaAfrica Foundation, n.d.)*

## 2.2.4 SHE

SHE (Sustainable Health Enterprise) is a pad company based in Rwanda. They use local resources like banana fibers to create the pads. Their goal is to make pads that consumers can afford, so girls and women can stay in school and work. They do MHM trainings in schools and communities to increase awareness. Here they also sell the pads and make them available. SHE fosters acceptability of the product by creating eye-catching designs with their brand GO! (see *Image 17*).

SHE is really similar to MakaPads, the main difference being the materials they use and their online visibility for donors. However, MakaPads could also include the idea of making more appealing visual designs. It's relevant to mention that both companies focus on educating girls about menstruation to debunk misconceptions and increase the use of menstrual pads.



*Image 17: go! Product Done by SHE (Sustainable Health Enterprises (SHE) | Our work, n.d.)*

## 2.3 Benchmark Conclusions

Comparative tables were created to visually contrast the affordable pads companies including MakaPads. *Table 1* summarizes the general overview of the information obtained from each company. *Table 2* uses the four A's to compare MakaPads with the other companies. Finally, *Table 3* shows the learnings that MakaPads can consider from each company to adapt into their own strategy.

*Table 1* shows that most companies have a local approach in their distribution strategies. Some of the companies' focus on giving employment to local women which underlines their purpose to empower women. Most of the companies, rely on local resources to create disposable pads which makes them more affordable and sustainable. Only one company offers a wide variety of packages to fit a bigger range of users, this makes the company more user oriented. Most companies lack their own distribution model, and they rely on external organizations to provide it which hinders them to become self-sufficient. It's interesting that all companies focus on the increasing awareness of MHM and they create content to distribute information.

*Table 2* shows that most companies only make their pads available to users when information campaigns are taking place in specific communities. Other companies are dependent on external organizations to distribute the pads. MakaPads wants to shift from this

Image 17: go! Product Done by SHE (Sustainable Health Enterprises (SHE) | Our work, n.d.)

### Companies of Affordable Menstrual Pads Overview

	Region	Engagement in the Community	Pad Type	Product Offer	Product Distribution Strategy	Information Distribution Strategy
<b>MakaPads</b>	<b>Uganda:</b> Local Approach	<b>Employ local women</b> to the factory and provide them new skills to <b>produce the pad</b> and a stable income	<b>Disposable pad</b> made of local resources: <b>papyrus and using the sun's energy</b>	2 kits: Pack of <b>3 pads</b> Pack of <b>6 pads</b>	Previously: B2B for refugee camps Current: <b>B2C for users in the villages</b>	Provide <b>MHM trainings in schools</b>
<b>Afripads</b>	<b>Uganda:</b> Local Approach	<b>Employ local women</b> to <b>produce the pad</b>	<b>Reusable pads</b>	3 kits: <b>4 pads:</b> 1 super maxi pad, 3 maxi pads <b>6 pads:</b> 1 super maxi pad, 5 maxi pads <b>School girl (5 pads):</b> 1 super maxi pad, 2 maxi pads, 2 mini pads <b>Underwear</b>	<b>B2B: other organizations distribute them</b> Website sells: for other consumers	<b>Collaborate with NGOs</b> to produce content: creation of an <b>animated booklet</b>
<b>Banapads</b>	<b>Uganda and Tanzania:</b> Local Approach	<b>Employ local women</b> and train them to <b>produce and sell the pads</b>	<b>Disposable pads</b> made of local disposed resources: <b>banana pseudostem</b>	<b>One pack</b> of pads	<b>Local women to local women:</b> only in their communities	Information given <b>while selling the product</b>
<b>Zana Africa</b>	<b>Kenya:</b> East Africa Approach		<b>Disposable pads</b> produced by another partner company: <b>Nia</b>	<b>One Nia pack</b> of pads	Sell Nia's pads <b>during education programs</b>	<b>MHM and women's rights campaigns</b>
<b>SHE</b>	<b>Rwanda:</b> Local Approach		<b>Disposable pads</b> made of local resources: <b>banana fibers</b>	<b>One pack</b> of pads	Sell pads <b>during MHM trainings</b>	<b>MHM trainings in schools and communities</b>

approach and create their own strategy to provide constant availability of their pads in rural areas. This will benefit the end user and might increase product knowledge and loyalty.

All companies give relevant information about MHM in the communities, however, some are more prepared and have better content than others. Currently MakaPads focuses on teaching MHM to girls in schools. Nevertheless, it might be relevant to make the information widely available for all the community members. Additionally it might be interesting to empower people to teach each other about the topic so they don't rely on external sources of information to increase MHM awareness.

It is evident that most of the menstrual pad companies analyzed are affordable by means of using local resources. Some companies rely on external donors or companies who purchase the pads and then distributes them. This is something MakaPads used to do, however they are now searching for ways to keep the pads affordable while making the business economically sustainable. Finally, affordable pad companies have different ways to make their product acceptable. However, it is evident that this is not the focus for most of them.

Each company has different approaches which might result interesting for MakaPads to incorporate in their own strategy. These learnings will be considered while doing further research to understand which could benefit MakaPads on their new strategy.

Table 2: Companies of Affordable Menstrual Pads four A's Analysis

## Companies of Affordable Menstrual Pads Four A's Analysis

	Availability	Awareness	Affordability	Acceptability
<b>MakaPads</b>	Not widely available. Still need to <b>find a distribution that suits</b> them	<b>Trainings offered for girls.</b> Need to <b>improve the distribution of information</b> to create more awareness	<b>Affordable price for their target user</b> compared to commercial brands	The pad <b>serves its purpose</b> , there are <b>some aspects which need to change</b> to increase acceptability
<b>Afripads</b>	Availability (amount and location) <b>depends on other companies to distribute</b>	Thanks to collaborations they <b>create effective, high quality material</b> to increase awareness	The pads are affordable in the terms that the user <b>only needs to purchase them once a year</b>	<b>Extensive offer of high quality products</b> which fulfills the acceptability of users
<b>Banapads</b>	The products are available <b>as long as there are women who produce the pads in the community</b>	<b>Local women</b> who produce the pads <b>are in charge of creating awareness</b> of the product. Content is not curated	The <b>pads are affordable</b> because they <b>use local resources</b>	This is not part of the company's focus
<b>Zana Africa</b>	Information and pads are given <b>only when specific programs take place</b>	The organization focuses solely on <b>creating content and curation of programs</b>	The product and information are <b>distributed for free</b>	The acceptability of the product is left to the partner Nia
<b>SHE</b>	Sell the product and make it <b>available during MHM trainings</b>	The company provides <b>MHM trainings to schools and communities</b>	The pads are affordable, their income <b>relies in external donors</b>	The design of the <b>packaging is eye catching</b> , making it more accepted

Table 3: Learnings MakaPads Can Apply

## Learnings MakaPads Can Apply

	Afripads	Banapads	Zana Africa	SHE
<b>MakaPads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create other pad sizes to increase acceptability</li> <li>• Collaborate with local organizations to increase awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use local women as partners to distribute pads and teach MHM to increase awareness and availability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include product bundles like underpants to increase engagement and acceptability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use more appealing designs for the packaging to increase acceptability</li> </ul>

# 3

## Mapping the Social Systems

Further desk research was conducted to understand the value that the community has on topics like menstruation. Additionally, how the community involvement can increase the use of menstrual pads and dissemination of information. This led to a first hypothesis of the distribution model in the villages of Uganda. Finally, interviews were conducted with people from Uganda to understand the context further and start to map the social systems and identify opinion leaders in the communities.

### 3.1 A Community Based Strategy

It is essential that girls and boys who are approaching adolescence, get education on menstruation and how to manage it (Misra *et al.*, 2013; UNICEF, 2018). Teaching MHM to adolescents will decrease taboos and normalize menstruation for both males and females. MHM knowledge will also help them make informed decisions on how to manage with their own menstrual health (UNESCO, 2014). At the same time, more information will empower and promote behavioral change for girls in rural areas as it will increase the use of menstrual pads (Dongre *et al.*, 2007; Ssewanyana & Bitanihirwe, 2017). Simultaneously, increasing the availability of pads will improve the school attendance of girls (Montgomery *et al.*, 2012) supporting them to develop to their full potential (Chauhan *et al.*, 2021).

In order to create suitable MHM education programs for adolescents, context, culture and age should be taken into consideration (UNESCO, 2014). Schools should provide MHM programs and involve parents to facilitate a dialogue on the topic at home (UNICEF, 2018). Mothers are an important source of information on menstruation for girls (Chauhan *et al.*, 2021).

Research by UNESCO (2014) demonstrates that MHM school programs are more successful when the parents and the community are included. By involving parents in these programs,

the knowledge and awareness is transferred to all family members. Consequently, this impacts the health and wellbeing for both kids and parents (UNESCO, 2014). Hence, community leaders and parents should be involved on MHM programs and become leaders on the topic.

#### 3.1.1 Opinion Leaders Theory

The multi-step flow theory developed by Paul Lazarsfeld *et al.* (1955) is relevant as it introduces the idea of ‘opinion leaders’ to spread information in communities. Opinion leaders are relatable figures in their communities. The theory argues that opinion leaders get information from different sources and then form their beliefs. Subsequently, they influence the behavior and opinion of people in their community (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

This theory is taken forward to apply it on the strategy for MakaPads. Opinion leaders can be part of the distribution chain to create awareness on MHM and the product. They become key in the strategy to create behavioral change and product purchase in their community (Ognyanova, 2017).

### 3.1.2 Hypothesis of a New Distribution Model

A first hypothesis for the strategy of MakaPads is formed. The proposal uses some aspects of the current distribution system. However, it adds opinion leaders for distribution and includes parents as customers (see *Image 18*).

The model maintains the schools as a hub for MakaPads to teach about MHM and distribute pads. However, given that girls don’t have the economic independence to buy pads, other members of the community are added to the model.

In this approach, MakaPads collaborates with local women as “champions” of the brand. MakaPads train

the champions and provide the pads, then the champions sell the pads and teach about MHM to the parents (community). They also use their house or business as a distribution hub. This way people know where to return for more pads, which reduces the effort the champions must do. In return, the champions will receive commission for the sales they do.

The objective of this strategy is to increase the involvement of the community in menstruation, to gain more knowledge and encourage pad purchase. The end goal is to create behavior change for girls and women to use the pads regularly.

#### Distribution Model Hypothesis

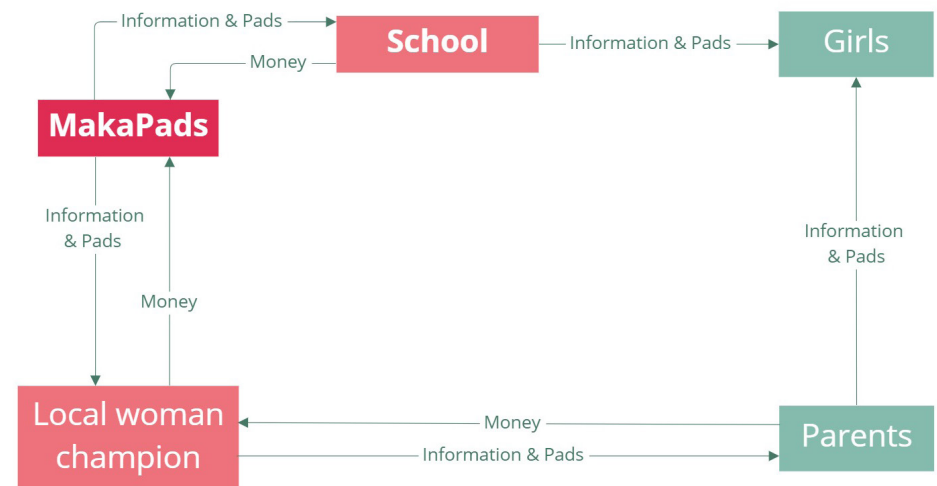


Image 18: Distribution Model Hypothesis

## 3.2 Mapping the Context

A set of four online interviews were conducted to understand how the proposed model fits in the context. Two main goals for these online interviews were set: the first was to identify the main challenges girls and women in Uganda have regarding menstruation. The second was to map the main stakeholders and streams of information in rural areas of Uganda.

### 3.2.1 Method

The interviews were conducted using video calling applications. These had a duration of approximately one hour each. The setup of the interviews was adapted to the participants' needs to make it easy for them to connect.

The structure of the interviews was divided in four parts. At the beginning, the objective was to build trust with the participant. The next part was an exploration into the topic of menstruation in rural Uganda. Finally, the last two topics were awareness of MHM and availability of menstrual products. This was obtained by diving into the participants' personal experiences and observations of their community regarding menstruation.

### 3.2.2 Participants

According to the sampling strategies proposed by Michael Q. Patton (Vaca, 2015), participants were recruited using the Snowball method. The participants for the interview were recruited from the 1st and 2nd degree connections of the author in Uganda.

The purpose of the interviews was to understand the context with local people. Therefore, the characteristics of the participants didn't have to be too specific. Neither did they have to be in the target group of MakaPads. Nevertheless, the participants were expected to have a good knowledge on the structure and culture of rural areas in Uganda.

Three of the selected participants were part of Link Child Foundation (LCF), a local organization. LCF has a school with different projects in a slum area

in the city of Mbale. Consequently, the participants were close to the settings and culture of rural Uganda. The fourth participant lives in the city of Kisoro, which added another perspective to the insights of the interviews.

**Participant 1:** Joana is married and has one daughter and two sons. She lives in the city of Mbale and she is a social worker at LCF.

**Participant 2:** Fatma is married and has one daughter and one son. She lives in the city of Mbale and she is a social worker at LCF.

**Participant 3:** Joseph is married and has four daughters. He lives in the city of Mbale, he is the CEO of LCF.

**Participant 4:** Mackline is a woman living in Kisoro.

### 3.2.3 Interview Insights

The data collected in the interviews were analyzed based on the two A's of Availability and Awareness. However, additional information about Affordability was collected and therefore the relevant insights are shown. The results presented represent the most relevant insights from the interviews. Quotes are added to help illustrate the thoughts of the participants which lead to the conclusions for each topic.

#### 3.2.3.1 Affordability Insights

During the interviews, all participants indicated that women in rural areas lack affordable solutions to manage their menstruation properly. It is pertinent, therefore, to bridge that gap and take an affordable solution like MakaPads to rural areas in Uganda.

**There is a need for affordable pads in rural areas:**

*“Only commercial pads are available in rural areas. These are the most expensive pads and women can't afford them” – Joana | Joseph | Fatma | Mackline*

**Pads are a luxury product:**

*“People prefer to buy something ‘essential’ instead of pads. Pads are like candies, luxurious, a waste of money” – Joana*

#### 3.2.3.2 Availability Insights

Participants also stated that the availability of pads is low, and they can only be found in certain central stores. This is inconvenient as it forces women to go out of their routines to reach specific stores where they can find menstrual pads.

**The pads are found only in the main stores in the center of the village:**

*“Women in villages don't find the pads in small nearby stores. There is one shop house where they can find it in the center of the village” – Fatma*

Participants suggested that schools are a good point of distribution of information and pads. MakaPads is already using schools as such. Therefore, it is essential to keep schools in the end strategy.

**Schools are good points of knowledge and distribution:**

*“It is easier to get menstrual pads for girls who go to schools” – Mackline*

The participants named interesting stakeholders and women's groups in villages. These might be relevant to include into the new model as the women champions. VHTs (Village Health Team) are influential and known women in the communities. VSLAs (Village Savings and Loan Associations) are groups of 15-30 women who get together once a week to gather money and talk about different topics such as their personal experiences and families.

**Women's groups in villages are good platforms to share personal experiences:**

*“Savings groups (VSLA) of about 20-30 women, meet once a week talk about financial and personal problems. They talk about their personal experiences and their families. ‘A problem shared is a problem solved’” – Fatma*

**VHTs are opinion leaders in the villages:**

*“They are trusted people in the village. They are housewives or work at kiosks. These women volunteer for the government to spread health campaigns in their community. They expect a small retribution for this job, something like mobile data or transport expenses” – Joseph*

#### 3.2.3.3 Awareness Insights

Participants stated that menstruation is a topic covered in school curriculums, but it is not common to talk about it at home. Some participants stressed the importance of parents talking about menstruation to their children. Though, to do that, parents need to gain more confidence on the subject. Therefore, teaching menstruation to parents is relevant.

**Parents lack confidence to talk about menstruation:**

*“Parents are not confident talking about this topic with their children. They think they don't know enough so they prefer not to talk about the topic and leave it to the schools to explain” – Joseph*

**Girls lack good sources of information:**

*“As girls don't have many sources of information, their peers tell what happens from their own experience. This can be scary because they talk about pain, blood and how uncomfortable the period is” – Joana*

**Government has MHM programs in place:**

*“The government has budget for programs to increase knowledge of menstruation in villages” – Mackline*

**There are barriers to access information:**

*“Health centers, schools and health workers provide information on menstruation. However, the lack of proper infrastructure in such centers causes barriers for girls to get it” – Joseph*

### 3.3 Enhanced Research Focus

After the interviews were analyzed, new subdivisions and subgoals were added for further research.

#### 3.3.1 Research Subdivisions

The project assignment was set up using the four A framework. Awareness and Availability were selected as the focus of the project. Two subsections were added to each A.

Awareness was divided into MHM Communication and Product Communication. MHM communication includes content of the trainings from MakaPads and the community knowledge on the topic. Product communication explores the users' expectations from a pad brand.

Availability was divided into Information Distribution and Product Distribution. Information distribution includes the medium and means to share information. Product distribution explores new stakeholders as partners or consumers for the distribution chain.

#### 3.3.2 Research Sub-Goals

To guide the next steps of the research, 3 subgoals were set.

**Subgoal 1: Understand how MHM experts and product distribution experts operate in Uganda.**

**Subgoal 2: Understand the needs and expectations of users of menstrual pads in the villages in Uganda.**

**Subgoal 3: Understand the position and structure of opinion leaders in villages in Uganda.**

### 3.4 Challenges and Limitations

The previous subgoals point out the main limitation. This is exploring villages in Uganda from a foreign context. Talking to people in the villages might be the biggest challenge given the technological infrastructure. In addition, an online setting might hinder the trust and openness from participants to talk about this topic.

Additionally, it is challenging to build a relation with MakaPads from abroad. A lack of trust could present barriers for the implementation of the strategy.

Thus, to tackle the challenges and limitations of the project, the next step was to travel to Uganda to do field research. The objective was to conduct research in villages in Uganda to address the subgoals proposed in section 3.2. Interviews will be conducted with users, opinion leaders, MHM experts and distribution experts.

# 4

## Research in Uganda

Travelling to Uganda became key to gain in-depth knowledge from the people who live in the villages. The objective was to be able to convey interviews with people who would be otherwise unreachable and to observe the community's behavior. The end goal was to get a better understanding of the context to design a suitable and successful strategy for MakaPads.

Consequently, the planning for the field research began. Participants were contacted and recruited. Research guidelines, supported with canvases were created. As the interviews were conducted by the author alone, supporting material was created for note taking.

## 4.1 Subgoal 1: Understand how MHM experts and product distribution experts operate in Uganda

The purpose of the first subgoal was to learn about successful companies and programs in Uganda. Cultural biases and expectations may become barriers to design a strategy which is context appropriate. Therefore, it became relevant to seek for information from experts within Uganda. This subgoal includes the research subdivision of MHM communication, product distribution and information distribution.

### 4.1.1 Research Method

Two different types of experts were identified for the interviews. The first were experts on MHM programs in Uganda, an organization and a teacher who create content and teach the topic. Interviews of one hour were planned with these MHM experts, guidelines were created, and interviews were scheduled beforehand. The interview with the organization took place in Kampala (the capital city) and the interview with the teacher took place in Mbale (a city in the East of Uganda).

The second type were experts with experience in distributing goods throughout Uganda. The interest for these conversations arose after meeting the MakaPads team. Therefore, spontaneous thirty-minute conversations were done with distribution experts. One interview was done physically and the other two were done by phone calls. The interviews were done from Kampala.

### 4.1.2 Participants

Experts were recruited using Opportunity Sampling (Vaca, 2015) because the participants were identified while doing other research work.

The MHM expert organization was found during a webinar session covering the topic of menstruation in East Africa. IIEA (Irise Institute East Africa) is an organization that aims to eradicate any type of oppression related to menstruation and they support female entrepreneurs working in the topic of menstrual health. Irise, therefore, proved to be a relevant stakeholder for the project. The interview was arranged with the Program Manager of Irise to learn further from them.

Additionally, after spending time in LCF (the school in Mbale), the significance of teachers for girls became evident. Similarly, schools are valuable places for the communities as it is a hub where people gather and go for advice. For that reason, a spontaneous interview was conducted with a teacher from primary grade 5. In that school year, some girls are starting their periods therefore, it was interesting to talk to her to understand how girls and teachers are handling it.

After presenting the proposed distribution model to the manager of MakaPads, he contacted three colleagues he had from the company Brac. The company distributes a wide range of living goods and health material. The distribution model was similar to the proposed model for MakaPads, it proved interesting to learn further about it. The three experts of the Brac distribution model were interviewed to understand the model better.

### 4.1.3 Material

An interview guideline was designed for the MHM experts, setting the goal and the general structure of the conversation (see *Appendix 1*). The interview started with introductions to establish trust with the participant, followed by a general understanding of their role in the organization and continued with an exploration of their programs. Finally, the interview closed by learning about the mediums they use to distribute information and exploring the possible collaborations with MakaPads.

Given that the conversations with distribution experts were spontaneous, there was no concrete guidelines for it. The conversations started by understanding the role of the participants within Brac. They followed by exploring the model and finally understanding how MakaPads could be added into their distribution streams.

## 4.2 Subgoal 2: Understand the needs and expectations of users of menstrual pads in the villages in Uganda

The second subgoal was proposed to explore the needs of pads users in the villages. To understand their knowledge on menstruation and the source of such information. To learn about their routines around menstruation. And understand their expectations from menstrual pads. The subgoal aims to cover all the research subdivisions: MHM and product communication, information, and product distribution.

### 4.2.1 Research Method

Two types of users were selected for the interviews: The first type are schoolgirls in villages of Uganda. The girls had to be teenagers and have experience managing their period. A one-hour interview was conducted with two girls from the village of Mityana. Guidelines and canvases were created as support material for the interviews.

The second type of users are VSLAs, the savings group which includes women, moms and some men from the community. The session with the VSLA lasted for one hour and it was designed with a mix of research methods. The first half were observations of the group dynamics. The second half included interview style questions and finalized with a focus group evaluation of the product. The session was conducted in a district of Mbale.

### 4.2.2 Participants

The girls were recruited using Snowball sampling (Vaca, 2015). The MakaPads team asked one of their most influential saleswomen in Mityana to recruit two girls for the interviews. The requirements were for the girls to be teenagers, have experience with managing menstruation and using MakaPads. The first girl, Lisa was 14 years old, she goes to school and helps her mom working at the kiosk. The second girl was recruited by Lisa, her name was Joney, she is 17 years old and goes to school in Mityana.

The VSLA group were recruited through Joseph and Joana (LCF staff). The group is called “Team no Sleep” and it’s formed by 29 women and 1 man, located in a slum area in Mbale. They meet at 10 am every Thursday and assemble for one hour together. The group consisted of women of all ages, some were moms, some were single, and some were already grandmothers. This variety in the group proved useful to gain a broader understanding of the topics.

### 4.2.3 Material

For the interview with the girls, a guideline and other materials were created (see *Appendix 2*). The interview started by explaining the project and introducing each other. Good in-depth introductions were essential to build trust with the girls. Following a section to understand the relationships of the girls and sources of information in their community. This was supported with a canvas called “People in my life” (see *Appendix 3*). In this canvas, relevant stakeholders were placed around a girl, helping guide the conversation and note taking for the research.

The interview followed by talking about the experience of girls with their first period. The canvas “What is menstruation?” was used (See *Appendix 4*). A timeline is placed in the center to talk about the experience before and after their first period. Then their routine for their period was explored with the canvas “A week in a month” (see *Appendix 5*). This was also a timeline where the beginning and end of the period was placed.

Finally, an exploration was conducted on the qualities that girls want on pads. The card sorting research method was used, the cards had written the qualities that MakaPads uses to communicate to users (see *Appendix 6*) and were placed in a matrix by users grading it from more to less important.

The first part of the session with the VSLA was free for observations. The second part had a guideline with interview questions (see *Appendix 7*). The session started with an explanation of the project, followed by an exploration on their knowledge on menstruation and where they get such information. Afterwards the group explored and discussed the qualities of the pads. The group opened a package of MakaPads, analyzed them and gave feedback. Finally, a small exploration was conducted of their preference for mediums to get information from. This session didn’t use support material as it was a group activity and note taking was easier.

### 4.3 Sub-goal 3: Understand the position and structure of opinion leaders in villages in Uganda

The third subgoal was formed to define the position and role of opinion leaders in the villages. Special attention was placed to understand VHTs motivations, responsibilities, and structure. The subgoal covers all the research subdivisions: MHM and product communication and information and product distribution.

#### 4.3.1 Research Method

Within the class of opinion leaders, the participant selection focus was on the VHTs. A one-hour interview was held with two VHTs of different districts in Mbale. Guidelines and canvases were created for the interviews.

A guerrilla interview was performed with a kiosk vendor in Mityana who already sells MakaPads. A 15 min conversation took place to get a broader idea of what the users were saying about the pads and her tactics to sell the pads.

#### 4.3.2 Participants

The VHTs were recruited using Snowball sampling (Vaca, 2015). Joseph and Joana from LCF arranged the meetings with the VHTs Silvia and Carla. VHTs are a group formed and recruited by the government. The VHTs started when the ministry needed to transmit information to the last-mile. The selected VHTs belonged to different age groups and different districts in Mbale, which gave a wider overview to the insights of the research. Both participants had different jobs and different motivations for becoming a VHT.

The kiosk vendor was recruited using opportunity sampling (Vaca, 2015). MakaPads has saleswomen in the village of Mityana, the top vendor, Linda, was approached for the guerrilla interview. She is well known and connected in the village. Since she is a health worker, she understands and communicates the value of using pads. She is, therefore, an influential woman regarding menstruation and pad usage.

#### 4.3.3 Material

A guideline was created for the interview with the VHTs (see *Appendix 8*). Similarly, to the other interviews, at the beginning the aim was to set an understanding of the project and introducing each other. Following, to learn the role of the VHTs in their communities and afterwards, an exploration was done on the relations they have in the village and the canvas “People I meet” was used (see *Appendix 9*), where relevant stakeholders are placed around the VHT.

The interview followed with an overview of their point of view of how girls learn about menstruation. A similar canvas was used named “Period information map” (see *Appendix 10*), however, in this canvas the girl is in the center of the map. Finally, as VHTs are a source of information, an exploration was done on the medium in which they prefer to give information. The canvas “Information canvas” was used (see *Appendix 11*), where VHTs could place in a matrix of different communication medium according to the effectiveness and the ease of them.

For the guerrilla interview with the kiosk vendor, a general guideline was made (see *Appendix 12*). Once in the village, the kiosk vendor was identified and approached with some questions. The goal of this interview was to learn about the quality of the pads and the consumers’ perspective.

# 5

## Research in Uganda Analysis and Findings

The data of each interview was processed and main findings were reported. The findings of all interviews were clustered together and analyzed by means of the two A's: awareness and availability. However, some insights about acceptability and affordability emerged during the research, thus the findings were included in the analysis. The insights are presented with quotes to illustrate the thoughts of the participants. Conclusions are made after the quotes to summarize each section. The detailed clusters can be found in *Appendix 13*.

## 5.1 Awareness Main Findings

The relevant findings for awareness were clustered together and main insights for the project were defined. The insights were placed in the research subdivisions of MHM Communication and Product Communication. The main topics covered were the necessity for information about menstruation, the information about the product that users want and the medium in which to communicate such information.

### 5.1.1 MHM Communication Findings

During the interviews, girls and women stated that they are scared about their first period because they don't have enough information. The lack of information also hinders their confidence to talk about menstruation with other people.

*"Before getting my period I didn't know anything. I would hear my mom talk about it with my sister, but when I came close then they would stop talking. I feared getting my period because I would see blood."*  
– Teenager

*"Some mothers grew up without information on menstruation, so they don't know what to tell their daughters. That is why they fear talking to their daughters about it"*  
– VSLA group

Additionally, participants indicated that girls don't actively seek for information about menstruation, however, when they are given information on the topic, they ask many questions.

*"Girls don't approach the teachers to talk about their period. We pick out the girls that seem like they are about to begin their cycle and talk to them about menstruation"* – Teacher

*"In the school we have social talks where we discuss about growth and development, and sometimes menstruation. When girls and boys are giving information about it, they have many doubts and ask questions."* – Teacher

From the findings, it is evident that girls and women need more information to feel confident to talk about menstruation and handle it. Women of all ages have many doubts that need answers to debunk misconceptions about their habits during their period. By knowing good practices of MHM, women will be able to live a healthier lifestyle during their period and normalize it. Teaching MHM to mothers and addressing menstruation as something normal will ensure that girls have better information from a younger age. At the same time, this will increase awareness on the importance of using menstrual pads, which may lead to a higher purchase intention of pads in villages.

Girls revealed that menstruation makes them feel happy and normal. Also, the teacher expressed that when she explains menstruation to girls, she talks about unity with all women.

*"I feel good and happy every day when I have my period, I feel normal. When I miss it, I feel bad"*  
– Teenager

*"When I get my period, I am happy because I feel normal, and I know I'm not pregnant"* – Teenager

*"We tell girls that it is normal, they might be surprised about their period, but all women have it"* – Teacher

MakaPads can use this idea of "normality" and "unity" in their communication of MHM. "Normality" to make girls feel more comfortable and relaxed about the topic and "unity" to urge them to ask any women the doubts they have about menstruation.

Participants suggested that sharing information with text might be difficult as many people in the villages don't know how to read. Therefore, the communication should be mainly illustrative for everyone to understand it.

*"Some people don't know how to read so they won't understand the information" – VHT*

According to participants, posters and videos are effective mediums to share information. Videos are good to show detailed and illustrative information. However, the disadvantages of this medium are due to the technological advancement in the villages. Some people might not have the hardware, the capacity or internet connection to play the video.

*"It's good to have a video to know exactly what is happening. It's feasible to send it. The problem would be having data from both sides" – VHT*

Posters, on the other hand, prove to be a good medium to spread information as they can be placed in multiple gathering hubs in the villages. An interesting observation from the interviews was that if posters are placed in schools, girls can go directly to ask teachers any doubts they have.

*"It's good to have posters in schools that way girls can know more about it before getting their period. Kids will read it and if they don't understand they can come to teachers and ask us about it" – Teacher*

Image 19 visualizes the results for the medium the participants prefer to give and receive information. Even though the axis shows that videos might be easier and effective than the rest of the mediums, it also implies a higher investment from the company. The creation of a video can cost from 500,000

UGX to 1,000,000 UGX. Alternatively, posters have lower investment cost which can cost from 50,000 UGX to 100,000 UGX. Additionally, posters are also considered to be effective and easy visual way for MakaPads to trigger questions and spread information of MHM in the villages.

## Information Medium Results

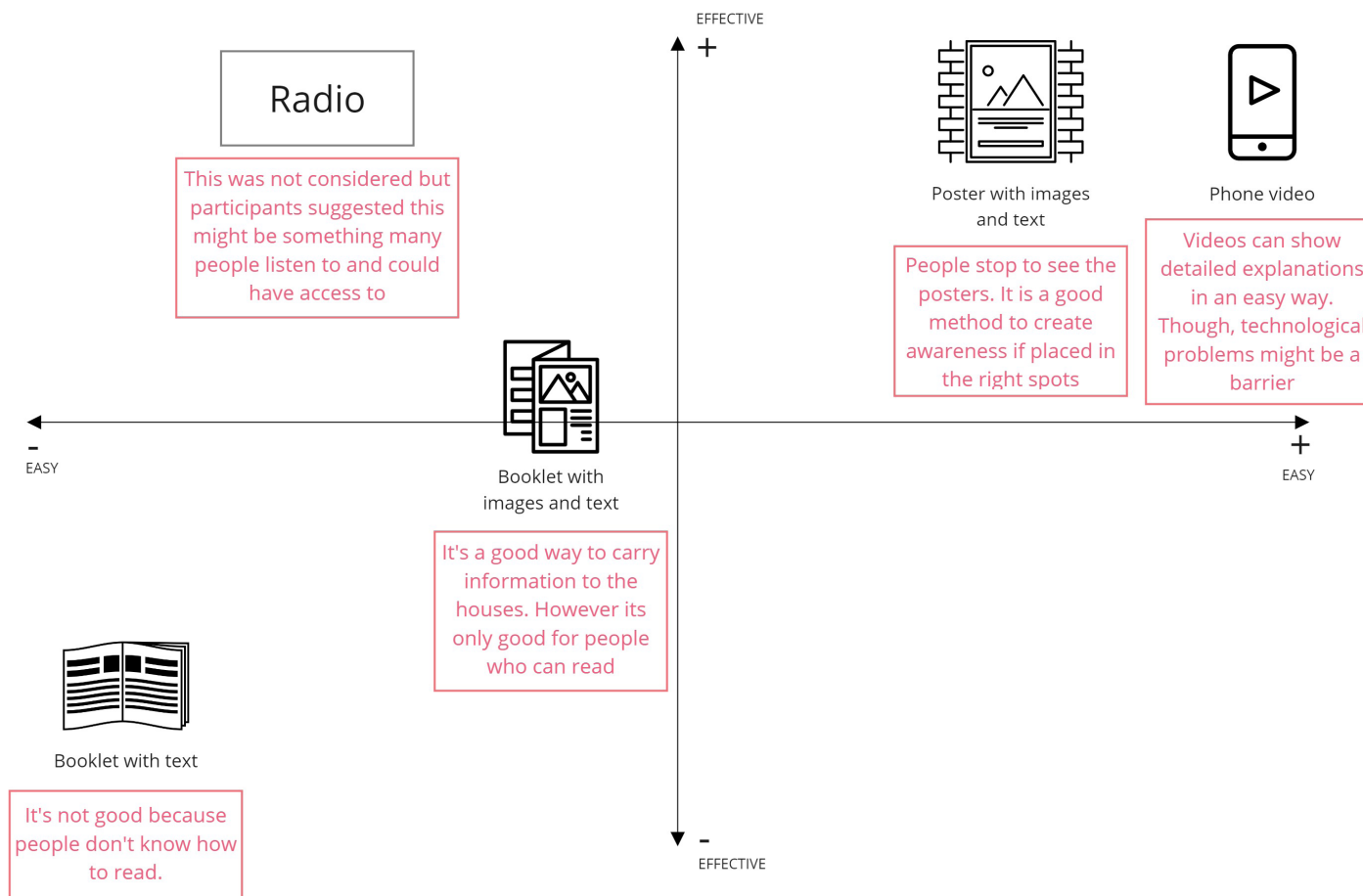


Image 19: Information Medium Results

## 5.1.2 Product Communication Findings

Users stated that their main drive to use pads is to feel confident to do their daily activities. Users also expressed that they want to feel comfortable when they are on their period. Additionally, it's important for them to know the absorption time to trust the pad and feel relaxed.

*"Pads are good to feel confident, to run, not have stains, don't get burn and to absorb. I feel more confident when I have a pad" – Teenager*

*"I want to feel free and comfortable; I want to feel good. If it's soft and nice, it means it's comfortable" – Teenager*

*"It's important to know the absorption of the pad, this way I am confident that it will not leak and get wet. Then I know I can stay in school. I would like to know how many hours it takes the pad to get full" – Teenager*

Image 20 visualizes the results obtained for the information that the users want to know about the product. With the results, directions for the communication of the pads were created.



Image 20: Product Information Results

The main message for the advertising of MakaPads should focus on comfort and confidence. These feelings can be expressed with an image and a complementary tagline. The characteristics of the pads should be included to communicate the full advantages of using MakaPads. The most important characteristic is the hours of absorption the pad provides; other characteristics like burning and smell might also be relevant to add so girls know they will be comfortable using the pads.

## 5.2 Availability Main Findings

Relevant findings for availability were clustered together and insights were defined. The insights were subdivided into information distribution and product distribution. The data in this clusters cover the sources of information for girls, the different distribution models explored and partners and users that can be included in the new model.

### 5.2.1 Information Distribution Findings

For girls and women, the preferred source of information for menstruation are their mothers, but they also talk to other women who are close to them about their problems and doubts regarding menstruation.

*“I always talk to my mom about irregularities on my period. I normally want to go to the hospital, but my mom calms me down” – Teenager*

*“I talk to my sister about girl issues. If I need pads or if there is something different during my period” – Teenager*

*“All the women in the family gives advice to girls about their period” – VHT*

*“As a grandma I am their guardian and I ask the girls to tell me when they start the period so they can monitor them” – VHT*

As women feel more confident to talk to other women about menstruation, the distribution strategy should include women to teach MHM education and talk about pads.

Girls and moms also believe that teachers are a good and trusted source of information. Furthermore, schools are relevant hubs for information, and it is a place where the community gathers regularly.

*“Teachers call girls to talk about menstruation on Saturdays. Teachers always give good information. I talk to teachers when I’m on my period” – Teenager*

*“School is the best way to receive information about menstruation. Senior women teachers seat them down to talk about it” – VSLA Group*

As trusted stakeholders in the villages, the teachers and the schools should continue to be part of the distribution strategy of MakaPads. Nevertheless, both stakeholders can take a bigger part of the strategy to distribute information and facilitate the relationships between MakaPads and the community.

VHTs are also trusted people in their villages. After the interviews, the process in which they get recruited by the government became clear. To select the VHTs in the villages, local leaders select the influential and active people in the community, or they ask the community itself to select a good

person for this position. After the person is selected and confirmed, they get trained on health campaigns and become VHTs (see *Image 21*). Every time the ministry wants to implement a new health campaign, they go back to the villages to train the VHTs and provide them with the relevant tools.

### VHT Recruitment Model

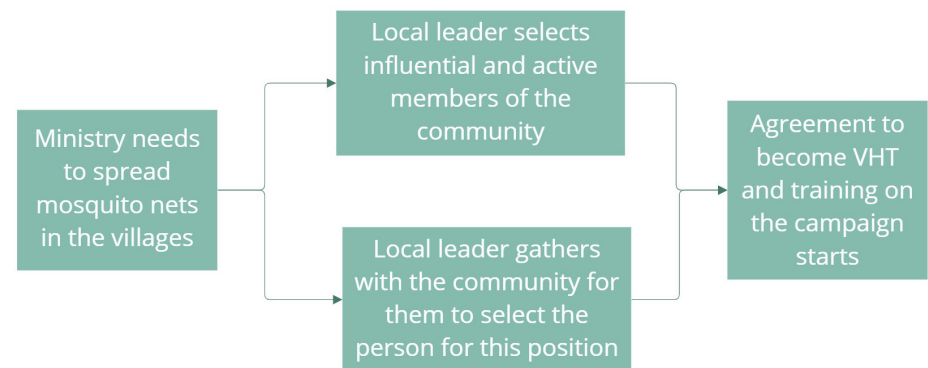


Image 21: VHTs Recruitment Model

Today, there are VHTs established in most villages in Uganda. The VHT system has large scale and reach in the villages, they get to the last-mile house mobilizing people and information.

*“I work with 200 houses in the community. I reach 10-20 per day, depending on the weather. Depending on the campaign it can take 2 to 3 months.” – VHT*

VHTs are influential people in the villages and the community knows who they are. Women become VHTs because they are genuinely concerned about the people in their community, and they want to help to spread health information.

*“Local leaders introduce the VHT to the community and that is how everyone knows them. We go door to door spreading news.” – VHT*

*“I became a VHT to spread the information. I was concerned that it took people too long to get the information and I want them to know” – VHT*

When interviewing teachers and VHTs they expressed their interest on getting trained on MHM and teach the topic to others in their communities.

*“I would like to know more about menstrual health and be trained on it. This way I can help and talk to my community about it” – VHT*

*“I would like more training about menstruation to help girls better” – Teacher*

These are two stakeholders who can be added on the distribution chain as opinion leaders. The VHTs will need to be trained in sales and MHM education because they don't have sales capabilities.

*“VHT needs to be given a strategy, so they know what to do and sell. The good thing is that they already have the database of the village” – Brac Expert*

When the VHTs are part of the distribution strategy, the trainings from MakaPads need to change. They are not teaching menstruation to girls anymore; they will be training future experts in MHM aiming to educate others and sell pads.

Irise's expertise lies in training future educators. They have a community network where anyone can join to get trained in menstruation topics (see *Image 22*). Irise does a three-day training, so women become experts and mentors of menstruation in their communities.

*“We support female entrepreneurs who are dealing with menstrual health topics. We train women in different communities and then women can be trainers of others. Women need to subscribe to the period equality network to get the trainings” – Irise Program Manager*

Irise has the know-how in training community leaders and MakaPads could use their expertise to change their trainings. Both companies can collaborate to train the VHTs. Another option is for MakaPads to get trained by Irise, this way MakaPads can enhance their content and train the VHTs themselves.

### Irise Training Model



*Image 22: Irise Training Model*

## 5.2.2 Product Distribution Findings

The model for distributing products from the company Brac was explored (see *Image 23*). Brac is an established company and has a big reach and operates in 75 districts in Uganda. Brac trains a team in the villages called Community Health Promoters (CHP), they sell the products going house by house. The CHPs are similar to the VHTs, but CHPs have selling expertise.

*“Brac has 135 branches with around 20 CHP. 75 districts in the whole country. Brac use Community Health Promotor (CHP) instead of VHT. CHP already has selling experience” – Brac Expert*

Given Brac’s big reach, MakaPads could make a partnership to be part of the products they sell. Brac experts suggested that to sell the MakaPads with Brac, the product needs to change to be more appealing and therefore more sellable.

*“MakaPads is an interesting product to sell, and it fits with the model. However, to be sold by Brac, the product needs to look better” – Brac Expert*

An interesting insight from the Brac model is that they do the trainings to the CHPs by group, this reduces time and effort for the company and enhances the distribution of information.

*“Regional meetings assistants come together with the CHPs and they have trainings for different products. There are more than 2000 CHP in all Uganda” – Brac Expert*

In the new distribution model, MakaPads can use this technique to train VHTs in groups to reduce their efforts. This will decrease their financial and time investment and increase the reach they have in the villages.

Finally, the VSLA are user groups that can increase the product purchases for MakaPads. Being part of a savings groups means that the members have physical money all the time. Also, as most members of the groups are women, they are highly interested on menstrual products and understand the value of purchasing them.

*“VSLA groups have between 15-30 women. They collect money from everyone to avoid seasonality, for the times they might not have money. They have money saved.” – Brac Expert*

*“My savings group decided to give pads in schools because we saw girls were not in school because of problems with their period” – Brac Expert*

It is interesting for MakaPads to add VSLAs as a new consumer group. VSLA groups have constant available money, by teaching them about MHM and offering the product, MakaPads can ensure a greater purchase intention of the pads. On the other hand, it will also reduce the effort for VHTs by selling to a group of women, instead of selling house by house to individual consumers.

### Brac Distribution Model



*Image 23: Brac Distribution Model*

### 5.3 Affordability Main Findings

Even though affordability was out of the scope of the project, after talking to participants, it was brought back as recommendation for MakaPads. The suggestion is to think of different selling strategies to make the product more attractive. The recommendation is to create an offer to buy the product in bulk. For big groups like the VSLAs, buying big quantities of the product for a lower price might result in higher purchase intention of the pads.

*“We would like to buy it in bulk, this would be cheaper for us, and it would incentivize us to buy the product” – VSLA Group*

*“It would be interesting to sell to the VSLA group by bulk as a product bundle, so they see it more attractive to buy” – Brac Expert*

The idea of looking into new business models is interesting for MakaPads to make the product more appealing and to make the business more profitable.

### 5.4 Acceptability Main Findings

The acceptability of the product was also out of the scope of the project. However, when doing user interviews, it was evident that the product needs to improve. The MakaPads at present, serve their purpose, nevertheless current and new users have some doubts about the desirability of the product.

There are two main aspects of the pad that need improvement. The first, is the type of gum it uses to adhere to the panties. Current MakaPads users suggest that the gum is too strong and it tears either the pad or the panty on removal.

*“The gum in the pad is really bad. There is too much of it” – Teenager*

Additionally, women and girls suggest that the pad size should be bigger for heavier flow. Even though the material of the pad makes it highly absorbent, its size makes users believe that it won't absorb too much.

*“It would be good to have a heavier and wider pad. This seems like something for the last days or for young girls” – VSLA group*

By doing these two changes, MakaPads can increase the product acceptability from the users. Bopinc created a model called ATEAR, a step-by-step model representing the journey in

which customers engage with a product. This is an acronym that stands for Attention, Trust, Experience, Action and Retention (see *Image 24*).

The project's strategy focuses on the first two steps, Attention and Trust. However, a good Experience with the product and the MHM trainings is the key catalyst for Action and Retention of customers. Based on the model, the product must be improved for MakaPads to retain consumers.

Hence even though acceptability is out of the scope, it is essential that these recommendations are taken forward to improve the product and for the success of the strategy.



Image 24: Bopinc's ATEAR Model

# 6

## Design Proposal and Testing

The project's next step was to propose different distribution models and communication directions. These proposals were discussed and analyzed during a workshop with the company to include their preference and capabilities in the decision making. Finally, MHM and product communication directions were designed and tested with users. The goal of the user test was to assess the understanding of the images and the messages to see what would be best suited for the target group.

## 6.1 Distribution Model Proposals

Using the research findings, distribution models were created to increase availability and awareness of menstrual pads in the villages of Uganda. The models include new stakeholders as partners for distribution and suggests new consumer groups.

In the proposed model (see *Image 25*), the first step is to identify schools in the desired village that MakaPads can partner with. The schools then serves as a hub for the trainings and helps recruiting the VHTs in the area. Afterwards, the school teachers and the VHTs get trained by MakaPads at the school and finally, the VHTs can start to teach MHM and sell the pads to different consumer groups including VSLAs, retail shops, women, and girls. Parallely, the school teachers will teach MHM to the girls in the school.

This model strengthens MakaPads' brand by relying on the villages' opinion leaders (VHTs, teachers and schools) to spread information and sell the product. These stakeholders are highly trusted and influential in the villages, so by partnering with them, the purchase intention of pads may increase. Moreover, the VSLA groups include women who are mothers or who run retail shops, so the reach of MakaPads in the villages increases by adding them as a target consumer.

The other model proposal builds on the previous model and it adds a

collaboration for MHM trainings (see *Image 26*). MakaPads can seek for a collaboration with Irise given that their expertise is in training future MHM educators. Subsequently, MakaPads can focus their efforts in creating a compelling sales training for VHTs, this model will help MakaPads to distribute better MHM information. However, even though there is interest from Irise

to collaborate, the economical and practical implications were not certain.

The third proposal is for MakaPads to be part of the distribution model for Brac. To do this, MakaPads would have to change their product's appearance and teach the Brac team the characteristics of the pads. Afterwards, Brac will train the CHPs in the villages

according to their values and sales strategy. The advantages of joining Brac are that MakaPads won't have to put much effort to set a network and implement the distribution strategy. The disadvantage of this model is that MakaPads will have to make an economic investment to change the product to fit Brac's standards.

### Proposed Distribution Model

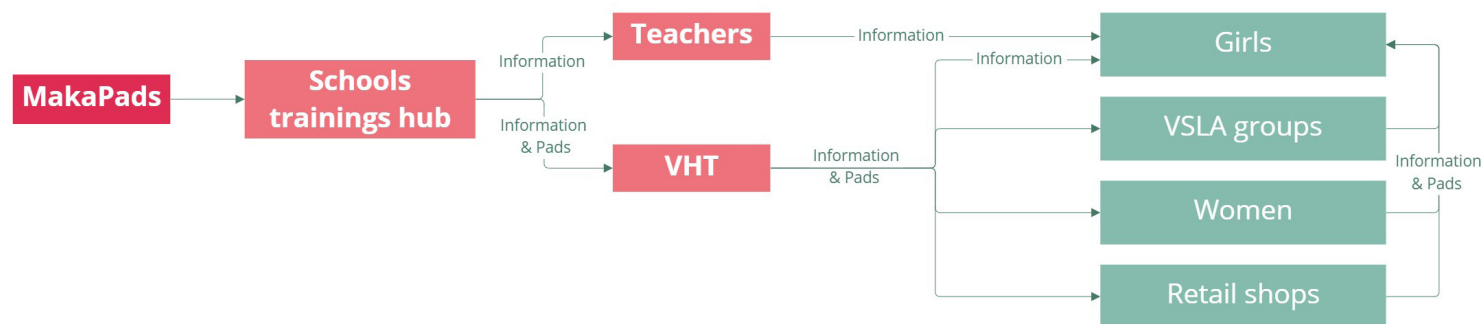


Image 25: Proposed Model for Makapads

### Proposed Distribution Model + Irise Collaboration

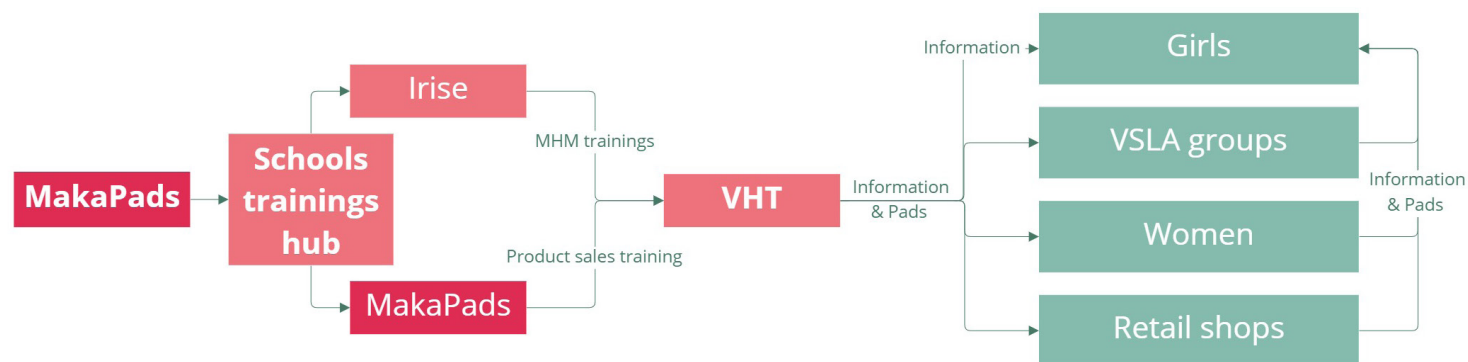


Image 26: Proposed Model for MakaPads + Collaboration with Irise

## 6.2 Co-Creation Workshop With MakaPads

With the model proposals, a workshop took place to decide together with the MakaPads team the desired direction. The goal of co-creating the solution with the company was to make the implementation of the distribution direction more feasible considering their capabilities and their preferences.

The workshop started by stating the research findings. Followed by an activity to analyze the three models and evaluating them according to the scalability, viability of implementation, impact, investment and barriers to the model (see full insights in Appendix 14).

The first model to train VHTs and have them as partners to do the distribution of information and the product was perceived as the most viable for the team as it has the lowest economical investment. However, the implementation of the strategy might be slow and time investment would be high when training and following up regularly with the VHTs. Nevertheless, the team believed that it will be greatly impactful as the VHTs are trusted in the villages and have big reach. In addition, the team thought that it can be scalable for MakaPads because the VHT system is set up by the government and VHTs

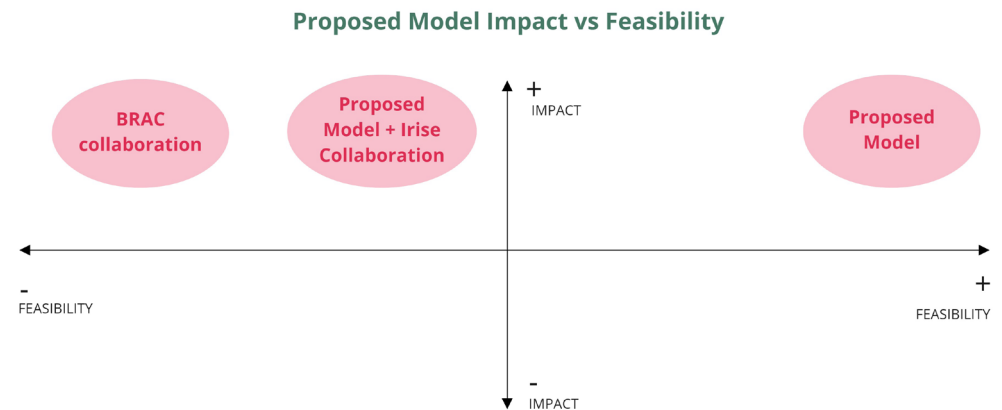
are already established in the villages of Uganda. The model would only work if the VHT's agree to be their "partners", therefore a desirable partnership agreement would have to be created. MakaPads team have doubts about the need to involve a third party such as the ministry of health. Additionally, they worry that VSLA and VHTs are not established in all villages. These last points were perceived as slight barriers for the model.

For the second model (Irise collaboration), the same questions as in the previous model arose. Additional barriers were introduced as there were doubts about the economical investment for MakaPads to collaborate with Irise. The team thought the investment would be too high and the model was discarded. However, during the workshop, the team decided that their trainings needed improvement, so afterwards they got into conversations with Irise to receive training from them.

Joining the Brac model was perceived as highly scalable and impactful because Brac is already established around the country, therefore MakaPads would be able to reach many people. However, the high economic

investment to redesign the product is a huge barrier for the team. Furthermore, another significant barrier for MakaPads is that they won't be able to decide how the product is communicated and possibly the MHM trainings would stop. Having to change their product and stop the distribution of MHM information would represent changes in the company's values which is something MakaPads is not willing to give up.

*Image 27* and *Table 4* visualize the comparison of the three models using the topics discussed during the workshop. *Image 27* shows a matrix using feasibility and impact to compare the models. All the distribution models were perceived to create high impact. In contrast, the feasibility of the models is completely different, showing the proposed model to be the most feasible to implement.



*Image 27: Proposed Models: Impact vs Feasibility*

Table 4 presents the five values analyzed for each model. It shows that even though Brac can have the biggest scalability, the investment is too high which makes the viability low and the barriers high. For the collaboration with Irise, the investment is uncertain, but it is perceived by the team to be less viable and have more barriers. The proposed model has the potential to be scalable if done correctly, there is not much investment which increases the viability and reduces the barriers for implementation.

The conclusion of the team was to follow the distribution proposal of the first model. This new distribution strategy has a defined structure that MakaPads can follow to enter into new villages. The model adds opinion leaders to increase the purchase intention of consumers and it makes the sales trainings more efficient doing it by group. It also adds key consumer groups to decrease the sales effort for VHTs and increase the product purchases for MakaPads. At the same time, the model results comfortable for the team as it is similar to their existing model, and it allows them to keep their values and be in charge of the decision making.

Table 4: Comparison of Possible Distribution Models

### Comparison of Distribution Models

	IMPACT	SCALABILITY	INVESTMENT	VIABILITY	Barriers
<b>Proposed Model</b>	High	Medium	Low	High	Low
<b>Proposed Model + Irise Collaboration</b>	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>Collaboration with Brac</b>	High	High	High	Low	High

## 6.3 User Testing: Product and MHM Communication Posters

During the workshop, the product communication directions were presented and analyzed. From the field research, concepts like Comfort, Confidence, Freedom, and Happiness were discussed. The MakaPads team decided to convey Comfort as their main message. Confidence was kept as a secondary concept, although both are highly correlated. They want to empower girls and make them feel comfortable so they attend school during their period.

The attributes of the pads were also discussed to include in the communication. With the insights from the field research, it became clear that some of the attributes that MakaPads currently communicates are not too relevant for their target users. However, attributes like absorption, that it doesn't smell or burn them are essential for them. These were chosen as main attributes to include in the communication of the product.

The poster for MHM communication was more experimental as there was

no previous research done for it. However, there were some insights from the field research that suggested that women unity and the normalization of the period were two relevant concepts for girls to understand. With these in mind, a brainstorming session was performed to decide the messages to be tested for the MHM posters.

After these decisions were made with the team, posters were designed as MVPs (Minimum Viable Product) to be able to test them with users. The user tests showed how the communication of the posters was perceived by the user and gave directions to possible changes.

### 6.3.1 Method

A guerrilla test was conducted with schoolgirls in a school near the MakaPads factory in Kawempe. Once there, the school principal was approached during lunch time to ask for permission to conduct interviews. Snowball sampling (Vaca, 2015) was used as the school principal helped recruiting the participants to test the posters with. Each test had a duration of maximum 10 minutes where the project was explained to the girls. Similar posters were analyzed together conducting an A/B testing. They girls analyzed the posters based on the messaging, imagery, and colors.

### 6.3.2 Participants

The participants of the guerrilla test were girls in their teenage years who already had their first period. Four teenage girls were selected by the school principal. She chose girls who had some years of experience with menstruation. Two of the girls were 19 years old and the other two were 16 and 17 years old. Their experience proved useful and resulted in better analysis and feedbacks of the posters.

### 6.3.3 Material

Two types of posters were designed, one poster was for product communication and the other one was for MHM communication to be placed in schools and trigger questions. Three posters were created for MHM communication to test the messaging, imagery and colors used (see *Image 28, 29 and 30*). The image was the same in all three posters, the goal was to test if the use of abstract images and figures were understandable for schoolgirls in Uganda. To test the messaging, two of the posters had the same color, but the message changed. And to test the color, two posters had the same message, but the colors were different. Testing like this allowed to exclude biases and helped focused on what had to be analyzed.



Image 28: MHM Communication Poster Design "Menstruation is Normal" Green

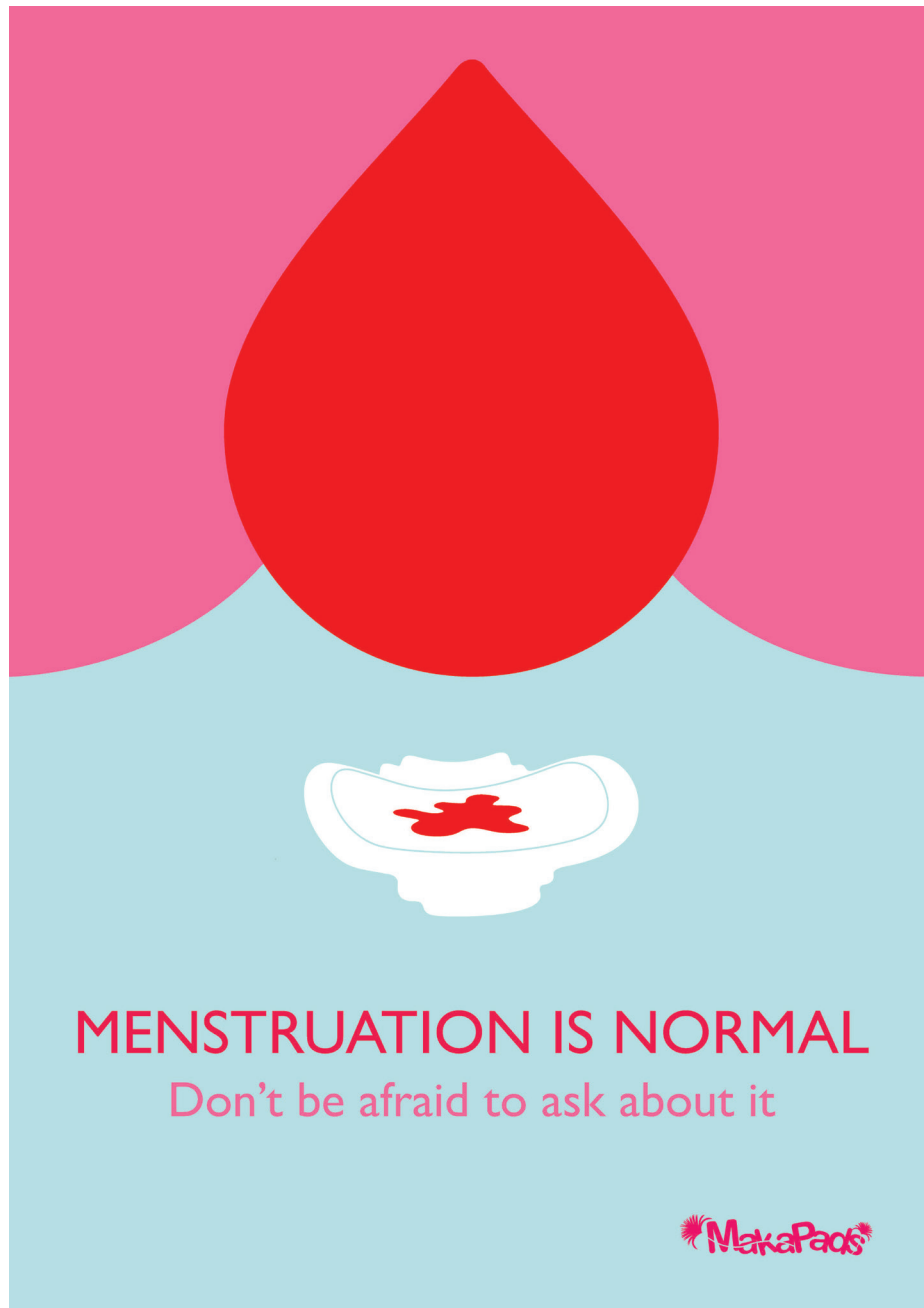


Image 29: MHM Communication Poster Design "Menstruation is Normal" Blue



Image 30: MHM Communication Poster Design "Don't Be Afraid to Ask About Your Period" Blue

One product poster was created to test the message and image (see *Image 31*). The goal was to explore if the selected photography and message, communicated the feeling of comfort and confidence. The pad characteristics mentioned by users in the field research were included to test their relevance for schoolgirls.

### 6.3.4 User Test Outcomes

The testing revealed interesting insights for the communication material created for schoolgirls. Feedback was collected to improve the messaging and images chosen and a color scheme was selected. To see the full insights, go to *Appendix 15*.

Participants understood the general messages on the MHM posters. Girls realized that they would be less afraid about menstruation by asking questions and thought that the messages suggested that girls should be confident when they menstruate. The first message was preferred because it directly addresses menstruation and then gives advice to ask about it. Participants suggested that this structure will promote girls to ask more questions. Participants liked that the posters expressed women unity and implied that any women can answer their questions. The abstract image was understandable for girls, and it was not shocking for them. Finally, as menstruation is a personal matter, the participants preferred the use of lighter colors on the poster.

When analyzing the poster for product communication, participants suggested that the chosen photography inspires freedom and happiness. They also expressed the importance of feeling comfortable, which makes them know they can rely on the pad. The participants appreciated the main message and thought that it compliments and gives further meaning to the image. At the same time, they liked the characteristics of the pad placed on the poster which helped them understand the benefits of the pads. However, participants suggested that the product should be placed in the poster to know what it is and see how it looks like.

After the testing was over, it was evident that changes had to be made to improve the communication in the posters. However, the author believed that the posters should be developed further by a designer from Uganda. The reason being that by working with a local designer, the message and the images would be more context appropriate. Therefore, MakaPads agreed to search for a graphic designer in Uganda who they will collaborate with. With the insights gathered in the user tests, poster briefs (presented in *Chapter 7*) were created with direction suggestions for the designer.

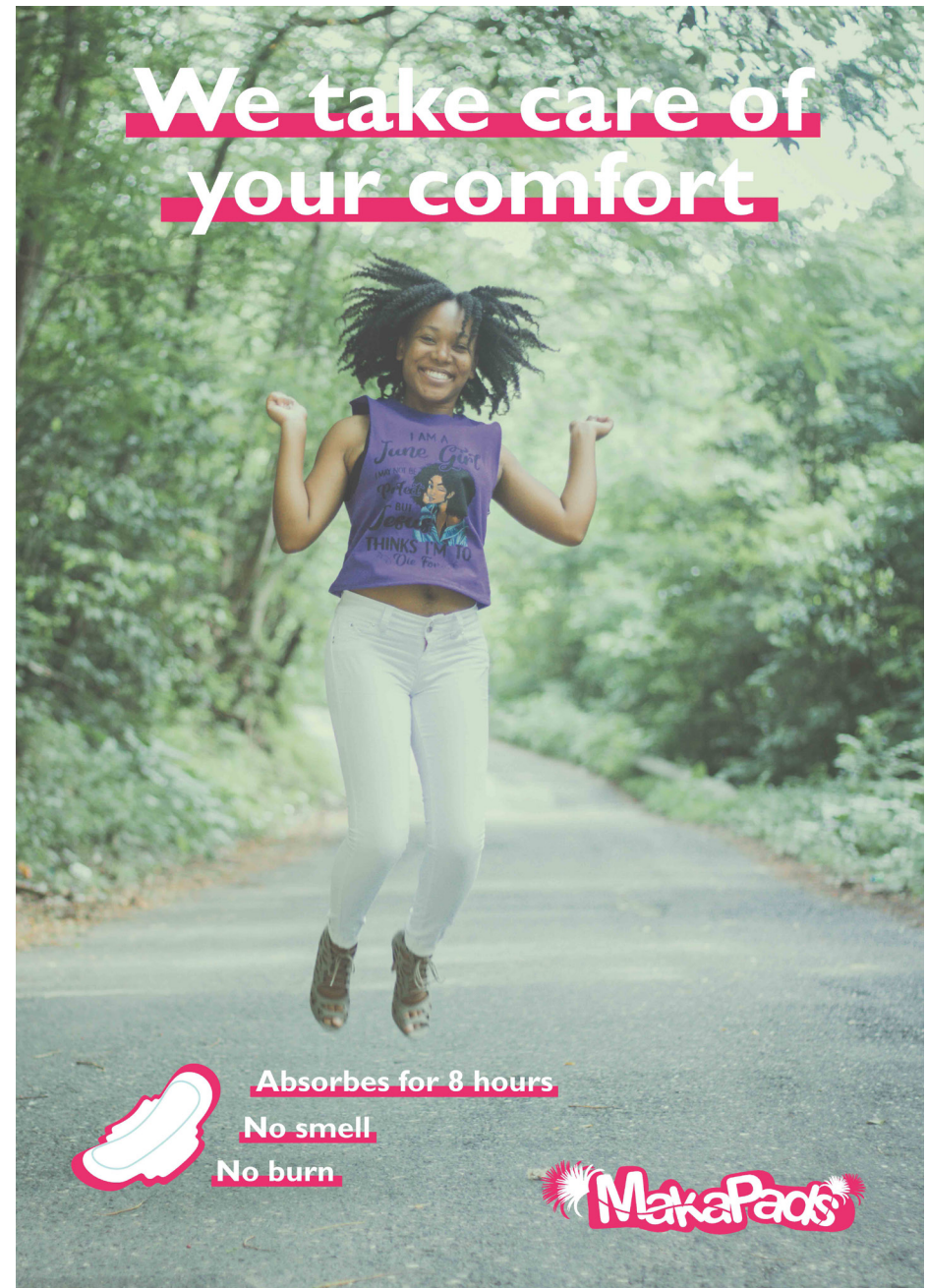


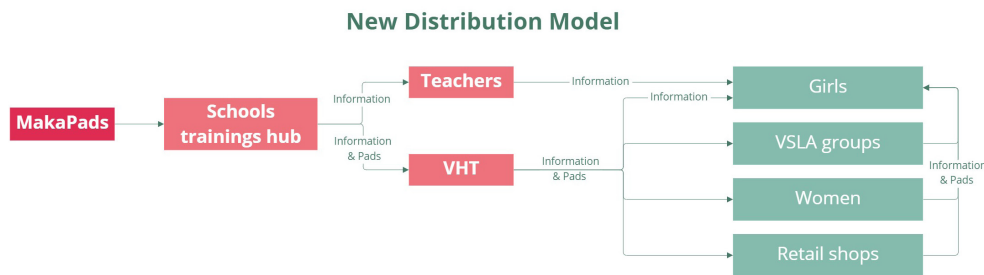
Image 31: Product Communication Poster Design “We Take Care of Your Comfort”

# 7

## Design Outcomes

The strategy was translated in different solution layers and the material was created to guide MakaPads for the implementation of it. The first layer was the creation and refining of personas, then two tactical roadmaps were designed for a trial of the market launch in Mbale. Poster briefs were created as guideline and inspiration for MakaPads and a local designer. Finally, another tactical roadmap and a canvas were designed to encourage the replication of the market launch in other villages of Uganda.

The new distribution model is shown in *Image 32* as reference for the material created.



*Image 32: MakaPads New Distribution Model*

## 7.1 Personas: Defining Users and Partners

MakaPads had already created a rough version of personas for girls and women as their consumers. However, these personas lacked depth and detailed descriptions, therefore, with the research findings the information was complimented, and the personas re-fined. A new persona type was created to represent MakaPads' partnerships. A VHT persona is created and defined as their main partner. It is recommended that MakaPads conducts further research to create personas and segmentation of other stakeholders like retail shop owners, schools, and teachers.

The personas were created as a guide for MakaPads to know how to communicate to different stakeholders in their distribution chain. Three persona cards were designed to describe a girl in their target group, a woman who is part of a VSLA group and who is also a mom and finally to represent the qualities of a VHT (see *Image 33, 34* and *35*). Each

persona card has their main needs written at the top, followed with a quote as an expression of their mindset. Then a short description about them and their regular activities along with an overview of their daily routines or their routines around menstruation. Lastly the type of communication that each persona needs about MHM and the product is specified.

The goal of creating personas for MakaPads is for the company to have a clear overview of their target user and consumer and their partners' needs. The persona cards can be used for different purposes during this strategy and for future projects of the company. The user cards will help MakaPads to understand their targets' desires and create successful communication material for them. The partner card will ensure that MakaPads empathizes with the VHTs to understand their mindset and therefore, build strong relationships with them.

# Liza | User

GUIDANCE
ASSURANCE
COMFORT

"I feel very happy when my period comes, it makes me feel normal"

About

Liza goes to **school every day** and helps her mom working at the Kiosk.

She **loves** going to **school**, enjoys doing **crafts** and doing **sports**.

MHM communication

- Liza has **many questions** about **menstruation**.
- She **prefers to talk** about it with her **mom** and **teachers**.
- She wants to **learn more** to **feel confident** and **not afraid**.

Menstruation routines

Before: She starts **carrying pads** and pain killers. She makes sure to **run every day**.

During: She uses **4 pads a day** (morning, afternoon, evening, night).

Product communication

- Liza wants a **pad** she can **rely on** to do all her **daily activities**.
- She wants to **feel comfortable** when she is on her period.
- She wants a pad that is going to **protect her** and **not harm her**.


*Image 33: Persona of Girl as User*


## Fatima | Consumer & User

**GUIDANCE** **ASSURANCE** **COMFORT**


*"I grew up without information, so I don't know what to tell my daughter"*

### About

 Fatima is a **social worker** in a school. She **gathers every week** with her VSLA group.

 She enjoys **meeting with friends** to talk, she is married and has **two daughters**.

### Routines

 Every week she saves some money with with the VSLA. Sometimes she needs to ask money from them. Her VSLA group sometimes **saves money to buy pads** for girls in the schools.

### MHM communication

- Fatima **doesn't know** much **about menstruation** so she doesn't talk about it.
- She **needs information** to **feel confident** to talk to her daughters about menstruation.

### Product communication

- Fatima wants to **provide her daughters with pads** and know if the pads are only for girls.
- She wants to know **how much a pad absorbs** and know how many to buy.


Image 34: Persona of Woman as Consumer


## Silvia | Partner

**GUIDANCE** **CONFIDENCE** **UNITY**


*"I would like to get trained on MHM so I can educate others"*

### About

 Silvia has a drug store, she is a **VHT volunteer** and works in village projects.

 She is passionate to **spread knowledge** and **helping people** in the village.

### Routines

 As a VHT, Silvia works on **health campaigns** from the government. She goes to **every house** in her area with other VHTs. She works for monthly periods and she can reach up to **20 houses a day**.

### MHM communication

- Silvia knows only about menstruation from her **own experience**.
- She wants to **know more** so she can **teach others**.
- She will need **material to teach**.

### Product communication

- Silvia needs **guidance** to know how to **sell the product**.
- She needs thinks it's very important that **girls have access** to affordable pads.
- She wants to **collaborate**.

Image 33: Persona of Girl as User

## 7.2 Tactical Roadmap: Trial Market Launch

The new distribution model will be tested by MakaPads in Mbale. Connections were already established in the area with LCF, the primary school who helped to recruit the VHTs and VSLAs during the field research. LCF already has some programs to support the community and they have relationships with the VSLA groups and the VHTs working in the surrounding area of Mbale. Therefore, LCF expressed interest in collaborating with MakaPads to train their teachers and to bring the pads to the area. An initial collaboration between both organizations will reduce the efforts for MakaPads to find local partners and it will make the implementation of the distribution strategy easier.

A tactical roadmap was created for the market launch trial in Mbale (see Image 36). The roadmap describes the preparations and partnerships needed for the launch. The market launch date was discussed during the workshop with MakaPads. As it will be done partnering with a school, the launch will happen according to the school calendar. The new market was therefore set to be launched before the 5th of September.

The roadmap is divided in three horizons and the four A's are used as divisions for the vertical axis. Each A has subsections with tasks for MakaPads to

complete in certain time frames to make sure they will be ready for the market launch. The timings used and set of tasks are a guide for MakaPads, therefore, they can be modified if necessary.

The first horizon describes the preparations for the new market launch. In this horizon, MakaPads will need to improve the acceptability of the pad by changing the adhering gum and creating a new pad size. The prototype for this new size is already accomplished, so MakaPads just needs to start producing it. MakaPads should also improve their trainings and collaborate with a graphic designer to create the posters for MHM and product awareness. It is also recommended for MakaPads to think of different business models and pricing strategies for the new market and the new partners. Simultaneously, collaborations must be made with LCF to recruit the VHTs to attend the training and the stock of pads should be prepared.

The second horizon illustrates the market launch, in which the first trainings will take place (before the 5th of September). The previously recruited group of VHTs and school teachers will get trained, and the pads will be distributed to the VHTs to sell in the community. LCF will also be given pads as they expressed interest to have them for the girls who need them while they are at

school. After the first training is done, a new group of VHTs from nearby areas will be recruited to repeat the same procedure the following month. It is recommended for MakaPads to review their process to learn from success and failures and make improvements in future iterations.

The last horizon is composed of monthly trainings with new VHT groups and evaluation and feedback loops from previous groups will be incorporated to learn and improve the trainings and the product. At the same time, MakaPads will collect the earnings of the monthly sales from the VHTs and replenish their pads stock. It is recommended that MakaPads learns from the amount of stock being sold each month so they can plan ahead for the demand in the village. The loops for this trial will be done each month until the end of the school year. When these loops finished MakaPads should have learned the requirements from the area so the distribution of the pads can continue towards the future.

Another tactical roadmap was created to guide the process of improving the trainings (see Image 37). A special focus was given to it because there are numerous things to be done and improved, so extra guidelines were needed for the team. The roadmap for training improvement has three

horizons, similar to the previously mentioned roadmap. The first horizon will be for the team to learn by getting trained from Irise so they can improve the training content and material with such learnings. The second horizon will be the launch and first training from MakaPads to the VHTs and teachers and the final horizon will be to get evaluation and feedback loops specifically to improve the trainings. This roadmap also includes the creation of posters as support material for the trainings, however, due to financial limitations, this is a recommendation for MakaPads to take in the long-term.

Both tactical roadmaps were tested and validated with the manager of MakaPads. The goal of these roadmaps is to give focus on the important tasks for MakaPads to successfully implement the new distribution model.

# Distribution and communication trial in Mbale roadmap

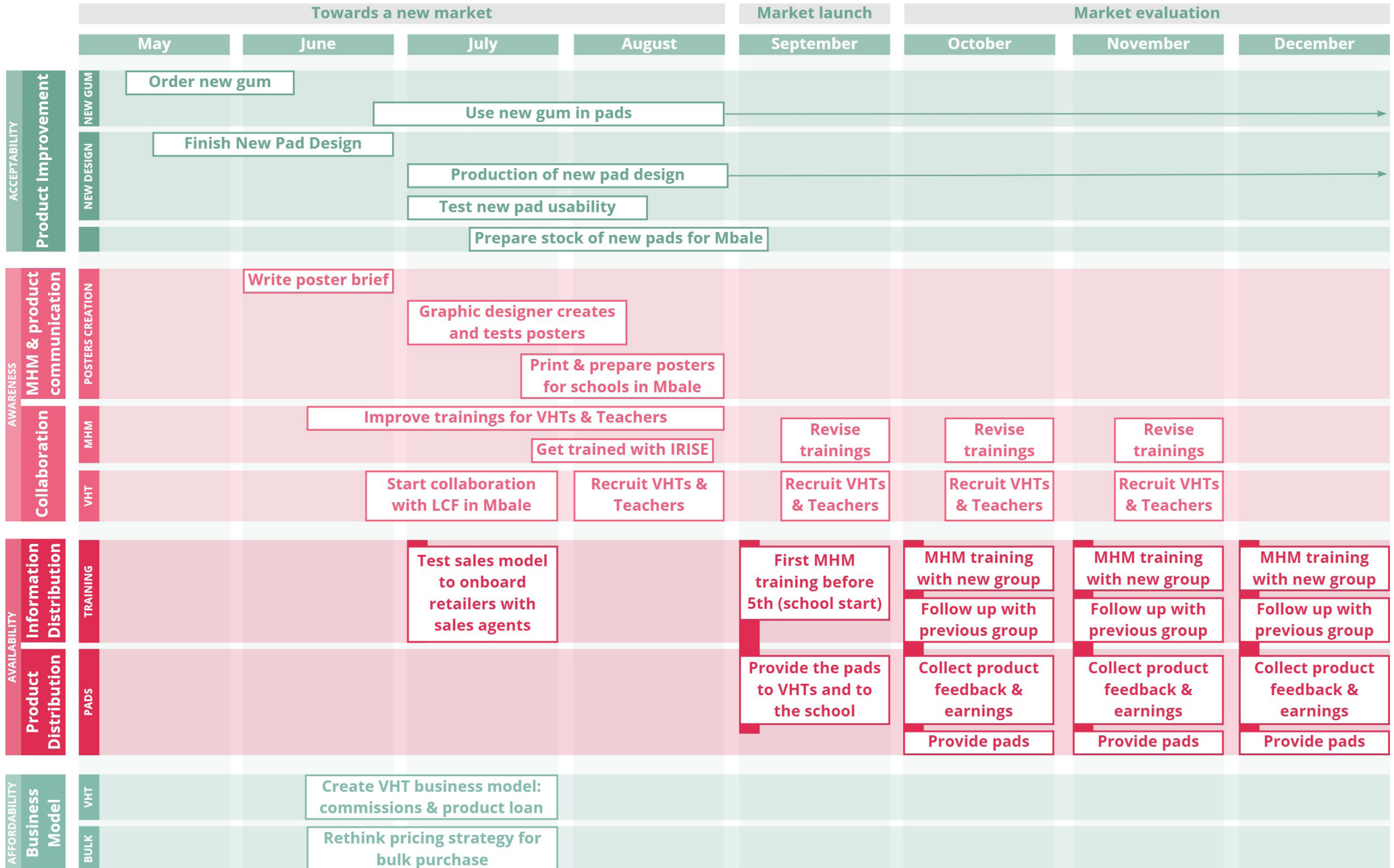


Image 36: Tactical Roadmap for the Market Launch Trial

## MHM and product trainings improvement roadmap

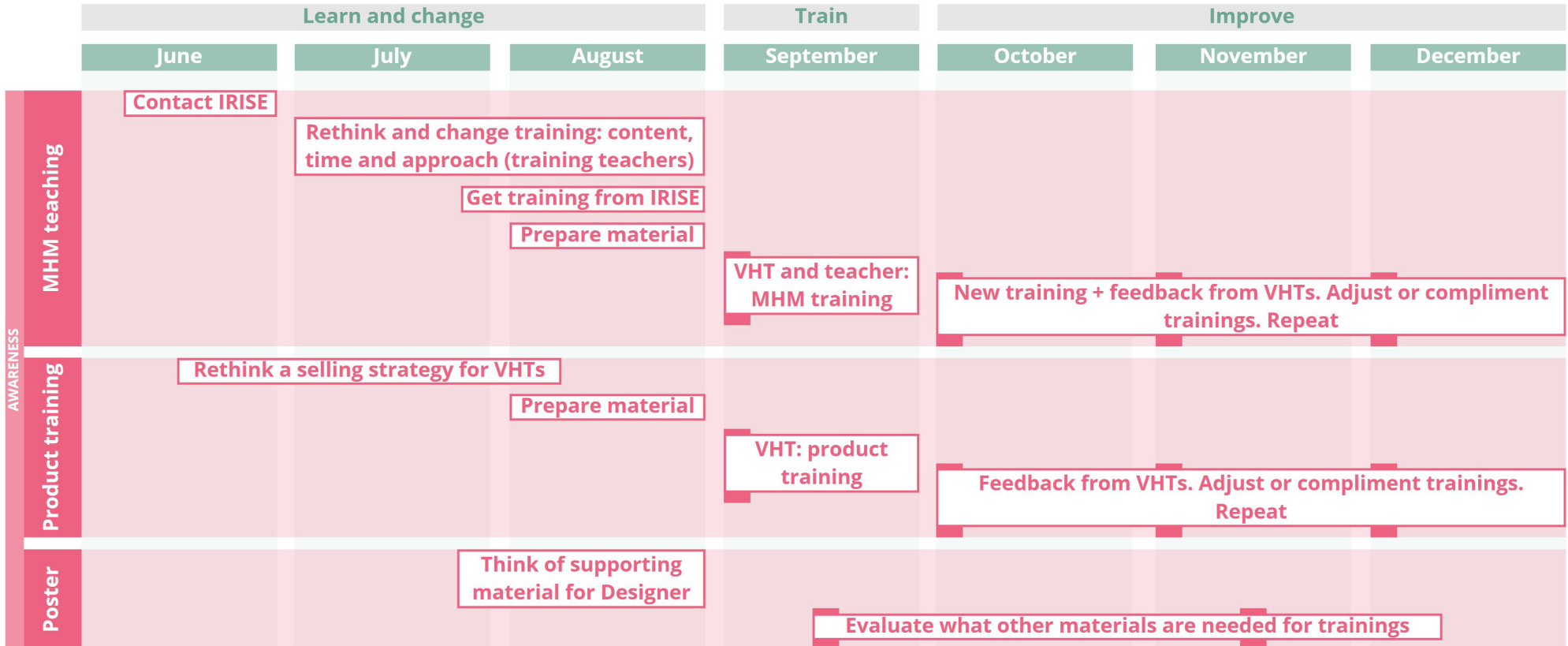


Image 36: Tactical Roadmap for the Market Launch Trial

## 7.3 Poster Briefs: Product and MHM Communication

Using the findings from the posters testing, three briefs were created for MakaPads' communication. The goal of the poster briefs for MakaPads is to make it simple for them to understand the type of information that needs to be included in the communication and explain why certain things are included in the designs. The briefs were designed to provide inspiration and a base line for a local designer to generate relevant posters for the villages in Uganda and simplify the interaction between the designer and MakaPads.

The first brief was done for the poster to increase MHM awareness in the villages (see *Image 38*). The goal is to spark questions about menstruation from the community, specially targeted for girls. Following the insights from the field research, the posters will be placed in schools for girls and other members in the community to see, so when girls have any question about it, they can ask their teachers.

Based on the testing findings, recommendations are defined for changes and improvements of the image and message. Some images are placed for reference of possible directions that the design can take. A color pallet is chosen for all MakaPads' communication material according to the preference of the testing and a benchmark analysis.

### MHM Awareness poster brief

#### Image

Keep **suggestive and abstract image**. When testing this was well taken by girls. See below some other examples which can provide inspiration.

#### Other inspiration



#### Test Poster



#### Color pallet

The colors are the **same in all communication**. When testing this was the preferred color scheme for girls

#EC6280	C:0% M:54% Y:42% K:7%
#DE2C53	C:0% M:70% Y:55% K:13%
#9BC3B6	C:16% M:0% Y:5% K:24%
#84BBAD	C:22% M:0% Y:5% K:27%
#6DA691	C:22% M:0% Y:8% K:35%

#### Main message

Find other wording which is more contextual. Keep the structure, the first message **talk about menstruation**. Second message is an **advice** from Makapads **to get informed**.

#### \*Women Unity

Add an image or add a message something about the fact that **all women are in this together**. See the images below for inspiration

#### Other inspiration

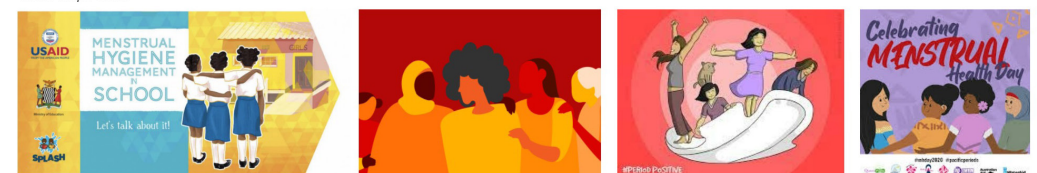


Image 38: Poster Brief for MHM Communication

The second brief was done for the poster to communicate the product (see *Image 39*). The poster targets girls as the users and mothers as the consumers. Therefore, the poster will be placed in schools and relevant hubs where the community (especially women) gathers in the villages.

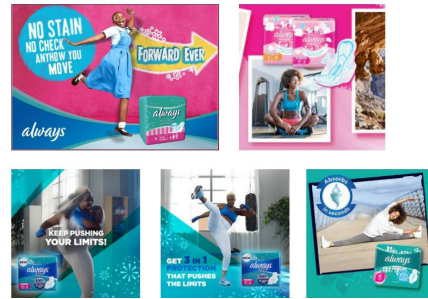
Based on the user tests, the overall elements of the poster can be applied in the final version. However, a more contextual image should be selected to facilitate the users to relate to the girl in the image. Some suggestions are made to change the wording of the message and the pads characteristics. Nevertheless, the message should complement the image to express comfort and confidence. The most important remark from the testing was to add a visual image of the pads, all users expressed the desire to know how it looks like. Other images were placed in the brief for reference and inspiration of the designer. Finally, the same color pallet from the previous defined brief was specified to unify the image of MakaPads.

## Product poster brief

### Photography

A **Ugandan girl** doing an activity that shows her **happy and comfortable** (jumping, running, going to school). The girl should be relatable to girls in villages in Uganda.

### Other inspiration



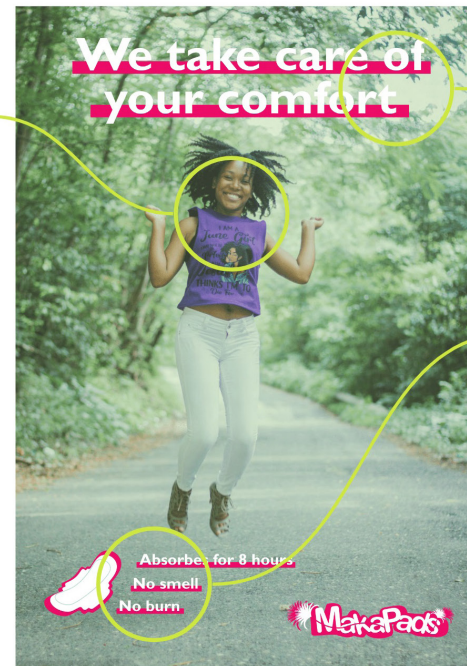
### Color pallet

Looking at other campaigns and the colors that Makapads have used in the past, this is the suggested color pallet:

**Pink scale:** these colors make the connection to the existing branding of Makapads. It makes the content **relatable to the period**.

**Green (to blue) scale:** the green is already used in the branding as a relation to sustainability. The current color is toned down and make similar to blue as many companies use this color in their campaigns.

Test Poster



### Main message

When testing, the main message was good and can stay the same. If you want to explore some different message keep the word **comfort** for this main message. This **compliments the image** of the the girl jumping or doing other activities.

### Pad characteristics

Keep the characteristics, its important for girls but change some wording:

- **8 hours absorption**
- **No perfume**
- **Doesn't burn you**

Possibility to add some more features (see examples below)

Add the product to the poster, during interviews girls wanted to see how the pad looks like. **Show the package of the pad** or/and the pad itself. Also possible to add an image of the layers of the pad (see examples below). The icon of the pad can be kept or take it out.

#EC6280	C:0%	M:54%	Y:42%	K:7%
#DE2C53	C:0%	M:70%	Y:55%	K:13%
#9BC3B6	C:16%	M:0%	Y:5%	K:24%
#84BBAD	C:22%	M:0%	Y:5%	K:27%
#6DA691	C:22%	M:0%	Y:8%	K:35%

Product placement and characteristics examples



Image 39: Poster Brief for Product Communication

A third brief was designed for the creation of material to support the MHM trainings (see *Image 40*). This brief was created after the user tests were analyzed and the idea of generating extra visual material for the trainings arose. The production of this material is not the main priority for this strategy or for MakaPads. However, it is highly recommended for MakaPads to create this support material to train the VHTs and in the future, the VHTs can also use this material to teach the topic to others in the communities.

This brief is more abstract, nevertheless it aims to give direction and inspiration to MakaPads of the possible content to visualize for the trainings. The brief mainly shows examples of existing solutions produced by other companies. As the examples suggest, the posters can explain menstruation and the reproductive system, or it can be the steps to take for proper menstrual hygiene. According to the content that MakaPads gives in the trainings, they can decide which type of information they want to visualize. The color codes to utilize for the support material are the same as the previous two, thus the brand colors are present on all communication created by MakaPads.

The poster briefs were validated with the MakaPads' manager, which led to further discussions to add the color pallet on other elements of the brand such as the packaging. It is recommended for MakaPads to implement this color pallet in their packaging designs and other material they use so the brand identity is unified.

## MHM trainings material brief

### Image and message

This posters goal is to be **informative for the communities**. The information can be in many different aspects regarding the menstrual cycle or hygiene, etc. See below some examples as inspiration.

### Other inspiration



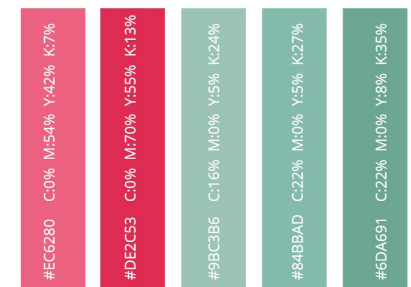
Image 40: MHM Poster Brief for Training Material

### Priority

This is not the first priority. However, as the trainings start Beatrice can think of **material** which would be interesting to **give to the VHTs and to the schools**. It will work as promotion for Makapads to give these posters to spread knowledge.

### Color pallet

The colors are the **same in all communication**.



## 7.4 Tactical Roadmap: Market Launch Replication

After the market launch in Mbale is done, MakaPads will have tested and refined the new distribution model. Once MakaPads constructs a network of VHT in the surrounding areas of Mbale, they will move to other villages to set up a new network for distribution. Material was created for the replication of the distribution strategy to facilitate decision making and guide MakaPads in the implementation of the distribution model in new villages.

A tactical roadmap was created to guide the replication of the launch strategy in new markets (see *Image 41*). The roadmap will work interchangeably in different periods of the year; therefore, the months are not specified. The roadmap suggests that MakaPads organizes each market launch based on the school's academic year, which has three terms of three months each. If MakaPads implements the roadmap as such, three different villages can be included in their distribution program each year.

In the roadmap, the preparations needed for the market launch start a couple of months before every school term starts. The preparations include establishing partnerships with local schools, recruiting VHTs and prepare the stock of pads. Similar to the launch in Mbale,

the new market will be launched some days before the school term starts. The trainings will take place in the chosen school and the pads will be given to the VHTs. After the first training, new VHTs will be recruited for future trainings and follow ups will be done with the VHTs for some months to evaluate the new market. The loops to train and receive feedback will be done until the distribution model is properly established aiming for the end of the school term. The timings of the roadmap are not concrete to leave space for MakaPads to adapt it and modify it according to their needs.

It is highly recommended for MakaPads to learn from the previous markets to understand what to do when the schools are closed. An example of this is to create strong bonds with the VHTs so the school doesn't have to be a middleman after the trainings are done. This means that the relationships with the VHTs can be independent.

Finally, a canvas was created to guide the arrangements needed to enter to a new market (see *Image 42*). The goal of the canvas is for MakaPads to know the steps they need to take to establish the distribution model. The canvas should be printed to allow the company to write down important research findings from the new village.

MakaPads will first have to decide the new market in which they want to enter. Then the canvas is divided in four steps: the first one is to identify the schools that can be relevant partners and serve as hubs for the trainings. Then, to objectively describe why a certain school might be better to collaborate with. Consequently, the school will be selected, and the collaboration agreement will be stated. The number of participants for the trainings is chosen and recruited at this stage. Finally, the number of participants should be reevaluated according to the success in the new market.

# Strategy Replication Roadmap

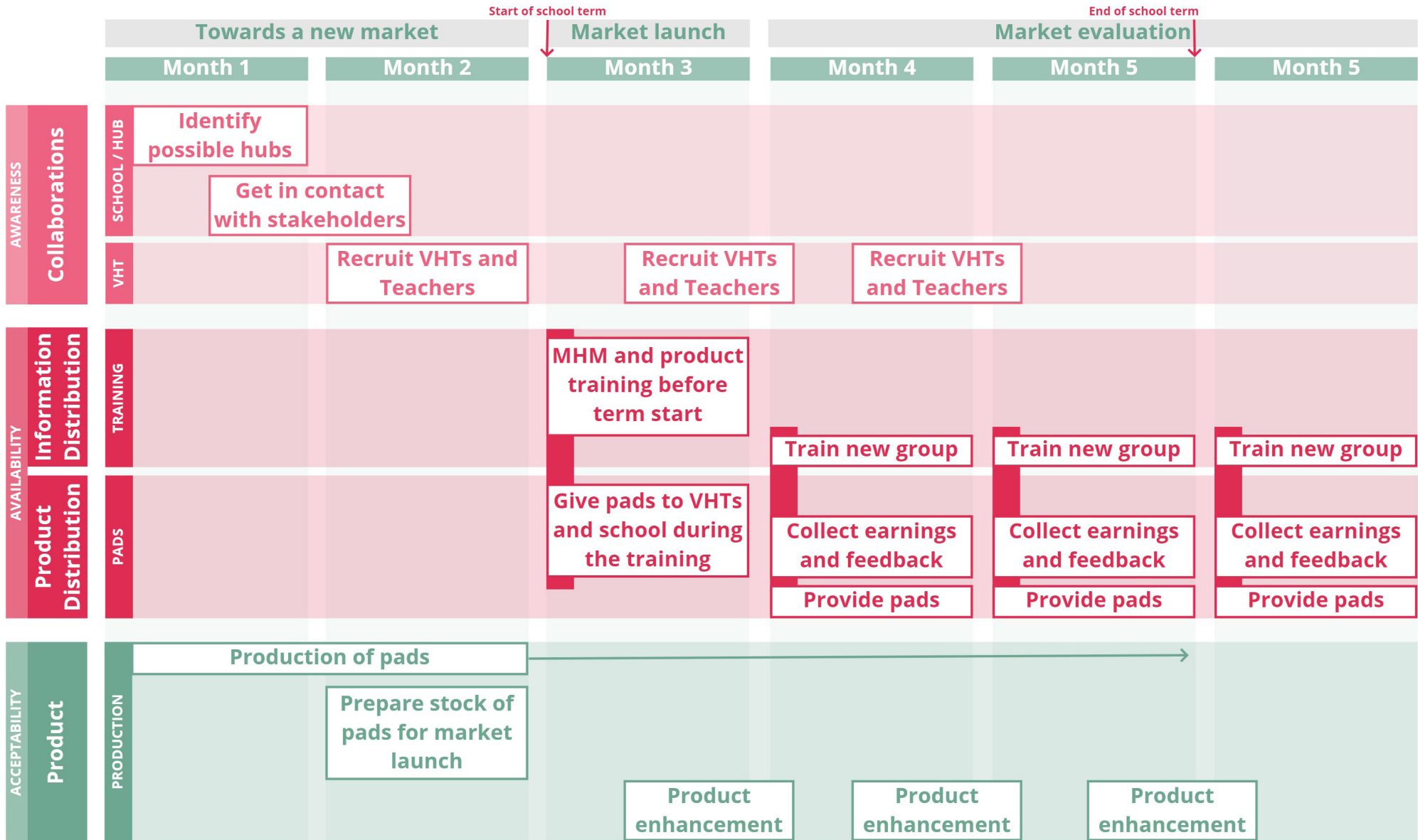


Image 41: Tactical Roadmap for Market Launch Replication

# MakaPads Replication Strategy

Use this canvas to enter a new market/area. Follow the steps to identify the hub for the trainings and to create collaborations with stakeholders and opinion leaders in the area.

New area:

---

## 1 Identify

Identify relevant contacts in the new area. List 5 relevant schools in the area who are interesting to contact. Write down the names of the principals (or someone relevant in the school) with their contact details.

Example: Schools who are also working with social projects are the most interesting to contact.

## 3 Collaboration

Set collaboration agreements with the relevant stakeholders in the school, set dates to start collaboration

**Collaboration agreement:**

**Starting date:**

**Timeline suggested (trainings):**

Analyse the area and define the number of VHTs and teachers to have onboard in the team

**Number of VHTs for area:**

**Number of teachers for training:**

## 2 Contact

Get in contact with the people previously mention. Try to set a face to face meeting to talk about the project and possibilities to collaborate. Note down the schools who are interested and why. Finally select the most interesting hub for MakaPads to collaborate

## 4 Review

Analyse and follow up with the work done from the VHTs and reformulate the previous statement of the amount of VHTs needed for the area

**Number of VHTs for area:**

**Number of VHTs per training:**

# 8

## Project Conclusions and Limitations



After the project was finalized, conclusions were formulated from the research findings and the project outcomes. Suggestions for implementation of the strategy for companies with similar goals were made and further actions for MakaPads to implement were recommended.

Based on previous literature, adolescents should get education on MHM to normalize menstruation and for girls to make informed decisions about their menstrual health (Dongre *et al.*, 2007; Misra *et al.*, 2013; Ssewanyana & Bitanihirwe, 2017; UNESCO, 2014; UNICEF, 2018). Additionally, interview findings made evident that girls and women in the villages of Uganda need more information on MHM to increase their confidence in the topic. Boosting their confidence enables conversations between women and other community members to increase the awareness and knowledge of menstruation in the villages of Uganda (UNESCO, 2014; UNICEF, 2018).

Given the findings from the user testing and the field interviews, the advertising material should focus on communicating comfort and confidence. Other attributes like absorption should be included as positive characteristics of the pads. Conveying these messages will enable users to relate to the brand and the pads will become more appealing which might increase the purchase intention of the product.

Conducting the field research made evident that information should be pre-

sented via a visual and analogue medium. Additional insights suggest that informative posters in schools trigger questions from girls and subsequently the teachers can answer their questions. Therefore, by placing posters in relevant community hubs like schools will prove relevant to empower girls and women with information.

VHTs are added as partners in the new distribution model as opinion leaders of the brand. After the interviews with multiple stakeholders, it became clear that VHTs are influential individuals and have outreach in the rural communities of Uganda. Adding VHTs to the distribution strategy will positively impact the awareness of the brand and increase the sales of the pads.

MakaPads will have to adapt their trainings because they will no longer be teaching menstruation to girls, but they will now train future educators. A collaboration with Irise will be created as their expertise lies in training community leaders. By collaborating with a local organization, MakaPads will tap into their expertise and improve their trainings for VHTs to become experts in MHM.

Observations during the field research suggest that schools and teachers are influential hubs and individuals in the community, they are also well connected with other influential stakeholders. Therefore, collaborations will be established with schools to positively influence the implementation of the strategy in the villages.

Distribution experts and field interviews revealed that VSLA groups should be included as a target customer for MakaPads. By doing this, MakaPads will ensure a more effective distribution system selling the pads by group instead of to individual consumers. At the same time, VSLAs are groups who are interested and have the economic capabilities to purchase such product.

Additional insights that were out of the project scope arose during the field interviews. After an analysis of the MakaPads with users, it became clear that the product needs improvement to increase its acceptability such as changing the gum to adhere the pads and creating a bigger pad. By doing this, MakaPads ensures the retention of their consumers and the success of the strategy. Similarly, recommendations are made for MakaPads to rethink their selling strategy to make the purchase of the product more affordable and appealing for consumer groups for example selling the pads by bulk.

Personas for girls, VSLA/Mom and VHTs were created for MakaPads to understand and fulfill their users, consumers, and partner needs. Future research can be done to create personas of other consumer groups and partners, to understand their needs and improve the relationship and communication with all the stakeholders in the strategy. Furthermore, tactical roadmaps and canvases were designed for the company to get a full overview of the steps towards implementation and replication of the strategy. Finally,

poster briefs were designed to inspire and guide a local graphic designer to create the communication of MHM and the product.

The material created aims to guide MakaPads towards a successful implementation of the strategy. Being a social enterprise, MakaPads has limited resources therefore, the strategy focuses on the essentials to reduce the effort and eliminates the barriers for implementation.

With further research, the launch strategy conceived as the outcome of this project, can be used by organizations with a similar goal namely those who want to introduce their products to rural communities in Africa. The success of this strategy depends primarily on identifying opinion leaders and consumer groups that fit the profile of the target consumer of the product. Social groups and structures exist in society, and these must be looked at to decide which can match with the target customer. Moreover, governments have established social systems like the Village Health Teams (VHT) in these communities, these structures should be analyzed, and relevant entities should be invited as stakeholders in the strategy. This will allow companies who want to distribute their products in rural communities to prepare a market launch for their product.

# 9

## Project Reflections



Throughout the project, I applied different methods to give direction and guide the research process. To frame the project goal, I used the framework of the four A's of marketing by Sheth and Sisodia (2011). This framework helped me to focus throughout different stages of the project. I used it to write the interview guidelines and to understand information that was needed from each stakeholder.

During the analysis of the interviews, I had collected too much data and I didn't know how to start to make sense of all the information. Later I chose to process the information and structure the analysis by means of the four A's of marketing. This helped me to cluster the insights and make sense of the information from all the interviews done. Looking back, it would have been better to process the information from the interviews sooner. It was specially challenging being on the field because much information was collected at the same time. For future projects, I will make sure I have a clear way to convey the analysis and make the processing and analyzing easier.

During the project, I utilized the theory of opinion leaders developed by Lazarsfeld and Katz (1955), to create the first solution hypothesis of this project. Using this approach was helpful because it gave a goal to the first interviews conveyed to understand the context. The objective was to search for possible opinion leaders in the villages of Uganda. Applying the terminology of opinion leaders helped me and the participants to understand the type

of person needed for the distribution strategy. VHTs were identified as such and they became the key stakeholder for the end strategy. Without this theory, the outcome of the project would have been completely different, and the process would have been harder.

One of the main challenges was to recruit people to interview in the villages of Uganda from The Netherlands. The communication with MakaPads from abroad was very difficult, as it was hard to start a working relationship without knowing each other. I contacted a friend who has an NGO in Uganda and she connected me with people in the field to convey the first interviews. Luckily the people interviewed had a wide knowledge of the systems in the villages and many contacts there. I then tapped into their network to do interviews in the villages once I was in Uganda. This brought an interesting project outcome and it proved helpful to expand the context of the project. Now that I have explored this way of recruiting, it's a method that I want to continue using in my future career. Doing research outside of the network of the company helped to discover different outcomes that hadn't been explored yet.

During my stay in Uganda, many challenges presented themselves. The biggest one being an internal restructure of the company. When I realized this, I understood that the design solution of the project had to be practical to be successfully implemented. Therefore, the outcomes of this project are tailored to the needs

and desires of the company. By making the approach so practical, after some months have passed the company has already implemented some parts of the strategy. They already improved the gum in the pads, created a new size for the pad. They are collaborating with Irise to improve their trainings and they are involved in activities of the Irise network. A graphic designer is taking on the designs and creations of the posters. And the collaboration with LCF in Mbale is moving forward to start the trainings there. I appreciated this approach to create something that is tangible and implementable for social enterprises, and I will take it forward for my career.

At the beginning of the project, I had made many plans of things that I wanted to do. Before going to Uganda, I had to change some things from the planning and modify them to the project's needs. Once in Uganda, circumstances changed and the project had to readjust again. What I learned from this experience is that it's good to have a plan to guide the steps to follow, but it is necessary to leave space for uncertainties and alterations.

Referring to the personal goals of the project, during this thesis I learnt to apply strategic thinking for social enterprises and help shape the process of decision making for a successful outcome. The Master of Strategic Product Design taught me to be deliberate in decision making and to have a future vision in design projects. I learned to approach the problems from a broader perspective but be able to scope the

projects and find the real need which has to be solved. Even though I have a UX research background, the master gave me more tools and methods for all the stages of research and to convey different types of research. Finally, it let me explore new areas of design which equipped me with new skills. Having said that, I would have liked to learn more about the implementation phase of a project. I believe this is something useful that designers should know so the design proposals are implemented by the companies.

On the other hand, in my search for projects for social impact, I did multiple side projects as this was not part of the master curriculum. Therefore, the mentoring from Bopinc was really important for my learnings to design for social impact. I learned about implementing design proposals in complex environments. At the same time, it guided me to understand the wide possibilities that social enterprises offer and how to help them create great impact with little resources.

I realized that working to solve a societal issue with a company who is really trying to make a difference is really rewarding to create positive impact. However, challenges for budget and systemic barriers can be very powerful, therefore it is very important to be creative and think of ways to solve the challenge with the limitations that are presented. I hope that by means of this strategy MakaPads can create behavior change in the villages of Uganda and fulfill their goal to keep girls in schools.

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# Appendices

# Guideline for Menstrual Health Experts Interviews

Makapads

Total time: 60 min

Participants: Program Manager IIEA (Irise Institute East Africa)

Hardware: Phone (recording), microphone, notebook, guideline

## I. Introduction and getting to know each other (5 min)

**Goal:** Making participants feel comfortable and letting them 'open up' for the conversation

- Explain the project: Bopinc (Netherlands) - Makapads (Uganda) - Strategy to sell to the consumer by creating awareness of menstrual health and increase the availability of the product. I want to understand how menstrual health setting, education and the programs work in Uganda
- Explain set-up of the session and ask for permission to record
- Introductions: name, profession

## II. Their role in their organizations (10 min)

**Goal:** Gather insight on the work they do regarding menstrual health

- What is the organization?
- What do you do in (organization)?
- What do you do for menstrual health?
- Why is this important for you?

## III. Exploring the programs (20 min)

**Goal:** Understand the curriculum and programs they do. Know which information is important and how they give the information

- What programs does the organization do?
  - Do you work in the rural areas?
  - Do you work in a low-income setting?
  - Are they successful?
- Why do you do these programs?
  - Why are they relevant?
- Who do you involve?
  - Which entities participate in the program?
  - Do you involve schools?
  - Do you involve other organizations?
  - Do you go directly to women and girls?
- How do you do it?
  - How do you get to rural areas in the country?
  - How do you give the information?
- Do you do training programs?
  - How do you do them?
  - How available are they?

## IV. Content and awareness (15 min)

**Goal:** Understand the content and the medium they give the information from the programs they have

- What is the curriculum in the programs?
- What information do you give?
  - Why is it important?
  - What information is lacking in the communities?
- What is the most important information?
- To whom do you give the information?
  - Who do you involve?
- How do you collect your information?
  - What are your sources?
  - How do you create the content?
- Which mediums do you use to give the content?
  - Which one works better?
  - Which one is more useful

## Collaboration (10 minutes)

**Goal:** Get any final insights and possibilities of collaborations

- What type of collaborations do you do?
- What do you look for in a collaboration?

*Explain that for the project we want to build relationships with Makapads to improve the content given.*

- Would it be interesting to build a collaboration with Makapads?
- What would you want from Makapads?

### **Final comments**

- Do you have any other things you would like to tell me or ask me?

> The moderator thanks the participants for their participation.

## Guideline for Teenage Girls Interviews

Makapads

Total time: 60 min

Participants: Teenage girls, had their period some years back

Number of participants: 2 or 3

Hardware: Phone (recording, photos, videos), microphone, camera (photos and videos), notebook, guideline, pads, templates and cards ( "People in my life", "What is menstruation?", "A week in the month" and "Qualities in pads")

### I. Introduction and getting to know each other (5 min)

**Goal:** Making participants feel comfortable and letting them 'open up' for the conversation

- Graduation project: Makapads are menstrual pads, the company started with the purpose of giving a solution to protect girls during their period for a full day so they can stay in school. I would like to understand what is the experience of a young woman in rural Uganda dealing with menstruation.
- Pointing out confidentiality, allow participants to be open and honest and share their perceptions, feelings and thoughts towards the subject
- Explain set-up of the session and ask for permission to record
- Obtain consent
- Starter question: What did you do this morning (last evening)?

### II. Understanding relationships and information streams (20 min)

**Goal:** Map the girls relationships and the main players as information givers of menstrual health topics

Use the "People in my life" canvas

- Can you tell me how your relationship with each one of these people is?
- What do you talk about with them?

- With whom do you talk about menstruation?
- With whom do you feel more comfortable to talk about menstruation?
- Who gives you the best information?
  
- Is there anyone else we are missing?

### III. First period and awareness (15 min)

**Goal:** Understand what do girls know about menstruation

Use the "What is menstruation?" matrix.

- When did you first get your period?
- How did you feel? (probe with feelings: confused?)
- Before you got your period, what did you know about it?
- How did you know about it?
  - Who told you about it?
  - What is the medium that you learned it from?
- What did you learn after it?
- How did you learn about it?

### V. Understanding their rituals (10 min)

**Goal:** Understand what girls do when they are on their period

Use the "A week in a month" canvas, explain how to use it, give an example.

- When you have your period, what do you do?
  - When do you start preparing?
- What is your first day like?
  - What do you do?
  - Who do you need to talk to?
  - How do you feel about it?
- What do the next few days look like?
  - What do you do?
- How do you feel during the week? (map the feelings in the days)
- Is there something else happening at other points during the month?

## VI. Exploring the qualities that girls are looking for (10 min)

**Goal:** Understand what is important for girls and what they value about menstrual pads

Use the "Pad qualities card sorting" canvas and cards. Take out pads

- Do you know what a menstrual pad is?  
*Take out the pads*
- What do you see in this pad?
- What do you think is interesting?
- What is important for you to know about these menstrual pads (to have during your period)?
- Ask why some things are more important than others

### Close (3 minutes)

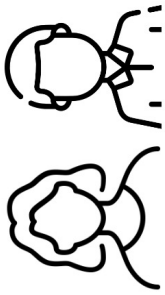
→ Do you have any other things you would like to tell me or ask me?

> The moderator thanks the participants for their participation.

**People in my life**



Aunt



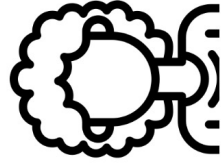
Mom and Dad



Grandma



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Me



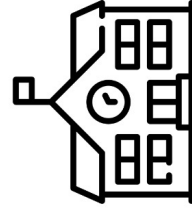
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Friends



Teacher



School

- ◆ Relation
- Topics
- ▮ Preference

What is menstruation?



- ◆ Feelings
- Resources

**A week in the month**



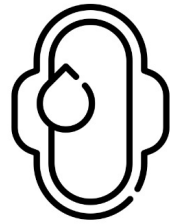
- ◆ Feelings
- Activities
- ▮ Pain points



Cards Qualities in pads



Price



Absorption



No chemicals



No smell



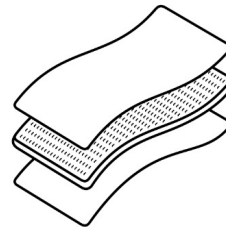
Sustainable



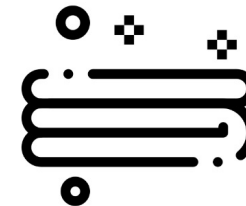
Freedom



School attendance



Material



Clean



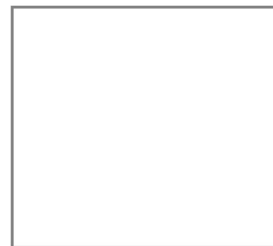
Comfort



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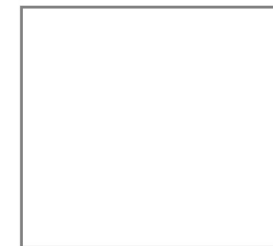
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## Guideline for Moms in VSLA Interviews

Makapads

Total time: 10 min

Number of participants: 3 or in group

Participants: Women who are part of VSLA

Hardware: Phone (recording, photos, videos), microphone, notebook, guideline, templates  
("Qualities in pads" "Information Medium")

### Introduction and getting to know the group (1 min)

**Goal:** Making participants feel comfortable and letting them 'open up' for the conversation

- Graduation project: Makapads are affordable menstrual pads. The company started with the purpose of providing a solution for schoolgirls in their period so they can stay in school for the whole day. I want to understand what you **value** when **buying pads** and how you **get information** about it
- Pointing out confidentiality, allow participants to be open and honest and share their perceptions, feelings and thoughts towards the subject
- Explain set-up of the session and ask for permission to record
- Obtain consent

### I. Exploring the pad qualities (5 min)

**Goal:** Understand what is important and what they value about menstrual pads

Use the "Pad qualities" canvas. Take out a pack of makapads

- What kind of menstrual product have you bought? Why?
- Do you buy the same for your daughter?  
*Take out the pads*
- What do you see in this pad?
- What do you think is interesting?
- What is important for you to know about these menstrual pads (to have during your period)?
- Ask why some things are more important than others

### II. Explore medium of information (5 min)

**Goal:** Understand what is better and easier to distribute information

Use the "Information medium" canvas

- Who do you talk to about menstruation?
- What do you talk about?
- How do you talk about it?
  
- What do you think is a good way of receiving information?
- What do you think is the best way to receive information about menstruation?
- Can you order the cards relating to what is easier and what is more effective?
- Ask why they are ordering things in that way

### Close (1 minutes)

- Do you have any other things you would like to tell me or ask me?

> The moderator thanks the participants for their participation.

# Guideline for Village Health Team Interviews

Makapads

Total time: 60 min

Number of participants: 2

Participants: VHT women

Hardware: Phone (recording, photos, videos), microphone, camera (photos and videos), notebook, guideline, templates and cards ( "People I meet", "Period information map", "medium map")

## Introduction and getting to know the group (5 min)

**Goal:** Making participants feel comfortable and letting them 'open up' for the conversation

- Graduation project: Makapads are affordable menstrual pads. The company started with the purpose of providing a solution for schoolgirls in their period so they can stay in school for the whole day. I want to understand your position in the village as a VHT, your interests and relationships
- Pointing out confidentiality, allow participants to be open and honest and share their perceptions, feelings and thoughts towards the subject
- Explain set-up of the session and ask for permission to record
- Obtain consent
- Round of introductions- name, profession, family situation and conversation starter: What is your favorite part of the day?

## I. Understand the VHT role (15 min)

**Goal:** Understand their role as a VHT, their interest to be part of this role and how they were approached

- What is a VHT?
  - What are your responsibilities?
  - What are the activities you do?
  - How much time does it take you?

- Why do you do it?
  - Why did you say yes to the collaboration?
- How did you become a VHT?
  - Who approached you?
- What is your role regarding menstrual health?

## II. Explore the relationships in the village (20 min)

**Goal:** Understand who are the people the VHT interacts with and the purpose of it

Use the "People I meet" canvas, explain how to use it and give an example.

- How is your relationship with your community?
- Who do you interact with?
- How often do you interact with them?
- What do they give you?
- What do you give them?
- Why are they important?

## III. Explore information streams (10 min)

**Goal:** Understand from their perception who talks to girls about menstruation in the villages

Use the "Period information map" canvas, explain how to use it and give an example

- How is the relationship between these people and girls?
- What do they talk about?
- With whom do they talk about menstruation?
- With whom do you feel more comfortable to talk about menstruation?
- Who gives you the best information?
  
- Is there anyone else we are missing?

#### IV. Explore medium of information (10 min)

**Goal:** Understand what is better and easier to distribute information

Use the "Information medium" canvas

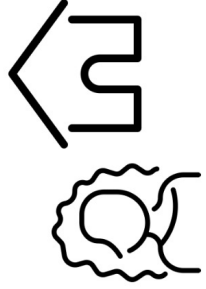
- What do you think is a good way of giving information to the village?
- What do you think is the best way to give information about menstruation?
- Can you order the cards relating to what is easier and what is more effective?
- Ask why they are ordering things in that way

#### V. Close (3 minutes)

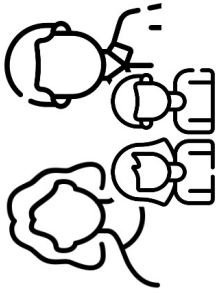
- Do you have any other things you would like to tell me or ask me?

> The moderator thanks the participants for their participation.

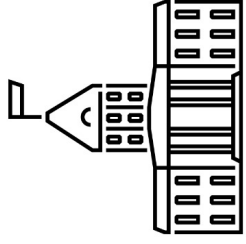
People I meet



Neighbors



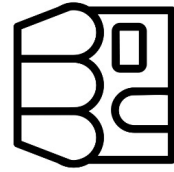
Families in the community



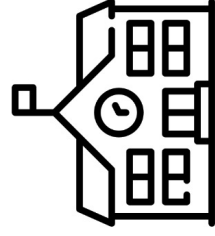
Government



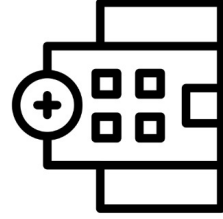
Me



Stores



School



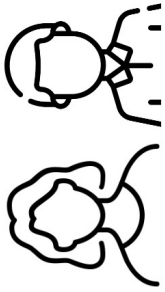
Hospitals

◆ Interaction  
■ Exchange

Period information map



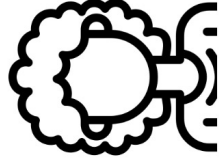
Aunt



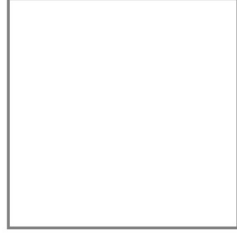
Mom and Dad



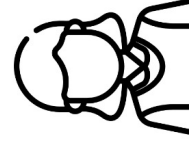
Grandma



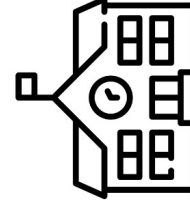
Girls



Friends



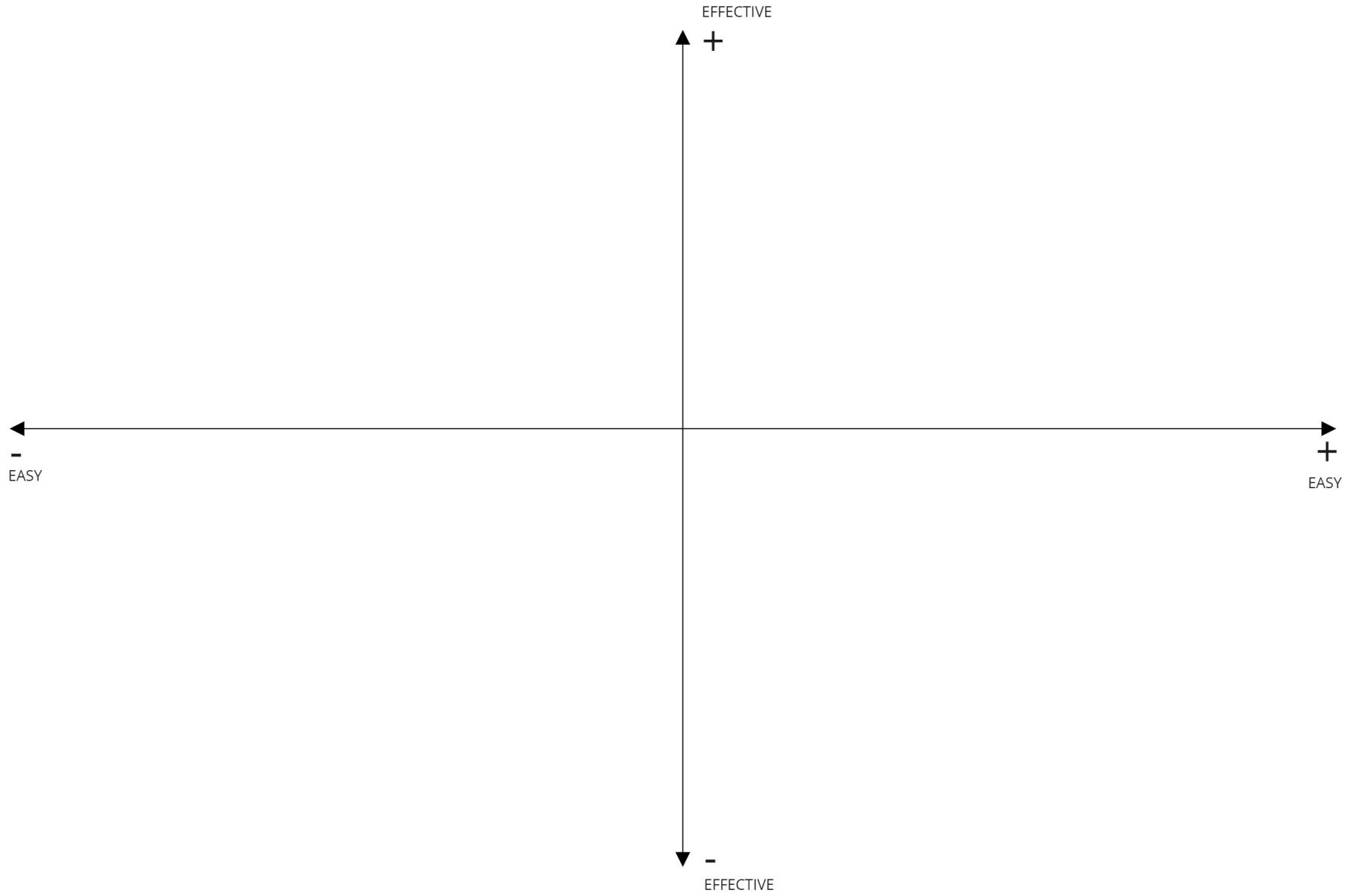
Teacher



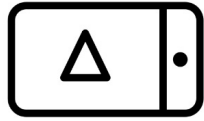
School

- ◆ Interaction
- Topics
- ▮ Medium

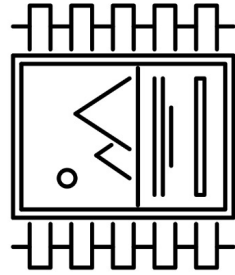
Information medium



Information medium cards



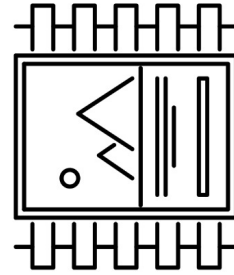
Phone video



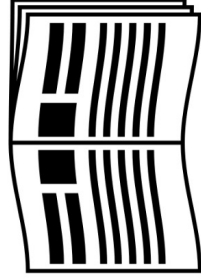
Poster with  
images and text



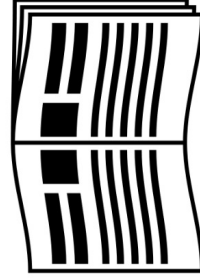
Phone video



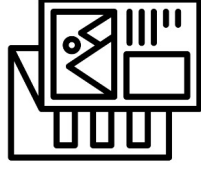
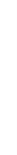
Poster with  
images and text



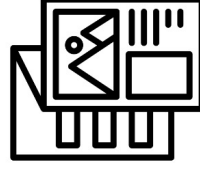
Booklet with  
text



Booklet with  
text



Booklet with  
images and text



Booklet with  
images and text



### Local leaders know who are the opinion leaders in the community

The local leaders in the community told in a meeting what the ministry wanted and she volunteered

Became a VHT in 2012. Ministry said that they wanted people to get some information from people in the villages.

She is called to come into town to be in meetings with other local leaders

Local leaders introduce the VHT to the community and that is how everyone knows them

Ministry told the leaders in the community what they needed. The leaders directed them to women who were active in the community.

### VHT don't have sales capabilities

VHT's are not sales agents. They are good to distribute products for free

CHP distributes and sells. The company produces the information

Use CPH to play the role of sales agents. Women team

VHT needs to be given a strategy so they know what to do and sell. They have the database of the village

BRAC use Community Health Promotor (CHP) instead of VHT. CHP already has selling experience

### VSLA are women who have money and interest on these products

VSLA groups between 8-15 women. They collect money from their group to avoid seasonality, for the times they might not have money.

VSLA have money saved

Many go-rounds after women's groups who collect money with a purpose (weddings, christmas)

They support each other in case they have problems.

They give advice to each other

In case someone has to go to the hospital, or they lose someone. They help out

They also support each other in happiness.

It is teamwork when children of someone in the group goes and graduates school

Her savings group decided to give pads in schools because they saw girls were not in school because of menstruation

### Training by group can reduce effort

Get all the women in the same locality and train them at the same time

Regional meetings assistants come together. Here they have trainings for different products

From the head office in Kampala, they orient the project association. Then take it to the CHP. The CHP orients them. (More than 2000 CHP)

### Community leaders can be trained to spread the word

Teachers are an interesting person to train. They are seeking for the girls to tell them about it

She always likes to learn more

IEA has Menstrual health champions: they train them, they teach them to different localities and mentor them

They would buy the pads if they can trust the person selling them. Because they are affordable

Teacher would like more training about menstruation to help girls better

She would like to know more about menstrual health and be trained on it

Ministry of health gives trainings for the programs that they are selling (community, malaria, covid vaccinations). They give own practical and theoretical information

From the Ministry of health she gives some health education every term for all the school

If someone would go to their group and tell them about the pads, they would buy it.

She was trained and got a certificate after one month

### Its important to increase access to health products

MHM - for teenage girls. To empower women for their livelihood and to get skills for financial literacy. Be self reliable

BRAC strategy is there to give moms and kids access to health products

### VHTs have a big reach in the villages

She completes the activities fast. For the mosquito nets she took 2 days to cover the whole town

CHP works a minimum of 100 households. They have a smartphone

They talk to people house to house

She works 3 days a week as a VHT, going door to door

BRAC distributes at household level. Door to door or community gatherings

It can take 2 to 3 months during campaigns. There are 200 houses. 10-20 houses per day, depending on the weather

VHT's have other work to do

There are 2 VHT in the area

There are 4 VHTs for the whole village

## Collaborations

### Collaborations can help create impact

- Collaboration is the most important thing to make impact
- The ministry of education has a lot of budget for menstrual health
- They work together with other companies or entities to make more impact
- Its important to not work in silos

### VSLA system

- They do a cycle of 12 months. At the end they split everything
- Muno: they save money for something little for a period of time
- Members of the group come from the same locality
- You can buy shares for 5000. You can only buy 10 shares a week
- They meet and the first half an hour would be for the accounting. Then talk about life
- They loan out money for 10% interest

### Brac system

- Brac is one of the biggest associations in Uganda to sell products in villages
- Brac has 135 branches with around 20 CHP-75 districts in the whole country
- Branch office has a number of districts. They assess the vulnerability of the area and then they go
- Brac doesn't create products. They assess the products and then give it to the VHT's to sell
- Uganda Sanitation for Health Association (USHA) has different organizations: BRAC, TETRADEC, SSG, FSG, SNV
- BRAC understands the product. Then see how often do the CHP go to houses and how many other activities do they do.
- What is the margin that the VHT get? BRAC CHP purchase the product at a lower price and then they get money from the product
- BRAC sells living goods and health materials. Cook stoves, BRAC porridge, reusable pads, anti-pads, diapers, medicines +60 products

### VHT role

- Apac from VHT she is a social worker to check HIV positive, register them and help the families. She goes to health centers to know the people in her community who are living with HIV
- Mobilize people when there are immunization campaigns
- In covid advice people to wash hands and put their masks
- Ministry of health doesn't come to the villages so that is why they need someone there
- The mobilizations are after an outbreak so they need to immunize, almost every 3 months
- Take pregnant women to maternity hubs. Send the women in a boda with her own money
- She knows more about the community than the hospitals, so she asks to show around the health workers
- She advises women to not have babies at home and go to clinics
- She refers mothers and patients to the hospitals when they have 'danger signs'
- She doesn't have a role regarding menstrual health
- They are like partners with the hospitals, they would give and receive information from them
- Leads the patients to health centers
- Mobilize the community to get immunization. They mark the people who already received the vaccines by painting a nail
- Collect data in the house of people, and give information. They give vaccines

### IRISE system

- IIEA is a women health organization, women economic empowerment
- IIEA support female entrepreneurs who are doing menstrual health items
- To have the menstrual education women need to subscribe to the period equality network
- IIEA train women in menstrual health. Then women can be trainers of others
- IIEA distribute menstrual pads and cups
- Community based organizations
- Irise main challenge is finding funding
- Irise use the feminist approach - leadership, not only trainings and give pads, they want to tackle the route of the problem, all types of oppression



## Information Distribution



# Awareness

## Communication Medium



## Product Communication



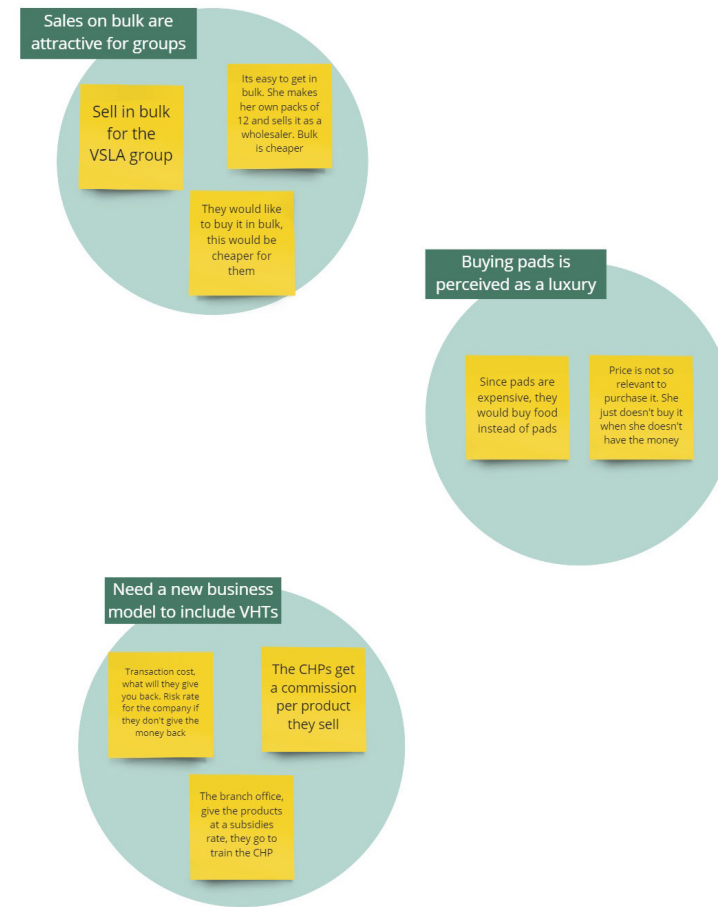
# Acceptability

## Product Enhancement



# Affordability

## Product Sales



## Brac Distribution Model



### Scalable

It's scalable since it will reach many people

Very scalable due to Brac's reach in 175 districts and women who are already good in sales

Not so scalable like the other models

### Impact

It has great impact

Impact would be significant because of the reach it has. It will reach deserved numbers

High impact

### Viable

It can be viable

its viable

Relatively viable

Viable

### Investment

High investment: This model requires the company to make the product according to their model

It requires great investment to improve the product

lower investment since they already have facilities established

Requires a lot of investment

### Barrier

The biggest barrier would be the limited funds to improve the product

I am not sure the standard of the product improvement they require

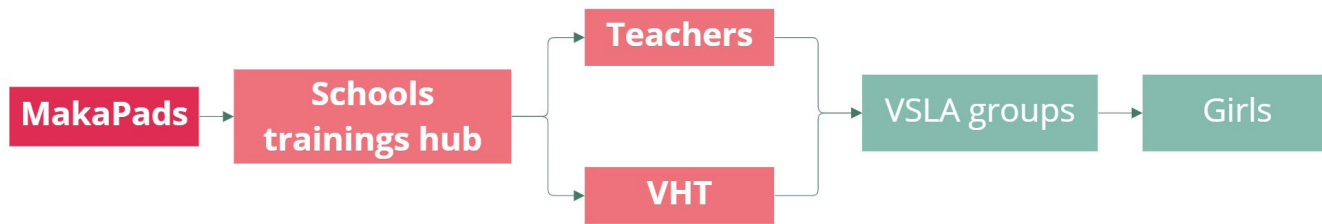
Need to change the pad to fit more strungent aesthetics features. On the other hand, current developments may break this barrier

Improve the product

They have so many products hence Makapads can be lost in the chain

May require a lot of time to development

# Proposed Distribution Model



## Scalable

more VHTs are recruited each year thus more staff/agents

Its scalable because its near to the community

More scalable than other models

VHTs are an existing model in the community and shall be continuous and the agenda for health is a governmental program

Its scalable if VHTs see the benefits for them or are motivated

## Impact

VHTs can reach several areas

High impact

It can have impact but would build slowly

VHTs are accepted by the community and trusted

More impact is realized since the VHTs are the most trusted health team in the communities

## Viable

VHTs are trained and paid by the ministry thus selling makapads and MH is just an addition to their jobs. ie. value addition

Can work, may have to engage Ministries or Local governments for permission to engage with government schools, private schools might be easier

No need to re-invent the wheel

viable

most viable

## Investment

Follow up would be necessary. Costs would be medium term

Traveling costs but moderate.

High investment, a lot of time to train

Doesn't require a lot of investment

## Barrier

Training the VHTs

Are these groups in our area of operation?

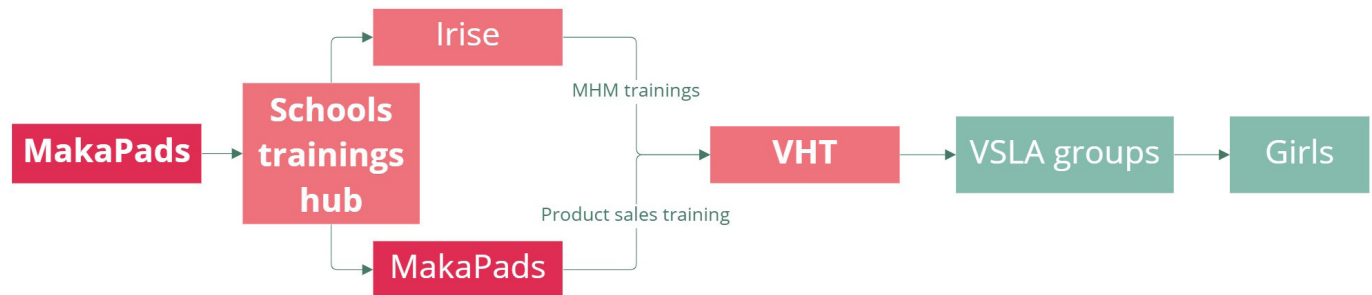
funds

Ministry of Education/ Health need to buy in, but manageable

Although mainly women they are business minded so will want to make profit

How active are these VHTs and Groups?

# Proposed Distribution Model + Irise Collaboration



Scalable

Scalable

Scalable, nearer to the community

Yes it can be scalable

Impact

high impact

It will make a big impact

Viabile

more viable

viable

Investment

Medium investment: IRISE requires partnerships which can be costly

Doesn't require a lot of investment

I think it's worth doing

Relatively high investment

Barrier

May require a lot of investment in form of trainings and facilitation

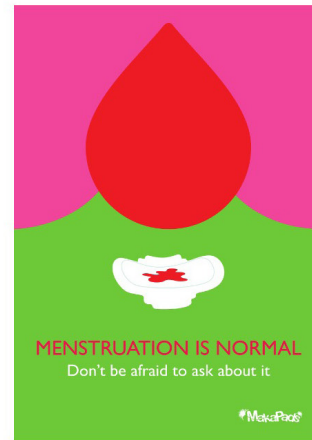
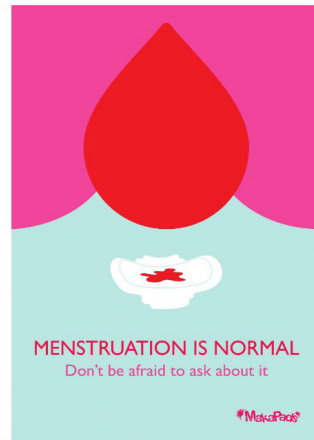
They mostly concentrate on reusables

Are they in our areas of operation

May be funds (am not sure) of the costs involved

How active are the VHTs

# MHM Awareness



Say that women are united and anyone can answer your questions

Menstruation is something normal for everyone

Every girl and every women knows about it

Girls issues

Remain calm, every women experience it

Its easier to ask the women in your life about menstruation

If you are a lady to ask about it I am not afraid, only if I have to ask a man

I can ask and consult my female teacher

advice on how to handle and consult

ask for information. Point out some important message

If I ask things I will know and not be afraid when it comes

Not to be afraid when you get your period

Not to be afraid I shouldn't get scared

If you face something its not normal, don't be afraid to ask someone

I was counicled by my mom

There are different ages when you get your mesntruation

We just need to get used to menstruation

If you start menstruating, you shouldn't fear because its part of women's lifes

When I start is not something new

I panicked when I saw blood

Our period is different and it changes

Talk about menstruation and give advice will make girls ask more about it

Talk about menstruation and advice you

poster 1 makes me ask more about menstruation

Prefer this poster because it advices

This is more like a brief information

This feels like an intro

Only advice

You should be confident when you menstruate

no need to be shy

It tells you to be confident

its free to menstruate

Lighter colors are preferred as the topic is more presonal

Prefers green

prefers blue

Prefer the blue color

Prefers blue

They are not shocked to see this images and understand the abstraction

I see a pad and blood

I see the pad / sanitary tissue

This is menstruation / period

# Product Awareness

