

KOPERNIK
FINDING WHAT WORKS

THE PERFECT FIT: PROMOTING MENSTRUAL HEALTH

PROJECT REPORT

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The making of a reusable menstrual pad

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In collaboration with Simavi and AYO Indonesia, and with the support of Grand Challenges Canada, Kopernik implemented The Perfect Fit initiative to improve awareness and knowledge on Menstrual Hygiene (MH) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) issues to females in Indonesia.

We conducted this project in Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, where we provided information for women about MH/SRHR and established a local manufacturing hub for reusable menstrual pad.

We conducted a combination of quantitative and qualitative surveys to measure: 1) increase in MH/SRHR awareness, and; 2) the usage and acceptance rate of the reusable menstrual pads.

We found that:

- There was an increase of 8 percent on MH/SRHR knowledge and 3.5 percent increase in a positive attitude towards menstruation. However, respondents feel less comfortable as compared to baseline for seeking medical advice for some MH/SRHR issues.
- 95 percent of respondents used the reusable menstrual pad, with a 4.3 out of 5 satisfaction rating.





ABOUT THE PROJECT

CONTEXT

Many women in Indonesia have low awareness on MH and SRHR as well as limited access to menstrual hygiene products

Menstruation and sexual reproductive health remain taboo topics in Indonesia. A culture of silence contributes to a lack of knowledge, resulting in women and girls having limited awareness of their Menstrual Hygiene (MH) and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) needs and/or being too embarrassed to discuss about any problems they may be facing. This situation negatively influences health-seeking behaviors related to MH and SRHR problems.

In rural areas, access to alternative products to manage menstruation hygienically are also limited with commercial disposable sanitary pads often being the only option. Commercial disposable pads can contain dioxins that have been identified as potential health hazards[1]. On top of health concerns, there is no adequate waste management system to handle the disposal of the products.

[1] WHO (2016). Dioxins and their effect on human health.



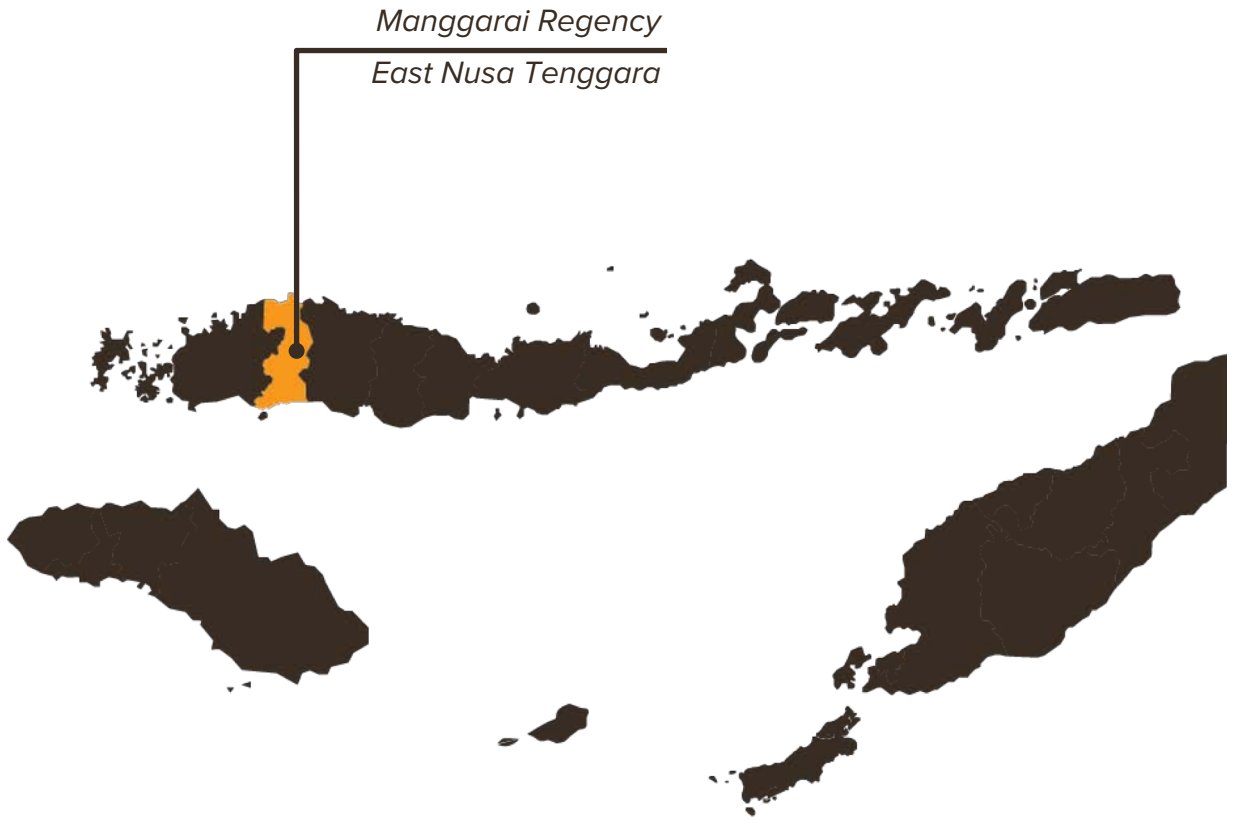
Needs assessment in Ruteng in May 2018

CONTEXT

Kopernik introduced reusable menstrual pads to women to increase MH/SRHR awareness

Following up on Kopernik's pilot project and Simavi's research, we found a need to provide an alternative menstrual product and encourage discussions regarding MH/SRHR issues among remote, underserved communities. In 2018, Kopernik implemented The Perfect Fit initiative, a joint collaborative project of Kopernik, Simavi, and AYO Indonesia to improve awareness and knowledge on MH and SRHR issues to women and girls in Indonesia.

With support from Grand Challenges Canada, we conducted a pilot project in Ruteng, Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province, to test whether a locally manufactured reusable menstrual pad could be an entry point to increase conversations about, and improve knowledge around menstruation.



THE INTERVENTION

The Perfect Fit initiative comprised of capacity development for local tailors, pad distributors, and consumers

The Perfect Fit Initiative

1. Producer



We trained 12 tailors, all of whom were women, in Ruteng to produce the pads locally.

As there was not any appropriate raw material in the area, we shipped the fabric from Surabaya to Ruteng.

2. Distributor



We recruited and trained 148 menstrual health agents known as **KOMAT** (Komunitas Menstruasi Sehat translated to Healthy Menstruation Community) as pad distributors and educators. These agents included men and women in Ruteng.

We equipped them with knowledge about MH/SRHR issues as well as business and marketing skills.

3. Consumer



We held MH/SRHR educational campaigns through sales and marketing materials for reusable menstrual pad users.

Key challenge:

Low MH/SRHR awareness among women in the last mile.

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PROJECT DESIGN

We hypothesized that through the Perfect Fit initiative, the communities' overall MH/SRHR awareness will increase. To help achieve this target, we also evaluated the communities' acceptance of the reusable menstrual pad as an educational 'tool'

	INCREASE MH/SRHR AWARENESS		PAD PERFORMANCE		
	Baseline	Endline	#1 Prototype	#2 Prototype	#3 Prototype
Sample size	150 (48 adult women, 102 school girls)	156 (56 adult women, 100 school girls)	100	79	68
Data collection method	● Quantitative: Questionnaires ● Qualitative: Focus Group Discussions		Face-to-face interviews		
Parameters	● Menstrual hygiene knowledge ● Attitude towards menstruation ● Health-seeking behavior		● Adoption rate ● Favorite features ● Areas needing improvement ● Product satisfaction rate		
Stakeholders	Local community in Ruteng and middle schools students		Local community in Ruteng, 10 local tailors, and KOMAT agents		

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TIMELINE

The project was implemented over 18 months from March 2018 to September 2019 with three design iterations of the reusable pads

	Research and Development		Iteration		Closing
	Research	**Development**	**Design Iteration**	**Data Collection**	**Reporting**
Activities	• Conducting needs assessment • Organizing baseline survey • Studying existing pads	• Producing pad design version 1 based on AYO Indonesia's design • Organizing user feedback #1	• Developing pad design version 2 • Organizing user feedback #2 • Developing pad design version 3	• Organizing user feedback #3 • Organizing endline survey • Market testing (sales monitoring)	• Evaluation • Data analysis • Reporting
Timeline	Mar - Jun '18		Jun '18 - Sep '19		Oct '19 - Jul '20



MAIN FINDINGS: MH/SRHR AWARENESS

MH/SRHR AWARENESS: MH KNOWLEDGE

There was a 13 percent increase in participants' understanding on menstrual hygiene knowledge

Participants' understanding of menstrual hygiene (MH) was measured using a set of five questions in the table. The results were then converted into a five point score.

On average, women aged 21 and over scored 3.4 at baseline and 3.8 at endline, whereas girls aged 20 and under scored on average 3.0 at baseline and 3.3 at endline. The number of correct answers per respondent has increased on average from 3.1 to 3.5 (or by 8 percent) where a t-test found a significant difference between the two samples (p-value=0.000).

Knowledge by question

Question	<20 years		21 years +		Overall	
	2017	2019	2017	2019	2017	2019
When does menstruation start on average?	47%	75%	40%	72%	44%	74%
Do women stop menstruating as they grow old?	85%	91%	96%	98%	89%	93%
Where does menstrual blood come from?	42%	69%	73%	90%	52%	76%
At the time of menarche (when menstruation first begins), not every girl has menstruation every month?	82%	87%	73%	92%	79%	88%
Pregnant women don't menstruate, true or false?	81%	87%	98%	100%	87%	91%



MH/SRHR AWARENESS: MH KNOWLEDGE

Although women's understanding of MH improved, it did not directly translate into behavioral change

Consistent with the quantitative survey, during endline FGDs, many respondents stated that they no longer believe myths surrounding menstruation. Such myths include that during menstruation one should not wash their hair, nor go near cooking food. Despite this, some explained that even though they no longer believed in these myths, they still wouldn't feel "comfortable" to conduct these activities during menstruation, showing that an improved understanding doesn't necessarily translate directly into behavioral change and reinforces the need to continue engaging with women and girls about these issues.



KOMAT gathering in Ruteng in September 2019

MH/SRHR AWARENESS: ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENSTRUATION

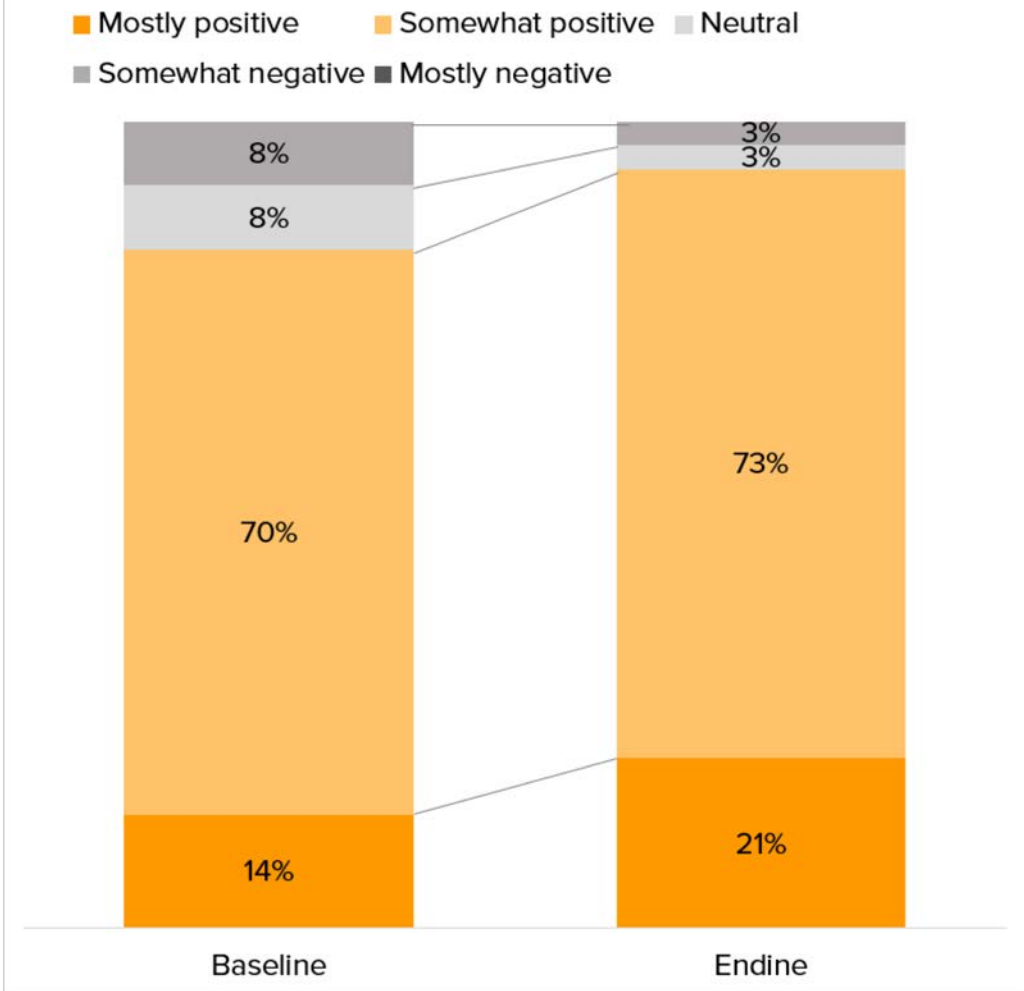
Generally, there has been an increase in positive attitude towards menstruation

Samples of women and girls at baseline and endline were asked whether they ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with a series of 10 statements that assessed their attitude towards menstruation. These levels of agreement were combined to give a composite score (scale 0-20) of attitudes across five levels. Higher scores and higher levels indicate more positive attitudes.

Generally, there has been an increase in positive attitudes from baseline to endline with the average composite score of attitude towards increasing from 12.5 baseline to 13.2 (3.5 percent increase) at endline, this difference was found to be statistically significant (p-value=0.000).

Attitude towards menstruation

N=156, Percentage of respondents by composite score



MH/SRHR AWARENESS: ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENSTRUATION

The attitude towards menstruation was assessed based on the following questions

Indicators for attitude towards menstruation (N=150)

Above 10% difference 0-10% difference Below 0 or minus point difference

Score Category	Attitude indicator
	A woman can sleep in the same bed as a man during her period
	Men should not see the cloth/pad that women use to manage their period
	A women/girl should not visit the mosque/church/temple during her period
	It is okay to dry underwear/cloth/pads outside where others might see them
	Men need to learn about MH
	Women can work, go to school, and lead a normal life during their period
	Information about menstruation should be shared with girls before their menarche
	I believe that menstruation is a disease
	Washing and disposing my cloth/underwear/pads is a source of stress
	Starting menstruation means a girl is ready to marry

The largest positive attitude increase was seen in women and girls being able to sleep in the same bed with a man (husband for women, male relative for girls) during her menstruation. Also, there was a 12 percent increase in the positive score for the statement 'Men should not see the cloth/pad that women use to manage their period', which may imply that women are less ashamed of their menstruation and don't feel the need to hide it from men.

However, the study saw an 18 percent increase in women and girls in agreement with the statement 'Starting menstruation means a girl is ready to marry'. This emphasized that more efforts are needed to focus on disconnecting menarche with the readiness for marriage.

MH/SRHR AWARENESS: HEALTH-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

Women became more proactive in seeing doctors for menstruation-related issues

By comparing baseline and endline FGD results, we found that more women would seek a doctor's advice for menstrual health related issues that they experienced (which ranged from white discharge to genital ulcers) at endline. This displays an encouraging increase in health seeking behaviour.

In addition, the women now have a better understanding of how to relieve pain and discomfort during menstruation. However, only a few reported to have taken medication due to menstrual discomfort.



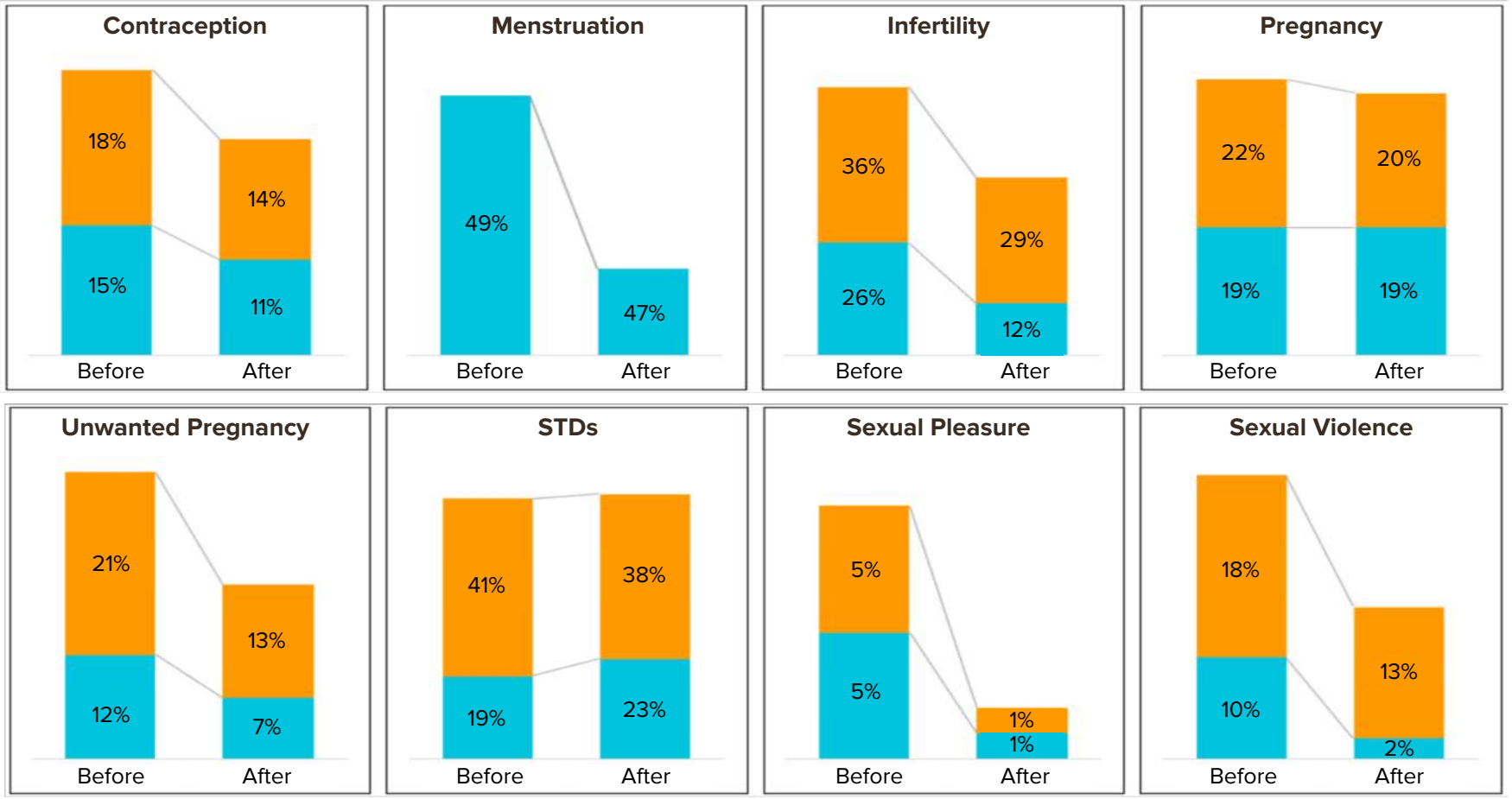
KOMAT training in Ruteng in May 2019

MH/SRHR AWARENESS: HEALTH-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

More respondents stated they did not need more information on MH/SRHR topics as they learned about these topics during the education session. However, more respondents felt less comfortable to seek medical advice for these topics

Comfort in asking health workers vs. information need

N=150, Percentage of respondents Comfort asking Information need



During the FGDs, it became clear that women and girls felt more comfortable talking to one another about these topics as compared to the beginning of the project, as they explained that they now have a better understanding of what these topics mean and that they are typical in the lives of women.



MAIN FINDINGS: PRODUCT ACCEPTANCE

PRODUCT ACCEPTANCE: USER PREFERENCE

The majority of users who received the reusable pads used them and overall, the users were satisfied with the product with an average satisfaction rating of 4.3

	#1 Prototype (Apr-May 2018, N=100)	**#2 Prototype** (Jul-Aug 2018, N=79)	**#3 Prototype** (Dec 2018-Jan 2019, N=68)
			
Pad usage	● 91 percent used the pads	● 86 percent used the pads	● 91 percent used the pads
Favorite features	● Absorption, washable, patterns	● Thickness, comfort, no leakage	● Absorption, comfort, size
Points of improvements	● Thicker layer for absorption, size adjustment, different fabric	● A small number asked for a thicker absorption layer	● Pads took a long time to dry in Ruteng's climate
Satisfaction rate (out of 5)	● 4.3	● 4.8	● 4.3

PRODUCT ACCEPTANCE: ADOPTION RATE

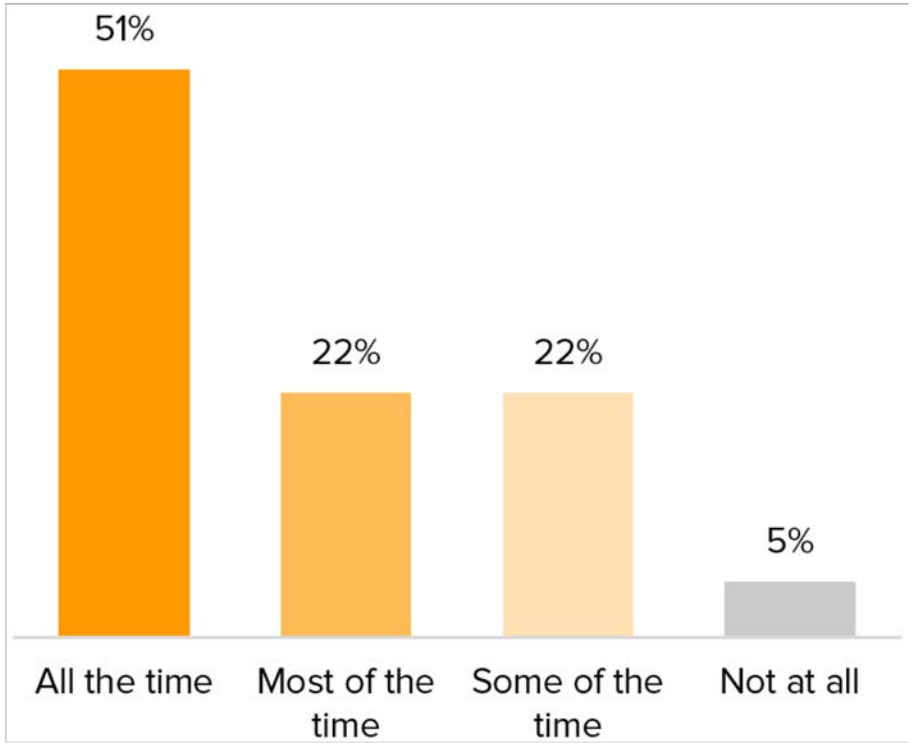
Further surveys with additional respondents confirmed that almost all respondents used the Perfect Fit menstrual pad prototype #3, with almost three quarters using it all, or most of the time

Almost three quarters (73 percent) of the respondents at endline used the Perfect Fit pads either all the time or most of the time during their menstruation. Of those who did not use the pad at all (5 percent), the reasons were because they did not like it, they used another product, or the pad was lost.

Of those who use the Perfect Fit pads as their main menstrual hygiene product, 80 percent stated that they found the product to be ‘very comfortable’, and 19 percent said that it was ‘somewhat comfortable’. This is a big improvement on those using other products, as at baseline (before anyone received the pads) only 51 percent stated they found their usual sanitary product to be ‘very comfortable’.

Perfect Fit pad adoption by endline survey

N=153, Percentage of respondents

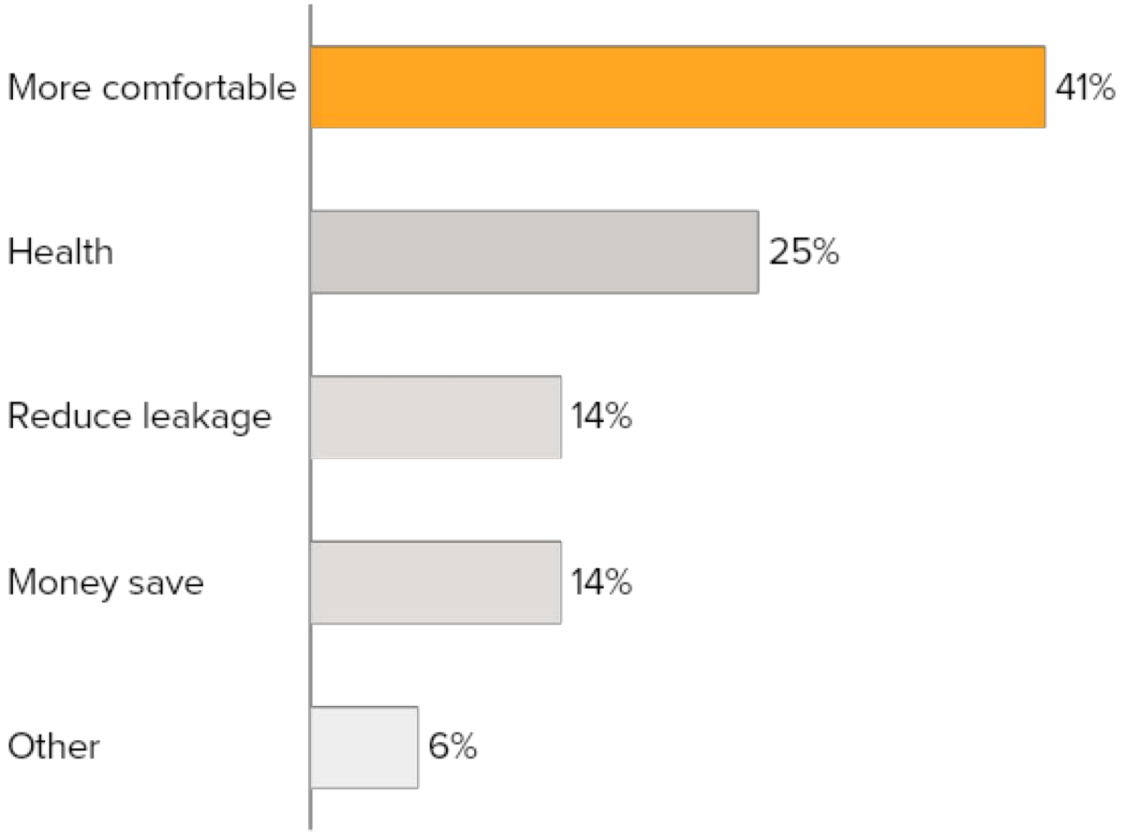


PRODUCT ACCEPTANCE: FAVORITE FEATURES

Perfect Fit pad users felt more comfortable, healthier, and experienced less menstrual blood leakage

Comfort and health are the top impacts perceived by Perfect Fit reusable pad users

N=68



Testimonials

"When using disposable pads, I usually had pimples around my vagina and it felt painful, but I haven't felt that since using the Perfect Fit pad ."

"The Perfect Fit pad is comfortable because it is made from fabric. Unlike disposable pads, the pad does not easily bunch up."

"The Perfect Fit pad helps to save more money since I don't have to buy disposable pads anymore."

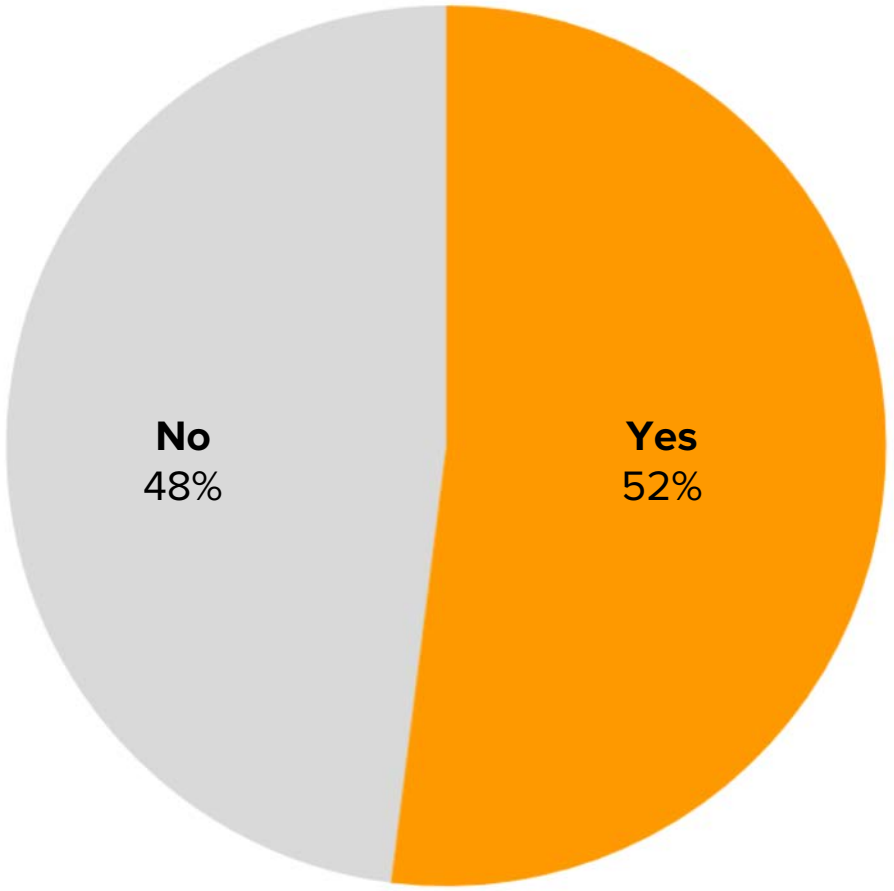
"I am still experiencing leakage when using the Perfect Fit pad, so I bought disposable pads as a back-up."

PRODUCT ACCEPTANCE: WILLINGNESS TO BUY

A slight majority of respondents thought that the current price (IDR25,000 or US$1.78) for one pad was expensive

The price of one pad is expensive

N=68



From this result, we understand that keeping the price of the pad low is important for the target beneficiaries in Ruteng as many of them still cannot see the economic benefit of the upfront investment required to buy reusable pads.

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ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

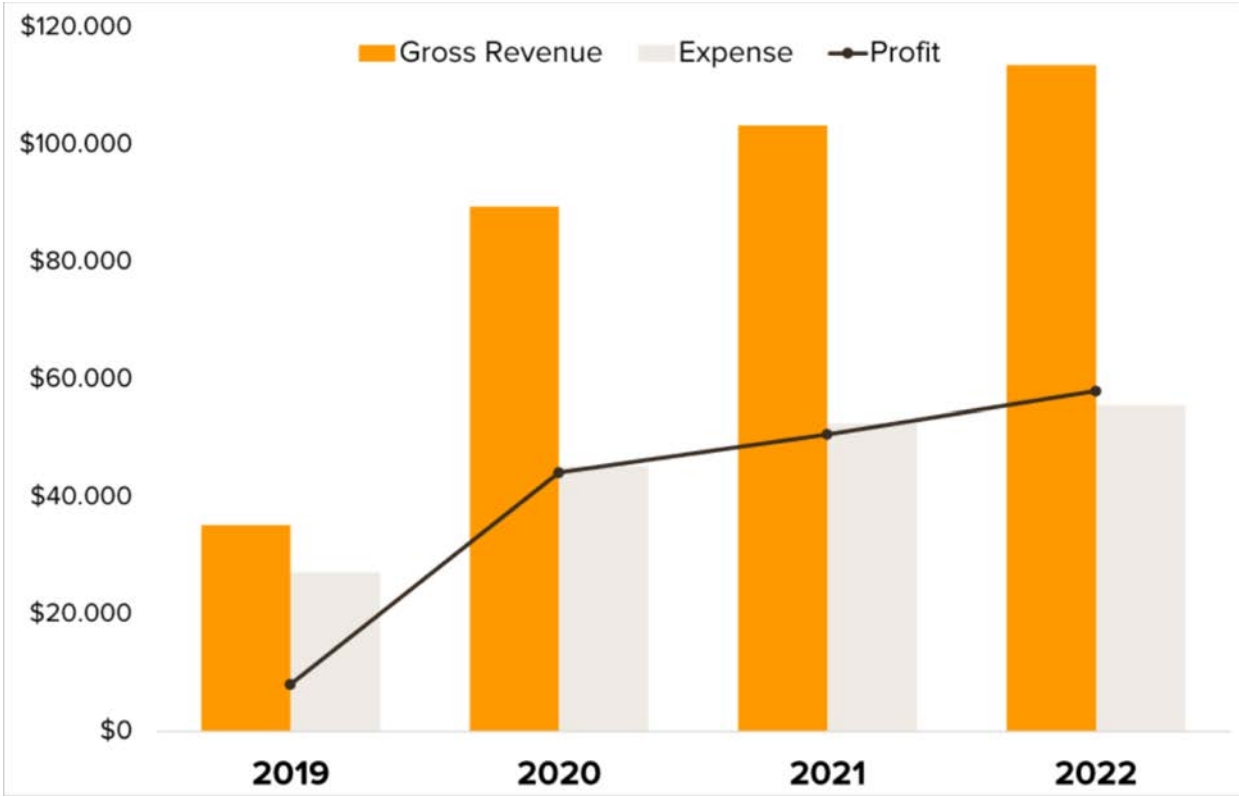
ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

We generated US$5,190 from selling 4,449 pads. We developed an expansion scenario and projected that a net profit of US$58,000 could be generated after four years

From March to September 2019, there was a significant interest in the final prototype resulting in 4,449 pads being sold and IDR72,756,000 (US$5,190) in gross profit generated.

Building upon this data, we developed a four-year financial projection with a scenario of expanding the Perfect Fit initiative to one new rural location (Labuan Bajo) and two urban areas (Java, Bali). Based on the projection, we estimated a US$58,000 net profit could be generated, reaching 51,600 women and girls.

Financial projection over four years



PROJECT IMPACT

We provided jobs for 160 people, manufactured 23,941 pads and distributed them to 5,964 women, and disseminated MH/SRHR knowledge to 108,798 people

During the 18-month project we:

- Provided jobs and an additional source of income for 160 people, including 12 tailors as pad producers, 148 community menstrual health (KOMAT) agents ranging from facility-based and non facility-based health workers, teachers, micro-entrepreneurs and housewives, as pad sellers and MH educators;
- Manufactured and distributed 23,941 Perfect Fit reusable menstrual pads, reaching 5,964 adult and adolescent females in Indonesia; and
- Disseminated six key messages around MH: a) basic definition; b) menstrual cycle; c) health and hygiene; d) taboos and myths; e) bodily integrity and rights; f) alternative MHM products through printed materials, in-person outreach activities, and an online campaign (facebook) reaching a total audience of 108,798.



KOMAT training in Ruteng



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS



The final product of Perfect Fit reusable menstrual pad

CONCLUSION

Overall, the intervention resulted in an improved understanding of MH/SRHR knowledge. However, the small sample size limits our ability to conclude the significance of trends that are observed in the datasets. There was an 8 percent increase on MH understanding. An increase was also shown in the attitude towards menstruation with an increase of composite score by 3.5 percent as more respondents perceived menstruation as positive. However, respondents felt less comfortable to seek medical advice for some MH/SRHR issues such as contraception, pregnancy, and sexual violence. This could be explained by the fact that in FGDs, participants said that they felt comfortable discussing these topics amongst their family and friends which were their preferred choice of confidant.

In regards to the reusable menstrual pad, 95 percent of the respondents used the pad with almost three quarters using it all or most of the time. What the respondents liked most about the pad are the absorbency, comfort, and size. However, the pad took a long time to dry in Ruteng's cool climate. Overall, respondents were very satisfied with the pad with a satisfaction rating of 4.3 out of 5.

NEXT STEPS

We established the Perfect Fit Indonesia enterprise to continue promoting menstrual health

To continue educating women and men about the importance of MH/SRHR and giving access to safe and eco-friendly menstrual products, in 2020, we established the Perfect Fit Indonesia enterprise. We will continue to work with local tailors and KOMAT agents and plan to expand the market to East Java and Bali. The enterprise offers reusable pad products, merchandise, and educational services as main revenue generating activities.



Perfect Fit Reusable Pads Handmade in Flores





Perfect Fit Merchandise:

- Tumblr
- Period tracking notebook
- T-Shirt
- Totebag

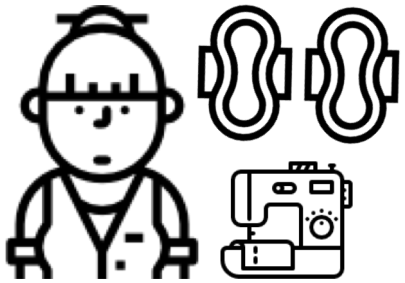


Educational services consist of workshops and/or training to groups

NEXT STEPS

We are planning to expand to East Java and Bali and to tap into the urban market

TAILORS



Raw Material Procurement & Pad Production

Perfect Fit team buy raw materials in Surabaya and send it to tailors in Labuan Bajo to produce pads and store in warehouse.

KOMAT AGENTS & EDUCATORS

RURAL MARKET



Rural Sellers buy products from our warehouse

- IDR100k per pack
- Door to door and direct selling mechanism
- Covers East Nusa Tenggara

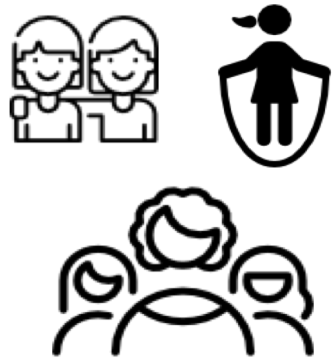
URBAN MARKET



Urban Sellers buy products from our warehouse

- IDR180k per pack
- Online and retail selling mechanism
- Buy one help one campaign
- Covers Java & Bali

CUSTOMERS



Customers buy pads from sellers

Customers save money, reduce menstrual pad waste, and improve their menstrual hygiene management.

ANNEX

ANNEX

Needs Assessment

Kopernik conducted a needs assessment to understand the current practice towards menstrual products, distribution channels, price point and desirable design features that are necessary to help product development for the Perfect Fit reusable pad.

The needs assessment was conducted in May 2018, in Langke Rembong district and Satar Mese district, Ruteng, Manggarai Regency and focused on collecting information about the current practices and specific needs of reproductive-age women and girls regarding menstrual health management. We interviewed 150 women of reproductive-age consisting of 100 adolescent girls aged 10-19 years and 50 adult women aged 20-49 years using a questionnaire.

We found that:

- On average, women: menstruate for 3-4 days in a month; use two pads per day, and; spend IDR8,329 (~US$0.55) per month to buy disposable pads.
- 83 percent of women only use disposable pads, the other 14 percent use disposable pads + cloth, 3 percent use only cloth.
- Adolescents women learned about sanitary products from their mothers (49 percent), friends (16 percent) and teachers (13 percent). While adult women respondents reported that they learned about sanitary products from their friends (26 percent), television (26 percent), and mothers (17 percent).
- More than 50 percent of the respondents were willing to try reusable pads.



Needs assessment in May 2018