

# Youths Menstrual Hygiene Management Program - Summary Report

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In Partnership with:

Rural Development Partners

A summarized sustainable impact report outlining the initiative for corporate investment.



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# Introduction

The Youth Menstrual Hygiene Management Program addresses period poverty in Malawi, Africa. Rural Development Partners, in support of Nexus Impacts, aim to implement tangible, lasting systems across school districts to manage menstrual hygiene and health among young women and girls by teaching sewing skills specifically tailored for creating reusable pads and educating them on sexual health, hygiene, and other relevant topics. Designed around sustainability, the project has a system involving local mother's groups, and through the establishment of sewing clubs within schools, these local girls and women are fostering independence and systemic support for future generations.

## Problem Statement

In many communities, young women and girls face obstacles in managing menstrual hygiene effectively, leading to adverse consequences such as school absenteeism, limited educational opportunities, cultural barriers, health challenges, perpetuating gender inequalities, and more. The lack of basic knowledge and access to affordable and hygienic menstrual products further exacerbates these challenges, hindering girls' academic progress and overall well-being. The difficulties of period poverty are exaggerated in rural communities due to financial limitations, cultural taboos, stigmas, and more.

## Objectives

### **1. Independent Menstrual Management**

- a. Goal: Empower women and girls with the skills and resources necessary for self-reliant menstrual management.
- b. Significance: Supports the dignity, safety, and daily participation of women and girls, reducing the impact of period poverty.

### **2. Women's Health Education**

- a. Goal: Deliver specialized education on women's health and address local taboos and stigmas.
- b. Significance: Knowledge empowers women to make informed decisions, reducing vulnerabilities linked to period poverty.

### **3. Community Involvement**

- a. Goal: Implement sewing clubs and menstrual education networks in rural communities for lasting change.
- b. Significance: Strengthens women's leadership roles, leading to sustainable solutions for challenges like period poverty.

The program, grounded in these pillars, aims to overcome societal and economic barriers, fostering individual and community progress.

# Contextual Challenges

The local environment of rural communities where the beneficiaries are located deals with unique contextual challenges compared to more privileged parts of the world. Here are some key challenges of period poverty in Malawi, Africa, that the Youths Menstrual Hygiene Management Program aims to address:

**Lack of Access to Menstrual Hygiene Products:** Women and girls struggle to afford menstrual hygiene products. They often face the heart-wrenching decision of choosing between buying food or essential items, leaving them without the means to purchase proper menstrual products.

**Impact on Educational Opportunities:** Due to the lack of menstrual hygiene products and proper facilities in schools, young girls are forced to miss school days each month during their periods. The shame and embarrassment they feel among their peers prevent them from attending classes, affecting their academic performance and undermining their future.

**Cultural Taboos and Stigma:** Menstruation remains a taboo topic in many African communities, silencing women and girls from discussing their menstrual health openly. The deeply ingrained cultural stigma surrounding menstruation perpetuates ignorance and prevents them from seeking vital information and support.

## YMHM Program Structure

**Day 1:** Introduction to Menstruation & Understanding Womens Bodies

- 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm: Education

**Day 2:** Hygiene & Well-being

- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm: Education
- 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm: Sewing Skills

**Day 3:** Introduction to Sexual Health & Consent

- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm: Education
- 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm: Sewing Skills

**Day 4:** Sewing Progress and Mastery

- 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm: Sewing Skills

**Day 5:** Moving Forward with Community Empowerment & Understanding Different Routes of Disease Transmission

- 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm: Sewing Skills
- 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm: Education

# Sewing Skills Training and Empowerment

The core of the Youth Menstrual Hygiene Management Program unfolds during the practical skills training component, spanning days two to five. This section delves into the structured curriculum, the imparted knowledge, and the outcomes achieved during this impactful four-day phase.

## Duration:

The practical skills training phase encompasses roughly eleven hours of instruction per participant, distributed across the four days. Participants engage in hands-on learning, acquiring the skills necessary for crafting reusable menstrual pads from locally sourced materials.

## Learning Objectives:

The overarching objectives of this phase are to empower beneficiaries with the capacity to create reusable menstrual pads and to foster sustainability in menstrual hygiene management for their own lives and community members. Specific learning outcomes include:

1. Proficiency in pad creation techniques, including cutting, stitching, and assembly.
2. Competence in selecting suitable materials.
3. Understanding the principles of pad design for optimal comfort and absorbency.

## Program Components and Resources:

Each female participant in the program receives a comprehensive set of resources and educational experiences. The program provides a four-year supply of menstrual products and two panties to each female beneficiary. Participants have access to sewing kits both during and after the program. The curriculum includes eleven hours of sewing education, introducing them to fabrics, absorbent layers, and stitching materials available in their local community. The program also offers six hours of hygiene and women's health education. Additionally, participants receive five light meals and opportunities for involvement in sewing clubs.

## Outcome and Sustainability:

The program aims to foster menstrual independence and combat period poverty for both individuals and their surrounding communities. Central to its design is the emphasis on long-term impact and sustainability. By providing practical skills, distributing essential resources, and promoting independent pad production, the program provides participants with the necessary tools to maintain sustainable menstrual hygiene practices. This approach not only caters to immediate needs but also fosters enduring change in menstrual health management within the broader community.

# Independence Strategies

- **Locally Sourced Materials:** The program solely uses locally sourced materials for pad production. This not only supports the local economy but also ensures the sustainability of the initiative. By utilizing materials that are readily available within the community, the program reduces dependency on external suppliers, decreases costs, and reinforces the importance of self-reliance and community empowerment.
- **Collaboration with Local School Districts:** The program collaborates with local school districts to effectively identify and engage with target communities. This collaboration ensures widespread participation and support.
- **Involving Female Community Members:** Female community members, known as mother groups, play a crucial role in the program's success. They are actively involved in each program and provide valuable guidance and support to the participants. Initially, the program is led by a member of the RDP organization; once the mothers' group demonstrates proficiency, the responsibility of teaching and practical knowledge training is transferred to them.
- **Creating Sewing Clubs:** To foster long-term sustainability and community access to pads, sewing clubs at the schools are established. These clubs offer a platform for participants and other students to exercise their skills, share experiences, and support each other in their menstrual health journey. In addition, the sewing clubs are provided with the tools necessary for independent pad creation.
- **Boys Education Participation:** During the education portion of the program, male classmates are invited to learn. The purpose is to reduce the taboos around menstruation, promote empathy, encourage support, normalize menstruation, enhance sexual health knowledge and practices, promote hygiene, reduce gender disparities, strengthen community cohesion, and reduce bullying.

## YMHM Program Tracked Impacts & Data

### Tracked Impacts & Data

Students:	Name, Age, Grade, Gender, Attendance, Signature
Mothers & Teachers:	Name, Age, Gender, Attendance, Signature
Light Meals:	Meals Items (Usually Samosas and Juice Boxes)
Panties:	Number of Panties Provided

Sewing Kits:	Number of Sewing Kits Provided
Health Education:	Number of Health Education Hours
Sewing Education:	Number of Sewing Education Hours
Pads Created:	Number of Pads Created During the Program
Post Program Materials:	Materials Given to Students Following the Program
Pads Worth from Program:	Total Pads Worth of Materials
Duration Worth of Menstrual Products:	Days, Months, & Years worth of Menstrual Products

## Dollar-To-Impact Ratio

The Dollar-to-Impact Ratio (DIR) measures the cost-effectiveness of the Youths Menstrual Hygiene Management Program. It evaluates the financial input against outcomes, such as duration of menstrual product access, panties provided, hours of health and sewing education, and light meals given. This metric helps optimize spending for maximum impact. The effective program cost per participant is USD \$28.10.

## Participant DIR

In the designated program, the expenditure per participant stands at USD \$28.10. As illustrated in the preceding chart, this amount encapsulates the direct impact conferred upon each individual involved.

Dollar-to-Impact Ratio (DIR) Per Participant		
USD	Quantity	Impact
\$28.10	48	Months of Menstrual Products
	11	Hours of Sewing Education
	6	Hours of Health Education
	5	Light Meals
	2	Underwear
	1	Sewing Kit
\$1.00	1.708114	Months of Menstrual Products
	0.391443	Hours of Sewing Education
	0.213514	Hours of Health Education
	0.177928	Light Meals
	0.071171	Underwear
	0.035586	Sewing Kit

## Menstrual DIR

The chart below illustrates the effective cost of menstrual products of various periods of time, reflected in Malawi's local currency, USD, and CAD.

Description	DIR - Menstrual Hygiene Management		
	USD	CAD	MK
Cost per Participant	\$28.10	\$38.78	31,275.77
Cost per Year of Menstrual Products	\$7.025	\$9.69	7,818.94
Cost per Month of Menstrual Products	\$0.585	\$0.8079	651.58
Cost per Day of Menstrual Products	\$0.084	\$0.1154	93.08

## Project Capacity & Operational Requirements

**Overview:** Within Mzimba North Education District, there are 289 schools, currently totalling 70,000 girls, with an annual influx of 13,000. The program strategy is able to support these women and beyond. The current stage of the program is aimed to reach over 16,000 girls within sixty-five schools. Annually, this number is expected to rise by an additional 2,800 girls.

### Funding Needs:

- For the 16,000 girls: Approximately USD ~450,000 is essential based on the Dollar-to-Impact Ratio.



- For the annual addition of 2,800 girls: An extra USD ~80,000 is needed each year.

**Program Distribution:**

To accommodate the annual influx of 2,800 students:

- Annually: 140 programs must be rolled out, with each supporting 20 beneficiaries.
- Monthly: 14 programs, spanning 10 months to factor in a 2-month school holiday and evaluation period.
- Weekly: Approximately 3.5 programs.

**Budget Breakdown:**

To accommodate the annual influx of 2,800 students:

- Per Program: \$562.02 USD.
- Weekly: \$1,967.08 USD.
- Monthly: \$7,868.33 USD.
- Quarterly: \$23,604.99 USD.
- Annually: \$78,683.29 USD.

**Points of Consideration:** Budget figures are anchored to current cost structures. Adjustments in these metrics could lead to variations in operational needs and financial requirements. Constant evaluations are essential to stay aligned with evolving needs.

**Strategic Focus:** Achieving a significant impact on the 16,000+ girls hinges on harmonizing ample funding, structured planning, and seamless execution. This ensures the current beneficiaries are well-served and the anticipated yearly additions are aptly incorporated.

## Conclusion

At its core, the YMHM Program champions individual autonomy and advances menstrual health outcomes for women. It not only enlightens young girls and women about vital health and hygiene practices but also endows them with tangible sewing skills, thereby placing their well-being squarely in their hands. By integrating mothers' groups and educational institutions into the training framework, the program ingrains itself within the community, engendering a robust sense of stewardship and accountability. The emphasis on personal empowerment paired with community health positions the program to leave a legacy that transcends its operational lifespan. This strategy stands as a pivotal shift, equipping young girls and entire communities to counteract the repercussions of period poverty, ushering them towards healthier, self-sustained futures.