



Fund for Innovation
and Transformation

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WOMEN'S GLOBAL HEALTH INNOVATIONS

Women's Empowerment Via Menstrual Hygiene and Livelihood Integration

Context

In Uganda, 90.5% of girls do not have access to menstrual products. The most impoverished girls are vulnerable to sexual coercion – exchanging sexual favors for menstrual products. Compounding challenges are negatively impacting school participation with 61.7% of girls reporting commonly missing school each month due to menstruation. The menstrual cup is a sustainable solution for girls who have barriers to accessing pads or pieces of cloth.

The Innovative Solution

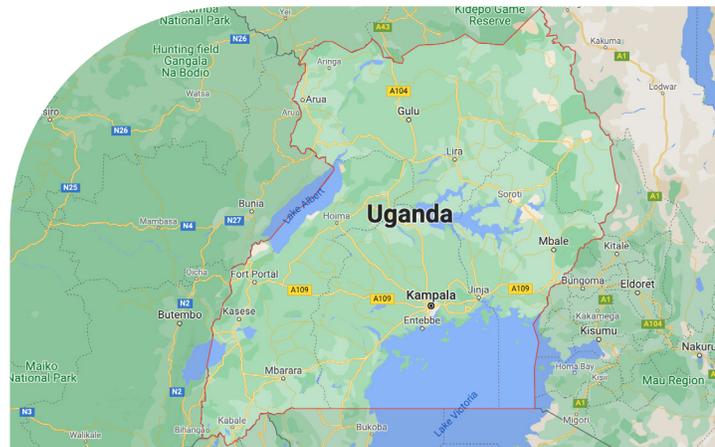
Supported by FIT, Women's Global Health Innovations tested an innovative menstrual health solution where sales 'Champions' from five villages were trained to promote and earn income selling Bfree Menstrual Cups. As opposed to traditional menstrual health products, the Bfree Cup is physically antibacterial, comfortable, easy to clean and reusable for up to 10 years.

Advancing Gender Equality

Gender was addressed during the test, by increasing livelihood opportunities for women through the sales model, as well as changing social norms where communities address their own attitudes, beliefs, and practices that perpetuate social exclusion and limit uptake of available services related to menstrual health and hygiene.

Testing Framework

The project's testing framework compared baseline and endline data to determine if utilizing a sales model could improve livelihoods while increasing access to menstrual health products for women and girls. Having men participate in the training program assisted in challenging



COUNTRY
Uganda

AMOUNT
\$243,664

TESTING PERIOD
15 months
Ended Dec 2021



SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY



GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE (GE3)



THEME: LIVELIHOODS

entrenched stigmas, taboos, myths, perceptions, and attitudes towards menstruation as solely a woman's issue. The conversation broadened to be inclusive of whole families and the community.

Results and Impact

'Champions' reported utilizing profits from BFree Cup sales to invest in new businesses, pay for school fees and buy more BFree Cups to sell, among other benefits. **In total, 238 cups were sold, (including 43 purchased by male family members).** BFree Cup users reported economic empowerment as one of the benefits of using the product, as they no longer had to find or purchase products monthly. Furthermore, they emphasized that with cup use, they did not have to worry about leakage. Engaged males, including cultural and religious leaders, as well as the male 'Champions', reported a change in attitude towards menstruation, of which they had very little previous knowledge.

Key Lessons

1. Movement restrictions and fears of contracting or spreading COVID-19 affected the enthusiasm of the 'Champions', as well as stock circulation, population income, profit margins and the ability of credited customers to pay outstanding balances. Community sensitization drives were affected since savings group meetings and gatherings could not be held.
2. Community leaders were useful in promoting MHH and product marketing, as they are knowledgeable about their community attitudes and practices, share a common language, are highly trusted and have previously introduced and promoted several other products in the community.
3. To reduce the risk of losses made when credit customers fail to pay, 'Champions' innovated a system that allowed customers to take cups on credit only with a recommendation letter from their local leader for more effortless follow-ups in case of default.

"The school incinerator is in an open space where boys stand and laugh at girls who always come to dispose of their used pads. But now with the BFree Cup, the boys never know when I am on my period, and this has made me more comfortable in school and also boosted my confidence in school." - 19-year-old BFree Cup user

"While I was using the pads I would not play while I was on my period because I was not comfortable, but with the bfree cup, I now can play football with the boys." - 19-year-old BFree Cup user

PARTNER ORGANIZATION

- Public Health Ambassadors Uganda

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

24 'Champions' (21 women, 3 men) trained to sell the BFree Menstrual Cup (238 BFree Menstrual Cups sold). 1418 girls and women reached with knowledge on Menstrual Health and Hygiene information (MHH).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ABOUT FIT

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.



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global health innovations