



A GUIDE TO PRODUCING REUSABLE SANITARY PADS



faith. action. results.

DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

Following the successful implementation of the I-SHINE project, CRS Ghana designed another 3-year project, the Integrated Community Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Improvement (ICOWASH) project, also funded by the Helmsley Charitable Trust, as a follow on to I-SHINE. The ICOWASH project continues the successful programming under I-SHINE and has incorporated lessons learned for more robust and impactful outcomes. The goal of the ICOWASH project is to improve health and wellbeing of 152,334 rural adults and children in West Mamprusi and Talensi districts in Northern Ghana.

As part of the efforts to respond to the needs of girls in schools, the two Projects provided special attention to menstrual hygiene management in schools by providing pad changing rooms with a portable incinerator attached, in school latrines and menstrual hygiene education in schools and communities. In 2016, CRS collaborated with the Desert Research Institute (DRI)-University of Nevada (UNR) and the University for Development Studies to conduct research to unravel the persisting barriers that keep girls out of school during their monthly period under the I-SHINE project. The top three reasons why girls were not comfortable at school were: pain during menstruation (33%), feeling embarrassed (23%) and lack of menstrual pads (19%). Also, 44% did not know about menstruation before their first period and 49% wanted modifications to the changing rooms. A key consideration in addition to provision of pad changing rooms, was to ensure the sustainable supply of safe menstrual pads.

From the above findings the ICOWASH project in 2018 engaged a consultant to carry out an operations research on market development for locally-sourced reusable sanitary pads as well as a formative research on Behavior Change Communication for improved WASH in communities. Findings from the research showed that many girls and woman from the project communities use cloths to manage their menstruation and hence were happy to know about the reusable pads. They however preferred that the reusable pads be sewn with absorbable cotton materials and with dark colored clothes to make blood stains invisible.

Based on these beneficial research findings, CRS Ghana ICOWASH Project added two additional strategies:

- ◆ Use research informed BCC communication channels on MHM for schools, health facilities and community level education to demystify misconceptions on menstrual hygiene and to promote good knowledge and practices on MHM.
- ◆ Business development of re-usable/low cost sanitary towels for communities by engaging community actors such as seamstresses to take up the production of the sanitary towels as a small - scale business.

Since the major challenge with the reusable pads is availability and affordability, the project then sort to address this challenge by training 18 local dress makers from the two project districts who will sew and retail the pads at very affordable prices. As a business model, the dress makers will link up with retail shops, drug stores and other retailers in nearby communities who can buy at wholesale prices and sell at retail prices to women and girls.

DOCUMENT OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Guide

This guide is primarily designed for dressmakers who were trained to sew and sell the pads as a means of livelihood. It has also been simplified and can be used as a handbook by any individual who desires to sew their own reusable pads. The step-by-step approach of the guide makes it convenient for sewing by hand as well.

This guide also outlines steps in using the pads, washing, drying them and other safe management practices. Advantages of using the cloth-based reusable pad is also mentioned here, to help first timers and promoters understand the concept at a glance.

Content of the Guide

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Procedure

Picture

1

Fold the designed fabric (African print) into 5 or 6 layers, draw out the pattern on the fabric with a pen and cut out.



2

Fold calico into several layers (4, 6, 8, 10) depending the type of pad you are making (A, B, C, D), draw patterns on calico.



3

Sew around the lines of the patterns and cut out individual calico.



Procedure

Picture

4 Pin the cut-out calico to the designed fabric.



5 Sew the calico to the designed fabric.



6 Use paper patterns to draw and cut-out plastic lining.

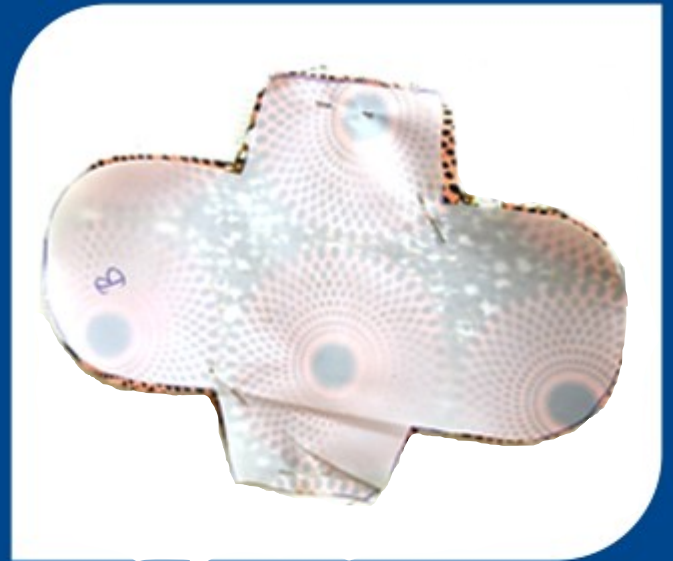


Procedure

Picture

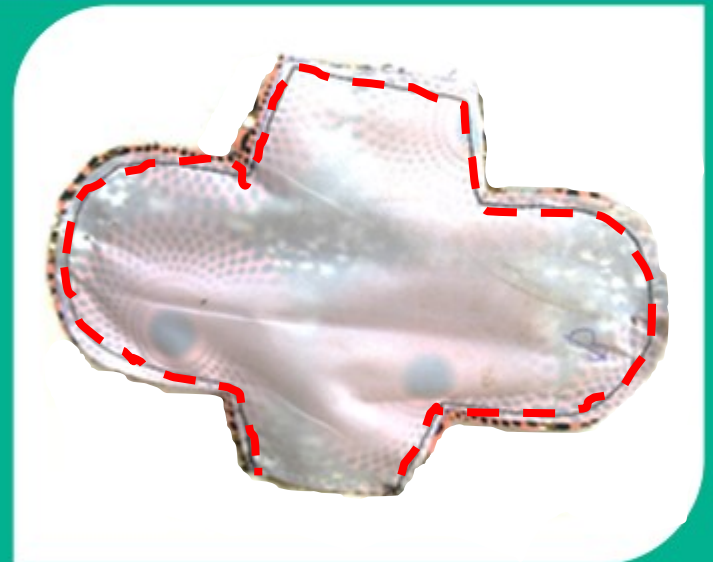
7

Pin the plastic lining to another layer of designed fabric



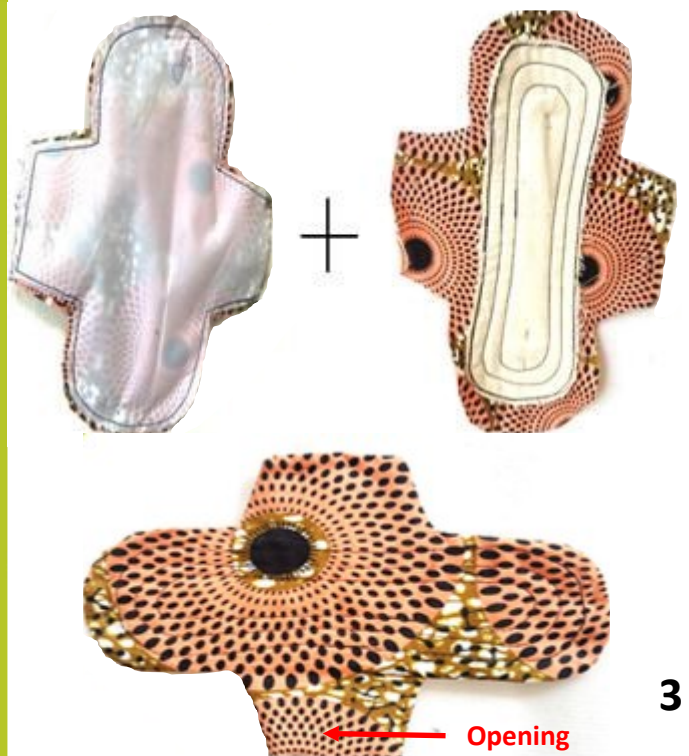
8

Sew lining to designed fabric



9

Attach 5 and 8 together with pins. Making the two designed fabric touch each other. Sew both together leaving an opening at one of the "wings". Use the opening (room) left to turn it inside out. (The plastic and calico go in and the designed fabric comes out).



Procedure

Picture

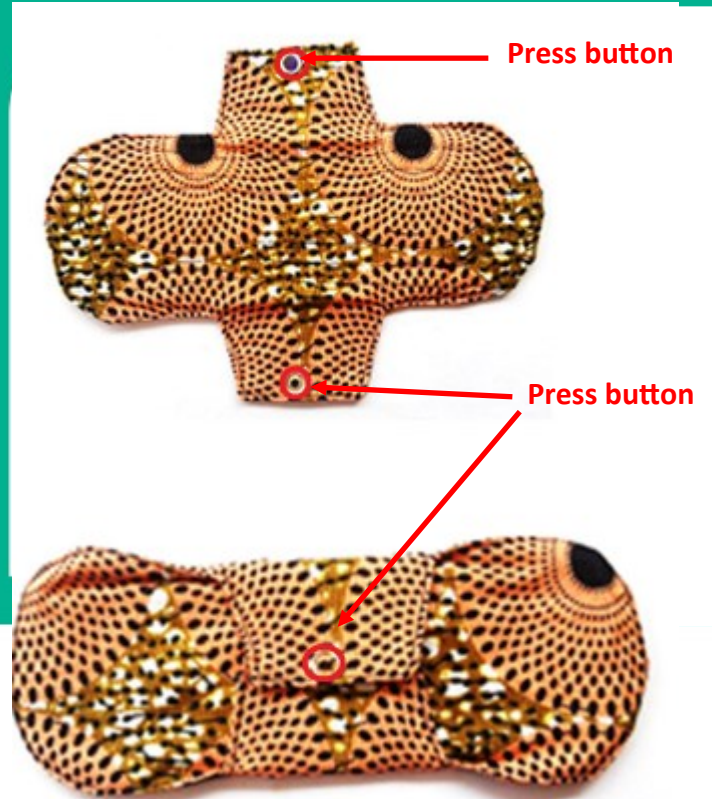
10

Sew the opening up.



11

Attach press buttons to the wings and test buttons for effectiveness



Types of Pad

Pad A, with four layers of calico



Note: When wearing, the part with the most stitches touches the body.

Pad B, with six layers of calico



Types of Pad

Pad C, with eight layers of calico



Note: When wearing, the part with the most stitches touches the body.





Pad D, with ten layers of calico



A mini bag made to contain pads.



PAD COMBINATIONS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF MENSTRUAL FLOW

SET	A	B	C	D	TOTAL
PICTURE					
LIGHT FLOW	4	2	2	0	8
REGULAR FLOW	2	4	1	1	8
HEAVY FLOW	0	2	3	3	8

Note: When wearing, the part with the most stitches touches the body.



BENEFITS OF THE REUSABLE PAD

- ◇ **Locally available**
- ◇ **Creates employment for local producers**
- ◇ **Easy to use**
- ◇ **No skin reactions**
- ◇ **Does not expose you to chemicals**
- ◇ **It is comfortable to use**
- ◇ **Easy to clean**
- ◇ **Very durable**



Saves Money: If you buy disposable pads every four (4) weeks, it costs you about 300 GHS in 4 years. But if you buy 8 reusable pads once, then it will cost you 75 GHS for 4 years. **You save more than 200 GHS over a 4 year period.**



Girls Empowerment: Girls who cannot afford to use pads, miss approximately 5 days of school a month, which amounts to about 60 missed school days per year. **Reusable pads help reduce menstrual-related dropouts among pupils in schools.**



Environmentally friendly: Every woman menstruates an average of 3000 days in her life. If she uses 4 disposable pads every day she menstruates, then she will use 12,000 disposable pads in her life. **However, a woman will only need about 80 reusable pads in a lifetime.**



HOW TO SAFELY MANAGE AND KEEP THE REUSABLE PADS



SOAK SOILED PAD FOR A FEW MINUTES WITH CLEAN WATER



WASH THOROUGHLY WITH SOAP PAYING ATTENTION TO BLOOD STAINED



RINSE THOROUGHLY WITH CLEAN WATER AT LEAST TWO TIMES



HANG AND ALLOW PADS TO COMPLETELY DRY IN SUNLIGHT



IRON THE MOST STITCHED PART OF THE PAD WITH A CLEAN IRON

