



IMPACT **20**  
REPORT **23**

**INVESTING  
LOCALLY  
TO ACCELERATE  
IMPACT**





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## DEFINITIONS

### **Menstrual Health:**

Menstrual health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, about the menstrual cycle.

### **Period Poverty:**

Having insufficient access to menstrual products, education, and sanitation facilities.

### **Localization:**

The process, in the context of international aid and development, of giving more decision-making agency, funding, leadership, inclusion, and power to local and national actors for the response to select issues.

### **Menstrual Dignity:**

An inclusive approach to menstrual health that addresses the root causes of inequality.

## ACRONYMS

### **IEC**

Information, Education, and Communication

### **MHH**

Menstrual Health and Hygiene

### **NGO**

Non-Government Organisation

### **CSR**

Corporate Social Responsibility

### **SDG**

Sustainable Development Goals

### **WASH**

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

## AFRIPads Success Story Of Accelerated Impact Through Local Investment



**Joris Boon**  
CEO AFRIPads

In 2023, we were fortunate to see the completion of an independent 5-year economic impact study of our AFRIPads factory in rural Uganda (thank you University of British Columbia and Mr. Dan Ahimbisibwe!). The results have provided resounding evidence for how impact can be amplified across communities and regions when you invest locally: in production, job creation, training, and education, quality products and services, and of course, in people. We expected the results of this 5-year study to show little to no change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But we were happily proven wrong! The report showed that over this period, the gender employment gap decreased significantly, there was a rise in girls' school attendance in the region, and the general purchasing power of the community and savings behavior also increased.

**I'm extremely proud that AFRIPads has had a female employment rate of at least 80% since inception, and consistently even higher at our factory.**

**The choice to employ and train often marginalized women in this rural section of Kitengesa, Uganda, has contributed greatly to the broader impact seen outside the factory walls.**

Investing in and including women in formal employment as well as in the formal economy through financial inclusion, has been the driver of our mission as a social enterprise for social and economic empowerment, specifically aiming to make a difference in the lives of girls and women.

When we decided to expand our AFRIPads factory in Kitengesa in 2015, we had more in mind than just producing our high-quality reusable menstrual pads. We wanted to create a ripple effect, making life better for everyone in the communi-

ty. So, we didn't just build a factory; we built better roads, improved access to electricity, and provided jobs to those, especially women, in the surrounding area. We believe the results of this study stand as a testament to the power of social enterprises and make the case for partnering with those who are investing in rural manufacturing, in women, and in the community.

2023 was a year of transition for AFRIPads, switching from the founders to me, an outside CEO. This transfer of leadership began a new phase in the history of AFRIPads. And with transition, comes change. Changes are not always easy, but I am proud of the resilience and flexibility of the team to adapt. And with that, build upon the strong foundation set by the founders to create an even stronger AFRIPads together. We also all witnessed the unfolding and continuation of major global conflicts, causing mass displacement. Sadly, women and girls in these areas are often disproportionately affected and menstrual health and hygiene aren't always top of mind. But we are so thankful for our partners and customers this past year who worked with us to prioritize this investment and provided critical menstrual products, education, and increased confidence to 657,844 women and girls. The far-reaching impact of these interventions goes beyond just providing pads.

**I'm proud to be continuing this journey and everyone at AFRIPads is excited to see what the future holds!**





**AFRIPads promotes local expertise and community involvement by supporting staff in the regions where we operate, thereby promoting sustainable support.**

"AFRIPads has changed my life in more ways than just providing a job and steady income. When I first joined AFRIPads, I didn't even know how to use a menstrual pad. I had never seen a pad or underwear. Since I started working with AFRIPads, I have furthered my education by pursuing a diploma in business administration. I have also invested in rental properties in Makindye. "

**May Nabwami**  
**12-year employee**





# Our Impact In Numbers



**657,844**

women and girls across Africa were reached with menstrual dignity kits.



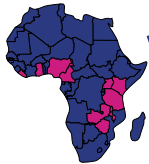
**3,388**

People were trained in 9 countries across Africa and Europe.



**789,412**

kilograms of waste averted assuming waste avoidance of disposable pads.



**10**

countries in Africa were reached with MH products, training, and information. These include Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Malawi, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Liberia, and Zambia.



**59** capacity-building training programs were conducted.



**261** organizations worked with.



# Our Impact on Schools and Communities

## Equity for all girls and women

"I am Angella Nandecha, a 22-year-old student in the Vocational class at St. Ursula Special Needs School in Jinja. I thank Irise Institute East Africa and AFRIPads for recognizing and supporting a girl like me, despite my hearing challenges and the neglect I face from my parents, who prioritize my siblings' needs over mine. For too long, I've been using rags to manage my periods. Thanks to you, I now have access to reusable pads."

## Decrease in school absenteeism, increase in school retention

"In Malawi, the distribution of menstrual dignity kits, which included reusable pads and underwear, led to improved school retention rates among girls. Before the distribution, there was an average absenteeism rate of 15% among girls in standard 4 to standard 8. However, after receiving the menstrual dignity kits, the absenteeism rate decreased to 5%. This change has had an impact on the school environment, with learners feeling more at ease and adequately equipped to manage menstruation."

Francis Soko, Headteacher,  
Chalomwe Primary School - Malawi

"I am so proud of what you have done for us. My daughter faced many challenges concerning menstrual wear, every month she had been missing six to eight days of the [month] due to a lack of sanitary pads. As the local council chairman, it has been hurting me that girls from my community including my daughter have been missing classes. Like many challenges we face, I tried to lobby the government to provide sanitary pads for these children, but all fell on deaf ears. As our children have what to wear during these challenging times let God shine upon you for your generosity towards our community, you have done what our government failed to solve".  
Mr. Ssembatya Henry Community  
Chairman - Uganda

## Lessening the burden in vulnerable communities

"Thank you so much for thinking of our girls. Many of them come from vulnerable communities, and they always bother me about pads. In most cases, I have to buy pads for them out of our own pockets."  
Nayebare Jane,  
a senior woman teacher at  
Kyambogo Primary School  
in Uganda

## Creating period positive schools

"At all of the schools, we sat down with the girls and conducted not only the training but also created a safe environment to allow them to ask any questions about menstruation or their bodies. We were very fortunate to have two extra volunteers present: a doctor and a pediatric nurse, who were helpful because they could provide advice and assistance with some difficult medical issues the girls were facing."  
-A Smile from Kenya





# Economic Impact of the AFRIpads Factory in Uganda



AFRIpads partnered with the University of British Columbia to study the economic impact of the AFRIpads factory in rural Uganda. Based on the results from the study, besides creating quality reusable sanitary products, the factory has also contributed to infrastructure improvement, promoted savings behavior, reduced the gender employment gap, and increased the enrollment of girls in school.

We are pleased to report that the recent results have shown several positive trends emerging despite the pandemic. We are encouraged by the outcomes below.

## Empowering Women

Beyond the direct economic impact, the employment opportunities created by **AFRIpads** have set in motion a chain of positive outcomes, namely contributing to a huge decrease in the gender employment gap. **The female employment gap dropped by 22 points during these 5 years in the region.** This was a reduction of two-thirds compared with 2018! The focus on women's employment, in particular, has been a catalyst for progress, with research indicating that women engaged in non-farm employment often increased their savings and social status, inspiring others to explore similar opportunities.

This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in Kitengesa, given the scale and quality of employment offered by AFRIpads as the study results showed far greater growth in women's full-time employment compared with national-level available statistics. Further, this indicates the potential success in doing our part to make progress towards SDGs 5 and 8 'Gender equality and women's empowerment', and 'Decent work and economic growth'.

The positive correlation between women's employment and household metrics, such as children's quality of life, underlines the impact of AFRIpads in this domain.







## Empowering the Community

In 2015, we decided to expand our AFRipads factory located in Kitengesa. Our aim was not just to produce high-quality reusable menstrual pads but also to positively impact the community. To achieve this, we undertook various initiatives such as building better roads, improving access to electricity, and providing employment opportunities, especially to women in the surrounding areas. **We currently have around 90 individuals employed at the factory, most of whom are from the neighboring communities, with over 83% being women.**

The growth and presence of AFRipads and the factory have proven to improve the overall living standards for the community at large, especially during tough times like the COVID-19 pandemic. The steady work provided by our factory meant more businesses could thrive by keeping and increasing the purchasing power in the community. Jobs at the factory don't just mean cash in our workers' pockets; it means a better future for their families. The 2023 survey results show an overall improvement in households' access to financial resources. **The number of respondents who reported insufficient money to pay for weekly expenses fell dramatically, from 80% to 50%.** With stable work, families can afford to send their kids to school. And this ripple effect extends well beyond our employees.

## Improving School Attendance

Of all children aged 5 to 18, the school attendance rate in the survey area increased by over three percentage points. While this change is small, gender dynamics shifted more significantly. Surprisingly, in the 2023 survey, the results showed **an increase in girls' school attendance by 6 percentage points**, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Families with members employed at the factory found it easier to send their children to school.

**AFRipads has been a major force for good in the Kitengesa community.** This study has shed light on how social enterprises like ours can contribute to community transformation and empowerment. It also represents a substantial step forward in understanding the long-term economic impact of social enterprises, and rural manufacturing, and demonstrating a model that others can follow.



## Spotlight Kenya

AFRipads organized a menstrual health knowledge networking event in September 2023, with 48 attendees from 28 organizations in Kenya to share our decade of learning and insights on menstrual practices and product uptake. This knowledge has come from more than 12 pilot studies and additional research AFRipads has been a part of over the years. This kind of collaboration and information sharing is what's needed for local impact when it comes to product access, selection, choice, and culturally appropriate support. The discussions were centered on the social and economic impact of menstrual products on women, school girls, and out-of-school girls.

As part of the workshop, participants addressed misconceptions, gaps, and challenges regarding menstruating girls in education, out-of-school settings, and humanitarian settings as well as increasing their knowledge and awareness of the topic.

**Important takeaways were the desire for more events like this to be organized, including more stakeholders in steering committees, and a better understanding and focus on market-based solutions instead of only relying on donation models.**





# Spotlight Uganda

AFRIPads played a key role in providing strategic direction in national discussions focused on menstrual health and hygiene in the WASH sector. We participated in high-level decision-making discussions and showcased our menstrual products and IEC materials at various events, such as UN Day.

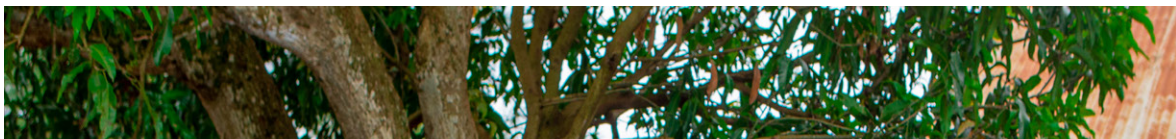
These events were organized by key strategic organizations, including the Ministry of Education and Sports, Gender Equity and Budgeting Unit, UN, Irise Institute East Africa, Uganda Women's Network, Period Posse Presents and AFRIChild.



## Corporate Social Responsibility

Local corporate partnerships remain a strong ally for our gender equality mission through menstrual health and hygiene support. ABSA Bank donated 1,200 reusable menstrual pads to Mukono High School and provided education on menstrual health to the school as part of its CSR program. As a result of this partnership, menstrual health has been improved and gender equality has been promoted along with education and dignity.





# Donations in Detail

Each year the **AFRIPads Foundation** based in the Netherlands works hard to secure support for thousands of girls across Uganda, Kenya and Malawi with reusable pads, underwear and training.

The **primary impact** of these donations was felt in promoting school retention, preventing dropouts due to ending child marriages, providing comfort during menstruation, building self-confidence, and enhancing self-esteem among school girls. We impacted a diverse group of **23,760** people.

These included: **school girls, out-of-school girls, young mothers**, girls and women with **special needs** including hearing, physical, intellectual, visual, or other impairments, **refugees, orphans**, those with the **least access to both income and menstrual products**, those with chronic diseases, and those in remote **fishing and farming communities**.

A heartfelt thank you to our generous supporters: van Vlissingen Foundation, Victrix, Vistra, Love Stories Intimates, and anonymous donors for supporting communities, transition centers, islands, schools, prisons, and refugee settlements in 2023. Through this joint support, the AFRIPads Foundation and AFRIPads helped alleviate period poverty, provide menstrual dignity, and ensure justice for girls and women in Kenya, Uganda, and Malawi.





In Uganda, we reached both government and privately owned schools: primary, secondary, and tertiary settings. Some of the privately owned schools are also a part of the religious communities.



In Uganda, we made a difference in 13 districts namely; Arua, Buvuma, Butaleja, Jinja, Kasese, Kampala, Kanungu, Kalangala, Luweero, Mukono, Nakasongola, Nakaseke, and Wakiso



In Kenya, the efforts extended to Malindi district on the coast



We reached a total of 105 schools in Kenya, Malawi, and Uganda



23,760 menstrual dignity kits were donated to 18 organizations



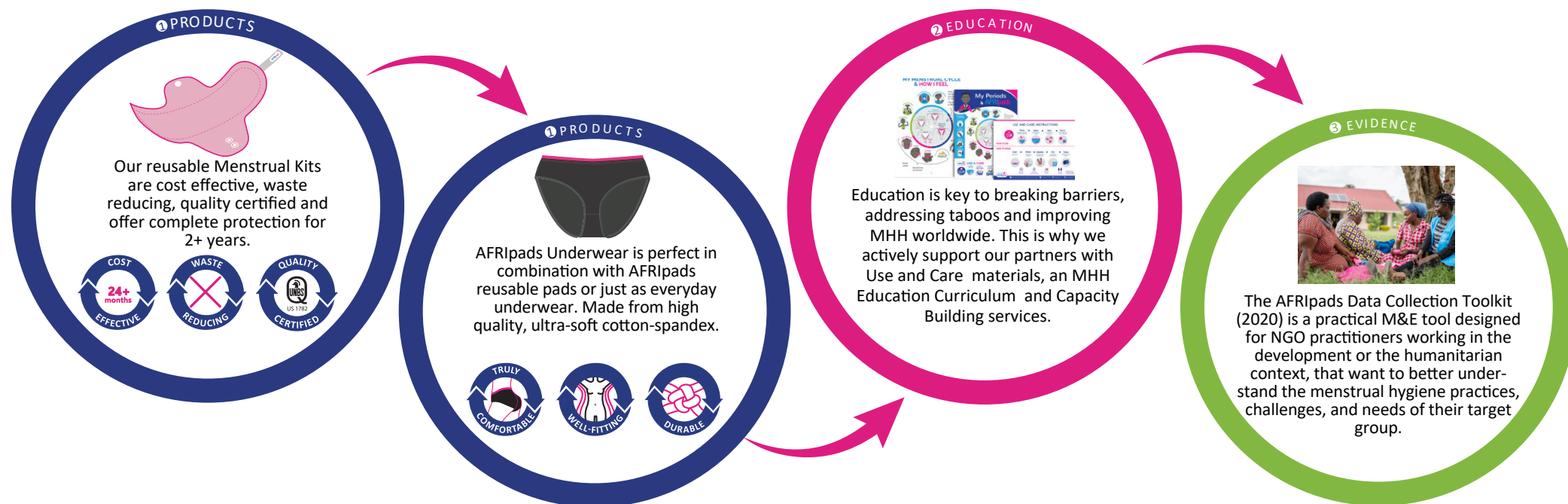
In Malawi, our efforts were concentrated in the Southern region, specifically Zomba district

# The AFRipads Holistic Approach

Our innovative MHH solution drives change through products, education and evidence.



As an impact-driven organization, we know that menstrual health goes beyond menstrual products. At AFRipads, we've leveraged our over a decade of MHH experience to develop a range of additional resources to ensure we are offering an effective and long-lasting solution to managing menstruation. Our holistic MHH solution now includes an extensive MHH Education Curriculum, a Data Collection Toolkit and much more.





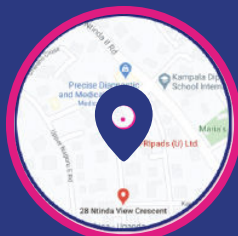


AFRIpads





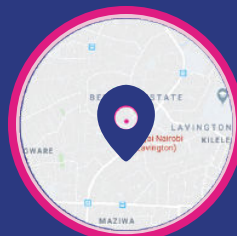
We are grateful for our customers and partners who worked with us to provide solutions for empowering girls and women globally. We equally appreciate everyone who thinks, dreams and works with us to catalyze collective action to end period poverty.



#### UGANDA

AFRipads Uganda Ltd.  
Plot 28 Ntinda View  
Crescent Naguru,  
Kampala

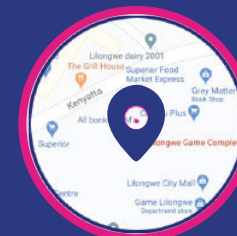
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