

Menstrual Hygiene Outreach Report

Date: 29th August 2025

Location: Kotido District, Karamoja

Partners: Sunny Smiles Initiative, Rotaract Ladies Initiative (ROLI), Afripads

Introduction

On the 29th of August 2025, Sunny Smiles Initiative in partnership with Rotaract Ladies Initiative (ROLI) conducted a menstrual hygiene outreach in Kotido District, Karamoja. The outreach aimed at restoring dignity, addressing menstrual health gaps, and breaking cultural barriers faced by women and girls in this underserved region.

Activities Conducted

- **Distribution of Menstrual Products:** Afripads donated 1,000 reusable sanitary pad kits which were distributed, and additional eco pads were procured by ROLI.
- **Underwear Distribution:** Each woman and girl who received pads also received an underwear, many of whom had never used one before.
- **Education & Demonstrations:** Beneficiaries were taught about menstrual hygiene, safe practices, and shown step-by-step demonstrations on how to use and care for reusable pads.
- **Literature & Girl Talk:** Educational materials on menstruation ('Girl Talk' literature) were provided to spark open discussions.
- **Community Engagement:** The team reached women across multiple villages and those admitted at Kotido General Hospital.

Key Findings

- **Age Range:** Beneficiaries ranged from 12 to 60 years old, all of whom had already started menstruating.
- **Access Gap:** An estimated 99% of women had never seen or used a menstrual product prior to this intervention.
- **Coping Mechanisms:** Common practices included using dirty linen, ropes, sitting in one place for long hours, or relying on heaps of mud.
- **Cultural Barriers & Taboos:** Menstruation is surrounded by stigma and myths, with women barred from entering kraals, preparing food, attending school, or participating in community events during their periods.
- **Early Marriages & Teen Pregnancies:** Cases of girls as young as 13 years old already married and with children were identified.

- **Basic Needs Gap:** Many women and girls had never owned or used underwear, highlighting a deep-rooted lack of access to basic hygiene essentials.

Challenges Encountered

- **Poor Road Conditions:** Heavy rains made travel between villages difficult, slowing down outreach activities.
- **Limited Funds:** There was a shortfall in funds to cover logistics, printing of educational literature, and procurement of demonstration materials for pad-making.
- **High Demand vs. Resources:** The overwhelming need exceeded the available resources, leaving more communities still unreached.

Conclusion

The outreach was a life-changing experience for hundreds of women and girls in Kotido District. Beyond distributing pads, it restored dignity through underwear provision, broke barriers through education, and ignited open conversations on menstrual health. The partnership between Sunny Smiles Initiative, ROLI, and Afripads created sustainable impact by equipping women with reusable menstrual products and knowledge that will serve them for years to come.

However, the challenges faced also highlighted the urgent need for more resources and sustained support to expand this program. More funding for logistics, educational materials, and demonstration supplies is critical to scale up and reach the many still in need across Karamoja.