



## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND COVERGENCE OF VILLAGE COMMITTEES (CLEAN PADS)

**Background:** Practice of using homemade pads during menstruation is quite widespread in rural and urban slum areas of Haryana. Home-made pads are made from old clothes or rags that are available in households. These are generally not clean. A project supported by Department of Rural Development Government of Haryana was started to bring out a change in the existing practice of discontinuation of the homemade pads and use of clean pads. The access to clean pads available in market as sanitary pads is limited in the urban slums. Locally assembled clean pads may help to increase their access. In order to promote women empowerment, and narrow the gender imbalances, it was proposed by SWACH to bring about convergence amongst different committees established at the village level (village panchayat, health and sanitation committee, sakshar mahila samuh etc.) and interested people in the villages and urban slums to promote the adoption and use of clean pads during menstruation. This would contribute to better hygiene, reduction of HIV/AIDS, STI and RTIs, and women empowerment by reducing the absenteeism at school and at work resulting from menstruation. The adoption of this practice would also serve as an entry point for building the life skills of female adolescents.

### Methodology

- An advocacy kit was developed that comprised of definition of menstruation, its importance, and current practices relating to menstruation in the rural area, the implications of the use of home-made pads, clean pads and sanitary pads that are sold in the market. It includes a description of the correct use and safe disposal of the used pads. The kit also provides a broad guidance on the promotion of use of clean pads in the villages and urban slums. Guidance is also provided on the possible role that different members in the community can play to promote the use of clean pads/sanitary pads. The advocacy kit was developed to seek the support and cooperation of state and district level officers of various departments i.e. health, rural development, education, social welfare, women and child development etc. for the promotion of clean pads and to enlist their support. The kit was used during the district level orientation meetings and subsequent meetings with individual officers and functionaries at different levels.
- Development of training package for self-help groups (SHGs): An SHG training package was developed comprising of the chapters: Importance of use of clean pads during menstruation, Role of SHGs in promotion and use of clean pads, assembly of clean pads, Demand creation by involving key persons and institutions that come in contact with women and adolescents, Identification of key distributors in the villages.
- As a part of the training package for publicity and advocacy, a flyer was developed. This contained a comparison between home-made pads and clean pads, the description about correct use of clean pads and safe disposal of used pads.
- Prior to district orientation meetings efforts were made by SWACH to prepare a training package. The component of the training package relating to assembly of clean pads from cotton and gauze as well as the details of procurement of raw materials, maintaining stocks etc. had to be dropped since the strategy of clean pads produced from cotton and gauze was discontinued.
- The first district level meeting was held at Gymkhana club Kurukshetra on 24.6.08. It was emphasized that the proposed clean pad project should be an integral part of the total sanitation program currently being implemented the district. It was decided that the proposed project would be initiated in those villages where there is a demand and the SHG is interested to take up this challenging job. Depending on the success the effort will be expanded. During the discussions, the Interest of the different groups was assessed and the most enthusiastic participants were selected. Keeping in mind the logistic difficulties it was decided to choose area where the interest was maximal and the distances to be covered are manageable given the limitations of staff to train and supervise the SHGs. The program could be scaled up based on initial experience.
- The second district level orientation meeting was held in Yamunanagar district. There were 103 participants in the meeting. Eight ladies were trained to prepare pads from cotton and gauze. This demonstration was given to the participants (including officials) in groups. Discussions were also held with the officials of the various departments, federation members of SHGs SMS etc. It was considered that instead of making pads from cotton and gauze efforts should be made to procure a machine and the required raw materials to produce a quality product that was environmentally appropriate. Advocacy materials developed by SWACH were distributed.



- The orientation meeting in district Ambala was conducted on 1.9.08. There were 52 participants including the key officials of various line departments, federation members of the SHGs SMS etc. The main issues discussed were (a) the product should be market competitive (b) the proposed clean pads should be distributed free of cost.
- After ensuring the feasibility of procuring the machine and the raw materials required for producing clean pads a decision was made to procure the machine and start the production of clean pads by the use of this technology. A communication was made to all the concerned ADCs in Ambala division regarding the inauguration of the installation of the machine and a demonstration on how to produce clean pads by the use of this machine.

### Key Highlights:

**Implementation in district Kurukshetra:** Mapping was done of the block Shahabad. Village clusters were selected for implementation of clean pads. The first training was done for a period of three days. Strategy had to be changed alternatively training the SHG for a period of one day at one week interval for three times. This would help to reinforce to the members of SHGs to stay interested in the program. The second and third day were also used to identify the difficulties encountered and seek possible solutions for the problems identified. The main distributor in the district agreed to supply the packets provided the requirement exceeded 500 packets to a cluster of villages. The distributor would deliver these 500 packets only in one village.

**Implementation of the project in district Yamunanagar:** The initial target population was 100,000 in 100 villages of the district. The strategy was to bring about convergence with adolescent health and development efforts supported by the State Directorate General of Health Services. Besides the availability of ANMs, AWWs, ASHAs, there were SMS groups and SHGs in the villages selected. The effort also included establishment of adolescent friendly health clinics and enlisting the support of depot holders (Maniyari, beauty parlours, karyana merchants etc.). The main problem identified was related to the enormous problem of logistics of supplying small numbers in remote and difficult to reach villages. Access to market sanitary pad was non-existent in small villages because of lack of demand. Twelve retailers were identified and they were convinced to enhance their existing stock. Each retailer was linked to 5-8 village based depot holders who would pick up the requirements from the retailers based on the needs. All transactions were cash and the retailer was allowed a retainer of 50 paise per packet.

After the installation of the clean pad production machine at SWACH Panchkula production was started in November. The clean pad packets produced by SWACH were field tested and liked by many adolescents but a few problems were also pointed out. After a slow pick up SWACH Packets became quite popular since they were more affordable and provided good protection.

SWACH conducted an extensive household survey to determine the current practices during menstruation by using a WHO approved protocol in 600 adolescent girls (300 from 30 control villages and 300 from 30 intervention villages). The study showed that village adolescents were quite keen to use clean pads. This is illustrated by many girls in the control villages procuring sanitary pads from the market. The study highlighted that the main constraint in the use of clean pads was related to lack of access and non-availability and not so much to the lack of demand.

**Implementation of the clean pad promotional efforts in Panchkula:** Objective was prevention and control of STIs HIV/AIDS in urban slums of the district. Out of 17 urban slums in and around Panchkula 6 were covered by the project. The introduction of clean pads could serve as an entry point for greater success in the interpersonal communication and efforts to control and prevent STI and HIV/AIDS. For these reasons it was agreed to introduce social marketing of clean pads in the targeted population. The staff of the project was trained in the promotion, sale, correct use and disposal of clean pads. The promotion and sale of clean pads was added to weekly review meetings that were organized for the staff of the project.

It was possible for the staff to interact with 1000 females in the community on a regular basis. There were supply agents for condoms to promote safe sex. The most popular depot holders of condoms were encouraged to sell sanitary pad packets establishment of five SHGs. It took 6 weeks to convince all peer group members about usefulness and cost of pads. While the uptake was negligible but results were encouraging in subsequent 2 months during which 700 clean packets produced by SWACH were sold. Besides this 350 packets of sanitary pads available in the market were sold by the staff. 12 depot holders in the area were able to sell 450 packets. The SHGs were able to sell 300 packets.



### System for procurement and distribution of clean pads

- Distributors in Kurukshetra agreed to supply a minimum of 500 packets in 5-6 villages from where the packets could be distributed to individual villages based on their requirements. As a starting effort 100 packets were made available through purchase made by SWACH from the distributor.
- Even on repeated follow-up demand did not increase. Mapping was done to understand system of procurement of supplies. Possibility to enhance procurement was discussed with 12 retailers. Discussions were made with 88 village volunteers to procure clean pad packets from identified retailers. Based on the estimated demand from the field; arrangements were made for supplying the SWACH clean pads at designated locations in the district from where these were distributed to the retailers/depot holders.
- In all the locations where the SHGs/volunteers were trained the strategy that worked reasonably well was to distribute the packets to the people who participated.
- Relatively large promotion could be possible through one to one interactions but this could not be scaled up because the volunteers found the process to be labour intensive with small returns.
- Small retailers were enthusiastic but the sheer volume of the packets as compared to small profits discouraged them from sustained participation.
- Production of clean Pads in SWACH Panchkula
- Six young energetic girls were selected for assembly of clean pads by using the household help.
- A three days training was organized for a period of about 6 hours per day.
- After the completion of training these girls were requested to come for a period of one week to participate in the production of clean. The production capacity was 100 packets per day.

### Quality of production

These comprised of (a) observing that the material is ground properly (b) even pressing (c) the releasing paper is properly cut and pasted on the pad and (d) proper exposure to UV light before sealing. It was also ensured that the workers do a clean job in sealing the packet. The quality was also determined by a feedback from the users. The field staff pointed out from their experiences the problems that were brought out by the users. Main problems identified were (a) the variable thickness of the pad (b) lack of stickiness of the pad with panties and (c) the pads was not evenly pressed leading to lumping.

**Stock maintenance:** A stock register was maintained to keep an account of raw material procured, used and procured. The packets were produced and balanced according to the requirement. The estimation of requirement was made and about 26% buffer was maintained in order to prevent Stock outs. The method of estimation was on the basis of weekly meetings with field staff.

**Cost recovery:** On a weekly basis the field staff shared the record of distribution and sale of the Packets. They also identified their requirements. A system was followed so that the supplies are provided when the payment is made for the packets sold since the previous visit. No backlog was allowed.

### Lesson learnt:

- Good quality participating training is essential to pick start the programme.
- The potential for use is vast and there is an unmet need in the community.
- The barrier of cost is a socio-cultural mind set which can be overcome by understanding the benefits of freedom and empowerment.
- For sustainability of the programme additional resources have to be mobilized.

### Survey on menstruation and menstrual practices among adolescent girls in a district in Haryana

#### Cluster, Village and adolescents covered

Area	Clusters	Villages	Households	Adolescent enumerated	Adolescent investigated
Control	10	30	868	1470	594
Intervention	10	30	893	1455	599
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>1761</b>	<b>2925</b>	<b>1193</b>



**Pattern of use of pads during last menstrual period**

Response	10-14		15-19		Total	
	C.	I.	C.	I.	Control	Intervention
Sanitary Pads (clean pads) bought from market or village volunteers	31 (32.6)	37 (52.1)	33 (27.3)	87 (58.4)	64 (29.6)	124 (56.3)
old clothes	61 (64.2)	33 (46.5)	84 (69.4)	60 (40.3)	145 (67.1)	93 (42.2)
Cotton	2 (2.1)	-	2 (1.6)	1 (0.7)	4 (1.9)	1 (0.4)
Other	1 (1.1)	1 (1.4)	2 (1.7)	1 (0.7)	3 (1.4)	2 (0.9)
Total	95 (100.0)	71 (100.0)	121 (100.0)	149 (100.0)	216 (100.0)	220 (100.0)

**The reasons for not using Sanitary Pads**

Response	10-14		15-19		Total	
	C.	I.	C.	I.	Control	Intervention
Not Aware of pads	12 (18.8)	10 (29.4)	23 (26.1)	9 (14.5)	35 (23.0)	19 (19.8)
Don't Know Where to get it from	7 (10.9)	2 (5.9)	8 (9.1)	2 (3.2)	15 (9.9)	4 (4.2)
Non-availability of supplies	6 (9.4)	4 (11.8)	7 (7.9)	6 (9.7)	13 (8.6)	10 (10.4)
Expensive	9 (14.1)	4 (11.8)	7 (7.9)	21 (33.9)	16 (10.5)	25 (26.4)
Embarrassed to access the pads	10 (15.6)	6 (17.6)	16 (18.2)	9 (14.5)	26 (17.1)	15 (15.6)
Unfriendly Provider	-	-	-	-	-	-

Do Not want to use them	8 (12.5)	7 (20.6)	17 (19.3)	11 (17.7)	25 (16.4)	18 (18.8)
Other	12 (18.8)	2 (2.9)	10 (11.4)	4 (6.4)	22 (14.5)	5 (5.2)
Total	64 (100.0)	34 (100.0)	88 (100.0)	62 (100.0)	152 (100.0)	96 (100.0)

In both the areas the reason for not using the sanitary pads was not the lack of will to use them but to factors like embarrassment, lack of knowledge of availability, expense etc.

**Reasons for satisfaction with service**

Response	10-14		15-19		Total	
	C.	I.	C.	I.	Control	Intervention
Attentive staff	3	2	2	3	5	5



	(33.3)	(20.0)	(25.0)	(15.8)	(29.4)	(15.2)
Efficient Service	7 (77.8)	6 (60.0)	1 (12.5)	8 (42.1)	8 (47.1)	14 (42.4)
Non- judgmental Staff	1 (11.1)	-	-	-	1 (5.9)	-
Clean facility	7 (77.8)	5 (50.0)	5 (62.5)	6 (31.6)	12 (70.6)	11 (33.3)
Other	-	1 (10.0)	1 (12.5)	2 (10.5)	1 (5.9)	3 (9.1)
N=	9 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	29 (100.0)

**The main reason for satisfaction with service in the control area was clean facility followed by efficient service and attentive staff. In contrast efficient service was the main cause of satisfaction followed by clean facility.**