

# EcoSmart Uganda

The EcoSmart pads are innovative products produced by EcoSmart Uganda, a social enterprise that envisions a new era for every African girl and hopes to increase access to affordable menstrual health supplies for every female.

## COUNTRY



Uganda

## STRATEGIC FOCUS



Production of hygiene products,  
Access to hygiene products, SRH  
Education & Research

## TARGET BENEFICIARIES



Women and girls in rural areas

## OWNERSHIP



ECOSMART UGANDA LIMITED

## STATUS



Testing and getting ready to  
Launch product

## FUNDING



Initial: \$10,000  
Other Funding: \$4,000 (big ideas);  
\$20,000 (kao Japan)

## PARTNER



Kao Japan, OUTBOX Uganda,  
UNFPA

## TYPE OF SOLUTION



Consumer product

## Introduction

EcoSmart aims at: reducing school absenteeism for girls that miss school during their menstruation, reducing waste generated from disposable sanitary pads by utilizing natural materials and providing employment through local production of the EcoSmart pads.

Globally, there are 1.8 billion females in their reproductive age; unfortunately, millions of these females across the world are still denied the right to manage their menstrual period with dignity. In Uganda, a nationwide survey showed that only 35% of females aged 15 to 49 years were able to adequately meet their needs during Menstruation. According to the World Bank, about 20% of the households in Uganda are below the national poverty line. Daily expenses of these households may not cater for the purchase of sanitary pads so sanitary pads are a luxury especially for women from rural areas and vulnerable communities like refugee camps. As an alternative, these females resort to rudimentary options such as the use of old pieces of cloth, old foam mattresses, toilet paper, cloth rags and so on. This lack of appropriate materials is a high contributor to the level of school absenteeism for many adolescent girls according to the Adolescent Health Risk behaviors study conducted in 2017.

Therefore, for the wellbeing of women and girls especially those in underserved communities, there is a great need to access basic affordable materials to utilize during their menstruation. EcoSmart is producing eco-friendly affordable sanitary pads made using repurposed sugarcane residue to help women from low income backgrounds with hygienic high quality products that create equality in menstrual management.

## Progress and Results

Research and development of the EcoSmart pads has been executed to achieve a cotton feel like material for use in the pads. The organization has set up a local manufacturing facility in western Uganda and has progressed from using the Uganda Industrial Research Institute facility in the processing of the sugarcane fiber. The product testing and certification of the sanitary napkins from the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) is underway. The product package of the sanitary pads has been assessed and approved by UNBS.

A total of 152 school girls were trained in 2019 in western Uganda on menstrual health and the girls were provided with underwear supplies to support them as they undergo menstruation. Our team has conducted a study in 55 primary schools in western Uganda around the menstrual environment in primary schools in rural western Uganda, the study revealed the use of latrines to wash and change sanitary pads; almost of these latrines had a bad stench, dirty walls, no privacy and no locks. The team obtained expression of interest to conduct menstrual trainings and education. Our team has hired four employees to support in local production and day to day operational activities of the organization.

## Challenges and Lessons Learnt

The production process has been challenging for the team, we have locally fabricated the production equipment used because this machinery is not available locally. This has consumed a lot of time. Moving forward, we are moving in to certification of the products which seems to consume a lot of time but the team is working with consultants to ensure that this product is safe for all users and meets the needs of the users.

## More about EcoSmart Uganda

If you would like to know more about EcoSmart Uganda, check out the resources below or contact: [innovation.toolkit@unfpa.org](mailto:innovation.toolkit@unfpa.org).

Website: <https://ecosmart.co.ug/>

Email: [info@ecosmart.co.ug](mailto:info@ecosmart.co.ug)

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