Producing Compostable Sanitary Napkins

In India, menstruation and hygiene practices are neglected topics due to gender disparity. Many girls and women cannot afford or have not been educated about the use of sanitary products. The use of old cloths, sand or ash is a hazardous yet common alternative. At the same time, those who can afford to, use and dispose of 12.3 billion sanitary pads each year, which end up as toxic waste on landfills, where they will remain for 500+ years or be incinerated, releasing chemicals and toxins into the air we breathe.

Aakar enables women to produce and sell affordable, fully compostable, high-quality sanitary napkins within their communities while simultaneously raising awareness towards menstrual hygiene. Along this way, Aakar also provides entrepreneurial training to village level entrepreneurs to sustain the created livelihood opportunities.

Aakar is a hybrid social enterprise, comprising Aakar Innovations and Aakar Social Ventures. Aakar Innovations provides local entrepreneurs with the commercially viable solutions for production and distribution of affordable, environmentally friendly sanitary pads, in areas where they would otherwise not be available. Aakar Social Ventures supports awareness raising regarding sanitation with a specific focus on menstrual hygiene, empowering girls and women to make informed choices and to take charge of their own socio-economic development.

Through our solution model, Aakar fulfils 11 out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations.
**Julius Baer Foundation**

For more than fifty years, the Julius Baer Foundation has dedicated itself to making meaningful and impactful contributions to society. The grant foundation of the Julius Baer Group was founded in 1965 by Walter J. Bar to support all forms of art and culture, various sciences, and carefully selected charitable causes within Switzerland. The Foundation’s reach has extended along with the growth of the Group, and today it collaborates with partner organisations worldwide in the core areas of Wealth Inequality and Solutions Replacing Plastics.

**How you can contribute**

Clients and employees of Julius Baer can support the Foundation.

Your donation will be used specifically for the core area of your wish. IBAN: CH 94 0851 5072 8789 4200 9

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**Aakar Solution Model**

- **Anandipads**
  - India’s 1st and only fully Compostable sanitary pad with Bio-SAP

- **Environmental sustainability**
  - through the distribution and promotion of compostable sanitary napkins & Green Disposal System

- **Financial sustainability**
  - through Aakar’s business model & connecting Urban women to support rural women & girls

- **SHG/VLE run Mini-Factory**
  - One factory provides employment to 10–15 women directly in production and another 15–20 women indirectly through Anandipad sales commission.

- **Customized Machinery**
  - Each mini factory consists of four machines and two specialized tools which have each been created and customized by Aakar Innovations.

- **Behavioral Change Communication Program & Sales**
  - through Aakar’s Social’s awareness curriculum, trust building, women to women network

**The Green Menstrual Hygiene Solution**

The Julius Baer Foundation is supporting and encouraging the “Green Menstrual Hygiene Solution” project. This project will help local women to get employment opportunities in mini factories where women produce fully compostable and biodegradable sanitary ‘Anandi pads’ certified as per ISO-17088 (International compostable standard). Anandi pads are free of any kind of harmful chemicals and become part of soil and manure in composting conditions within 3–6 months. They are completely safe to use and free from skin irritations, rashes, infections. The local girls and women will get access to affordable fully compostable pads from these productions.

**Facts and figures: India**

- Out of 355 million menstruating women in India, only ~36% of women and girls use sanitary pads. Menstruation continues to be a subject of gender disparity in India.
- 71% adolescent girls remained unaware of menstruation until menarche.
  - In Tamil Nadu, 79% of girls and women were unaware of menstrual hygiene practices. The percentage was 66% in Uttar Pradesh, 56% in Rajasthan and 51% in West Bengal.
  - In India, 23% girls drop out of school annually due to lack of proper menstrual hygiene management facilities, which include availability of sanitary napkins and logical awareness of menstruation.
  - Approx. 60% of women and girls using commercial plastic pads with harmful chemicals experience skin rashes and irritation, and infections linked to diseases including cervical cancer.
  - Sanitary napkins accounted for 45% of total household garbage collected across India (as per MHAI).

For more information about Aakar Innovations, please visit:

www.aakarinnovations.com

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2. Source: Spot on! a 2014 report by NGO Dasra
4. Source: www.aakarinnovations.com
5. Source: “Women in green: Tackling Hygiene Waste through Innovations” by WIPO Green
7. Charles Fourier, French philosopher, originator of the word “feminism”, 1772–1837

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