



# Action Research Findings

Assessment of BanaPads Operations in Western Uganda

*Caroline de Bie, Kaci McCartan, Ty Van Herweg*  
Santa Clara University  
Center for Science, Technology and Society  
Santa Clara, California USA



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## Executive Summary

As the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals approaches, the international community is forced to evaluate its progress. While significant strides have been made towards these goals, several countries have fallen behind. According to a 2014 UNESCO report, Uganda has the highest secondary school dropout rate in East Africa at 70%, and many of those leaving school are girls.<sup>1</sup> Dropouts are due to various social and economic factors, including lack of support and sanitary materials during menstruation. When girls do not have the proper hygiene products for their menstrual cycle, they often decide to stay home from school. These days missed add up to several months over time, depriving the girls of an equal education. Because of this disadvantage, many girls simply drop out of school and miss many of the great opportunities that an education can provide.

BanaPads Limited is a social enterprise that manufactures and sells low-cost, eco-friendly sanitary pads to girls in rural Uganda to help them stay in school and maintain proper hygiene. BanaPads has made great improvements in the lives of the communities where it currently works, and it would like to scale this impact to thousands more. BanaPads plans to expand into other parts of Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi.

To help prepare for this massive scaling effort, our team of Global Social Benefit Fellows from Santa Clara University has compiled a comprehensive set of tools. Created through extensive field research and evaluation of current operations, this comprehensive package of tools will allow BanaPads to standardize the training of new Champions and business operations, thus increasing the potential success of each Champion.

The first tool is a menstruation management workshop manual that explains the basics of menstruation and how to maintain proper hygiene. This tool also includes the selection of new BanaPads Champions.

The second tool is a sales training manual that teaches new Champions the best strategies to sell their product.

Third, we compiled a data set from hundreds of surveys to help inform new branches about the menstruation situation in their communities.

The fourth and final tool is a business operations manual, which explains to Champions the essentials of running their own businesses.

Separately, we provide specifications for a mobile app to be used by Champions to track inventory and cash flow, and an explanation of how to use Microsoft Excel. These tools will provide BanaPads

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<sup>1</sup> Mpyangu, Christine M., Eric A. Ochen, Eria O. Onyango, and Yovani M. Lubaaale. "Out of School Children Study in Uganda." UNESCO (2014). Web.

with a solid foundation for scaling into different areas and can be adapted for different environments.

## Using These Tools

The training process is key to BanaPads success, for it ensures that its initial investments in BanaPads Champions are optimally impactful. BanaPads has already trained 43 Champions in Mpigi. Through four interviews with BanaPads's most successful Champions, we discovered that ongoing support has proven essential to maximizing the impact that Champions can have in their communities. We hope that these tools can contribute to BanaPads Limited's ongoing success and continue to maximize its Return On Investment in a way that is both economically and socially beneficial.

BanaPads should feel free to edit and change the format of these manuals as it pleases. They are meant to provide a supplement to the business training process. We recommend that as BanaPads learns more about its needs and best practices, the manuals should be updated, edited, and changed accordingly. This will help BanaPads ensure long-term success with its training and expansion efforts.

## Business Operations Manual for Champions

The Business Operations Manual was written for BanaPads as a standardized supplement to business training. Through expansion efforts, BanaPads Limited hopes to train close to 600 Champions in the next five years. This manual will provide those Champions with a reference tool they can use following training.

The manual outlines important processes that are key to successful business operations. By outlining the three main principles of operations, the manual provides a simple, comprehensive approach to business training. The manual also provides valuable information that Champions can refer to even after they have received initial training, which can help ensure their success in the beginning stages of starting their businesses. This simple approach will also allow for greater ease in translating the current English manual into Luganda, Rukiga, and eventually Swahili.

## Champion Guiding Tool Data Processing

Before BanaPads officially enters into a parish, BanaPads Champions in training gather data in their villages about the current menstruation situations of the households. Over two hundred surveys were conducted in a given parish within one week. These surveys were handwritten and were not useful for BanaPads because it was not possible to see the overall menstruation situation of the parish. Because of this, it was necessary to have a standardized and computerized format to collect

and analyze the data gathered from the Champion Guiding Tool surveys in order to transition the data gathered into baseline information for BanaPads.

To help standardize the use of the spreadsheets across all BanaPads locations, the manual first summarizes how to use the two Microsoft Excel spreadsheet templates created: Parish Menstruation Data and Parish Contact Data. The manual then outlines the formatting of the two spreadsheets and how to input the data from the handwritten surveys.

The use of these spreadsheets can allow BanaPads to have baseline information before penetrating a new market that can later be used as impact metrics to show how BanaPads has furthered its mission to break the silence about menstruation and improve female menstrual hygiene.

## Menstruation Management Workshop Manual

The Menstruation Management Workshop Manual contains a detailed description of a typical menstruation management workshop. This includes a discussion about the definition of menstruation, challenges faced during menstruation, how to cope with these challenges, potential health risks of poor sanitary practices and the demonstration of how to use a pad. The workshop ends with a group quiz to assess comprehension and then an explanation of the roles and key qualities of a BanaPads female Champion. After this workshop, women will be selected to go through the training process of becoming a Champion. This manual is intended for use in communities by those facilitating education sessions after the initial scouting and recruiting days.

## Sales Training Manual

The Sales Training Manual is intended to help new Champions learn how to successfully sell their products. Like the Business Operations Manual, the Sales Training Manual should be distributed to Champions after a formal training session and used as a reference throughout a Champion's time with BanaPads. The beginning of the manual provides a brief outline of BanaPads as an enterprise, what it means to be a Champion, and a description of how the pads are made. It then provides a comprehensive explanation of the sales procedures that each Champion should follow when selling to different groups of people. After these procedures, it includes a few sales tips and ways to address issues that may come up when they are giving a sales pitch to a new group of people. A customer section follows, with photos of how to use a pad, a pricing matrix, and a testimonial section with examples of happy customers explaining why they love using BanaPads. As BanaPads expands, it will be able to adapt this manual to different markets.

## Inventory Management Through SMS Mobile App

BanaPads Limited requested that we evaluate its inventory management system and develop a proposal for an SMS app that can facilitate data processing. The idea was to create a simple, easy-to-use mobile app that provides headquarters with up-to-date inventory numbers and sales data.

By analyzing current processes and forecasting what data BanaPads will need as it expands, we were able to propose an app development project to the Frugal Innovation Lab at SCU.

Dr. Figueria of the Frugal Innovation Lab recommended that an open-source data input app would be the best facilitator of data processing. By allowing BanaPads Champions to input their inventory balances, the description of transactions, whether receipts were provided to clients, and resulting cash balances, headquarters can use the resulting data to track inventory and sales in all regions. Headquarters can then use the data to schedule distribution and manufacturing, track cash flows, and project future sales. This app would also provide BanaPads with real-time data that can be presented to investors and other shareholders.

### ***Encouraging Use of App***

In order to ensure on-time information that is accurate, certain incentives are recommended to encourage the BanaPads Champions to input transactional information. Incentives that could influence on-time data might include discounts on future inventory and mobile money transfers.

Discounts on future inventory encourage participation because they can improve Champions' profits while ensuring information accuracy in information. An appropriate discount might be a percentage such as 10%, or a lump-sum number such as 20,000 shillings. Either way, providing some sort of financial incentive will help encourage Champions to take advantage of the app.

Mobile money transfers can also be a useful incentive. By transferring Champions an amount such as 10,000 shillings upon completion of their data input, Champions can see an immediate reward from their active participation. This might work more effectively and could also be a more cost-effective approach.

Data should be updated on a weekly basis. If one day is chosen every week for Champions to input their inventory and sales numbers, then a consistent flow of information can be received at headquarters. This in turn will help the BanaPads executive team to make decisions in a timely manner. Ultimately, a week-to-week breakdown of sales numbers can provide key insight into the success and struggles of different regions, parishes, or individual Champions.