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# Project Proposal

on

## Low Cost Sanitary Napkin

*(An initiative to improve health status of the adolescent girls and women and generate livelihood avenues in rural areas)*

Submitted by:

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## **Executive Summary:**

Women's health and hygiene has been one of the key concerns over the years across the world. The awareness on menstrual hygiene and usage of sanitary napkins is virtually absent in rural areas. Poor menstrual hygiene can cause fungal infections, repeated infections to RTI, cervical cancer and vulnerable to infertility. Reproductive hygiene education and sexual education is not part of any education system in India.

The adolescent girls get information and education on menstruation from her mother and grandmother, who themselves had practiced the unhygienic behaviors for years and thus do not see any harm in the practices of using old cloths during menstruation. By creating enough awareness regarding menstrual hygiene's importance and use of sanitary napkins, we try to prevent such chronic diseases from happening in the rural areas.

The project intends to build an enterprise model on a pilot basis in the working areas where group(s) of women would be fostered to run the business by themselves with handholding support and overall supervision by the implementing organization i.e. Gramya Sansthan for due course of time. Since the idea is in its inception phase, we would want to see and plan growth as the inception phase and pilot phase materializes.

In view of generating demand and creating awareness among the targeted beneficiaries i.e. adolescent girls and women on the importance of personal hygiene and menstrual hygiene management in the marginalized communities, the project would involve many actors such as community based organizations (called CBOs) such as adolescent girls group, women's group, Self Help Groups (SHGs) formed by the organization in previous time under several project's interventions over the years.

Another important aspect of the project is to develop the adolescent girls and women as entrepreneurs while tapping their potentials and imparting training for their skill diversification and becoming self-sufficient as part of the social enterprise of the low cost sanitary napkin business and our responsibility to the society as whole.

## **Project Background:**

Article 25 of International declaration of Human rights states that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family; including food, clothing, and housing and medical care and necessary social services motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. In India nearly 80% to 90% rural women use old cloths instead of using sanitary napkins leading to vaginal infection & diseases.

Low cost Feminine hygiene is a priority. Menstruation continues to be shrouded in misconceptions and perceived as a matter of extreme embarrassment. In Uttar Pradesh, as in other parts of India, menstruation and menstrual practices are clouded by taboos and social restrictions for women as well the girls. The socio cultural norms in the society discourage discussion pertaining to puberty and menstruation within and outside the family thus leading to poor and unhygienic practices to manage Menstruation. Girls have little opportunity to take care of their health and other requirements. On account of the traditional patriarchy followed since time immemorial, often their contribution is not accounted and valued. Communication gap between girls and their parents, other family members is found.

The problems rises in proportion to the affordability to the choices of means adopted for menstrual hygiene management where sanitary napkin is preferred by and large by the women and girls but due to low income and poverty they many times fail to afford it. This further inculcates sense of inferiority and declines their confidence in mobility attending schools, doing even daily household chores and participation.

Though in urban India the trend has changed in recent years, but in working area alike rural India, these topics remained significantly taboo among all, irrespective of social and economic status. Poor Accessibility and Social barrier is the root cause behind this. Sanitary Napkins are only available in the medical stores or departmental stores generally situated in the largest villages or local markets. Without transportation, it is very difficult to reach the marketplace. On top of that, social issues prevent women and girls from obtaining sanitary napkins at local pharmacies due to social embarrassment about the topic.

Thus, this project not only would be responsive to meet the need of low cost sanitary napkin demand of the poor and marginalized community's women & girls but also would set-up and run a business model that would further support in engaging some of the girls and women for their employability and earning income and empowering them. Since, without availing effective alternatives to the girls and women on menstruation, they will not be motivated and

changed towards new behavioral practices. Hence, we will make sure production, promotion and uses of the low cost sanitary napkins by the target beneficiaries itself.

### **Situation Analysis:**

The working area i.e. Naugarh, Chakiya Shahabganj blocks are situated at distant from the district headquarter of Chandauli in U.P. The area is geographical challenging to work where frequent transportation is not available for the movement in the villages. The adolescent girls get information regarding the menstruation from her mother and grandmother, who themselves had practiced the unhygienic behaviors for years and thus do not see any harm in the practices of using old cloths during menstruation. The families of the intervene communities are extremely poor and illiterate and daily wages work is the only source for majority of the families that also varies due to seasonality of the jobs in construction, agricultural labour works, MNREGA and others. Some of the families also work at brick kilns. Few of them are marginal farmers in the villages but it's not sufficient for food grain production for whole year.

Another important factor is that the rural women and girls generally do not maintain cleanliness during menstruation period. As a result they become the host of many infectious diseases. This is due to the lack of awareness among them and also due to the economic inability for adopting better precautions like- use of good sanitary napkins during menstruation period. Usually different varieties of sanitary napkins are found available in the market. But the reason is that these napkins are not affordable for rural poor women and girls.

Gramya Sansthan conducted Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with girls and women in 15 villages including 2 blocks i.e. Sevapuri and Baragaon of Varanasi district and 12 villages including 2 blocks i.e. Naugarh and Shahabganj of Chandauli district in Uttar Pradesh. Total 225 nos. of girls and women participated in the FGDs. The motto behind the FGD was to know about sanitary napkins use during menstruation also called MC. During the discussion with the girls and women participants said they need sanitary napkins because cotton cloths in their families are not available enough to make it use of as absorbent during MC.

In Naugarh block, adolescent girls told that mostly they use tericot cloth as no other option is available. They further added that if they purchase sanitary napkin from the market the minimum price of a pad cost Rs. 22/- and in a month at least 2 to 3 pads are required. So, it's not possible to purchase it per month for a girl of poor or very low income family. 'Kishori Suraksha Yojna' is launched by the Govt. and provision is made to provide free sanitary napkin to the adolescent girls enrolled in the govt. schools, but it is not reaching to them and if distributed in somewhere just one packet that is insufficient to them.

In FGD the women participants expressed their views that why Govt. provides free sanitary napkins to girls only and not to women also because we equally have the need of sanitary napkins during MC. They agreed on that if anyone provides low cost sanitary napkins as compare to the market price they would like to purchase it. They also added that it would also be good if there could be such facilities for the proper disposal of used cloths (absorbent) and sanitary napkins.

### **Working area:**

The working is located in district Chandauli situated in eastern part of U.P. in India. There are 3 identified blocks listed in the below table for the interventions of the proposed project. Another fact is that the identified blocks i.e. Naugarh, Chakiya and Shahabganj blocks in the district, people migrates to the local city namely Varanasi in search of job and return back to their place. Only few percent of the people migrates to metropolitan cities.

<b>District</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>Gram Panchayats</b>
Chandauli	Naugarh	43
	Chakiya	73
	Shahabganj	63

*Source: Secondary data by the Govt. department*

### **Demographic data of Chandauli district-U.P.**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Population (%)	87.58 %	12.42 %
Total Population	1,710,203	242,553
Male Population	890,630	127,275
Female Population	819,573	115,278
Sex Ratio	920	906
Average Literacy Rate	70.72%	76.75%
Male Literacy	81.55%	82.89%
Female Literacy	58.95%	69.98%
<b>Age Wise Data</b>		

Total 10-19 Years persons	400632	59436
10-19 Year Female	186774	28188
Total 20-35 Years age persons	417014	65596
20-35 Year age Female	201499	31138
Total 36-45 Year age Persons	185608	28107
36-45 Year age Female	89890	13766

Source: Census 2011

In the above table we find that a large proportion of the district population 1710203 nos. figures 87.58% of Chandauli reside in rural areas in comparison to urban population that is just 242553 (12.42%) out of total as per census data 2011. In age wise data, too, we find that in rural areas 10-19 age group adolescent girls are 186774 nos. (approx. 11%) and 20-35 years age women are 417014 (24%). In age group of 36-45 years 89890 that figures 5% in the total population of rural areas. It shows that there is good scope of work under the project.

The project would be started to pilot in three identified blocks said before and gradually would be scale up in other blocks as per the feasibility and success of the initiative.

#### **Project target:**

- Adolescent girls (10-19 age group)
- Women (20-45 age group)

#### **Methodology:**

- Demand analysis:** For promoting low cost sanitary napkins in the villages and more importantly amid the poor and marginalized community girls and women, it would require to conduct a demand analysis by sample survey mode. This would further help in designing marketing strategy, increasing demand and reaching to the desired population by the time.
- Quality assurance of the product:** Another important aspect for promoting low cost sanitary napkin is to make sure the quality of the sanitary napkins in relation to the available brands in the market. However, it's impractical to meet the same quality at the starting stage but efforts would be made to provide good quality cost efficient sanitary napkins to the girls & women.
- Empowering the CBOs and Women's Groups:** For this, participation of the project's personal would be ensured in the schedule monthly meetings of respective CBOs and women's group and their larger collectives formed at block and district level to reach our maximum audience at a time. Importance of the adopting hygienic practices through low cost sanitary napkin and other positive behaviors would be focused during the discussion.

- d) **Involving multi-stakeholders in promoting feminine hygiene:** Support from the multi-stakeholders to enable appropriate atmosphere to talk, demand and receive services on menstrual hygiene issues is crucial. Now a days, govt. service providers like ASHA, ANMs, AWWs are assigned task to visits, provide right information on MHM but in practicality its rarely found in the villages and comes into the notice when health status of a girls and women reaches at a critical stage. Hence, it is envisages that involving multi-stakeholders (parents, school teaches, service providers, community leaders, group leaders etc.) would be an added advantage.
- e) **Information dissemination:** This would be done through various ways like taking support from the community volunteers, peer leaders of the group in the local communities.
- f) **Engagement with the Government:** Regular dialogue with the government department like Health, Education and Panchayati Raj departments, discussion would be held to scale up the business by negotiating for providing opportunities of linking the women entrepreneurs in the govt. initiative for supply of the low cost sanitary napkins in local areas and region.
- g) **School level interventions:** A good proportion of the adolescent girls attend the schools. It would be advantageous for us to tap these girls and involve in promotion of low cost sanitary napkin as directly and telling the importance about the same in their family and neighborhood as well. This can be done in session conduction and issue based discussion with the girls students by making consensus.
- h) **Training and capacity building:** Time by time orientation to the engaged team in the production unit will be done by the experts and organizational management. This would include the induction training to work and proper uses of the machines, quality assurance while making sanitary napkins, hygiene maintaining during the whole process, business doing tips and the like for making it successful.

**Overall Goal:** *“Setting up a low cost sanitary napkin enterprise for proving affordable option for menstrual hygiene management and piloting a business model for creating employability to the girls & women in the working areas”.*

#### **Project Objectives:**

- 1) To establish low cost sanitary napkin production unit managed by rural women/ Self Help Groups for ensuring adequate supply of sanitary napkins at affordable price.
- 2) To improve the economic conditions of women & provide them the opportunities for augmenting their income.
- 3) To create awareness among rural girls & women on issues of Menstrual Hygiene Management.



- 4) To provide quality infrastructure in the form of vending machines & incinerators to promote Menstrual Hygiene Management in schools.
- 5) To engage some rural unemployed youths in production and marketing and also to fulfill the school requirements to maximum parts.

**Relevant fact:**

- The organizational presence and directly reach amid the adolescent girls and women through various interventions in previous in the working blocks would be an added advantage to gear up low cost sanitary napkins initiative.
- There are nearly 1100 nos. of adolescent girls are mobilized into their groups called AGGs.
- Nearly 100 and above Peer Leaders mentored on menstrual hygiene management (MHM) would volunteer in promotion of the low cost sanitary napkin at family and community level.
- Approx. 1200 nos. of women are also being mobilized into the women groups invariably called CBOs. Their larger collectives are formed at block and district level.
- Association with Govt. department through the membership of organization in different Govt. committees e.g. District Health Society (DHS), Rogi Kalyan Samiti (RKS) would be supportive to scale up the initiative in other blocks and locations.

**Stakeholder Analysis**

- Adolescent girls (10-19 years age)
- Women (20-45 years age)
- Mothers
- Govt. Health workers/Service providers (ASHAs, ANMs, AWWs)
- School teachers (especially female teachers)

**COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS: cost of single napkin**

Particulars	Cost ( in INR)	Remark
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Raw materials (Wood pulp, sap sheet, gum, packing, tape etc.)	1.10	
Labour	0.29	(calculated 5 labourers in a unit) @3500/- per month to each on average
Electricity	0.10	
Packing	0.15	
Transportation cost	0.25	For raw materials delivery to the unit
Wastage of materials & maintenance charge	0.06	During transportation, storage and uses.
<b>Total manufacturing cost</b>	<b>1.95</b>	

Cost calculation of 8 napkins i.e. One pack= Rs 1.95\*8 = Rs 15.60/-

15% profit on the manufacturing cost= Rs. 2.34/-

Price of One pack of 8 sanitary napkins: (manufacturing cost 15.60/- + profit 2.34/- = **17.94**)  
(In round figure Rs. **18/- per pack**)

**Profit & Loss: Calculated for a month:**

Item/Expense head	Remark
Raw materials purchase cost for the sanitary napkin in a month (Excluding transportation labour, packing, electricity, taxes etc.)	60,000 rupees
Total no. of sanitary napkin manufactured out of the purchased raw materials (approx.)	60,000 pieces
Total No. of Sanitary napkin packets each of 8 napkins in one pack (Total napkins manufactured 60000/8 napkins in per pack)	7500 packs
Selling price of one pack napkin (each set of 8 pieces napkins)	18.00 rupees
<b>(A) Total Selling Amount of the Sanitary Napkins in a month @18.00 rupees*7500 packs of sanitary napkin)</b>	<b>1,35,000.00</b>
Reserve amount for the next month purchase of the raw materials	60,000.00
Payment to the Manager cum Unit Incharge @ 12000/- per month	12,000.00
Tax (VAT @14.5%) on the total selling amount (column A)	19575.00

Transportation Cost (transporting raw materials from the dealer to the unit)	18000.00
Other overhead expenses (e.g. Rent, advertisement, sale promotion, consultancy fee)	8000.00
<b>(B) Total Expense (on the Raw materials, HR, Tax and Overhead expenses) in a month</b>	<b>1,17,575.00</b>
<b>(C) Net Profit (A-B) = 1,35,000.00 – 1,17,575.00 (in a month)</b>	<b>17,425.00</b>

**Total projected profit from a unit in a Year: @ Rs. 17,425.00\*12 months= 2,09,100.00**  
**A Self-Sustaining Micro-Enterprise Model**

It is a sustainable revenue generating enterprise that gives stakeholders the opportunity to be actively involved and engaged in manufacturing and distributing the product. By making a nominal investment in the machine and employing around 5 to 6 women per machine say it at a unit. SHGs can empower women in marginalized communities. This ensures that many self-help groups can tap into the resources of this eco-friendly sanitary napkin market, as well as reduce high transportation costs by locally using this small machine.

Furthermore, the proposed project does not compromise on the quality of the sanitary napkin as the raw material used comes from pinewood fiber and not from cotton. The sanitary napkin also has a biodegradable element which ensures minimal damage to the environment.

**Expected outcome:**

- Awareness about menstrual hygiene management in rural population, thus providing an atmosphere of confidence.
- Better menstrual hygiene leads to decrease in prevalence of RTIs and hence, better health.
- Training local women and hence, providing employment opportunities and augmenting their income.
- Incentive for workers for sale of sanitary napkins, thus encouragement leading to motivational force.
- Convergence of National flagship Program namely NRHM, SBM AND SGSY would provide common ground for these program.

**Risk and Assumptions:**

- Market competition and existence of big players to run the business for providing good quality sanitary napkins on an affordable price and making minimum profit also.
- Adaptation of low cost sanitary napkin by the target population e.g. girls and women by shifting their mindset from the traditional practices of MHM in the rural areas.
- Biodegradable materials used in the low cost sanitary napkin would attract once the girls and women would come to know the harmful effect of branded sanitary napkins on their health causes to serious diseases e.g. vaginal & uterus infection and other criticality.
- Women led business enterprise would raise the acceptability of the product made among the girls and women in the local areas since trust upon them already does exist.
- Response from the govt. department and seeking possibility for the linkages might be a good move to scale up the business enterprise led by the women on a longer run.

### **Contingency Plan:**

So far information gathered in low cost sanitary napkin initiative, we could not find any serious threats to the business. However, in front of marketing and selling of the products competition is there. Further, the whole idea behind this initiative is not a sole profit making business rather to gear it up as social enterprise within marginalized and poor communities of the working areas where women are taking its ownership and earning small income by providing affordable option to the girls and women for their menstrual hygiene management.

Yet, in view of business promotion following are the contingency plan:

- a) Starting of the low cost sanitary napkin promotion amid the adolescent girls groups (AGGs) and women groups, SHGs to check the response quickly and incorporating value addition as per response and feedback on absorbent quality, packing, pricing and so on.
- b) Reaching to the possible no. of beneficiaries' i.e. adolescent girls and women of desired age groups directly through their groups, community forums to ensure minimum sale of the ready products in a month and year.

- c) Seeking possibility to scale up the sale of sanitary napkins in other blocks of the district by organizing promotional events at the village/community level in the form of Health Fair, joint collaboration with Govt. department and involving the services providers.
- d) Training and exposure of the women engaged in the production unit(s) to update their knowledge and enhancing skills to make sure that products are matching with the current demand.
- e) Tapping potential of the girls and women to develop them as entrepreneur by imparting training and capacity building for their skill diversification as part of social enterprise of the business. It would help in recognition of the business model piloted at a greater scale.
- f) Mobilizing fund by the Self Help Groups to invest in the business apart from the profit of the business in case of occurrence of sudden investment, new set-up establishment.
- g) Maintaining appropriate working capital, corpus fund for providing support in social security benefits, health insurance to the women workers engaged in the business to handle the situation of sudden break down of the work.
- h) Following right practices of the storage, procurements, packaging and other quality assurance measures by overall supervision by the trained & skilled professional/unit Manager cum Incharge.

**Budget:**

**Annex. 1 Budget Gramya Sansthan (Excel Sheet)**