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on

Reusable Sanitary Napkin Feasibility Assessment

A. BACKGROUND

Cox's Bazar is one of the most vulnerable and poorest districts of Bangladesh due to its geographical, social and economic condition. Since 2017's mass Rohingya influx, the refugees and the host communities of the surroundings are suffering inevitably by many socio-economic, socio-cultural, physical and protection issues. COVID-19 had also made the situation to bring unprecedented loss and sufferings to people's lives and livelihoods. Teknaf and Ukhiya upazilla which are the main shelter hub for Rohingyas are worst affected by many disproportionate crises. The education level of the refugees are very low to mark as a basic level and so on the host community. However, low education facilities also made them very unaware of the basic hygiene practices. Likewise, women and adolescent girls face many barriers to go to the educational institutes, that resulted in their lack of menstrual hygiene management knowledge and access to any safe sanitary napkin/ pad. According to UNICEF, millions of girls, women, transgender men and non-binary persons are unable to manage their menstrual cycle in a dignified and healthy way.¹ As 52% of the displaced population of the Rohingya refugee camp are women and adolescents, it's a crucial need for them to manage their menstrual health hygienically and in a dignified way².

Considering the needs of those vulnerable women and girls' OXFAM's EFSVL team is implementing a skill development activity under its DEC Appeal fund, Oxfam HK and other internal Oxfam funds (e.g. Oxfam Intermon, Australian Philanthropy etc.). This activity supports the refugees and vulnerable women of host community to develop their skills on Reusable Sanitary Napkin production. Those reusable napkins are basically made by cloths. By sewing or producing those SNs they get a fair amount of money to support their family and to become enhance their self-reliance. On the other hand, those produced reusable Sanitary Napkins are distributed to the vulnerable women and adolescent girls' group of camps, host community and to other NGOs, INGOs etc.

¹ "Menstrual hygiene: Gender inequality, cultural taboos and poverty can cause menstrual health needs to go unmet." <https://www.unicef.org/wash/menstrual-hygiene>

² ISCG 2019, Gender Profile No.2 For Rohingya Refugee Response Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh (as of March 2019).iscg_gender_profile_no._2_rohingya_refugee_response_30march2019.pdf

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Approximately, 260,000 sanitary napkins were produced and distributed to 150,000 women and adolescent girls in the camps, host community and to other Oxfam's local partners, NGOs, INGOs etc. According to the user feedbacks (e.g. Rapid SN assessment), the napkins are washable, long lasting, comfortable, cost effective, sustainable, and environment friendly. On average, each woman or adolescent girl needs three pads per day (with each pad used for three to four hours and after every use, the pads can be washed in warm water with detergent or soap and dried under direct sunlight for next use). Three pads can therefore last for at least two months. These napkins are produced in a standard size which are convenient for all aged users. These activities have been field-tested, for instance, between April 2019 and March 2020, Coast Trust implemented a pilot programme on washable sanitary pad making in Camp 14 and washable sanitary pads were well received. In addition, a reusable sanitary napkin production guideline was also developed in consultation with the NGO Forum and Coast Trust to follow that tool during train the trainers (ToT) and to disseminate the knowledges during participants training. Nevertheless, an in-depth assessment / study of that reusable napkin is still needed for understanding the feasibility, user perception and gaps for learnings and future improvement of that activity.

B. RATIONALE

For girls, menarche and menstruation is the physical, highly visible and marker of their transition to adulthood. Puberty starts in some girls before adolescents and concludes with the physical capacity for human reproduction. In our country, most of the primary school girls receive little to no information about menstruation in their schools and are therefore not aware of or prepared for the changes they experience onwards. Besides this, some traditional practices, and myths can also be a barrier to hygienic menstrual management. An assessment result from Whykong union of Teknaf shows that most of the women and girls uses old cloths and sometimes low-cost plastic pads. Sometimes they use many unhygienic cloths and the pads are often used for a long time, which causes itching, rash, and other severe negative effects to their menstrual health. Those conventional pads have a polymer layer that takes 5-10 years to degrade.

However, a Reusable Sanitary Napkin production activity was introduced therefore considering the menstrual hygiene management of the adolescents and women of the Rohingya camp as well

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as the host community. Under this activity more than 260,000 SNs were produced and around 150,000 had been distributed to the Teknaf and Ukhiya camp and host community areas. Initially these reusable Sanitary Napkins are well accepted by the community users (e.g. adolescent girls, women) considering its frequent usability, comforts, cost-effectiveness etc. Presumably, those SNs are no or less negative effects to the environment than the conventional ones.

Though, the quality of the cloth materials was tested in an adhoc manner by the team for example, through observation and consultation with the previous implementer of NGO Forum and Coast Trust. Unfortunately, the precise quality assessment by practical testing was not done earlier due to meet the time bound of the activity. Therefore, this assessment needs to be conducted to ensure a safe and hygienic menstrual health management. In addition, the quality assessment will also mitigate any further health risk issues and gaps of the activity. Hence, the absorbency, eco-friendliness, microbial effects, and any chemical reaction of those SN composition materials like the upper fabrics and middle absorbent layers will be tested accordingly during the whole process.

C. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the assessment is to assess the quality of the Reusable Sanitary Napkin in consideration of-

- Testing the quality of the materials: Chemical composition, absorbency, and microbial effects of the cloth materials used like flannel cloth and absorbent layer.
- Testing the environmental friendliness of the napkin: If those napkins are disposable and may pose any possible risks of contamination.
- Assessing the User Perception of the product in regard of its design, size, comfort, dry-time and longevity.

D. SCOPE OF WORK

1. Quality of Materials

- a. pH level and chemical reaction
 - Determine the pH level of the fabric and absorbent layer used in upper and middle portion of the SN.

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- Identify and assess whether any chemical compounds are present in those flannel and absorbent layer or the material can have any reaction during discharge.
- b. Porosity and Cleanliness
 - Determine if the fabrics used in surface layer are porous and the discharges can pass through it without spilled out.
 - Assess if the absorbent layer can be cleaned fully after usage. For instance, it does not contain or remain any oil, dirt or discharged after cleaning.
- c. Microbial effects
 - Assess the effectiveness of the reusable sanitary napkin by identifying if it is bacteriostatic and infection free.
- d. Absorbency
 - Determine the capacity of the reusable sanitary napkin to soak the discharge without leaking and average time required for dry out after washing.

2. Eco-friendliness

- a. Disposability
 - Assess if the layers are made from disposable materials by ensuring the napkin can dissolve in the soil while dumped.
- b. Potential Contamination
 - Find out any potential contaminants or risk that can get mixed with or harm the environmental parameters while disposed.

3. User Perception

- a. Dimension of the Napkin
 - Identify if the button used to assemble the pad can stick that at the correct points.
 - Gather information on the dimension (like length, breadth and width) of the napkins fit for all users.
- b. Comfort
 - Determine if the surface of the pad feels soft and comfortable and whether it causes any irritation to the skin.

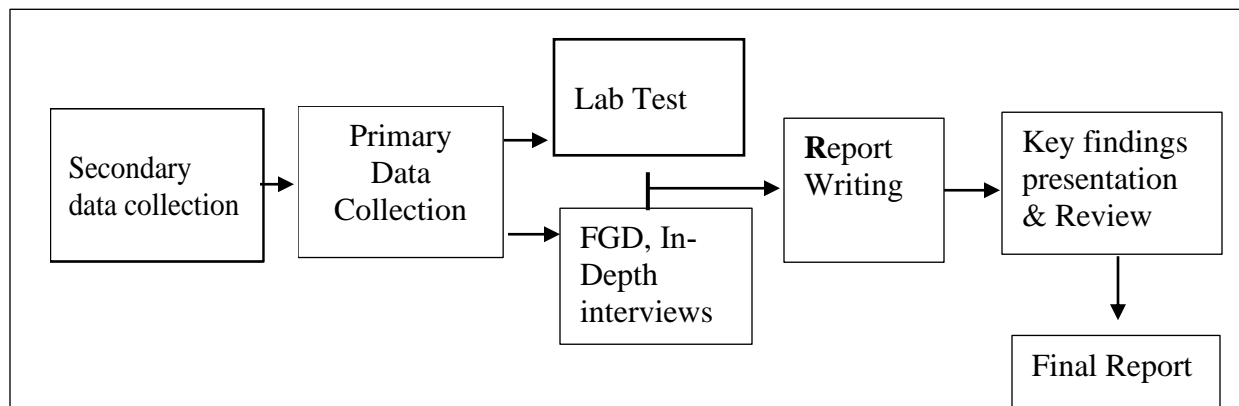
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E. METHODOLOGY

The process flow of the assessment is presented below in a sequential manner:



The assessment will be undertaken in between 20 September to 10 October 2022, using a combined methodology, including a lab test, secondary data review, focus group discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) at household and community levels. The methodology will then triangulate the qualitative and quantitative datasets through.

- Desk reviewing and analysis of secondary data and information developed by OXFAM (as applicable) and different Sanitary Napkin standard guidelines developed by different agencies
- Based on the lab test, assessment results and desk review of internal and external documents, identify specific gaps in knowledge or areas that need updating and adapt, as needed in the final report and framework those for collection from the user level.
- Undertake field work through visiting communities, speaking with women and adolescent girls who using those reusable sanitary napkins.
- Based on gaps identified by and comparing the literature review with test results and field data write up findings and preliminary recommendations.

❖ Secondary Data Collection:

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Desk reviewing relevant guideline, reports, proposals and related project documents of OXFAM, different Govt. health sectors, NGO, INGOs, UN, or other agency generated standard reports and guidelines on reusable sanitary napkin, materials description etc.

❖ Primary Data Collection:

Focus Group discussion (FGD)

02 FGDs in camp of UKhiya upazilla and 03 FGDS at Teknaf sadar and Whykong union of Teknaf Upazilla will be conducted to gather required information.

In-Depth interviews (IDI)

At least 10 in depth interviews will be undertaken to obtain detailed information from the users and producers of the reusable sanitary napkin activity of OXFAM.

F. Deliverables

- ✓ A detailed plan for conducting the assessment including the lab testing and field level activities management.
- ✓ A brief description of the methodology, data entry and analysis plan with an introduction of any software used in the whole process.
- ✓ An initial report (.doc) after conducting the Lab Test and different guideline review regarding reusable sanitary napkin.
- ✓ A list of the literature reviewed in docs. and analysed dataset (field and lab) in excel sheet.
- ✓ Key findings and recommendation presentation to the OXFAM team.
- ✓ A final report (.doc)

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G. Timeframe

Tentative Timeframe: 01 September 2022 -31 October 2022

No	Activities	Deadline	Remarks
1	Recruitment of Consultant	01 September 2022	After recruitment processes
2	Detailed Plan submitted	10 September 2022	
3	Materials collection and preparedness for lab test	25 September 2022	Tested & report generated
4	Initial report submitted (1st draft)	15 October 2022	To get feedback from OXFAM team
5	Field work started	25 September 2022	Location: Ukhiya camps, Teknaf sadar union, Whykong union.
6	Analysis report submitted	20 September 2022	Literature reviewed in (.doc) and datasets (.xls)
7	Key findings, recommendation presentation	10 October 2022	Use relevant Guideline also
8	Final report submitted	25 October 2022	

H. Core Competencies & Consultant Profile

- At least 5 years' experience in conducting similar activities like lab testing of fabric materials, qualitative research etc.
- Experience working as a consultant in Bangladesh
- Good understanding of menstrual hygiene management and environmental cross-cutting issues.
- Experience in group facilitation.
- Familiar with the Rohingya response context.

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- Strong analysis skills and logical thinking.
- Able to follow schedule and commit to finish study in timely manner.
- Ability to deliver assessment results within the shortest period of time.
- All these competencies and experience should be reflected in consultant or consultant team's CV(s).

I. BID REQUIREMENTS

Consultants/Organizations who meet the requirements should submit the technical and financial proposal, which should include the following:

- A technical proposal including a detailed work plan.
- A detailed financial proposal.
- Updated curriculum vitae of consultant that clearly spell out qualifications and experience.
- Samples of previous works (minimum 2)
- 2 organizational references
- VAT/TIN registration/certificate

J. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria:	Weight
1. Technical	70
Understanding of the TOR	15
Proposed Methodology	15
Experience in similar work	15
Team composition	10
Qualification of the consultant(s)	15
2. Financial	30
Total	100