

Cupvert 2.0

Project Report

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Introduction

About the Project

The COVID - 19 pandemic is having an unprecedented global impact on societies and economies across the world impacting men and women differently. While it is too early to have a better understanding of the socio - economic impact of vulnerable population groups, in particular, women and girls face challenges to access sanitary supplies and maintain their dignity during the social distancing and lockdown measures taken by the government for infection control. For this reason, there is the need to increase access to menstrual management products during the response and aftermath of the COVID - 19 outbreak.

In the Maldives, a large population is young and many of them have lost or reduced their income and are in a situation without any idea of their prospects. In a country where every consumable product is imported and is highly dependent on the logistics and distribution to the 187 inhabited islands, it is likely to have stock-outs of essential sanitary products. While there are no reported restrictions to girls and women in the Maldives to menstrual hygiene practices, the prevailing social, cultural, and institutional barriers will become a hindrance for girls and women in accessing sanitary supplies during the lockdown.

In addition, Maldives is facing unprecedented challenges to manage solid waste. During the pandemic, it is expected to increase the amount of single-use plastic and other products.

Moving on from the pilot project conducted in 2019, this project would empower young women and girls to make informed decisions on environmentally friendly menstrual management to ensure their human security and dignity in alignment with the UN Agenda 2030 and the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021.

Aims and Objectives

1. Breaking the taboo on menstrual health through promotion of environment-friendly menstrual management products
2. Creating awareness and empowering girls and women on Sexual and Reproductive Health

Project Implementation

Summary of Project implementation

Scope of Work	Work Status		Social Media Reach									
	Status	Percentage	Facebook			Twitter		Instagram				
			Likes	Shares	Reach	Engagements	Reach	Likes	Saves	Share	Reach	
Social Media Posts												
Post 1 - A Beginner's Guide to Menstruation	Completed	100%				86	2,953	215	18	71	2,288	
Post 2 - Menstrual Cups	Completed	100%				84	1,734	186	35		9,596	
Post 3 - User Guide	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Post 4 - Is it Clean	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Post 5 - How to choose	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Post 6 - Get to know your Cervix	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Post 7 - Sustainability	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Post 8 - Other alternatives	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Post 9 - Maldivian Period History	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Post 10 - Myths about the Cup	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Other Social Media Posts												
Survey Post	Completed	100%						332	17		23,019	
Session Invitation 1	Completed	100%						171	12	100	2,518	
Session Results 1	Completed	100%						118	3	30	1,815	
Session Invitation 2	Completed	100%						29	4		631	
Success Stories												
Story 1	Completed	100%				31	988	167	1	17	2,041	
Story 2	Completed	100%				3	234	133	2	7	1,855	
Story 3	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Story 4	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Story 5	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Story 6	Ready to be Posted	95%										
Video												
Teaser Video	Completed	100%				45	1,508	108	5		17,533	
Final Video	Final Edits	80%										

Social Media Posts

Post 1: A beginner's guide to menstruation



Post 2: What is a menstrual cup?

MENSTRUAL CUPS

A healthier, sustainable alternative to manage your period.

A menstrual cup can be used up to
12 hours

A pad needs to be changed every
04 - 06 hours

[CUPVERT 2-slide 1.mp4](#)
 Download - 501 KB

[CUPVERT 2-slide 3.mp4](#)
 Download - 641 KB

A menstrual cup can be used up to
12 hours

A pad needs to be changed every
04 - 06 hours

On average a person uses 180 pads in an year

You can reuse the same menstrual cup for up to
10 YEARS

A menstrual cup is a more healthier alternative too

Prevents dryness of the vagina since no vaginal fluids and healthy bacteria are absorbed by the cup

Want to get to know the menstrual cup a little bit better? Ask us your questions in the comments below

Post 3: User Guide

HOW TO USE



A MENSTRUAL CUP

cupvert 3-01.mp4
[Download](#) - 489 KB

STEP 01



At the start of every cycle, sterilize your menstrual cup by boiling it for 3-5 minutes in water before use

STEP 02



Always sanitize your hands with mild soap before handling the cup

STEP 03



Fold or pinch your cup. Here are some common pinch / fold methods

STEP 04



standing upright standing one leg up squatting down sitting down

Get into a comfortable position that works for you

STEP 05



Insert the folded cup into the vagina and release. The cup can be adjusted and rotated if needed.

Step 05.mp4
[Download](#) - 255 KB

STEP 06



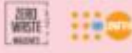
To remove the cup, pinch the bottom of the cup to its outer cushion and remove

STEP 07



Empty & wash cup with mild soap and water before reinsertion during your period

Once your period has ended, don't forget to sterilize your menstrual cup for reuse on your next cycle

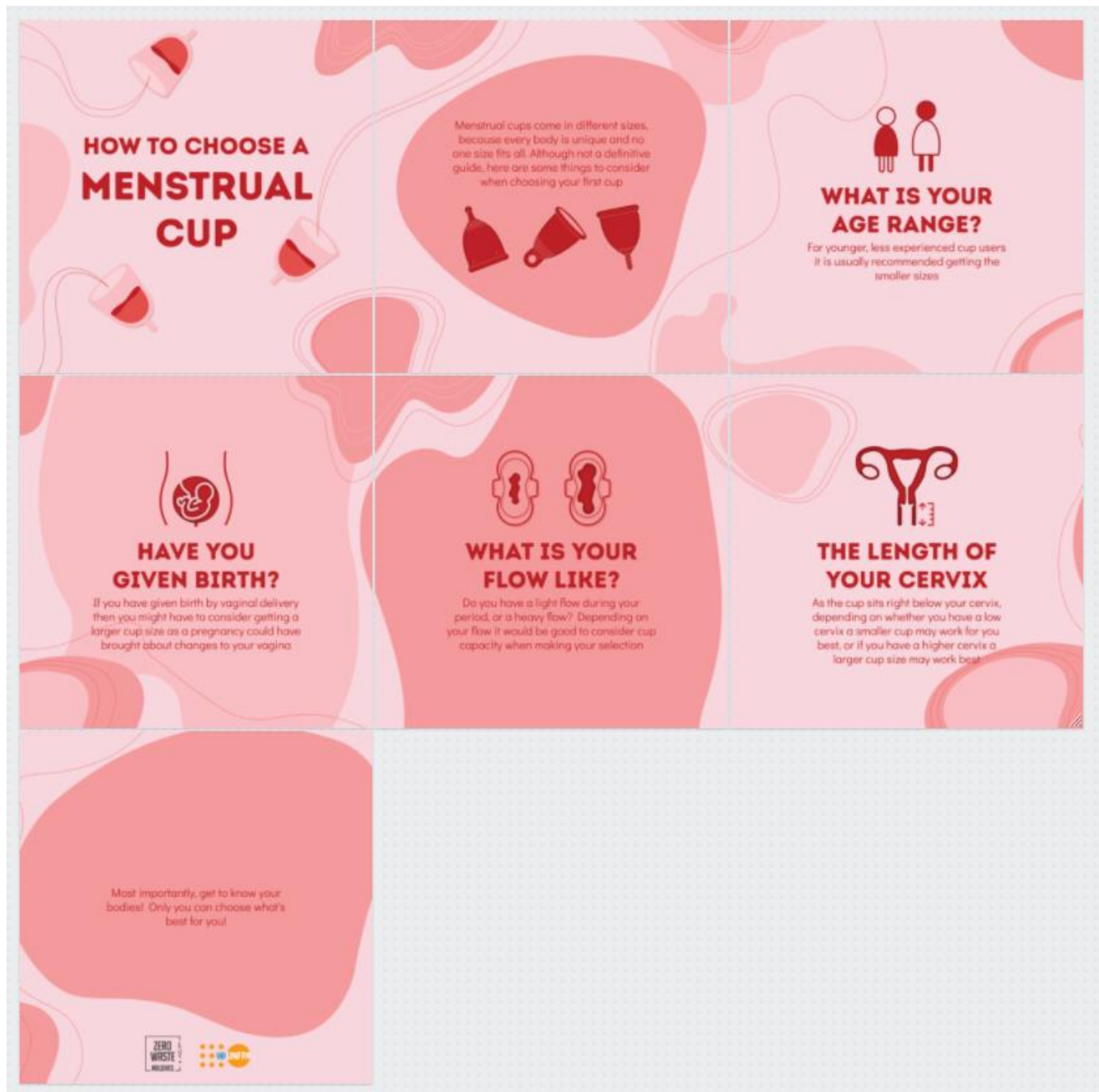


Post 4: Menstrual Cups: Is it clean? How do we clean it?

MENSTRUAL CUPS; IS IT CLEAN? HOW DO WE CLEAN IT?	 the cup is very hygienic as no external factors or free oxygen can reach the collected flow whilst inserted, so no bacteria is created	infact you are more likely to get an infection due to dirty hands! so always make sure to wash hands with soap before inserting or removing 	 however you should always empty your cup every 08 - 12 hrs as bacteria do grow exponentially
with proper care and maintenance the menstrual cup will last many years and you only have to follow a few simple steps	 boil the cup for 3-5 mins before use FIRST TIME/BEGINNING	 after emptying cup, wash with water to clean before inserting always wash hands with soap before handling cup DURING PERIODS	although its not necessary to use a soap to clean your cup during periods, but if you prefer, always use a perfume free, ph balanced soap  sanitizing wipes can also be used to clean your cup alternatively DURING PERIODS
the menstrual cup has tiny suction holes that are necessary for the vacuum seal to function and should be cleaned during and after your periods  after washing hands, first fill the cup with water, place your hands so that its covered completely and then squeeze the cup so that the pressure pushes the water through the hole DURING PERIODS	 boil the cup for 3-5 mins and then store in a breathable material like an organic cotton bag AFTER	Following these simple steps will ensure that your cup is always clean and lasts many cycles. Feel free to ask us your questions below 	

 **CUPVERT-4-9.mp4**
Download - 1.0 MB

Post 5: How to Choose a Menstrual cup



Post 6: Measuring the Cervix

MEASURING THE CERVIX



1



Always begin by washing your hands

2



standing upright standing one leg up squatting down sitting down

Get into a comfortable position that works for you

3



Insert the longest finger into the vagina and observe how far it goes in to reach the roof of the cervix

4



low medium high

Your cervix height can be measured by how further your finger can go into the vagina before it touches the cervix

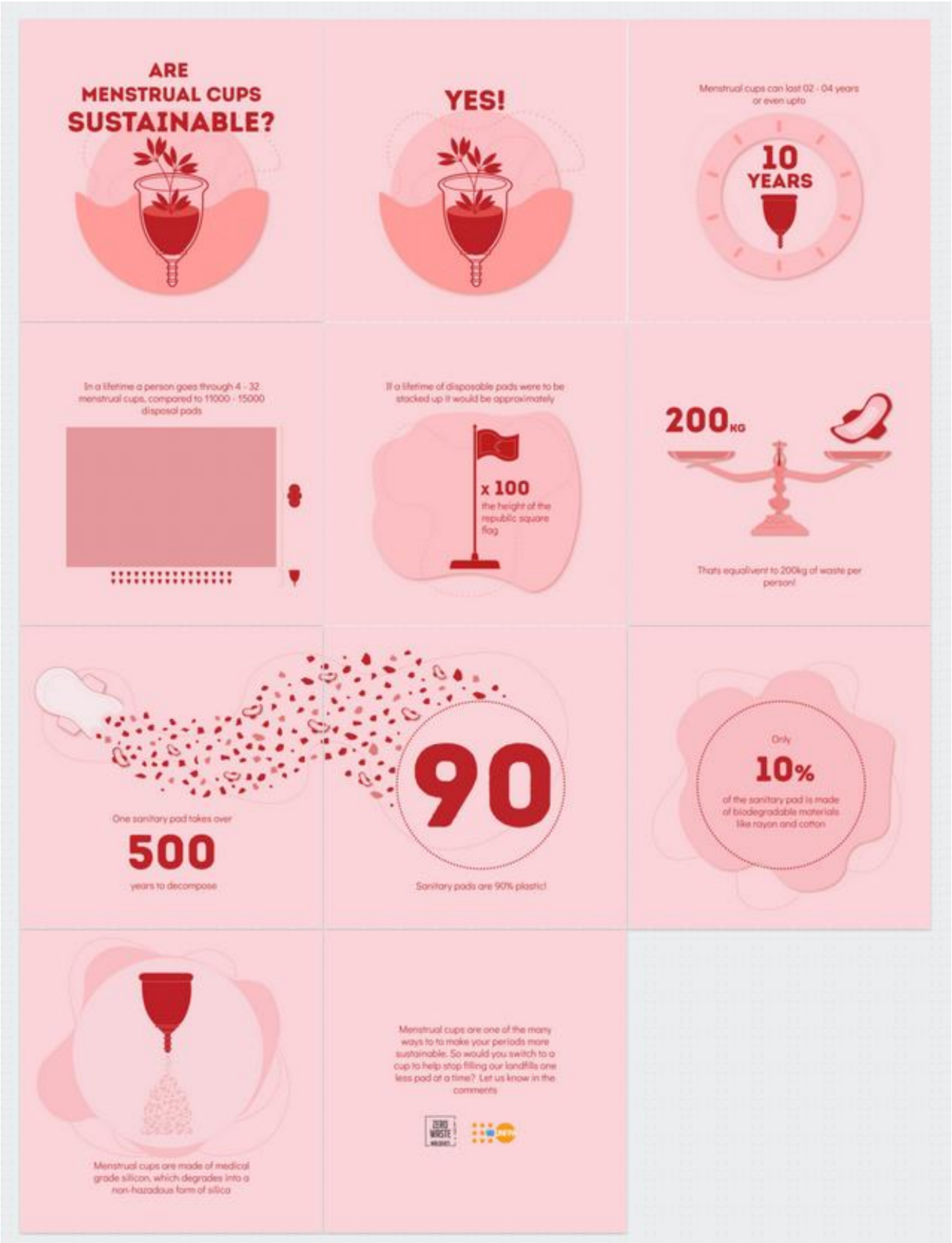
Measuring your cervix can help in choosing the right menstrual cup size for you. Ask us your questions in the comments below



WASHING HANDS.mp4
[Download](#) - 581 KB

INSERTION.mp4
[Download](#) - 251 KB

Post 7: Are Menstrual Cups Sustainable?



Post 8: Other sustainable alternatives to Cups

**OTHER SUSTAINABLE
ALTERNATIVES
TO THE
MENSTRUAL CUPS**

**NOT READY
FOR A CUP?**

Dont worry!
There are many environmentally
friendly alternatives to
choose from

PERIOD PANTIES



Underwear that absorbs menstrual
blood and can then be washed
normally and reused

REUSABLE CLOTHPAD



Biodegradable cloth pads that last for
12-24 months. Requires committed
washing and drying

REUSABLE MENSTRUAL DISK



A disc that fits back into the vaginal
fornix behind and below the cervix

**100% COTTON
TAMPONS OR PADS**



Biodegradable tampons and pads
made from a 100% cotton

With many environmentally friendly
options available, instead of using
unsustainable periods product like the
disposable pads and tampons made
from plastic, switching to a sustainable
period has never been easier



Post 9: Period History

Only 20 years back it would have been a taboo to even speak about our bodies and the most natural process of our bodies as freely as we do now



and period management was indeed a very messy business for the maldivian women



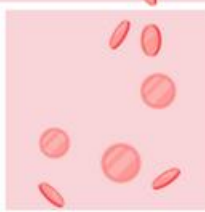
Black kandi ki without panties and constant washing was the usual way women dealt with menstruation



a dip in the ocean was not an uncommon way of getting clean



Pads were available as early as the 1950s, however it was very expensive and scarcely found for sale





From the late 60s throughout the 70s and 80s commonly folded clothes were used which were tucked into the faharu at the waist and fastened with another cloth. Sometimes cotton was tucked in between the cloth to make it



In some cases, dhigga or an ahi fai was used instead when cloth was not available



In the late 70s panties were sewn with rag clothes and thin long strands of rubber taken from used bicycle tires (elastic was not readily available)



However, this method was only used in households with seamstresses

The pads became easily available in Male' during the 80s but some women opted to use the previous methods even as late as the 90s



afterall we didn't start having this conversation in those days

All information collected for this post is based on anecdotal evidence. If there are any other ways by which Maldivian women dealt with their periods in the olden days, please share with us in the comments below



Post 10: Myths About Menstrual Cups

MYTHS ABOUT MENSTRUAL CUPS



Cups are unhygienic and lead to infection

Menstrual cups are made of medical grade silicone. This material does not cause any reaction with the skin or vaginal mucus. And since no free oxygen due to the vacuum seal, the chances of the cup causing toxic shock syndrome (TSS) is very low. Nevertheless, there is still a minimal risk of TSS if you have the specific strain of staph bacteria in your vaginal flora, so we always recommend making sure that you empty it after 6-12 hours



Menstrual cups are uncomfortable

The menstrual cup is very soft and flexible and you can fold it easily to allow easier insertion into the vagina, which is an extremely stretchable organ. It may take a few period cycles but once you master the technique you won't even notice it's there



Menstrual cups can get lost inside the vagina

Once inserted, the cup is held in place by strong pelvic muscles and a vacuum seal is formed at the rim of the cup. Due to the vacuum, the cup does not move and it cannot move up beyond the closed cervix



Menstrual cups need to be replaced every year

A menstrual cup only needs to be sterilized or disinfected once in between each cycle and stored in a cool dry place like your closet or drawer. Maintained well, the menstrual cup can last for 3-5 years or even in some case almost 10 years



Menstrual cup affects virginity

The act of losing one's virginity can only be through sexual intercourse. The presence or absence of the hymen is not considered as a sign of virginity. Some people are even born without the hymen and it is completely biologically normal



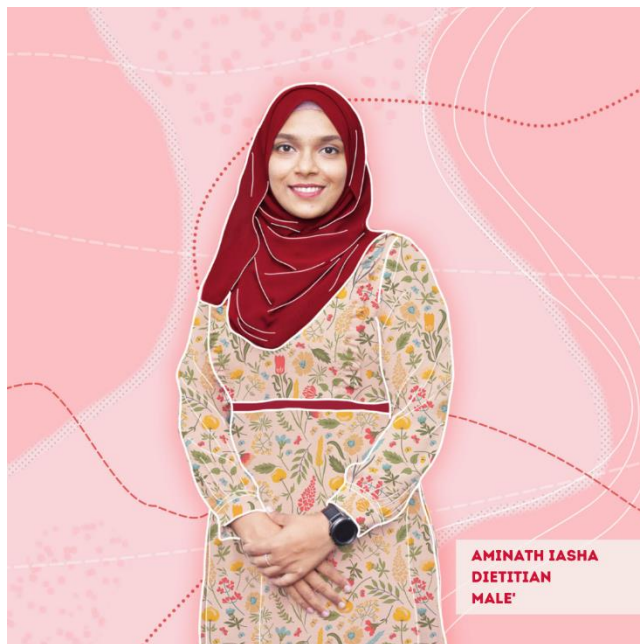
You can't exercise or go swimming with the cup

Yes you can absolutely do both and even sleep with the cup! And the cup can be used from 4-12 hours without emptying it. You can even use it during the heaviest periods



ZERO WASTE  **WORTH**

Success Stories



I'm not proud to say that I had no intention of doing anything good for the environment when I got a menstrual cup. I like to stay active, and strength training is my go-to form of exercise. I have always observed that my strength levels are highest during my period, regardless of the pain and bloating. That's why I got the cup as it would be more pleasant than having a blood-soaked pad while also simultaneously sweating buckets.

But soon, I realized that the benefits extended to my work as well. Being a healthcare worker, working amidst a global pandemic, it's been freeing not worrying about changing my pad in the middle of a work shift. Furthermore, I've come to know how detrimental conventional pads can be to the environment as they are not 100% biodegradable. So imagine my joy, knowing that I'm doing something good for the environment and also saving money while serving my selfish needs. It's been over a year since I've been using a menstrual cup.

I'm never looking back!



I was introduced to menstrual cups during the Cupvert session held in school by UNFPA, SHE, and Zero Waste Maldives in 2019.

All the participants of the session were given a menstrual cup to try at their own pace.

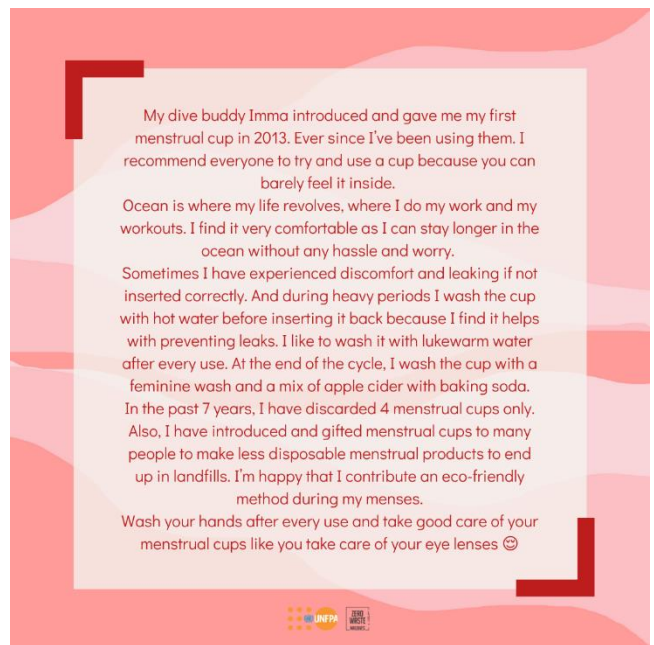
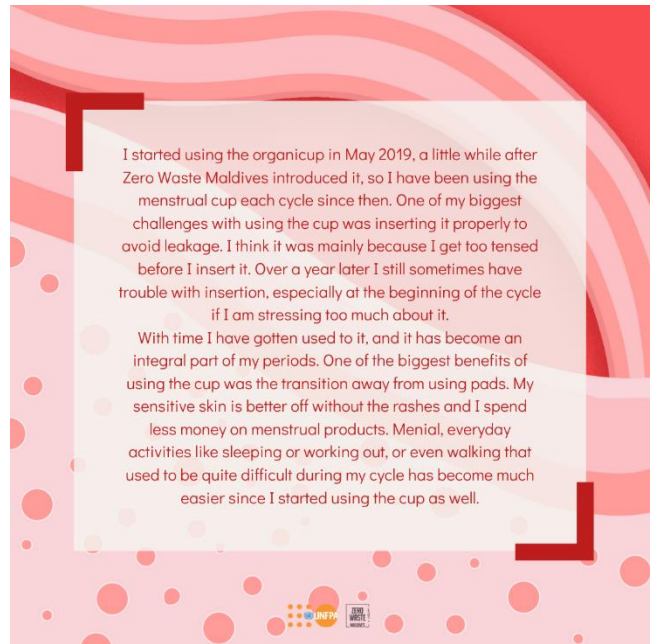
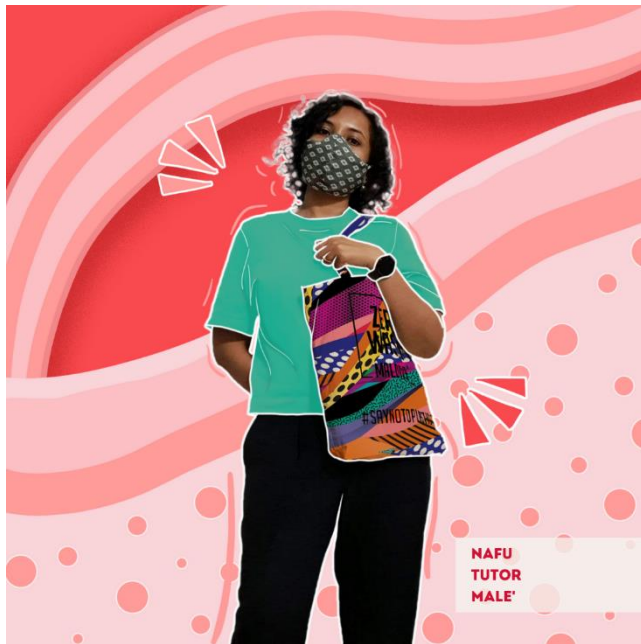
When I started using it, it was kinda hard at first. During the first try I experienced leaking from the cup. I even thought of changing back to pad at that point. But I remembered that we were told in the session that it takes a few cycles to get it right. I continued using the cup and it got easier every time. I found the cup more comfortable than the pad.

It doesn't feel like I am on my period anymore.

I am able to enjoy school hours without worrying about changing when on periods.

I am really glad I started using the cup.





Results

We have completed all the Information Sessions required in the TOR and as we have not managed to get the amount of participation in the sessions that we wanted we have been having more sessions. In Total, we have had 11 Sessions.

We have collected and compiled the success stories and they are ready to be disseminated via social media. Likewise, the rest of the social media information posts are also completed and ready to be posted on social media.

We are spacing out the posts as we do not want to overwhelm and flood social media. This will get us more engagement and get the conversation going about the topic and give people time to absorb the content.

The video post that we are preparing is almost complete however it is still not at the standard that we would like therefore we are still engaged in refining and fine-tuning the final product. The Draft video will be shared.

The survey results are in, we have done the data analysis and are compiling the report for the survey. The data we collected and the experience will be quite valuable to build upon for any future work that is done on Menstrual Health and sustainable alternatives for menstrual management.

Challenges

The major hurdle that we face is converting registrations for the sessions to participation in the sessions. We can get an average of 60% conversion.

Session	Description	Signed up	Attended	Participation %
Session 01	Gdh. Gahdhoo Age 18 - 30	29	21	72
Session 02	Gdh. Gahdhoo Age above 30	26	14	54
Session 03	GA.Gemanafushi	17	7	41
Session 04	Open Session	27	11	41
Session 05	Open Session	20	12	60
Session 06	Open Session for Under 21	17	11	65
Session 07	Laamu Atoll	60	32	53
Session 08	Open Session	33	18	55
Session 09	Sh.Noomaraa + Open Session	60	47	78
Session 10	Open Session	44	29	66
Session 11	Open Session for Under 21	14	10	71
Total Number		347	212	
Average Participation %				60

We also had an unexpected challenge where our social media accounts had got compromised. This resulted in our Advertising Accounts being suspended. This caused us to have to operate and disseminate the social media posts without any paid promotions. We are still working to fully rectify this issue.

Lessons Learnt

Administering sessions online was a very valuable learning experience. Not only do you have to consider technical issues from the delivery point of view but also the participant's point of view. The main learning of this was that all participants should be asked to test their set up prior to the day of the session so that they have time to rectify any technical issues that they may have.

Another consideration to be made with the online sessions especially for sessions aimed at Teenagers as well as adults is that not all islands have the same technology penetration and internet penetration as well. Some participants may be very tech-savvy while others may be quite technically challenged. In future sessions, we have to consider that some participation may drop due to lack of technical knowledge.

The financial cost of access to the internet also is a factor that hinders participation as participants have often requested data allowances to join the sessions.

Some of these observations require border high-level policy decisions to be made, while for the others we can potentially find creative solutions.

Way forward

The main aim of the project has been to ensure that 1000 menstrual cups and 1000 reusable pads are provided to the participants of the sessions. However, due to various issues, we have only managed to disseminate 14.6% of the products. Our focus was to primarily engage the outer islands, as access to alternative menstrual hygiene products is most difficult outside the area of the capital. During the Covid-19 lockdown, we received the most requests for help from the outer islands as getting conventional disposable menstrual hygiene products was limited.

However, it has been a considerable challenge to get participation in the amounts that we expected. We can get interest and registrations for the sessions however final participation is about 60%. So, we have decided to adjust our strategy of engagement and directly work with institutions such as Maldives Police Service, Customs, Maldives National Defense Force, Immigration to name a few, to provide us with participants that will take part in the sessions. We will also directly engage State-Owned Enterprises to achieve this.

We believe this will ensure rapid dissemination of the alternative menstrual hygiene products.

We will also be trying to engage the education ministry to have these sessions with participation from CHSE, MNU, and the other private educational institutions in Male'.

We have started communication with Maldives National University, Maldives Police Service, and Local Government Authority to plan sessions for next year. We have also engaged with American Center Maldives to hold sessions to islands through them as well.