

**Supplementary Materials 2.** Additional quotations describing each category

| <b>Being a responsible woman</b>   |
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| <p>“You know, we women, we should not only portray cleanliness on the outer, what people can see, but also in our inner garments. We should try to see that even where we are coming from is equally clean.” (ID-13, Market-C, 37)</p> <p>“I am not affected, I am free because am not young and I have had my periods for a long time now, I am not like a young girl who has just started.” (ID-6, Market-A, 23)</p> <p>“No, we no longer separate them [by gender] you can go to either [latrine], but as a lady, and adult at that, I can’t find a messed latrine and leave it. I wonder to myself ... what if the man comes and finds such a thing, so what you do is to clean it, so that the man doesn’t see such things.” (ID-34, School, 48)</p> <p>“Just like any other lady, I organised myself... I bought pads and padded myself” (ID-2, Market-B, 35)</p> <p>“They could therefore help us a bit; you go bathe and change and then you come back to your friends when you are fresh but these days when you are in your periods things become tough!!! Ideally for a lady, you cannot be comfortable and you feel you are not steady and you have a feeling everyone has seen you and you need to change .If some other things are free then it will help some of us to be to improve on our cleanness.” (ID-4, Market-A, 43)</p> <p>“You limit your movements and be there seated, don’t wear tight clothes, you respect yourself because if you padded yourself I am sure it can be noticed so you have to put on a big cloth until you finish and wear what you feel like.” (ID-28, Market-E, 37)</p> |
| <b>Keeping clean</b>   |
| <p>“it can take some time [changing menstrual materials] because you have to go back home and you change and also get water and you clean yourself because it is good to first clean yourself then you put it [menstrual material] on, then after you go back.” (ID-35, HCF, 35)</p> <p>“What I know about that place is that many women really make that place so dirty when they are in their periods, they never look back after using the toilet to see how they have left it. They tend to leave blood stains on the slab. But I really hate it when someone uses the toilet and leaves it stained. It is you who has gone in after them that actually feels ashamed.” (ID-13, Market-C, 37)</p> <p>“It is because I want to keep clean and comfortable. Do you know that you can lose your peace if you continue using a filled-up pad, you can’t even stand?” (ID-26, Market-D, 39)</p> <p>“Let me give you an example, on a normal day (when not menstruating) it is not good to spend the whole day without changing a knicker. Only those very busy can be excused, but if you are at home please change a knicker like 2 times a day. If you can change on such days why not change like 3 times when in your periods?” (ID-20, Market-C, 30)</p> <p>“when am in my periods that I may need to be extra clean but when am off my periods then am not so much concerned about going to bathe during the day.” (ID-33, HCF, 34)</p> <p>“I may go there three times in a day and you must pay so the expense is high but you must clean up to maintain proper hygiene” (ID-6, Market-A, 23)</p>                |

**Keeping secret**

“because we always assume that you are unhealthy during that period of time so why should you publish yourself to be unhealthy before everyone? So you keep it confidential” (ID-33, HCF, 34)

“You don’t have to talk about it, why should I talk about it, I cannot even tell my husband about it!” (ID-34, School, 48)

“Aaaa, for me I am free, very free but others fear, me I do [feel comfortable sharing about menstruation] because it is normal” (ID-17, HCF, 30)

“It is not interesting for everyone to know and it is natural, but it is not supposed to be shown to people. For me it is ashaming that is why when you see your friend you give them something to cover themselves to avoid shame.” (ID-30, Market-E, 41)

“Most women share when they want solutions to their issues for example those who use family [contraception], they come and tell you that ever since I got the family planning injection I bleed endlessly. With that one it is understandable because she is looking for advice but there are those who take it to be interesting, each time they have their periods they have to announce. That one is done without a cause.” (ID-20, Market-C, 30)

“No, except that I don’t go for prayers, (she laughs) I don’t want to show ... .I feel bad when I don’t go for prayers and because I don’t want these children to know that I am experiencing it...” (ID-22, School, 47)

“Of course, they will see and say that why is it that this woman goes with a polythene bag in this particular time of the month. What is she taking there? so it is better you go as if you are going for a long call, you change and you come back and sit” (ID-17, HCF, 30)

“I don’t know because one can’t tell you that I use this when I am in my period but for me I am courageous I can tell you that when in my period, I feel this and this, that this one burns me, the other one does this....” (ID-26, Market-D, 39)

**Knowledge**

“Yeah, like having sex when in periods. This causes infections in the fallopian tubes because each time you have sex the blood flows back and clots that is how we get infections.” (ID-20, Market-C, 30)

“I grew up being told that it is not when good to have sexual intercourse when you are menstruating because you can have continuous bleeding and you risk contracting diseases that you may not be able to diagnose in time.” (ID-16, Market-C, 18)

“Maybe they would recommend just to keep sanitation because we believe when someone is menstruating those organisms can easily be taken in by a woman, so you have to maintain good sanitation by making such and constructing more the public toilets.” (ID-1, HCF, 23)

“Now the problem that may occur but this is my thinking; during sexual intercourse, the blood might go to where it is not supposed to go like in “musenke” (tubes) and you may end up getting other complications.” (ID-31, Teacher, 42)

**Taboos/restrictions**

“What I heard of was not throwing these pads everywhere , some people with bad hearts know their herbs and they can put those herbs on your pads and you get a problem so you need to put it where is not seen by everyone but by just you the owner. However, when I became an adult I realized that all they wanted was to teach us to be clean because if they don’t scare you, wherever you find is where you dump them since you have no effect, so maybe they wanted us to be clean.” (ID-4, Market-A, 43)

“Imagine removing a pad, you are bleeding...then you have sex, then put back...Ehhhhh, that whole thing is just too disgusting! I cannot do it!” (ID-13, Market-C, 37)

“When in the period, I don’t touch people’s eats especially when I am at home. Someone might fail to eat when she gets to know that you are bleeding. Personally, if I get to know that you are bleeding, I can’t touch what you have prepared for me/eats. I am very sure about this.” (ID-20, Market-C, 30)

“that’s why people don’t say because when they tell you then you will say I don’t want you touch my cup, I don’t want you to boil my water and so on. People have different businesses so if she tells you that she’s having her period will you take her water? Some people don’t feel good about it, it is filthy “benyinyala”, can you tell a man about that? He will not take the water.” (ID-6, Market-A, 23)

**Workplace environment**

“for example when am in my periods I may need time for refreshing but just as I’ve mentioned just I may not get where to freshen from you know maybe I want to go bathe and change and as I talked the number of clients am not given all that time to go and bathe and change. So, you find I am not given ample time to freshen up, I end up maybe going and changing the pad but whereby I maybe wanted to bathe and freshen up, but that time is not there.” (ID-33, HCF, 34)

“You see those toilets have notices written there, whoever will do this, a fine of 10,000 shillings will be charged, but still they do them. Someone can do without your notice, but if God helps us and they find her, she pays the fine.” (ID-28, Market-E, 37)

“Haaa, for me when I am in my periods, I don’t want to use that thing there [school facility] (laughs). I have to go, that is the time I go home almost all the time as long as I don’t have a lesson because it is easy to get water from there. You know everything, you know where you keep your things, but again here carrying water there are very many [things] I can’t access here, but at home I can access everything.” (ID-14, Teacher, 21)

**Health care services and resources**

“In periods? Before, I used to take one week but currently I take 3 days. I got some medicine which I took and they reduced.” (ID-28, Market-E, 37)

“At first, even we were scared of somebody going twice in a period in a month, they did a lot of tests at the end of it they concluded that is how God created me and I was normal.” (ID-12, School, 41)

“honestly I tried taking medicine and even went to health facilities, I was given treatment but I didn’t get cured, I used herbs too but I didn’t get cured so it is like this is my ailment and am used to it. So I take just to reduce the pain to enable me do my work though I tried but failed.” (ID-21, Market-D, 49)

| <b>Menstrual cycle characteristics</b>  |
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| <p>“Me I don’t have light days, hmmm I don’t have light days because I get heavy bleeding throughout that time and much of the blood contain clots and as I told you that I at times don’t appear...because you can feel pain...feel like urinating but when you go to the pit you don’t urinate, you only feel the clots coming out” (ID-26, Market-D, 39)</p> <p>“Yeah there are times when the bleeding is heavy, on those days you feel abnormal, you at times feel like there is a tap that is opened. On such days you can use like 4 pads a day and on light days you use like 2 pads. One in the morning and another at night after showering..... when you are going to sleep” (ID-8, Market-A, 28)</p> <p>“What happens to me is that I get fed up and just hate myself. Naturally I don’t beat because when I was still young I used to fear being beaten but still it gets to a point and you get rude like; “give me space!!!” [Luganda:“Nviira nawe”]” (ID-31, School, 42)</p> <p>“She can if she is observant, she can know that I have changed . I completely change,I become very weak, my lips become dry especially if I don’t take water, I become pale and then you can know, if you are observant.” (ID-19, Market-D, 24)</p>                       |
| <b>Managing pain and symptoms</b>   |
| <p>“I was told that when you get used to taking medicine then you will always have to take medicine so I don’t take any medicine... I endure the pain.” (ID-6, Market-A, 23)</p> <p>“That is what I do because I was advised not to take tablets when in my Ps [periods] so I endure the pain and just take hot water or warm water.” (ID-11, Teacher 25)</p> <p>“I do not only that I take a lot of tea with conc tea leaves. When actually I have that pain I take conc tea, I put in a lot of tea leaves and probably helps me actually.” (ID-33, HCF, 34)</p> <p>“If it is not much you just know that one is normal and just do your work but really if the pain is much you go and take pain killers in most cases I take panadols.” (ID-12, School, 41)</p>  |
| <b>Managing menses and cleaning the body</b>  |
| <p>“Yeah, that has ever happened to me but currently I endeavour to buy it [pads] however expensive, but when I am at home I can use a cloth, as a means to save, knowing that if I use it at night, I can be able to wash it in the morning and spare the pads to use at the place of work and also carry one which I will use at the time of changing.” (ID-7, Market-A, 40)</p> <p>“I cannot use the other padding materials that you the youth use according to the flow so I get my good materials [cloth] which I wash and iron and keep after use so that anytime I need them I just use them.” (ID-21, Market-D, 49)</p> <p>“I used pads and sometimes I use cotton with gauze. For the first two days my flow is too much that these normal pads cannot help me at all I may be embarrassed so what I do I use cotton with gauze but after two days it has regulated and I use these normal pads.” (ID-33, HCF, 34)</p> <p>“I use them because they can absorb the blood very well and you don’t get stained and they stick to the knickers.” (ID-31, School, 42)</p> <p>“Yes. I don’t wait because if I wait, it burns me. I feel peace when it is dry but the moment it gets full, I become uncomfortable and I don’t also feel fit” (ID-26, Market-D, 39)</p> |

“You can come from home with your pad and come here at work then at around 11:00am you go to the washrooms with your jerry can and wash yourself and there after you change.” (ID-27, HCF, 24)

Interviewer: “Are there times you can change without washing up your private parts?”

Participant: “No, but I even hate it otherwise if I didn’t want to wash up I could change from here as you can see, but I would like to wash up and then change so that I can feel very well.” (ID-28, Market-E, 37)

“I change three times a day. In the morning then in the afternoon I also go back home and I shower then I change.” (ID-24, Market-A, 36)

#### **Confidence and pride**

“Yes I come to work because I make preparations for myself, I carry one to use when I change during the day, I change two times, I dispose of what I came with” (ID-9, Market-A, 19)

“I have the pads; the toilet is also accessible so, anytime I feel like changing I can do it” (ID-2, Market-B, 35)

“I feel comfortable and normal like my normal days, that’s how I feel. I don’t worry in most cases” (ID-15, HCF, 32)

#### **Distress and anxiety**

“You live sitting alone so most of the times you are always standing because when you sit like how I am sitting comfortably, sometimes I get to stand up when I have a stain on my cloth.” (ID-35, HCF, 35)

“I feel disgusted, even if I see a customer, I just wonder why she/he has come, you fear standing up, you are worried.” (ID-19, Market-D, 24)

“What normally worries me the most is that you don’t want to sit among your friends. You want to bathe and get fresh, keep yourself in doors, yet you can’t do that at work. If you get some water and clean yourself then you even keep thinking that maybe my pad is not in position, I think they have now noticed...” (ID-4, Market-A, 43)

“I’m not comfortable because am on tension, the backache, so it is not similar to how I feel now that am not having my period. Then worrying about the pad filling up and mapping anytime that’s the standing up I told you about, because am not at peace at all.” (ID-18, Market-C, 39)

“... when I am okay [not menstruating], I talk almost the whole day, I move there and there, but that time [during menstruation] I am always quiet.” (ID-14, School, 21)

#### **Financial stress**

“These towels [cloths], they are 500 [shillings] each, you find someone she buys like 4 or 6 and she uses them because people say, some women say that getting a pad is very expensive and your time [menstruation] can come when you can’t afford even 2000, 3000. How can you tell a man that maybe, that now buy for me pads, when you don’t have even food to eat?” (ID-10, HCF, 38)

“You can be here and the time for periods comes and you have no single coin but when you need help. If they could help us in any way like that and like in their office they have these provisions for those who have failed to get or they just reduce on the price.” (ID-4, Market-A, 43)

“the other thing is to provide a bathroom which is not at a cost so that we can bathe the whole body as we change our pads during the menstruation periods... now we all avoid bathing because we have to incur a cost.” (ID-9, Market-A, 19)

“If I could get another place where I could change that is free, it would be much easier for me. But as you know ladies’ conditions are hard, you have to go, pay and change.” (ID-28, Market-E, 37)

#### **Discomfort**

“You know this cotton pad, the way you move you can feel it, you can change the way of moving, even the things you do.” (ID-22, School, 47)

“It was only when, during that time when am having a heavy period it is when you don’t feel comfortable getting up, getting up to go and teach, supposing am standing there and the thing pours.” (ID-12, School, 41)

“Most of the time I feel like resting yet I can’t do it from here because of the disturbances from clients.” (ID-2, Market-B, 35)

“No, I can’t feel comfortable. I limit my movements and also with us ladies if you take a shower the flow reduces, I don’t know if you knew this. When you go to the bathroom and shower the flow reduces. If you can’t get that time at your workplace then stay at home and do all that from your home” (ID-20, Market-D, 30)

“You find yourself that you get more tired because when I am experiencing the period at times, I feel the backache, so when I am at work you know you can’t rest ... so you continue until the day ends.” (ID-10, HCF, 38)

Interviewer: “Why do you restrict the movements?”

Participant: “Because I feel that maybe someone is going to see the pad that I am putting on and some pads have some smell when you bypass someone will know that you are using this” (ID-11, School, 25)

“Yes, I feel really bad and at this time I would be in pains and covered because of coldness. I can open but I would still be in my salon somewhere resting.” (ID-26, Market-D, 39)

“actually am not for the two days I would be saying I wish it would happen over the weekend and sometimes God helps me it happens over the weekend so if I start on Friday by Monday am okay but if it starts on Monday to be honest I would wish for those two days to be at home if it were possible but of course I cannot.” (ID-33, HCF, 34)

“You live sitting alone so most of the times you are always standing because when you sit like how I am sitting comfortably, sometimes I get to stand up when I have a stain on my cloth.” (ID-35, HCF, 35)

**Work consequences**

“my dear with my health am different from other people because a friend may tell me; “ I become weak, loss of appetite ...’ but me that doesn’t happen, I remain healthy and well too.” (ID-9, Market-A, 19)

“I never want to really eat into my boss’ work time in the name of managing my periods.” (ID-13, Market-C, 37)

“It doesn’t because even when I was still working from [another market] I used to call off that whole day, maybe if it would begin in the morning, and I am feeling pain, and I am not feeling well, I could spend all the three days not working, not reporting at all.” (ID-19, Market-D, 24)

“...this money cannot be enough and if you are employed, needed all the time at your workplace, and you can’t even have an excuse for staying home, that one [woman] can go [to work], but you have to be ready because at their workplaces there are rest rooms to use for washing. But to me who is not pressured by anyone, it is my business, if I have 20,000 [shillings] to take me through that time [menstruation] I can stay home and wait for the bleeding to reduce” (ID-20, Market-C, 30)

“...I may say today I will not carry that, I feel it is too heavy. If we are offloading bananas I may select the smaller ones which I may carry then I hire someone to carry the big ones.” (ID-9, Market-A, 19)

“Only that when you are menstruating and you have too much headache you are advised to inform the administrators that you are not ready to work because of this and this. Then you can stay at your home.” (ID-11, Teacher, 25)

“Most of the time I avoid moving, I remain in one place. If I finish my lesson I go and sit in one place. You don’t see me loitering all the time. Like if am the one supposed to distribute toilet paper that time you have to move here and there but that day I don’t, someone else does that. I always don’t feel like moving, I always sit in one place.” (ID-14, School, 21)

“I don’t feel comfortable though I have no health problem during that time but I don’t feel comfortable like on a normal day” Interviewer: “So how do you deal with that at work?” Participant: “I just stay like that because I have no option” (ID-18, Market-C, 39)