PERIODS, PADS, PUBERTY:
WHAT WE KNOW AND DON’T KNOW

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Period.

• Every 28 days, adolescent girls & women bleed
• This is true in every part of the world
• Women have been "managing” their menses for centuries
  – Some ways healthy/clean/modern; others not so
• Millions of adolescent girls and young women lack appropriate, affordable, menstrual supplies
Menstruation and its Meaning

• 1000’s of euphemisms for menstruation spanning time and geography

• Social significance powerful, but valiance differs by culture

• Biological marker signaling fertility and transition from childhood to womanhood
MENSTRUAL STIGMA: Does it exist? Does it Matter?

Discomfort – associated with sexuality & reproduction

Shame/embarrassment due to inability to manage effectively

Exclusion – associated with dirt & pollution

Hinders ability to carry out every day activities (food preparation, prayer, washing) in some cultures

May alter sexual relations (+ and -)

What We Want: Physically Active, Confident, Secure Girls
A resource and action plan for Very Young Adolescents (VYAs)

- Illuminates health and social dimensions of lives of VYAs
- Identifies puberty as critical moment for intervention
- Offers suggestions for program experimentation
- Recommends areas for research

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Not New News, Making News
What is New.....

• Efforts to drive down price of sanitary pads; reduce or eliminate sales or "luxury" tax
• Product development --- new designs, local sourcing /production underway
• Greater attention to menstrual hygiene, puberty education, body awareness
• *Period Perception Study* -on-line survey
• Research – RCT in Kenya with ZanaAfrica and Population Council underway
Some Evidence, More Needed

- Perceptions and understanding of menstruation
- Days lost from work
- Days lost from school

- Does this result in decreased productivity and lost wages for women?
- Does access to sanitary supplies improve school retention and progression?
- How do we normalize, not problematize?
The Population Council conducts research and delivers solutions that improve lives around the world. Big ideas supported by evidence: It’s our model for global change.