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ENDLINE STUDY
Digital Didi
2023



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Executive Summary

This report highlights the key findings from the endline survey conducted for the Digital Didi Project – Innovation to ensure Menstrual hygiene and foster self-learning and entrepreneurship in a total of 10 states – Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The number of respondents surveyed was a total of 2238 individuals, out of which 35% of the respondents (794) surveyed were adolescents aged between 13-20, and 65% (1444) were women aged between 20 and above. The survey was conducted by Digital Empowerment Foundation in June 2023. The survey was conducted to assess the degree of access to digital devices and internet, level of financial literacy and knowledge, access to menstrual hygiene management knowledge and facilities among the sample respondents across different age groups, occupation and educational qualification.

1. Majority (96%) of the respondents were from rural areas.
2. In terms of educational qualifications, 45% respondents were either currently enrolled in, or have studied upto secondary level (class 9-10), 24% had studied till/are currently enrolled in senior secondary (11-120), 2% had diploma, 11% were graduate, 4% were postgraduate. Of the respondents, 14% respondents had either no formal education or had less than secondary level education.
3. Their occupational status was captured under the categories of agricultural worker, displaced worker/previously employed, entrepreneur, farmer, jobseeker, private sector employee (formal), private sector employee (informal), public sector employee, self-employed, wage labourer (non-agricultural), youth in school, youth not in school, and college/university students. Youth in school category had the highest number of respondents, with entrepreneur, jobseeker, and farmer being some of the other larger groups of respondents in terms of occupation.
4. Among the respondents, 927 were earning members and 1311 were non-earning members.
5. The respondents were asked to self-assess if they consider themselves aware of safe practices in regards to menstrual health. 98% responded “yes”, and 2% responded “no”.
6. The respondents were asked if they were aware of discussions on the environmental cost of commercially available disposable pads. Only 4% (99) respondents reported not having knowledge of environmental

cost of disposable pads.

7. The respondents were asked about the kind of absorbents they use during their cycle. Disposable/commercially available pads still remain the leading choice of absorbent among the respondents. However, there has been a decrease in the favourability of old cloth and cotton wool, and an increase in the favourability of reusable pads, new cloth, and reusable cloth/towel.
8. The respondents were asked about their choice of disposal of absorbents, there has been a 2% rise in respondents who reported using waste bins for disposal, and 5% increase in respondents who reported burning used absorbents. Waste management in general has much scope of work in moving towards sustainability.
9. There has been a 66% rise in the proportion of beneficiaries who now consider drying reusable absorbents in the sunlight feasible. This indicates successful steps towards destigmatising menstruation within the community.
10. At the time of the baseline survey, 48% respondents were opposed to the idea that girls should be aware of menstruation before attaining menarche. It may be considered a success for the project in destigmatising menstruation that 99% respondents supported girls being acquainted with knowledge of menstruation before attaining menarche.
11. One of the successes of the project is that there is a recorded 12% decrease in the proportion of beneficiaries who reported changing their absorbent once a day, and a 13% increase in respondents who reported

changing their absorbent 3 times or more in a day.

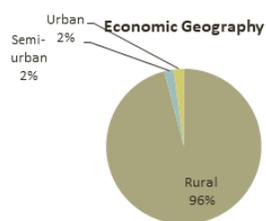
12. There has been a 50% increase in the proportion of beneficiaries who have used the internet to access need-based information on health issues.
13. The survey also recorded a 7% decrease in the proportion of respondents who did not password protect their phones.
14. There has been a 37% increase in proportion of respondents who are able to navigate the settings section of a smartphone by themselves. It is imperative for individuals to be able to make configurations to privacy and accessibility settings in a device to be able to make meaningful use of the device.
15. Since the course is digitally administered, the respondents were asked about the barriers faced in accessing the internet. The respondents were asked to select one or more options that apply to them from a predefined list. Cost of data and being involved in household chores are two of the most widely reported barriers to accessing internet.
16. We recorded a 39% increase in the proportion of respondents who have a bank account.
17. The respondents were asked to self-assess on a scale of 1-5 whether they feel sufficiently aware of UPI payments, net banking, and mobile wallets. There has been a 38% decrease in the proportion of respondents who reported not being adequately aware of digital payments (UPI, NetBanking, Mobile wallets, etc.).

Socio-economic Landscape

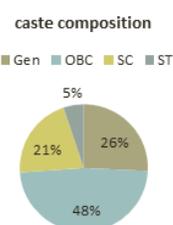
The survey was conducted in a total of 10 states – Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The table below lists the state-wise breakup of the number of respondents.

Sr. No.	Name of State	Number of respondents
1.	Assam	105
2.	Bihar	289
3.	Chhattisgarh	220
4.	Haryana	121
5.	Jharkhand	74
6.	Madhya Pradesh	206
7.	Odisha	317
8.	Rajasthan	355
9.	Uttar Pradesh	258
10.	West Bengal	293
Total		2238

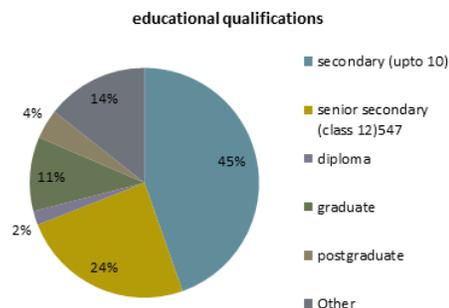
The economic-geographical region of the respondents was captured within the categories of rural, semi-urban, and urban. The respondents are mostly from rural areas, with 44 individuals from semi-urban areas and 47 from urban areas.



The caste location of the respondents was captured within the categories of General, OBC, ST, and SC. At 1077 of 2238 or 48%, OBC respondents form the largest share of respondents followed by General (576), SC (470), and ST (115).

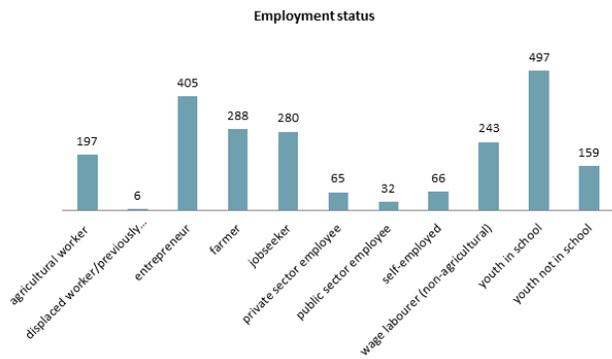


In terms of educational qualifications of the respondents, most respondents are educated upto class 10 level (998), followed by respondents who were educated upto senior secondary/class 12 level (547). At 322, the third largest respondent group is covered under 'others' – these are respondents who have no formal education or have primary level and less than secondary level education. A sizeable number of respondents have attained education to the level of graduate (234), post graduate (93), with some holding a diploma (44) in their last educational achievement.





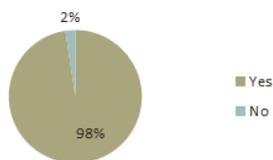
In terms of employment status, the three most represented respondent groups among the 11 groups that were categorised are youth attending school, entrepreneurs, and farmers (working in their own field); public sector employees and private sector employees were some of the least represented groups in this survey. A complete break-up of the respondents by their employment is presented in the chart below.



User's Menstrual Health Management Awareness

This section of the survey records the beneficiaries' responses to questions regarding general awareness of menstrual health and their use of absorbents at the end of the project.

Whether aware of safe practices regarding menstrual health



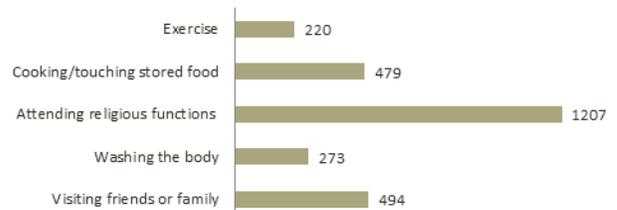
Whether aware of discussions around the environmental cost of using commercially available disposable pads



1. In comparison to baseline where only 28% respondents thought themselves aware of safe practices regarding menstrual health and hygiene, at the time of endline, 98% felt adequately aware. At the time of endline survey, there has been a 70% increase in proportion of beneficiaries who felt aware of safe practices regarding menstrual health.

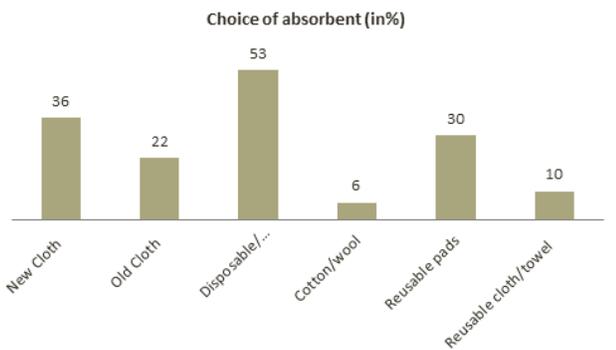
2. Between baseline and endline survey, there has been a 65% increase in proportion of beneficiaries who were initiated into conversations around the environmental cost of using disposable pads available commercially.

Activities avoided on account of periods

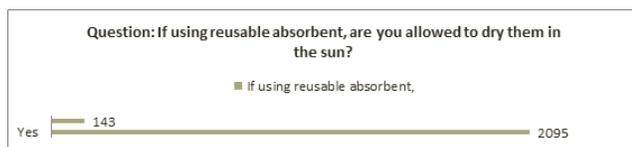




3. The activities avoided by the respondents on account of menstruating was recorded under the 5 categories of exercise, cooking/ touching stored food, attending religious functions, washing the body, and visiting friends or family. The proportion of respondents who reported each of the categories have remained unchanged, with least number of respondents avoiding exercise during their periods and highest proportion of respondents avoiding attending religious functions.



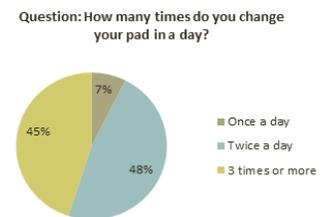
4. In terms of choice of absorbent, disposable/ commercially available pads still remain the leading choice of absorbent among the respondents. However, there has been a decrease in the favourability of old cloth and cotton wool, and an increase in the favourability of reusable pads, new cloth, and reusable cloth/towel.



5. There has been a 66% rise in the proportion of beneficiaries who now consider drying reusable absorbents in the sunlight feasible. This indicates successful steps towards destigmatising menstruation within the community.



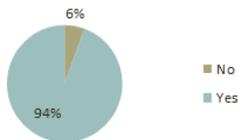
6. The respondents were asked about their choice of disposal of absorbents, there has been a 2% rise in respondents who reported using waste bins for disposal, and 5% increase in respondents who reported burning used absorbents. Waste management in general has much scope of work in moving towards sustainability.



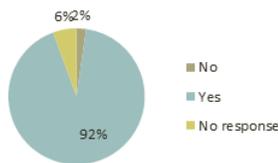
User's General Digital Use and Experience

This section of the survey recorded the nature of accessibility of internet, digital devices, and the chatbot assisted self learning programme.

Whether respondent made use of internet to access information on health issues

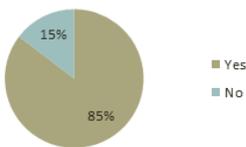


Whether internet search results were found to be useful

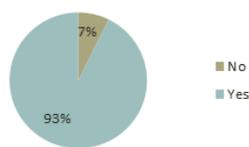


1. There has been a 50% increase in the proportion of beneficiaries who have used the internet to access need-based information on health issues.

Ownership of personal smartphone

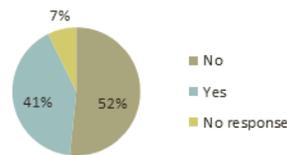


Whether phone is password protected

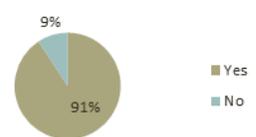


2. There has been 31% increase in proportion of respondents who now owned a smartphone.
3. There has been a 7% decrease in proportion of respondents who did not password protect their phones.

Whether required to share passwords



Whether able to navigate the settings section in the smartphone



4. There has been a 37% increase in proportion of respondents who are able to navigate the settings section of a smartphone by themselves. It is imperative for individuals to be able to make configurations to privacy and accessibility settings in a device to be able to make meaningful use of the device.

Since the course is digitally administered, the respondents were asked about the barriers faced in accessing the internet. The respondents were asked to select one or more options that apply to them from a predefined list. The break-up of their responses is presented below:

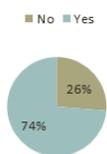
% reported barriers in accessing internet



1. Household chores and cost of data are 2 of the most widely reported barriers to accessing internet.
2. The respondents who selected 'Others' option, the listed reasons were largely network problems; time constraints due to studies, or work; and lack of availability of the shared phone.

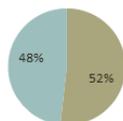
The respondents' experience in scanning the QR code was recorded. The 586 respondents (26%) who reported not being able to scan the QR code effectively were assisted in joining the training program via manually filling in the link to the course on Telegram.

Whether able to join the training program on Telegram by scanning QR code



Nature of problems faced in scanning the QR code

■ Issue with code ■ Issue with the device

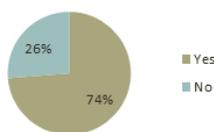


The setbacks faced by the respondents in finishing the training program on Telegram was surveyed. The respondents were further asked to select one or more issues they faced in finishing the chatbot course. Limited data subscription was one of the prime issues reported in finishing the course, followed by limited access to device.

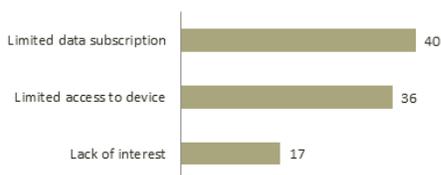
Of the total respondents, 26% were unable to finish the course.

A complete break-up of the findings by percentage is given in the charts below.

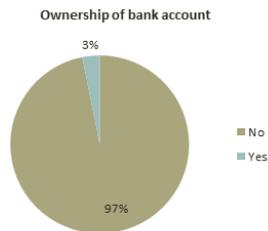
Whether able to finish the training program on Telegram



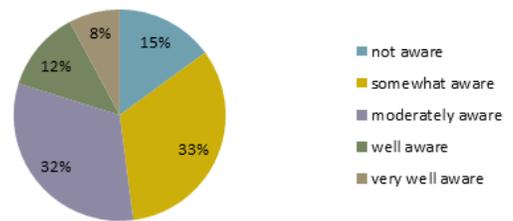
% respondents by issues reported in finishing the chatbot course



User's Financial Literacy



Question: On a scale of 1-5, how much do you think you are aware of UPI/Net Banking/Mobile Wallets?



1. There has been a 39% increase in the proportion of respondents who have a bank account.



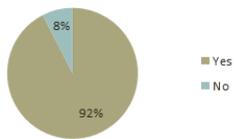
2. There has been a 38% decrease in the proportion of respondents who reported not being adequately aware of digital payments (UPI, Netbanking, Mobile wallets, etc.)



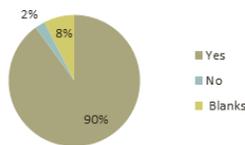


User's feedback on SmartPad and Self-Learning Components

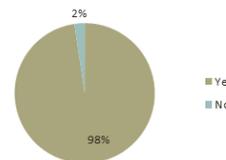
Question: Have you tried the SmartPad as a menstrual hygiene product?



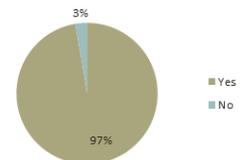
Question: Do you consider the SmartPad a good alternative menstrual hygiene product?



Question: Was the chatbot useful in providing information on the financial education components?



Question: Was the chatbot useful in providing information on entrepreneurial activities?

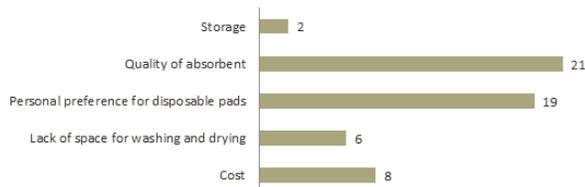


92% or 2069 of the 2238 respondents in the survey had tried the SmartPad as a menstrual hygiene product. Of these, 2013 respondents considered the SmartPad a good menstrual hygiene product.

- 98% respondents reported the financial education components of the chatbot to be useful.
- 97% respondents reported the information on entrepreneurial activities to be useful.

The 56 respondents who did not consider the SmartPad a good alternative menstrual hygiene product were asked about the prohibitive issues with the SmartPad. Issues with the quality of SmartPad as an absorbent, and personal preference for disposable pads were 2 of the most widely reported issues. A breakup of their responses is presented in the chart below:

Question: What are some prohibitive issues with the SmartPad as a menstrual hygiene product?





Recommendations

1. The project has been successful in increasing awareness of digital payments among the respondents. It can be of benefit to support the beneficiaries in confidently using digital payments as the preferred mode of transaction by imparting literacy about digital payments scams and ways to avoid them.
2. Focusing on waste management good practices can help emphasise the importance of switching away from disposable/commercially available pads. Vast regions of the country are either unserved or under-served by waste collection mechanism. The respondents should be given an opportunity to study sustainable and well established waste management practices in both individual and community set-ups to be able to situate the importance of waste segregation, disposal, etc.
3. With the general increase in volume of content available, the beneficiaries may benefit from being acquainted with keywords and veritable sources of content. Some internet users need help in increasing their odds of converting their access to internet to meaningful use to improve their life chances and the list of choices available to them while making decisions.

Discussion and Conclusion

1. The process of de-stigmatising menstruation and promoting period positivity in a community is a time-taking process. During the course of the project, there has been a positive change in attitude of the respondents towards their knowledge of basic menstrual health and hygiene practices, imparting younger girls with information about menstruation, willingness to switch to sustainable products. However, there are aspects which are dependent on the outlook of the community, access to sanitation and hygiene facilities, and access to healthcare facilities which determine an individual's experience. The survey captured the activities avoided by the respondents on account of menstruating under the 5 categories of exercise, cooking/touching stored food, attending religious functions, washing the body, and visiting friends or family. The proportion of respondents who reported each of the categories has largely remained unchanged, with least number of respondents avoiding exercise during their periods and highest proportion of respondents avoiding attending religious functions.
2. At 53%, disposable/commercially available pads are still the absorbent with the highest favourability among the respondents. Changing a reusable pad in settings outside of home can prove to be a hassle. There is scope for making people aware of other marginally sustainable menstrual hygiene products such as menstrual cups, menstrual discs, tampons, etc.
3. Waste management in general has a lot of scope of work in moving towards sustainability. While disposing off waste into dustbins is treated as the correct way to dispose waste, vast areas within a city as well as villages in India remain underserved or unserved by the public waste collection of measures. As such, driving the waste out of one's sight begins to take precedence often leading people to resort to burning, flushing down, and burying waste.
4. Access to the internet and ICTs is lower among girls and women in comparison to average population. Limited data subscription and access to device were two main factors leading to 26% of the respondents dropping out from the course.



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