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African Women Rising Video Project: The M Word Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The challenge of menstruation management often leads to high rates of school absenteeism and stifles productivity for menstruating women and girls in Uganda, and the wider region of East Africa. Bana offers a unique and sustainable solution to this issue with its BanaPads. The success of this product has pushed the enterprise to expand its product line and move into new regions to solve the pervasive issue of menstruation management. It simultaneously provides rural women financial agency by training them as its sales agents known as Champions.

Our research centered on an in depth examination of Bana's impact and how best to display this to a global audience to better educate about the issue of menstruation management, Bana's solution, and how impact investment could support Bana as it continues to scale. We were able to capture these various aspects of Bana through comprehensive interviews with Bana's administrative employees, beneficiaries, Champions, school administrators, teachers, and health professionals in regions with Bana presence throughout Uganda. These interviews were caught on film and edited into a 9-minute video that displayed Bana's core values of community health education, entrepreneurship, and advocacy. There are also three shorter videos that each display one particular facet of the Bana method. Additionally, we captured the manufacturing process of the BanaPads both on film and photographically to make the process more tangible to those that are not familiar with Bana. We also collected the necessary components to incorporate into Bana's upcoming updated website. These included professional headshots of Bana Staff, website content, and three shorter videos to display specific facets of Bana's core values and methods.

Through our research we found that Bana is making an undeniable impact on the lives of its beneficiaries. They are able to strive toward higher levels of education due to the modern method of feminine hygiene that Bana provides. Teachers and school administrators have observed significantly higher levels of school attendance and improved academic performance by female students. Health professionals address fewer cases of infections and illness due to use of unsanitary methods of menstruation management such as rags. The users themselves report higher levels of productivity and comfort not only in school, but in other activities. Champions experience a better quality of life directly linked to the income they generate from their sales. Through our interviews we observed the need for a higher manufacturing capacity to meet the community's need for BanaPads.

The videos and photographs that we provide Bana could be valuable in helping to facilitate a more prominent media presence providing the enterprise with more exposure. Additionally, they could be sent along with grant applications to better demonstrate their unique solution and attract more funding. For the future, we recommend that Bana continue to use film to display their progress and needs as they continue to expand their enterprise and the impact it has on the community.