

# Sustainability Report 2022

Distribution Summary



Kurdish Refugee Relief Foundation  
San Diego, CA



03

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→ Mission Statement/Introduction

The Kurdish Refugee Relief Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in San Diego, California by Kurdish-American women committed to empowering the voice of refugees. KRR is the first NGO to sustainably address the menstrual health gap in the Kurdistan region's refugee camps. Our survey on the ground concluded that the women lacked adequate access to menstrual hygiene products and often had to create makeshift products out of rags. In a commitment to our mission statement, we are currently pursuing sustainable options, such as reusable menstrual pads and underwear.

02

→ Moving Towards a More Sustainable Future

For women with limited access to traditional, single-use menstrual products, sustainable and reusable options are a long-term solution to product shortages and postponed distributions. In order to ease the transition from single-use to reusable products, KRR created a comprehensive educational program. Our educational program consisted of a variety of resources, including educational workshops with demonstrations, printed materials, and private counseling sessions in order to improve their comfortability with the new products and increase retention in the pilot program.



01.

## Our Impact

KRR has served **2000+ women** in the past **3 years**, distributing over **50,000 menstrual health products**

02.

## Rundown Distribution #4

Our Director of Operations led a team of local volunteers to distribute 150 dignity kits to women with a history of gender-based violence at the Bardarash Refugee Camp in June 2022. Each kit consisted of 5 reusable pads provided by AFRIPads, underwear, and printed educational materials about how to use the products. The team also conducted baseline surveys in Arabic in order to assess their unmet needs and their attitudes toward reusable menstrual products. Each participant also provided their phone number so the team could contact them 2 months later for a follow-up survey after using the reusable products. During these two months, there was a water interruption in the entire region.

Quick Facts



01

→ Access to Menstrual Materials

The Global Trends Report released by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) revealed that there were 89.3 million forcibly displaced individuals globally by the end of 2021. Most originate from Syria, which has continuously suffered political instability and conflict.<sup>1</sup> The Bardarash Refugee Camp is located outside of Erbil and Duhok. It currently hosts about 4,000 refugees, 45% of which are women.<sup>2</sup> Most of these women are of reproductive age and have an unmet need for menstrual health products.<sup>3</sup> In an effort to mitigate these needs, the Kurdish Refugee Relief Foundation (KRR) has conducted several distributions at Bardarash, providing over 2,000 women with dignity kits that include products such as pads, wipes, and pain relievers.

02

→ Advantages of Reusable Products

The Washington Post reports that in a lifetime, women spend between \$2000 and \$6,000 on single-use menstrual products. However, reusable pads last up to 5 years at a one-time cost of \$20, adding up to a lifetime cost of \$600 at only a fraction of the cost.<sup>4</sup> By relieving some of the financial burden, women have more means to address their other unmet needs and pursue opportunities that were previously denied due to lack of proper menstrual care. Additionally, nonorganic single-use pads are estimated to take 500 to 800 years to completely break down. However, reusable pads could lower waste by 22,907 tons a year. The industrial production of single-use pads creates about 12 pounds of CO2 a year.<sup>5</sup> The environmental implications of this production impacts refugees and displaced communities disproportionately.<sup>6</sup> The disposal of single-use products also poses a health hazard for refugees. A recent study was conducted on waste and sanitation-borne hazards in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. It showed that unmanaged waste accumulation and lack of treatment methods lead to the spread of vector-borne diseases.<sup>7</sup> KKR's conscientiousness towards the collective impact of the menstrual health industry guides our decision to source reusable products.

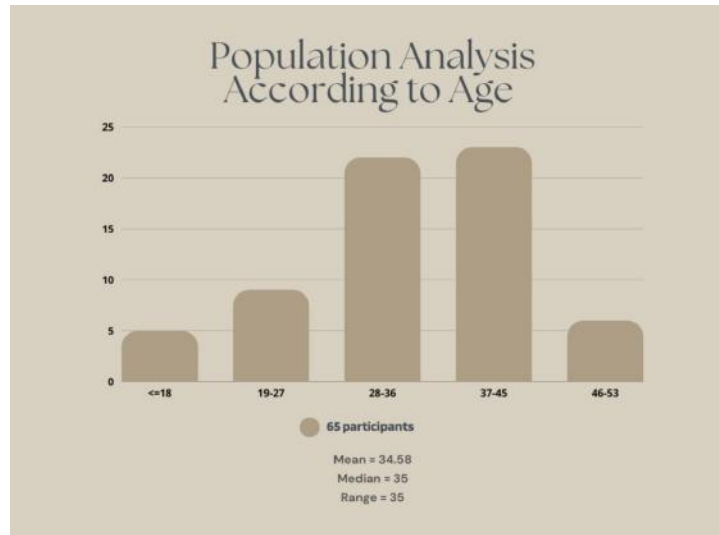


# Baseline Survey

01.

## Population Analysis

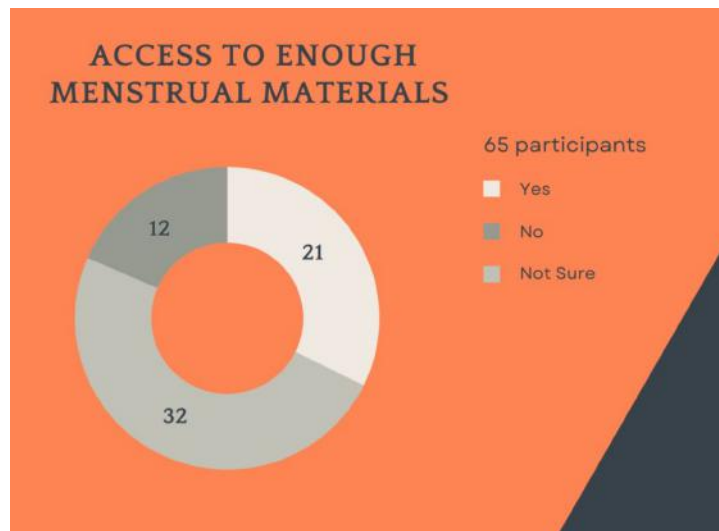
65 Arabic-speaking women participated in our baseline survey. They answered a series of 9 questions. This figure displays the distribution of ages. The youngest participant was 15 and the oldest was 50 years.



02.

## Access to Menstrual Products

Participants were asked if they had access to adequate menstrual products during their last cycle. 32 of the 65 women claimed they did not have adequate access, while 21 of them said they did.



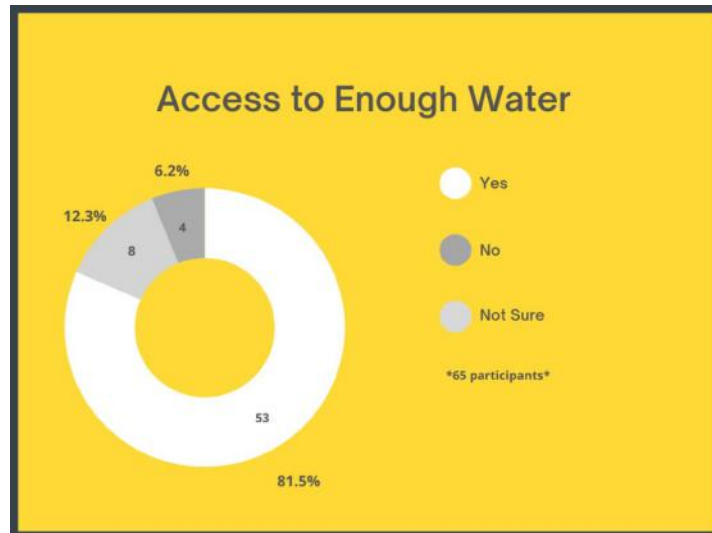
Survey Results



03.

### Access to Water

We asked the participants if they had access to adequate water for washing their reusable pads. About 82% of the women answered “yes,” while 18% answered “no” or “not sure.”



04.

### Satisfaction with Products

Over 70% of participants reported dissatisfaction with the menstrual products they currently use.



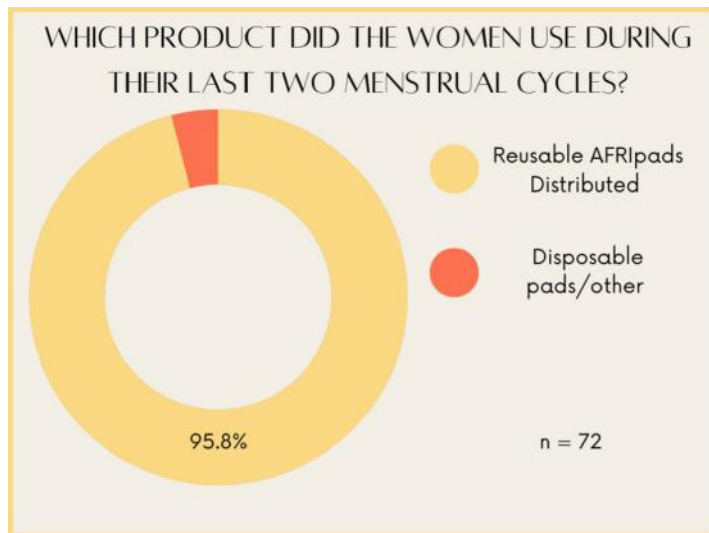


# Endline Survey

01.

## Menstrual Products Used

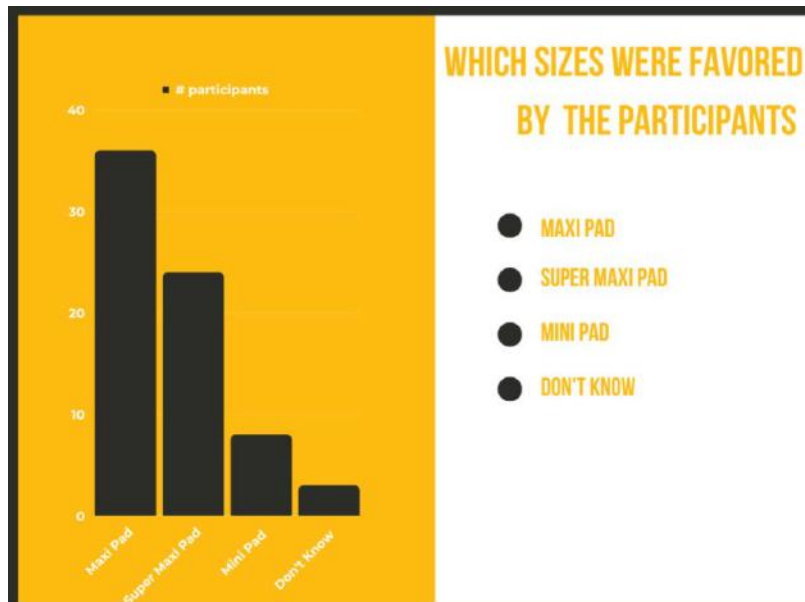
Two months after our initial baseline survey and distribution of reusable AFRIpads, we collected follow-up data from 72 participants. Over 95% of the women reported using the AFRIpads we distributed during their last two menstrual cycles.



02.

## Favored Sizes

We asked the participants which AFRIpads sizes they used. The majority preferred the maxi pad and super maxi pad.



Survey Results

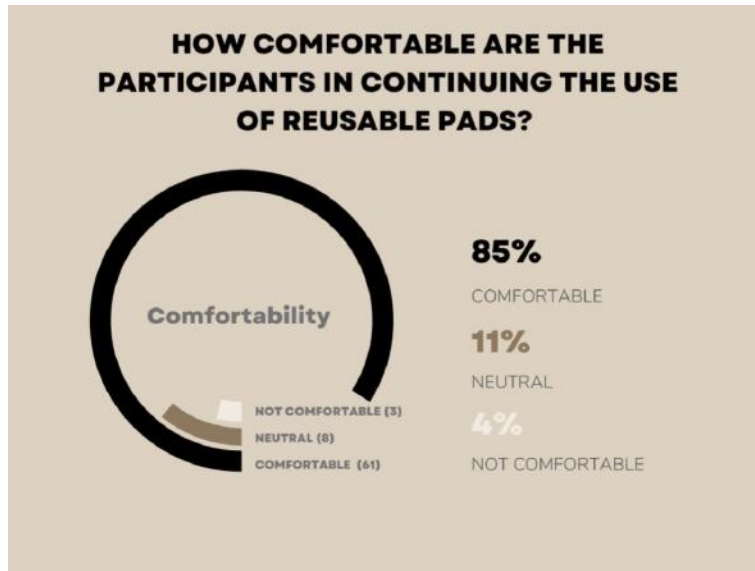




03.

### Comfortability with Reusable Pads

Participants were asked if they were comfortable using AFRIpads. 85% reported feeling comfortable using AFRIpads, while 11% reported feeling “neutral.” Based on these figures, we deem our pilot program successful.



04.

### Need for More Menstrual Pads

93% of the women reported a continued need for more menstrual products.



Survey Results



01.

## Results

While the world is increasingly moving towards an expanded use of reusable products, they haven't been seriously considered as a feasible option for refugees over concerns of water availability and cultural acceptance. However, our study demonstrated that the women reported high levels of comfort with the reusable pads. Finally, while access to water is generally sufficient, random interruptions in water supply could be viewed as a potential complication. As the women also agreed, by simply providing slightly more pads than usual in the case that they have to go longer without washing them.



02

→ Conclusion

The data we collected during our study highlights the continued need for menstrual health products, including reusable pads. Our study has allowed us to clarify our mission to expand beyond Bardarash Refugee Camp to neighboring camps and expand our sustainable menstrual health program. We will need to approach the subject with sensitivity and nuance, as we have in Bardarash, in order to increase acceptance of these products. In addition, to accommodate the women's diverse menstrual health, our future distributions will offer more quantity and sizing options than our pilot distribution. This three-pronged approach will more effectively fulfill KRR's mission to bridge the gap in one of the greatest public health inequities in the world of period poverty.



# 01.

## References

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