



FF741 Ripple Africa – Menstrual Cups

FINAL REPORT

Interim or Final report: Final report

Donor name: Fondation Eagle

Fondation Eagle reference: FF741

Name of Charity: Ripple Africa

Introduction:

This project was to introduce menstrual cups to 800 girls attending primary and secondary schools and 80 female teachers and school workers in Nkhata Bay District. 120 female Ripple Africa staff members would also be given menstrual cups and the necessary training to enable them to become trainers in their areas in the future.

Date of grant accepted: 29th November 2024

Amount: £16,982.

Conversion rate, date & amount in local currency:

2,100 Malawi Kwacha to the £ GBP.

Name and exact location of the project:

Mangochi, Salima, Dedza, Nkhotakota, Mzimba and Nkhata Bay Districts, Malawi.

Period of Project: 12 months.

Project beneficiaries:

This project would benefit 120 female Ripple Africa members of staff, 80 female school staff and approximately 800 girls attending primary and secondary schools.

Details of the project

After a small trial in 2019, we carried out a larger trial in May 2024 as, after many years running a Life Skills project we were informed by some of the teenage girls attending our youth groups that they allow their boyfriends to touch their breasts in exchange for money. This money is then used to purchase sanitary products, so they don't miss school each month.

Our team has built relationships of trust with the girls who are beginning to open up a lot more on issues like these. Therefore, we extended this vital Life Skills project and introduced menstrual cups to 250 girls.

We believe that by providing girls with a sanitary product that lasts for up to 10 years, we will reduce the number of girls seeking funds for their sanitary products in dangerous ways. It also has a positive environmental impact as sanitary pads are not biodegradable.

The aim of the project was to provide 800 female students at primary and secondary schools that we support with a menstrual cup each to ensure they can attend school every day of the month. We would also provide 80 female teachers and school workers with a menstrual cup. In addition, we wanted to provide 120 female Ripple Africa staff members with a menstrual cup to alleviate any challenges they may face in their work.

The cups would be provided free of charge to the girls and women, and training would be led by Rebecca Banda who leads on our Family Planning and Sexual Health project. Rebecca has been trained by Ruby Cups to deliver their approved training, particularly on ensuring that the users understand how to use the cups safely and hygienically. Rebecca has trained Matilda Mwale who has helped Rebecca run the training sessions with the schoolgirls and other school workers including Parent Teacher Association members.

Successes

- All schoolgirls' menstrual cups were distributed before the summer holidays began.
- Female Ripple Africa staff were reached in all the districts we work in despite the country's fuel crisis. We achieved an efficient and full distribution of materials.
- We met with school workers and mothers, sparking interesting and healthy conversations, with a wide community reach.
- Follow up meetings provided helpful information on why cups are or aren't being used.
- Results show high uptake and sustained use of the menstrual cups, with high recommendation rates.

Challenges

- Students dropping out or failing school, and women moving districts meant that some follow ups were not possible.
- Reports of schoolgirls stealing menstrual cups from others who have already received theirs. Those cups have since been replaced.
- Not all students attend the distribution sessions, mainly because they skipped school.
- Family resistance. 29% of non-user students cited parental concerns about age appropriateness.

Detailed budgets and actual expenditure summary and comparison:

Description	Original Budget		Actual Total	
	Malawi Kwacha	£s	Malawi Kwacha	£s
1,000 Menstrual Cups – UK cost	16,674,000	£7,940.00	15,750,000	£7,500.00
Menstrual Cup Shipping (LHR-LLW) – UK cost	1,764,000	£840.00	3,124,800	£1,488.00
Travel and Subsistence	9,702,000	£4,620.00	11,625,453	£5,535.93
Salaries - Coordinators and Managers	3,847,200	£1,832.00	3,316,803	£1,579.43
Monitoring and Evaluation	2,362,500	£1,125.00	1,575,000	£750.00
CELL/Data/Airtel	277,200	£132.00	342,762	£163.22
Malawi Office Costs	345,219	£164.39	230,160	£164.39
UK Office Costs- UK cost	690,438	£328.78	460,278	£328.78
Total	35,662,557	£16,982.17	36,425,256	£17,509.75

The overspend was funded from Ripple Africa's reserves.

Results

All 800 menstrual cups were distributed but our data reflects only 760 as we are waiting for the final two schools feedback (21 and 22 pupils respectively). We actually reached a total of 803 students. 176 of these were at primary schools (six schools) and 627 were at secondary schools (eight schools). Primary schools in Malawi sometimes have large numbers of teenage children attending as many repeat years in order to gain better leaving exam results.

Student Feedback

Of the 760 students we have data from so far, we have been able to follow up with 80% (605 students).

The other 20% were unavailable for the following reasons:

- 116 had transferred to other schools / Districts
- 27 had dropped out of school due to failing their exams
- 12 had dropped out of school due to pregnancy or because they had married.

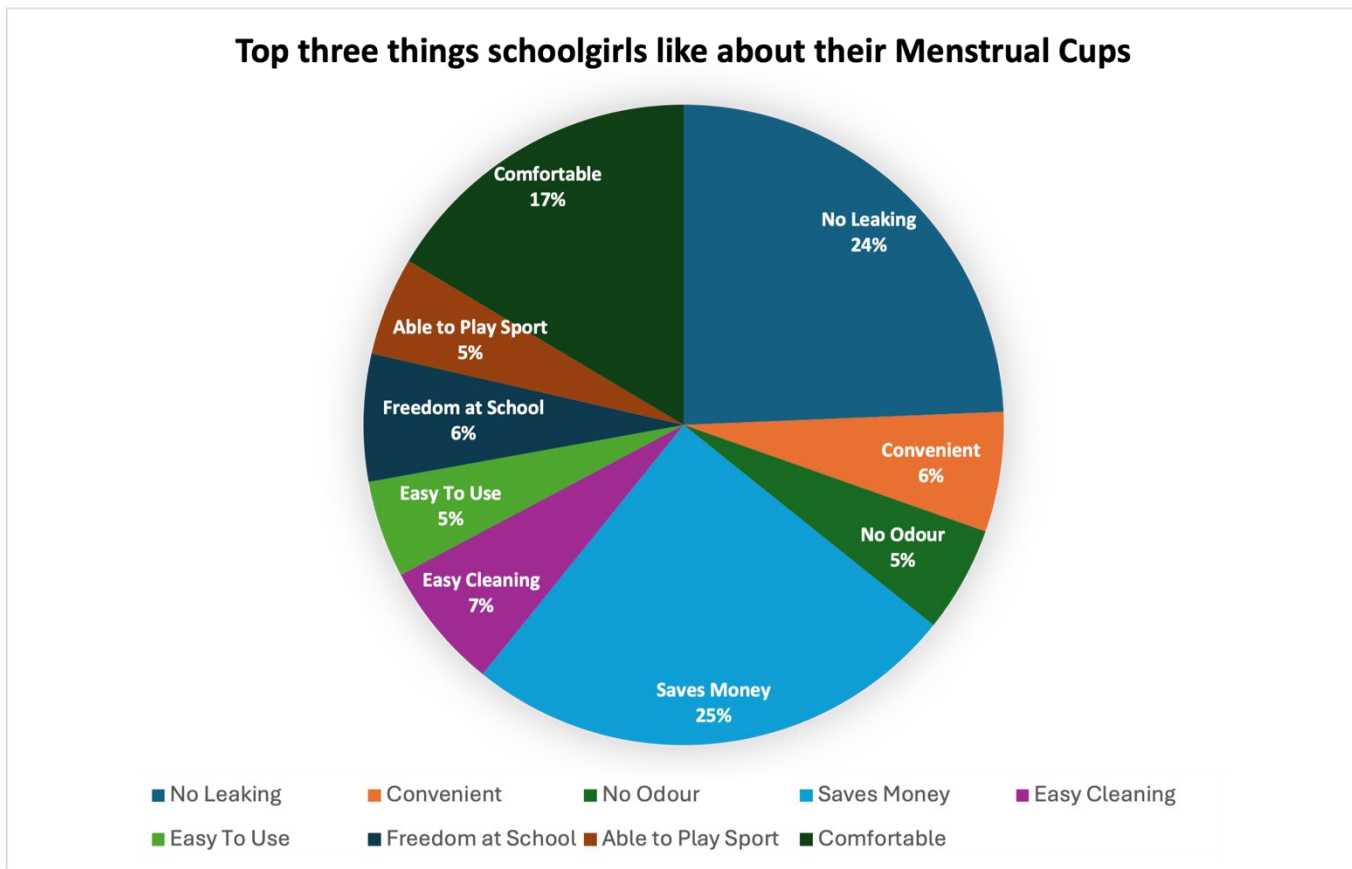
Of the 605 students that we followed up with, 90% (547) have used the cup and 10% (58) have not.

The reasons for not using the cup were:

- 30 girls were scared that the cup was too big to use
- Nine found it difficult to insert
- 17 girls' families were unhappy for them to use the cups – additional feedback is that parents want the girls to be a few years older before trying the cup
- One found it difficult to remove
- One had it stolen.

Of the 547 students that used their menstrual cup, 96% (523) are still using it and 4% (24) are not. We don't know the reasons for the girls who are not continuing to use it as we had failed to ask that question in our feedback, but we know that 23 girls went back to using disposable pads and one went back to using reusable pads.

We asked the girls "What do you most like about your menstrual cup?" and asked them to choose three in order of importance to them. Below are the results:



The schoolgirls were asked if they would recommend the menstrual cup to others and 99% said they would. Those that said they wouldn't recommend it because of fear that their cup would be stolen or because they don't feel comfortable discussing periods.

Adult women feedback

We planned to distribute 80 cups to teachers and school workers and 120 cups to Ripple Africa staff. In the end, only 64 cups were distributed to teachers and school workers, and only 79 members of staff attended training - some of our staff were on maternity leave, and we had not expected as many of our staff to no longer be menstruating. Therefore, we chose to distribute the remaining 55 cups to a group of mothers living in and around Tukombo who are involved in the fishing industry.

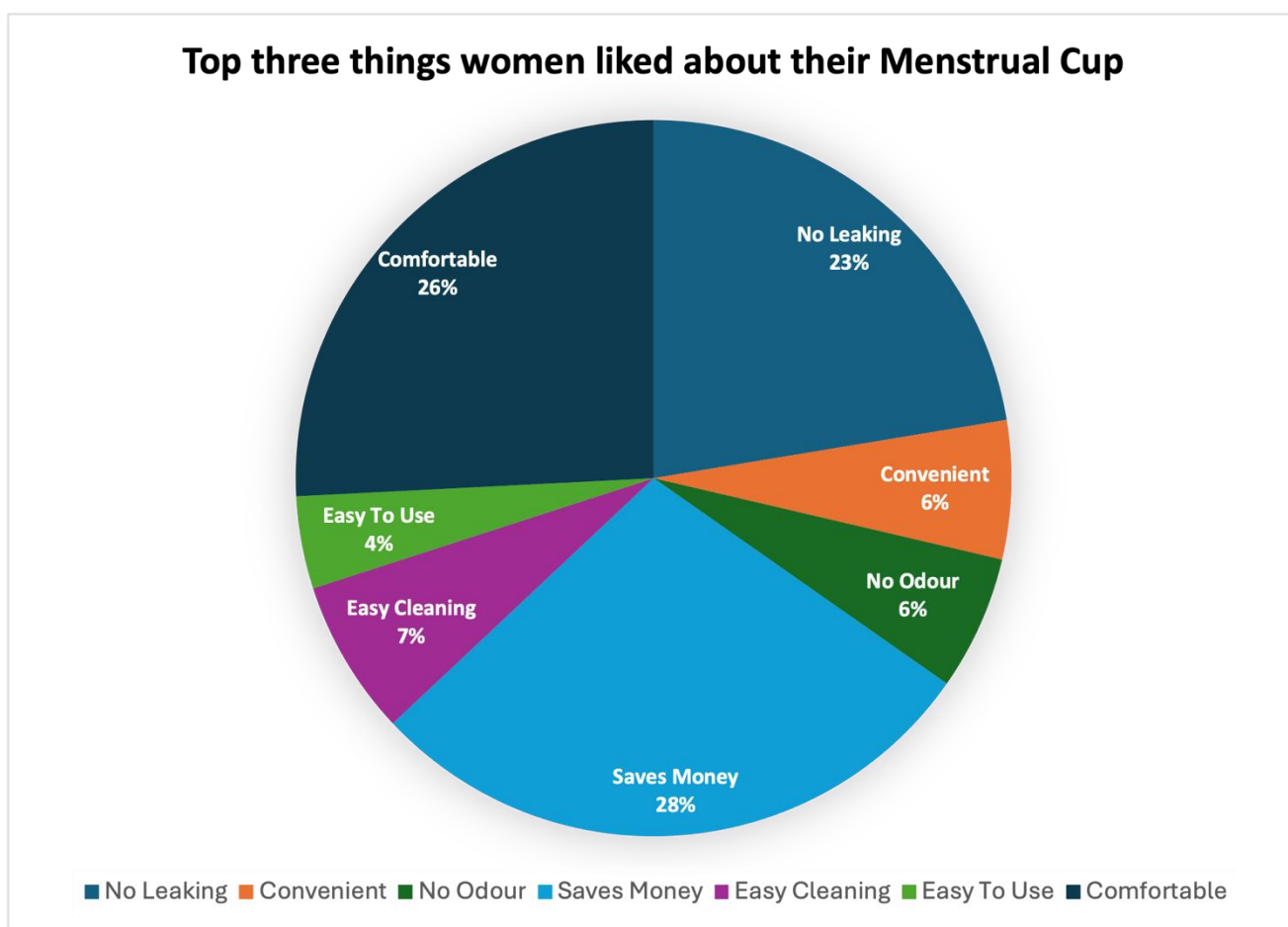
Of the 200 women (staff, teachers, school workers and mothers) we have been able to follow up with 95% of women (190). The other 5% (10 women) were unavailable as they had transferred to other Districts.

Of the 190 women that we followed up with, 177 (93%) have used the cup and 13 (7%) have not. The reasons for not using the cup:

- One was scared that the cup was too big to use (8%)
- Five are currently pregnant/breastfeeding (38%)
- Seven have started contraceptives which prevent menstruation or have stopped periods for other reasons (54%)

Of the 177 women that used their menstrual cup, 99% (176) are still using their cup and only one woman isn't. She is using disposable pads again.

We asked the women "What do you most like about your menstrual cup?" and asked them to choose three in order of importance to them.



The women were asked if they would recommend the menstrual cup to others and 100% said they would.

Registration data

The average age of Ripple Africa staff receiving a menstrual cup was 31 with one child. 92% were using disposable pads. 8% were using either cloth, cloth and pads.

The average age of teachers and school staff receiving a menstrual cup was 35 with two children. 74% were using disposable pads, 23% were using reusable pads, and 3% marked down other.

The average of the mothers in the community receiving a menstrual cup was 31 with three children. 56% used disposable pads and 44% used cloth.

The average age of the primary schoolgirls receiving a menstrual cup was 14 - 78% were using disposable pads before receiving a cup. The others were using cloth, reusable pads or a combination of cloth and pads. 86% said they were happy with the product they were using and only one said she missed school during her period.

The average age of the secondary schoolgirls receiving a menstrual cup was 17 - 83% were using disposable pads before receiving a cup, 10% were using reusable pads, 2.5% were using cloth only and 4.5% were using combination of cloth and pads. 74% said they were happy with the product they were using and asked if they stay at home during their period, 16% said they did.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings show strong acceptance and sustained use of menstrual cups among both schoolgirls and adult women. Despite difficulties in following up due to transfers, exam failures, pregnancy, or marriage, most participants were reached, and uptake was high. Among the students surveyed, 90% had tried the cup and – crucially - 96% of those continued to use it. Adult women showed even stronger retention, with 99% of users still relying on the cup. Where cups were not used, reasons were largely practical or temporary, such as fear of size, insertion challenges, pregnancy, or breastfeeding.

Feedback from users highlights clear benefits, and recommendation rates were exceptionally high - 99% among girls and 100% among women - indicating strong trust and positive experience across age groups. Willingness to pay also suggests perceived value of the product. Registration data further reveals that most participants previously relied on disposable pads, demonstrating that the cups are also helping the environment.

Taken together, these results indicate that menstrual cups are a viable, well-received, and sustainable menstrual health solution within the participating communities. Continued support, education, and gradual introduction for younger users - alongside community engagement to address parental concerns - may further strengthen adoption and long-term impact.

The results of this project show that these menstrual cups are providing women and schoolgirls with comfort, cleanliness and more financial freedom. We would like to thank all at Fondation Eagle for supporting this vitally important project.



Pam Haigh
UK General Manager
17th December 2025



Rebecca and Matilda in a school distribution session, explaining how a menstrual cup works



A student explaining the uterus diagram to her classmates during a distribution session

Students in a school distribution session, happy to ask questions



Students happy with their new menstrual cups

Girls in their classroom during a menstrual cup distribution session



Ripple Africa staff at a menstrual cup distribution and training session - Matilda is demonstrating blood collection using a test tube



Ripple Africa Tree Planting and Cookstove staff after receiving their menstrual cups



Menstrual cup distribution for Ripple Africa staff at the Chintheche office

Students with their new menstrual cups after a distribution session

Kazando Primary School

Maria is 49 years old and part of the Mother's Group at Kazando Primary School.

When she first saw the menstrual cup, she thought it was terrible. However, after listening to Rebecca her views changed. She said, "I like the fact that it is easy to clean, and that the girls in the community can come to school without a worry."



Rhoda and Edwish are best friends. They are both 17 years old and are in Standard 7.

Rhoda previously used disposable pads. She said, "My mother used to buy one pack but if she could afford it, she would buy two as one was never enough. I was excited for the change and I went home and told my mother that she can save money as I no longer need pads."

Since receiving her menstrual cup in June, Rhoda has used it every month. "My favorite things about the cup are no leaking, saving money, and freedom at school."

Attending the menstrual cup training was not the first time Edwish heard about the product. She said, "My sister was part of the initial trial and when she brought it home, she said to me that one day, I would have one. When I told her I had received one, she was thrilled as she understands how great it is, and it means that our mother can save money. I hope my younger sister will receive one too."

Edwish rated the top three things about the cup as being that it saves money, doesn't leak and is easy to clean.

Chiomba Primary School



We introduced you to Grace in the interim report. She is 14 years old and in Standard 6 at Chiomba Primary School. She was using disposable pads as she did not like using cloth as it caused chafing. However, she and her classmates say that when they used pads or cloth, there was an odour.

We are delighted to share that Grace has now received a menstrual cup.

Her aunt, Veronica, also received a cup as she is part of the Mother's Group at the school. Caring for her niece since Grace's parents died, she said, "Grace only started her periods this year so I will support her with using the menstrual cup. We will learn together."

Since receiving the cup Grace said her favorite things about it are that it is convenient, there is no leaking, and it is comfortable. Veronica said that it was convenient, and easy to use and clean.

Memory is a primary school teacher. She is 30 years old and a mother of two. Every month she was spending at least 3,000MK on disposable pads.

She said, "I found the training interesting especially as I could save a bit of money to spend on my two young children. We know that disposable pads are not good for the environment."



Bandawe Girls Secondary School



Shalom, Terah, and Alinafe received a menstrual cup before the summer holidays. Shalom said, "We attended assembly, and Matilda introduced herself to us and said why she was at our school. We were so excited, Matilda has so much knowledge and we asked lots of question."

I started using the cup and the best thing about using it was that I could sleep more easily and attend class without embarrassment. But my family were unhappy that I was using it, so I have stopped. They want me to be older so have said I should wait a couple of years."

Terah and Alinafe also received a cup but are not using it because they are scared. Terah said, “I was 12 years old when I got my first period. I use disposable pads, but I have not used the cup. My sister attends college in Blantyre and had heard of them - she is happy I have one, but I need more time to practice.”

This school had the highest number of girls not using their cups. With 150 schoolgirls per year group, it was the largest cohort of girls in one school that we worked with. Although the training was split into smaller groups, our experience suggests that in the schools where there are fewer girls boarding, the majority seem to like the cup and support the few that are struggling. In this school, the girls are already receiving money for pads from their parents, and there is less peer encouragement to try something new. Our plan is to run an additional training session for those girls who are worried about the size of the cup and how to insert it or remove it and then continue with the next follow up to monitor progress.

Mwaya Primary School

One of the unexpected challenges we experienced was some cups being stolen from girls sleeping at schools during exam revision times.

Esther, Nyles and Dorica were part of the initial trial of 250 schoolgirls. They were all sleeping at Mwaya Primary School as they were taking revision classes ahead of their final end of school exams.



Esther explained, “When students write their exams during primary school, they stay at the school for a couple of weeks to study. During this time, the cup that I had been using for almost a year was stolen. I woke up one morning realising I had my period but when I went to my bag, the cup was missing. This happened to Nyles and Dorica too.”

The schoolgirls were upset as they knew they would have to buy pads again. However, we have now been able to replace their cups.

Rebecca, one of our trainers, called a meeting to reiterate to the schoolgirls that not only is it unacceptable to steal, that it is also unhygienic too.

Ripple Africa Staff Feedback

We have spoken to our teams across different projects who received menstrual cups and here is what they had to say:



Victory is a coordinator in Nkhotakota District.

She said, “Menstrual cups are a total win for me as they're easy to use, super comfortable, and can be reused for years. Plus, they're perfect for our active lifestyles. There are no leaks so no worries. And let's be real, they're a great way to reduce waste and save some cash. I've been using mine for a while now, and I'm never going back to pads.”

Mercy, Senior Project Manager for our Fuel-efficient Cookstove project, loves her menstrual cup.

She said, “I wasn't sure about the cup when I first heard about it but after using it for the first time, I felt really comfortable, and I was able to work the whole day. I like that it is reusable as it is saving me money and it is environmentally friendly as I just wash it and use it again.”



Pilirani is a coordinator in Mzimba District.

She said, “I've used the cup for four months now and I never worry about leaks on long field trips. I feel very confident in meetings, and it has helped me save money too. Thank you!



Charity is a coordinator in Mzimba District.

She said, “There is no more chafing or discomfort since using the menstrual cup. It is comfortable and easy to use. I am reducing my environmental footprint as I have reduced waste, and I am able to save money.”



Brenda is a coordinator from Mzimba District.

She said, “I like the Cup because it has reduced my spending on sanitary pads every month and it has improved my menstrual hygiene practices. I am now better able to track my menstrual flow, and the Cup is very convenient especially when I'm at work.”

Rhoda is a coordinator in Mzimba District.

She said, “I was skeptical at first, but it's been a game-changer. I love how it reduces waste from disposable pads or tampons, and it is cost-effective. It can be uncomfortable to remove but overall, I am glad to have one as I have the freedom to move around and I have less anxiety about leaks or stains. I think it has reduced the stigma around menstruation, and I am able to participate more in daily activities.”

