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PRIDE NO SHAME PROJECT UPDATE

Scaling our impact

Since its launch in Rwanda in 2019, PrideNoShame, an initiative of Friends of Humanity, has worked to address period poverty by producing and distributing UZIMA sanitary pads, eco-friendly and biodegradable menstrual products made locally by refugee women for vulnerable women and girls.

Over the years, the project has demonstrated that menstrual health, women's empowerment and sustainable local development can go hand in hand. More than 1.15 million sanitary pads have been distributed and donated, 78 schools have been reached through menstrual health education and awareness programmes, and employment opportunities have been created primarily for Burundian refugee women.



A temporary pause

Our current production centre in Rwanda is temporarily closed as we prepare to scale up our production capacity. This temporary transition represents an important step towards the future of the project.

Over the past months, Friends of Humanity has been exploring solutions to significantly increase the production capacity of UZIMA sanitary pads. As demand continues to grow, we are now preparing for a new phase that will allow us to produce on a much larger scale—not only to meet the needs of women and girls in Rwanda, but ultimately to expand our impact across Central Africa. To make this possible, we are currently in discussions with machinery manufacturers and suppliers in Europe to identify the most suitable automated sanitary pad production machine for the next stage of PrideNoShame.

Automation without replacing women

The introduction of an automated production machine is intended to increase production capacity and efficiency while preserving existing jobs and creating new employment opportunities, particularly for refugee women.

Women's empowerment remains central to the project. PrideNoShame was built around the idea that women should not simply be beneficiaries of a humanitarian project, but active participants in building sustainable solutions and creating economic opportunities for themselves and their communities.

As production grows, refugee women will continue to play an important role across different stages of the value chain, including product handling, quality control, packaging, logistics and distribution. The long-term objective is not only to preserve existing employment, but also to create new job opportunities and strengthen women's financial independence and autonomy.

Preparing a new production facility

Scaling up production also requires a larger and more suitable production space.

The automated machine we are considering will require a facility capable of accommodating a more advanced and higher-capacity production line. We are therefore exploring different options for the future PrideNoShame production centre, including the possibility of constructing a new facility designed specifically for the needs of this next stage.

This new infrastructure will be a major investment in the future of the project and will help establish Rwanda as a production hub capable of serving a growing number of women and girls beyond borders.

Strengthening local partnerships

Another important development for PrideNoShame has been the strengthening of our partnership with the Rucci Legacy Foundation (RLF), a trusted local organisation specialised in healthcare, particularly for women and mothers.

By working closely with the RLF, we aim to strengthen our understanding of local needs and ensure that our activities continue to reach the women and girls who need them most. The partnership is intended to support PrideNoShame as a model for women's empowerment and long-term social and economic sustainability.



Ensuring continuity

While we prepare for the reopening of production at a new and larger scale, we do not want this transition to create a gap in access to menstrual products for the women and girls who depend on them. For this reason, PrideNoShame is currently in discussions with several sanitary pad manufacturers and suppliers about purchasing sanitary pads in bulk. This interim solution will allow PrideNoShame to continue distributing menstrual products in Rwanda while the new production facility and production line are being prepared.

In the coming weeks, several suppliers will send samples of their sanitary pads to Rwanda for local evaluation and testing. These samples will be received and coordinated locally by John Uwayezu, PrideNoShame's local Director, together with Aline Kalima of the Rucci Legacy Foundation, our local partner.

The products will be used at the refugee camps and schools, as part of a local market study and testing process, allowing women and girls to try the different sanitary pads and share their feedback with us. Listening to their needs and experiences is an essential part of this transition. Our goal is not simply to find a temporary solution, but to ensure that the sanitary products we distribute are carefully selected to meet their expectations and preferences.



What comes next?

The next phase of PrideNoShame is ambitious, but our mission remains the same.

In the coming months, our priorities will include:

- Finalising discussions with machinery suppliers and selecting the most suitable automated production machine.
- Securing the investment and funding required for the new scaling-up phase, estimated at around USD 6 million.
- Identifying or constructing a new production facility capable of hosting the larger and more advanced production line.
- Evaluating sanitary pad samples from selected suppliers through local testing and market research in Rwanda.
- Continuing the distribution of sanitary pads during the transition through bulk purchasing from carefully selected suppliers.
- Protecting existing employment opportunities and preparing to create additional jobs for refugee women as production expands.
- Increasing access to affordable and environmentally responsible menstrual products across Rwanda.
- Preparing for long-term expansion into Central Africa.

The same mission, on a larger scale

PrideNoShame has always been about much more than sanitary pads. It is about ensuring that no woman or girl is held back from education, work or opportunities because of her period. It is about challenging stigma surrounding menstruation. It is about creating dignified employment opportunities for refugee women. And it is about building sustainable solutions that can have a lasting impact. As we prepare for this next chapter, our ambition is growing, but our values remain unchanged.

UZIMA means life. And as PrideNoShame moves towards a larger and more sustainable production model, we remain committed to putting women, dignity, employment and empowerment at the centre of everything we do. This is not a pause in our mission. It is the beginning of our next chapter.

