Reviewer’s report

Title: Soiling, soap, and support. A qualitative understanding of the effects of reusable sanitary pads and puberty education: Implications for future research and practice.

Version: 1 Date: 31 May 2017
Reviewer: Nancy Muller

Reviewer’s report:

I appreciate the authors' detailed responses to my comments and incorporation of feedback from my initial review.

- With regard to my use of the term "improved cloth", this was to distinguish new cloth and the pads made by the girls from reused cloth rags.

I accept this paper as revised but recommend changes in the Implications for Practice section as noted below:

-Pg 24, lines 22-24 of Revised Track Changes version - Implications for Practice. I am not clear where this recommendation comes from. Evidence points to the benefits of improved latrine and water facilities in schools for effective menstrual hygiene. This should be independent of the second point, which seems like an unusual conclusion to draw. I am not aware of serious recommendations that girls should be encouraged to wash absorbents at school. If this is true in Uganda, that can be stated. If not, I do not see how this would be the conclusion. The point has already been made (lines 20-22) that girls are comfortable washing absorbents at home. That seems to be the relevant point.

- Pg 25, lines 2-5. If girls lack of sufficient means of cleaning their absorbents is a key finding, the solution may not be to provide them with soap. Is soap provision a one time offer that accompanies the AfriPads or does the school provide girls with soap ongoing? How do we know the girls get and use the soap for their pads? For reusable cloth pads to be used effectively, data is needed on the minimal level of washing/drying that will disinfect them - if that is the agreed upon level of cleanliness. That could be use of cold water, warm water, boiled water, sun drying, soap, water from a clean source, bleach or some combination of these. For cloth pads to be adopted at scale, there need to be evidence-based standards for maintaining cleanliness.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:
Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal