SAATHI

INDIA

PRESENCE: India, United States of America.

Saathi manufactures 100% biodegradable and compostable pads. It creates a circular economy model in the hygiene industry establishing itself as a sustainable consumer packaged goods (CPG) company.

Saathi is looking for:
- Investments (USD 2.6 million in debt for equipment and USD 2.4 million in equity for international expansion).
- Partnerships for distribution with multinational corporations in the CPG sector, UN agencies, and the Government of India.

CHALLENGE

With only 18% of women using sanitary pads, women in India currently generate more than 100,000 tons of pad waste each year. Pads are made of plastic or wood pulp, which causes women skin irritation and is harmful to the environment. In fact, plastic pads take 600 years to degrade and are burned for disposal, generating CO₂ and toxic fumes. It is estimated that in average an Indian woman generates 120-150 kg of sanitary pad waste in her life.

SOLUTION

Saathi has developed 100% biodegradable and compostable sanitary pads made from banana fibre, which is one of the most absorbent natural fibres, and abundant in India. Unlike wood pulp or cotton, it is an agricultural by-product and does not require additional land usage. These all-natural pads do not contain bleach or chemicals, in order to minimize skin irritation and avoid the release of toxins into the environment upon disposal.

Saathi pads degrade within 6 months of disposal, 1,200 times faster than conventional pads, and eliminate the need for incineration, reducing CO₂ emissions. The pads are also 55% cheaper than other premium health-conscious products, 100% natural, chemical free, more comfortable to skin, and more absorbent. The pads are also provided at a subsidized rate to low-income women who do not have access to sanitary pads through partnerships with NGOs. Furthermore, Saathi sets different price levels in urban and rural areas in order to facilitate rural adoption.

“I would consider the venture as a potential unicorn, giving its market potential, the environmental and social benefits and its exciting business model.”
– Victoria Smaniotto, Head of Outreach, Solar Impulse Foundation.

The company’s sales strategy includes both B2B and B2C, with B2B distributors and retailers in and outside India. For B2C, the venture focuses on digital marketing, public relations including media exposure in Vogue, Elle India, Forbes, Fast Company, Entrepreneur India, Bloomberg Quint, Times of India, CNN and NBC among others.

IMPACT

Since inception, Saathi pads sold more than one million products. The company combines the environmental impact of the reusable pads with clear social benefits for end-users and communities. Saathi buys agro-waste from banana tree farmers, who can earn extra income by selling the waste which normally would have been thrown.

Saathi measures its impact with the Impact Management Project method. In the last 3 years, the company’s impact was:
- 30 Metric Tons of CO₂ emissions saved
- 25 Metric Tons of plastic waste saved
- USD 77,000 in farmers’ income created
- 2,000+ jobs created
- 7,500 women who experienced rash-free periods
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

66% of women in C-suite positions
77% manufacturing and distribution jobs held by women

Saathi pads are chemical-free and do not harm women’s health as they do not cause any irritation: there are no carcinogens so no chance of getting harmful infections or skin related problems in the long-term.

The company employs women from underserved communities to manufacture sanitary pads. Women who work at Saathi’s factory gain autonomy by earning an income, and they are more likely to invest in children education, improving access to education for boys and girls. Furthermore, women are also earning by selling pads in their communities at a subsidized rate, consequently increasing WASH coverage.

SCALABILITY

The potential for scalability of the venture emerges from market trends: 26% of world’s population menstruate at any given time, and 10,000 pads on average are used by a woman over a lifetime.

The Total Addressable Market (TAM) for sanitary pads in India alone is estimated at USD 550 million, and USD 20.5 billion worldwide. The Serviceable Available Market (SAM) is 7 billion pads, and the eco-friendly market is 700 million pads. This is because even though 81% of Indian consumers want eco-friendly products, only 10% are willing to pay a premium. Furthermore, 58 million women in the US are using sanitary pads, and 60,000 of them are looking to switch to an alternative product.

Saathi expects to capture 5% of India’s eco-friendly pad market and plans to expand to the US by setting up an automated manufacturing factory and making new staff hires in sales, marketing, supply chain, research and development.

FINANCIALS

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<th>Annual Revenue (USD)</th>
<th>EBITDA (USD)</th>
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<td>217,000 (2019)</td>
<td>11,400 (2019)</td>
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INVESTMENTS

Saathi has experienced 67% of compounded growth over the past 3 years. From 2015 to 2019, Saathi raised USD 550,000 in grants and USD 205,000 in equity funding. Investors and granters included Katapult Ocean, Village Global, Pipeline Angels and Expo Dubai.

Saathi is currently looking for USD 2.6 million as an equipment loan and USD 2.4 million in equity for meeting the demands of launching in the US and upgrading its factory in India to a fully automated system.

PARTNERSHIPS

Saathi strategic partnerships include a collaboration with Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation to launch the One Million Pads Programme in Jharkhand (India) and to provide Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) education via workshops. An additional partner is Repurpose Global, with whom the company is launching the extension of One Million Pads Programme in Gujarat (India) and distributing sanitary pads to underprivileged women.

AWARDS

FOUNDER

Kritsin Kagetsu is the Co-founder of Saathi Pads. She was part of the Social Entrepreneurship programme from INSEAD and holds a Bachelors in Mechanical Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

MORE INFORMATION

Website: www.saathipads.com | Facebook: @SaathiPads
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