MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

THE GENDER EYE

SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE GENDER EYE ON MENSTRUATION MANAGEMENT: INNITIATIVES AND INNOVATIONS IN UGANDA FOR THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT. -14TH -15TH AUGUST 2014

MENSTRUATION MANAGEMENT

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EDITORIAL

Every year a new cohort of learners reaches puberty. Yet, despite the urgent and recurring need, there is little systematic and comprehensive guidance on this vital subject for all of us key stakeholders.

Menstruation is a particularly salient issue because it has a more pronounced effect on the quality and enjoyment of education than do other aspects of puberty. It involves a learning component as well as elements affected by the school environment and infrastructure. These include access to menstrual hygiene materials, latrines and places to change, safe water and sanitation, and good hygiene practices like hand washing with soap. Without these, the school environment is unhealthy, gender discriminatory and inadequate.

A healthy school environment – one in which healthy norms and practices can be created and reinforced covers both the physical and the social setting. It refers to facilities such as safe water, latrines, sanitation and hygiene, but also to an educational setting where learners and staff feel secure and comfortable.

Since the introduction of the UPE program in 1997, the Ministry of Education has adopted various strategies to ensure that the school environment is conducive for all learners. School environments have been engendered in terms of practices, school personnel, as well as infrastructure development.

The Ministry has also gone ahead to produce materials for children as well as teachers to ensure that they both have enough information and knowledge on how to handle, manage and support girls during menstruation.

Several development agencies and civil society organizations are also supporting the ministry’s initiatives through a number of programs to support young girls in school to cope with the challenges that come with menstruation.

This special issue of the Gender Eye shares, some of the good practices, interventions, innovations and initiatives around Menstrual Hygiene Management.

TOGETHER WE CAN BREAK THE SILENCE ON MENSTRUATION. IT IS EVERYBODY’S BUSINESS!

READ ON!

By Margaret Kasiko
(MoES/Gender Technical Advisor)
KEEPING GIRLS IN SCHOOL: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH BY MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

The on-set of menstruation highly contributes to the drop-out, absenteeism and low completion rates for girls in Uganda, and compromises the quality of education. This is because many girls lack the ability to manage it. UNICEF estimates that one in ten menstruating girls skips school for 4-5 days for every 28 days cycle or drops out completely. 4-5 days means losing 13 learning days equivalent to 2 weeks and 104 hours of school every term. About 23% of adolescents between ages of 12-18 drop out after they begin menstruating.

In order to accelerate girls’ full and equal participation and retention in primary schools, the Ministry of Education and Sport developed the National Strategy for Girls’ Education in 2004. The strategy was intended to act as a point of reference for all stakeholders intervening in girls’ education. The strategy has been reviewed and provides clear strategies on how to address the various issues affecting girls including menstruation.

As an action to implement the National Strategy, the MoES has developed various interventions and among the many; A Menstrual Reader has been developed and has three sections;

- What I need to know about menstruation (including frequently asked questions and answers)
- How do I manage menstruation (including myths and misconceptions)
- Supporting girls and peers to manage menstruation

This Reader is being disseminated to various stakeholders including girls themselves. The reader will be launched at the National Conference on Menstruation Management scheduled for 14-15th August 2014.

Other than the National Strategy and the Menstruation Management Reader, the Ministry of Education has also developed several programs and materials to provide information to girls and all key stakeholders to give support to girls during menstruation. Girls have been empowered with life skills through clubs like Girls Education Movement (GEM), Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth (PIASCY) as well as the School Family Initiative (SFI).

In order to address health and sanitation issues, the Ministry is developing all school facilities to ensure that during that time of the month, girls don’t miss school because of sanitation issues. Guidelines have been developed to have soap and spare uniform in the school rest room/changing room. In addition, a number of schools have been provided with water facilities.

Senior women teachers have also been trained to give support to the girls not only during menstruation but also to help them to address other challenges related to growing and sexual maturation.

Social and cultural barriers have also been demystified through sensitization campaigns in schools by both the teachers and members of the school management committees.

The Ministry of Education and Sports has also developed a handbook for teachers on creating a safe school environment, to help girls stay in school even during menstruation.

Several NGOs and development partners are also supporting the initiatives by the Ministry through provision of sanitary pads, making of local re-usable sanitary towels as well as funding initiatives aimed
at providing information to girls on management of maturation and menstruation and these are well elaborated in this issue.

Implementation of these programs however, has some challenges as resources to implement all these initiatives are scarce. Nevertheless, we still believe that the myths around can be demystified and should not be a reason for girls dropping out of school in Uganda.

Some publication on creating safe learning environments and management of menstruation by MoES
By Nanyanzi Rosette
Gender Unit/MoES

EMPOWERING GIRLS TO ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS

ELECU is a national NGO that works with civil society organisations, Primary Teacher Colleges, and Local Governments to improve the quality of basic and vocational education for vulnerable children and youth based in Lango, Rwenzori and Teso sub-regions with funding from the Edukans Foundation. ELECU also engages in advocacy and lobby initiatives at local and national levels for policy influencing and social accountability in education. Current interventions with 14 grassroots organisations address gaps in 1 or more pillars of a quality school. This includes interventions regarding teaching, learning, the learning environment, the school administration/management, and the school community. Sharing good practices from the field based partners at national level and ensuring that copies of the recently published Reader on “Understanding and Managing Menstruation” are in the hands of girls in schools, has contributed to keeping girls in schools. Feedback from the children, including participation of boys has shown us what works and what does not work.

Key innovations for menstrual hygiene management include: targeting the teachers to build confidence of the girl child in school; often when they have missed a few days, they get left behind and may give wrong responses to questions in class; or may be shy and reserved due to a soiled dress the previous day that
attracted ridicule from classmates. We train teachers to respond to the special needs of children and to use positive reinforcement through child-centered approaches. Besides this, ELECU partnered with TPO Uganda in 2012 to implement a psychosocial support project. The intervention was designed to support education the two sub counties of Omoro South and Omoro North in Alebtong district, Northern Uganda. A key goal was to contribute to improved access and retention of pupils in schools to enhance primary education completion rates among girls since a key contributor of school dropout is inadequate management of menstruation. The target participants were school girls and boys; senior women teachers and mothers. The key entry point in this intervention was established school clubs under the Girl Education Movement and Senior Women Teachers (SWTs) since they play a big role in guiding and counseling especially of girl children in schools. It was important to strengthen their roles in supporting girls to open up on issues that affected them socially, sexually, physically. Mothers and care-givers to girls also spend a significant time with children at home and they were targeted as well.

Working in 25 schools, a gender audit was conducted in Alebtong, a subcounty where the roads are inaccessible during the excessively wet periods of the month. Only 5 schools had the required minimum standards for a learning environment. This gender audit was followed by a training of Senior Women Teachers and mothers on management of menstrual hygiene and making local sanitary towels using clean cotton cloth, cotton wool that could be securely kept in place using buttons. Following the training, girls then participated in monthly meetings with their mothers, facilitated by the trained SWTs. These meetings helped girls to begin a culture of opening up, promoting free sharing among the girls and the SWTs. Girls were encouraged to provide peer support to one another while boys were also orientated to the special needs of the girl child in school.

A total of 5,539 girls, 3,266 mothers and 25 senior women teachers were oriented from 25 primary schools; 1,912 girls reported receiving guidance and support from their mothers on girl’s issues like menstrual management before the training; while 72 girls reportedly lacked support because their mothers had either passed on, divorced or were addicted to alcohol drinking. As a result of bringing the boys on board, in Ebule Primary School in Omoro North sub-county, the boys constructed a changing room for girls. Unfortunately this hut was given out by the administration to a teacher for accommodation. However, with continued dialogue between the SWT, our partners and the school administration, the hut was reverted back to the girls by the new head teachers who was transferred to the school three month ago.

A quote from a pupil of Obangangeo P.S

“I used to get any dirty piece of cloth which was no longer of use to anyone. I would wash it at night where other people would not see and hang it in a dark corner in the house. I would just fold it and put on for the whole day without changing. When I go back home, I would wash it for tomorrow’s use again even if it had not dried well. Sometimes I would feel pain. But I have learnt how to make a better one which does not cause me pain when I use. Now I know that it is important to have many and change, wash and sundry”
There are still prevailing opportunities to improve retention and quality of education in northern Uganda. These include community support for education especially of the child; tracking of school absenteeism/dropouts; and increasing the retention, performance and completion rates of primary education cycles.

By Connie Alezuyo

**KEEP A GIRL IN SCHOOL FOR A PRICE OF A SWEET: MAKAPADS**

Menstruation for many girls means no more education. MakaPads therefore provides an effective, low-cost protection to every girl to be retained but also to complete their education. Makapads are made from papyrus and paper waste. The fibers are beaten, dried and softened using no electricity.
MakaPads are single-use, 97% biodegradable sanitary pads that were innovated by Dr. Moses KizzaMusaazi of Makerere University in 2006. The Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) has certified them since they meet the international standards for sanitary pads.

Most school girls begin their menstrual periods in primary four or five. This means that without proper sanitary protection they are likely to avoid school during their periods which is about 3-5 days per month.

Proper sanitary protection means sanitary pads, which are usually too expensive. But MakaPads are affordable; a packet of 3 costs between 300-500/= (Three Hundred To Five Hundred Shillings).

Research shows that a primary schoolgirl needs 1 pad during the day while at school which replaces a piece of cloth she would use as an alternative for each day. One pad at Sh. 100 is the price of 1 sweet.

In a 9-months year, a girl needs Sh. 2700-4500. This is the bottom line; where we have assumed that a girl improvises with other items whilst at home (evenings, weekends & holidays).

Makapads is not only pocket friendly for parents but also user-friendly for adolescent girls. “Let us keep a girl in school for a price of a sweet.”

Dr. Moses KizzaMusaazi / Makerere University

AFRIPADS: A COST EFFECTIVE WAY OF MANAGING MENSTRUATION

AFRIpads’ mission is to empower women and girls through business, innovation and opportunity. The core objective is to empower Ugandan schoolgirls to achieve their full academic potential by improving attendance rates. We are also committed to empowering disadvantaged women through employment; consequently our 80+ staff is almost exclusively female. By providing these young women with productive employment, AFRIpads’ employees have achieved financial independence; acquired technical
and business skills; and equally important, have a deepened sense of self-worth as a result of having job security. This has enabled them to value but also support their daughters/sisters with the basic requirements including sanitary towels.

As a Ugandan limited company, our workshop is located in the rural village of Kitengesa, Masaka District Local Government.

**Menstruation an issue for many girls**

Many girls and women find managing their periods a miserable experience. But for those living in developing countries, getting hold of affordable and comfortable sanitary products can be a huge challenge.

According to the United Nations, 1/10 African schoolgirls skips school or drops out of school entirely due to a lack of menstrual products and poor access to proper sanitation. This critical unavailability of sanitary products in developing countries is a major barrier to primary and secondary education for girl students, resulting in absences of up to 4-5 days a month.

Unable to afford proper menstrual products, many Ugandan schoolgirls have no choice but to rely on crude, improvised materials to absorb their menstrual flow. Girls’ makeshift options include scraps of old clothing, wads of toilet paper, and banana fibres, among others – all of which are ineffective and uncomfortable.

By manufacturing our cost-effective cloth sanitary pads, AFRIpads provides schoolgirls with complete menstrual protection for up to 1 year (12 menstrual cycles). The reusable design of our Menstrual Kits is comfortable, cost-saving, and environmentally-friendly.

Since AFRIpads started business in November 2009, over 300,000 Menstrual Kits have been distributed to schoolgirls in Uganda and the region. Enabling girls’ education is arguably the cornerstone of development and the gateway to the full participation of women in political, economic, and cultural spheres of life. By creating and marketing our washable menstrual kits, AFRIpads has enabled 300,000 females to fully access their universal right to education.

By 2015, we want to have impacted the lives of half a million girls and women. We also aim to double our work force by that time, as well as scaling up our production capacity significantly. As long as there
are many schoolgirls in Uganda and beyond, whose education and academic potential is compromised by the lack of menstrual products and generally by poor access to proper sanitation, AFRIpads will continue advancing its work to alleviate these challenges for the girl child!

*Girls in Moroto posing with their Afripads menstrual kits*

**BY Helen Walker/Afripads**

**MENSTRUATION MANAGEMENT: A WORTHWHILE PARTNERSHIP**

The January 2014 Rotarian – the official magazine of Rotary carried a feature on Menstruation by Rose George. The argument is basically that many girls and women are still ostracized and discriminated against; leading to being ‘left out’ of community life and self-development. In Uganda menstruation is one of the leading causes of truancy and drop out of school for girls.

Menstruation a natural occurrence, a stage in the lives of women which sounds hope for procreation has been turned against them! Male dominated society has turned menstruation into a discriminatory excuse - excluding girls and women from taking part in household chores, touching food, participating in cultural and religious festivities as well as enjoying their basic rights.

Girls face shortages or lack of sanitary wear simply because they are not in control of family budgets – men who have the power to allocate resources do not regard menstruation requirements as a family need. Many girls will miss school due to the fear of soiling their uniforms because of unsuitable and unhygienic menstrual materials.

Rotary has six areas of focus; Literacy and education being one of them. However education will remain a domain of boys if menstruation is not addressed to free girls to fully participate It therefore becomes a worthwhile partnership of Rotary Clubs and local communities to effectively address menstruation as they promote literacy and education for all.

This is a clarion call to all Rotary Clubs interested in promoting literacy and basic education to first ensure that menstruation and other gender related barriers are addressed and all children as well as women
can freely and fully participate in all spheres of life. Community groups and schools this is to encourage you to approach Rotary Clubs in your vicinity for this key partnership.

The most sustainable way to support vulnerable girls to manage menstruation is to enable them to identify ways that they are in charge of – for instance how to make their own sanitary towels from readily available materials; so that the supply remains. Also work with community, cultural and religious leaders to dispel the myths around menstruation.

The above two are key to menstruation management as we are dealing with a monthly issue, not a once in a lifetime one!!! And the factors around it are determined by those who hold power in society.

**By Florence Kanyike**
**Educationalist, Gender Activist and Rotarian,**

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**WORLD VISION UGANDA HELPS REDUCE SCHOOL DROPOUT AND ABSENTEEISM THROUGH THE GIRL CHILD INITIATIVE ON MAKING SANITARY TOWELS USING LOCAL MATERIALS.**

**About World Vision**
World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

**Mission**
“World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the kingdom of God.” World Vision started operating in Uganda in 1986 and currently has 53 Area Development Programmes and 32 grants implemented in 41 districts. The current priority areas of focus are Education, Health/HIV/AIDS, Livelihoods and Child Protection. Crosscutting themes include Gender, Christian Commitment, Disability, Environment, and Peace Building.

Like in many areas of Uganda school dropout and child marriage especially among girls have been major challenges in the Area Development Programmes (ADPs) where World Vision Uganda (WVU) operates. As an initiative to contribute to its strategic objective of contributing to equitable access and quality of education for boys and girls, WVU has adopted integration of skills trainings in making of sanitary towels using locally available materials and life skills on sexuality, reproductive health and menstrual management in its education programmes. Gender equality is incorporated as part of the curriculum to
sensitize the target groups to challenge the socio-cultural norms and practices that undermine the girl child and promote positive masculinity among boys.

The capacity building sessions target senior women teachers, senior male teachers, CBOs, FBOs, mothers unions, women’s groups and girls as training of trainers who further extend the trainings to the schools. This has been undertaken in partnership with two of World Vision Uganda’s partners; the Girls’ Education Movement (GEM-Uganda) and the Civic Education Network. Using participatory approaches entailing group discussions, plenary discussions, sharing of real life experiences, role plays, picture codes among others, the skills trainings have been extended to schools and partners in Tororo, Busia, Kiboga, Nakasongola, Hoima, Pader and Oyam districts.

World Vision also focuses on other interventions to contribute to reduction in school dropout, child marriage and early pregnancies. According to David Wamboko, the World Vision Manager based in Tororo, World Vision in partnership with the district local government, have facilitated processes of creating awareness on gender and child protection policies in the district and empowering women, men, girls and boys to participate in education projects, as well as economic development interventions for improved household incomes.

He appeals to the district leadership and other stakeholders to enforce policies to end early child marriages and all other child sexual abuses which he says have led to increased cases of school drop outs, unwanted pregnancies, child and maternal deaths, increased risk to contracting HIV/AIDS and limiting
their participation in education and socio-economic development hence condemning children especially the girl child to a lifetime of poverty.

Suzan Alamai, the District Probation and Social Welfare Officer, confirmed that through regular dialogues World Vision has empowered communities to appreciate their own projects and to be champions against negative socio-cultural norms and practices. Communities have been empowered to raise their voice on issues affecting them and this has created a strong link between them and the district leadership which has made them watch dogs of one another. She said parents have also been engaged to play their roles of ensuring that girl child completes primary education by supporting them with all necessary scholastic materials and feeding.

MORE TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT THAN MEETS THE EYE

A dictionary definition will qualify a holistic view to mean, that we are interested in engaging and developing the whole person. The explanation given indicates that this is undertaken at different levels, physical, emotional and mental. The concept depicts that the human being is multi-dimensional. We have conscious and unconscious aspects, rational and irrational aspects. The Network for Water and Sanitation Uganda adopts this view in perceiving menstrual hygiene management in so far as promoting the girl child is concerned.

In 2013, when Prestwich conducted her study in Rukungiri South Western Uganda on menstrual hygiene management in schools, she discovered that 61.7% of the girls in schools reported normally missing
some days of school in a month because of menstruation. Prior to this study SNV in 2012 had conducted a study in 7 districts of Arua, Adjumai, Bundibugyo, Kasese, Kyenjojo, Lira, and Soroti only to discover 60% of the girls missed schools due to a similar ordeal.

In the 2012 National Learning Forum on School WASH organized by NETWAS Uganda, on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) concerns in schools; menstruation topped the agenda.

In partnership with Plan Uganda under the EC WASH Project, NETWAS Uganda undertook the task of targeting menstrual management, which was one of the negated challenges in the campaign to promote the girl child.

It is realized that a campaign to keep the girls in school holds more weight, if the girl child has a good enabling environment to attain her potential. Therefore, in 26 schools in Luwero, 22 in Kamuli district, 17 in Lira/Alebtong district and 19 in Tororo district; NETWAS Uganda made its intervention.

First was the act of embedding menstrual hygiene management (MHM) awareness in the schools, through school health club activities. According to the District Capacity Building Facilitator Kamuli district, Azuba Peter, this was not enough because preaching MHM without the required sanitary materials was not enough.

Besides this, Daniel Mwesige the District Capacity Building Facilitator for Tororo district argued that disposable pads were not a sustainable option, since pupils could not afford them.

“The disposable pads cost 2000 to 3000 shillings which a girl in the rural area cannot afford on a monthly basis, more to that, there is concern about their disposal, since the pupils use pit latrines and there are no incinerators in the schools,” Daniel noted.

In Luwero district, the Senior Women teachers acknowledged the challenges of disposing of pads noting, “Lined VIP latrines for girls were constructed without a provision of menstrual pad disposal and yet if the pads are disposed off in the latrine, it becomes very difficult to empty using a cesspool emptier.”
Soon the idea to train some school health club members and senior women teachers in making reusable pads was hatched, on the basis that if these were trained they could replicate the practice in the schools.

However, arising challenges noted, included the transfer of teachers trained in making the reusable pads to other schools as well as the pupils leaving the schools after completing primary seven. This challenge brought in the component of including the community development officers to be part of the team that should be trained.

After a successful spree of training in the making of reusable pad, the District Capacity Building Facilitator in Lira/Alebtong district, Cecilia Adyero noted, that whereas the training was appreciated, uptake and replication of the skills was not going to be as fast as needed. The missing component she pointed out was lack of materials at school level to replicate the good practice. NETWAS Uganda introduced the MHM kit, in form of metallic boxes each, containing 5 meters of cotton cloth, 5 meters of plastic sheet, a dozen of needles, 10 pieces of thread, a pair of scissors and a gloss of buttons.

The metallic boxes were distributed to the 84 schools, where girls began tutoring other girls in the skill of making reusable pads as well as stocking reusable pads at their respective school, to be used as emergency kits, incase one of them required them during the menstrual period while at school.

However, soon the challenge of pain and mood swings was brought to the discussion table by the District Capacity Building Facilitator for Luwero district, Flavia Kabasugga. According to Flavia even a reusable pad could not hold the ache a girl child felt during the menstrual period and this affected classroom performance as well as perpetrated absenteeism.

This condition is further elaborated on by Mellisa Conrad at Medicine net. Conrad explains that Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) which is a combination of emotional, physical, psychological, and mood disturbances occurs after a woman's ovulation and typically ending with the onset of her menstrual flow. She further explains that menstrual cramps are pains in the belly and pelvic areas that are experienced by a woman as a result of her menstrual period.

According to Conrad, menstrual cramps are not the same as the discomfort felt during premenstrual syndrome, although the symptoms of both disorders can sometimes be experienced as a continual process. She notes that many women suffer from both PMS and menstrual cramps and a survey shows that 90% of adolescent girls report having menstrual cramps.

Responding to this concern, NETWAS Uganda set out to include the Health Assistants as part of the initiative, with hope to create a link between the schools and the nearest health centres with hope that pain...
killers would be easily availed to schools. But according to Flavia, a lot more needs to be done including having targeted counseling sessions for the girl child regarding MHM.

Further responding to the challenges identified in the schools, NETWAS Uganda with support from the Austria Development Cooperation printed a guide on Menstrual Hygiene Management for pupils in primary school. This was shared in over 300 schools in the Central, Northern, Western, Eastern and West Nile region; illustrating some of the healthy lifestyles a girl can adapt to manage menstruation including the use of hot water to manage the pain.

With the efforts made, NETWAS Uganda has learned menstrual hygiene management goes beyond one aspect and that it affects the girl at all levels physical, emotional and mental. All levels need attention if the girl child is to have the best mental, social, physical and emotional disposition to perform better in school and keep in school. It is with this background that NETWAS Uganda is spearheading the first ever conference on menstrual hygiene management to champion the cause to advocate for better services in line with MHM as well as its prioritization, particularly for the girl child.

By Linda Lilian
Knowledge Management and Learning Coordinator NETWAS Uganda.

MENSTRUAL MANAGEMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN UGANDA

Definition

Menstrual Management (MM) involves managing the menstrual flow to prevent menstrual fluid from soiling the clothes, maintaining proper hygiene and cleanliness, eating a balanced diet to provide the body with essential nutrients and maintaining an active lifestyle while avoiding stress and tension.

According to the study on menstrual management in Uganda 2012 menstruation affects the majority of adolescent girls in school and this can potentially affects their education performance. According to this study, 57% of the girls pupils absent themselves due to menstrual periods in a year and over 60% of the girls pupils absent themselves from school during menstruation.

Lack of sanitary towels may cause absenteeism from school as girls resort to use of unhygienic materials that are more readily available and are not hygienically recommended for use. Girls in Uganda that use traditional materials such as cloth and old paper are always discouraged from playing sport or walking long distances for fear it would fall out.

Most schools lack sanitary facilities that have water points for easy access and use by the girls. Because of this inconvenience, many girls opt to stay at home during menses and this has implications on their achievement levels in the different grades.(Crofts 2012).

Current interventions by Ministry of Education and Sports

Irish Aid

unicef
The Ministry of Education and Sports in collaboration with the Ministry of Health developed the draft School Health Policy. The mission of the policy is to guide the design and implementation of sustainable quality health promoting initiatives in all schools Uganda. The policy will promote effective programming for health education in schools. The School health policy clearly addresses physical safety issues, such as ensuring the school has adequate water and sanitation facilities as well as a safe environment to protect learners and staff from physical and sexual abuse, harassment, discrimination and bullying. Although not yet passed, some components of the policy are already being implemented by various partners in education.

**Coordination**

The Ministry is also coordinating the efforts of various Development Partners and civil society organizations to expand facilities especially in primary schools. The UN-Joint Program on Gender Equality (UN-JPGE) through UNICEF has supported the provision of WASH facilities in the districts of Lira, Nebbi and Masaka. Facilities suitable for menstruating girls were also integrated into the WASH program. Other partners like SNV is developing schools as “change champions for WASH in the communities. This initiative has enabled many girls to remain in school during their menses.

**PIASCY Intervention**

The Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth (PIASCY) is the national programme designed to provide all school-going children and teachers with information on HIV/AIDS in order to prevent further infections, and to help both the HIV-infected and affected cope with the disease. It involves the use of textual material such as readers, and training manuals teaching about growing up and sexual maturation and the subject on menstruation and puberty to upper primary well covered under this programme. Over 1000 primary teachers have trained to effectively utilize the materials and impart the knowledge to girls in upper primary schools.

PIASCY student handbook of upper post primary; the handbook contains useful information; menstruation, Alcohol, drugs and cigarettes, media and pornography, Gifts, money and favours, puberty, understanding sex and its risks, RH, STIs

Through PIASCY strategies/activities girls of Kyotera Town Senior Academy of o-level attending sensitizing seminar on how to keep healthy with particular emphasis on menstrual hygiene
Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health intervention

The Adolescent Reproductive Health programme is one of the programmes implemented by the Ministry of Education and Sports with support from UNFPA. The programme aims at promoting and improving the reproductive health practices and access to health services for adolescents and mothers in conflict and post conflict areas. The programme is implemented in eight districts of Katakwi, Kanungu, Kotido, Kaabong, Mubende, Moroto, Oyam and Yumbe focusing in secondary schools. Teachers have been trained in promotion and supporting ASRH activities in schools plus linking school health programs to attached health facilities. In additional so many activities are being implemented on Sexual Reproductive Health where menstrual management is part. Such activities include dialogues with the parents school management committee, youth and elders to discuss family planning, supporting youth friendly services, radio talk shows focused on sensitizing and popularizing the youth friendly services including menstrual health management for girls in schools. Schools have established and promoted 46 clubs promoting reproductive health activities. UNFPA has supported the Ministry of Education and Sports distributed 4,800 girl kits in 24- schools (200 kits per school). Each girl kits were comprised of 2-packets of sanitary towels, 2-nickers, and bar of soap.
Integration of menstrual hygiene management into curriculum

The primary curriculum specifically addresses a number of relevant hygiene and sanitation issues as part of the general science curriculum. The primary curriculum is highly informative not only to the teachers but the learners also.

“My World and My Life” and “Welcome to the World” starts with me programme

The Ministry of Education and Sports is implementing “My World and My Life” and “Welcome to the World” starts with me as a sexual health and HIV/AIDS prevention programme supported by straight talk foundation, Save the Children and School Net in primary schools in the northern regions. The curriculum covers lessons on understanding your feelings, your body changes and menstruation, boys and girls, men and women, sexuality and love, pregnancy for girls and for boys, protect yourself as well as information on STIs and HIV/AIDS. The training manuals for teachers and students workbooks were developed and teachers trained. The manuals have been utilized within schools through using different teaching methods like presentations, games, tools guidelines and role plays.

Kasule Muhammad
HIV and AIDS Unit/MoES
Program Officer
**Girls Education Movement Supports Girls to Go to School and Stay in School**

Jessica, not her real name, a senior four girl attending Jeresar High School is among the 800 girls supported to stay in school and achieve an education by the Girls Education Movement Uganda (GEM).

The girls were provided two packets each of re-usable sanitary pads enough to take them one year, counseled on how to manage the period as well as the responsibility that comes with it in terms of adolescent sexual and reproductive concerns by the staff and the senior teachers in their respective host schools, where GEM U has been supporting them on a four-year bursary to study from senior one to senior four. This is one of the programme components of the United National Joint Programme on Population (UNJPP) supported by DFID through UNICEF.

The girls were selected from eight districts of Yumbe, Katakwi, Kaabong, Moroto, Kotido, Kanungu, Oyam and Mubende.

The Girls Education Movement focuses areas in education access, retention, quality and transition to be able to contribute to improvement in the educational outcomes. GEM U implements integrated programs that lead to the realization of these outcomes. Such initiatives include: Go back to school campaigns (GBS), water and sanitation promotion, mentorship and psychosocial support, enterprises and income generating support, vocational skills training, child protection and reproductive health. These programs are implemented through community mobilization, service delivery, capacity building, and advocacy.

Community mobilization to return children to school through a go back to school complain is such a major stride that GEM prides itself in. Led by children, community volunteers and school administrators, children undertake a mapping exercise for the children out of school. Equipped with the list / names of all the children out of school, the team conducts home visits to try to talk and convince children to go back to school or return to school, as well as engage the family heads to share the challenges so that they can work together to find solutions. In most cases, many girls are out of school because of the costs involved in educating them including sanitary pads.

Through the dialogues conducted at community with the children and adults, barriers and solutions are discussed then commitments for specific actions agreed upon. The children then return to schools, supported by peers through the GEM Clubs. The teachers at schools, the GEM Club patron are responsible for monitoring the returned children so that they do not drop out again. This takes interactive sessions at club level as well as counseling, provision of basic skills and materials like books and sanitary pads.
where there is need. The materials bought from the income obtained from the club and member contributions and occasionally from the school administration help to sustain but also support the neediest girls with scholastic materials and hygiene and sanitation support.

In first term alone a total of 5318 (2948 girls & 2433 boys) were traced and supported to return to school in 24 selected sub counties in eight districts of Gulu, Kitgum, Nebbi, Masaka, Mbarara, Lira, Nebbi and Kabong as shown in the attached table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masaka</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mbarara</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIRA</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaabong</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebbi</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulu</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitgum</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroto</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>1303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUB TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,433.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,948.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,381.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Picture of the girls and boys who returned to school in Gulu District (RIGHT) Girls giving their views during the International Day for the Girl Child (Left)*

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