

STUDY RESULTS REPORT

1. Introduction

The Sanitary Pad Pilot Project was an initiative that was developed and implemented by two partner organizations; members of the Global Bridge Network (GBN), an organization based in Japan, in partnership with Visionary Lady International (VLI), an organization based in Uganda. The Sanitary Pad Pilot Project which was carried out in Pallisa district Uganda, targeting young girls from classes P4 to P7, was conducted at the Canan Nursery & Junior Academy School and Opadoi P/S in the Agule County of the Pallisa district.

This project was made possible by the financial support from the fundraising campaign initiated among the Japanese community with the aim of providing the girls with re-usable sanitary pads as well as a training session on menstrual hygiene management. The Japanese people were able to raise 6,438,150 UGX to enable the project be implemented. With the money raised, reusable pads and cotton knickers were bought and given to the girls, those still in school and dropouts. The project was undertaken in June 2015 and an assessment survey to determine its impact was carried out in October 2015. In addition to these activities, the funds collected were put towards the administration of questionnaires among the project beneficiaries at the pre-project and post-project stages. Testimonies from various pupils and teachers were recorded to further supplement this information. The results of this research and the impact of the Sanitary Pad Pilot Project are documented in the following section.

2. Background

Prior to the actual activity dates, a team from GBN and VLI carried out a survey to establish the causes of girls dropping out of school. It was noted that most girls drop out of school due to lack of sanitary pads and their parents cannot afford buying them due to the economic situation most of them are in. The field team was able to carry out interview in various areas, schools, community leaders, Local counsel chairpersons, the elderly, Parents, students (both boys and girls) in order to roll out the findings. In many underdeveloped areas, the natural occurrence of a woman's menstruations has been observed to negatively impact her attainment of a primary education. The lack of proper sanitary facilities, the long distances which children must travel to reach their schools, the taboo nature of issues regarding reproductive health, the lack of materials for girls to

use during their monthly menstrual periods and a general scarcity of knowledge regarding proper menstrual health management techniques have been identified as major challenges faced by the schoolgirls. This often causes a drop in attendance among girls of a certain age, especially when compared to attendance rates among boys of similar ages who do not face these problems.

It has been documented that education increases returns to labor and reduces the segmentation of women into low-productivity operations (Bandera 2015). In this manner, poor school attendance among young girls due to the constraints mentioned above severely limits their prospects for the future. However, this problem always ignored in analyses of women's economic empowerment as it concerns girls of a younger age who have not yet established their livelihoods. For this reason, this project places focus on this often-neglected issue in the region of Pallisa, Uganda, in order to ease the burden of monthly menstruations on schoolgirls and assess the best practices for increasing reproductive health knowledge and gender-sensitivity moving onwards. Only then will the young Ugandan girls of this generation be on solid footing to aspire to grow into empowered women.

3. Analysis and study results

A. Free distribution of Sanitary Pads and the Rural Girl-Child relief in Uganda

GBN in partnership with VLI with support from Japanese donors supplied free sanitary pads to the primary school girls of menstrual age. The children were also taught basic hygiene practices. The following are the details of the supported students and the benefits from that support.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the children across classes. The target of the intervention was the children that had started experiencing periods and given that the intervention was done to primary school students, the supported girls are relatively young. Indeed, as shown in figure 1 below, most of the supported girls are aged between 12 and 16 years.

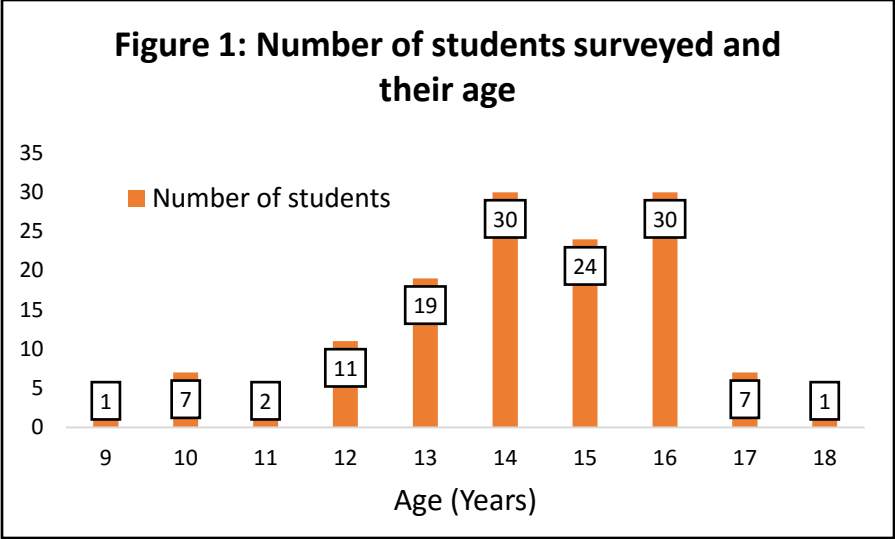


Figure 2 below shows the reported age at which the supported girls started experiencing menstrual periods. About 72% of girls reported that they started experiencing periods between 12 and 14 years. However, there are about 10% of girls who started when they were younger than 12 years, and about 15% of girls who started at the age of 15 and 16 years.

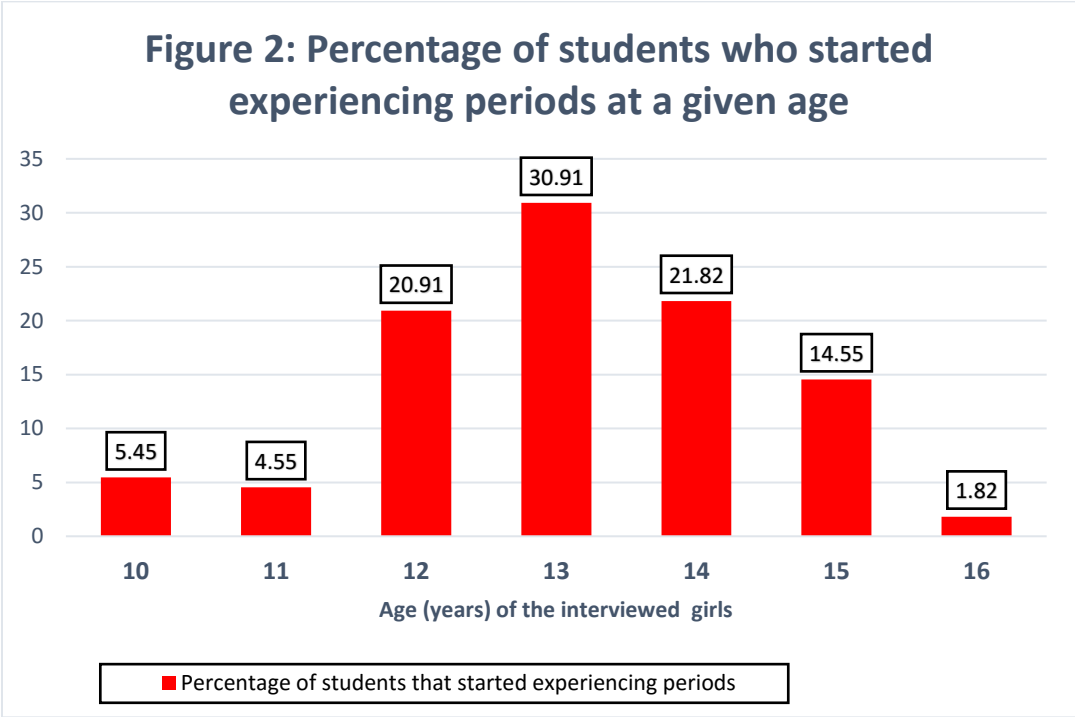


Table 1 below presents the number of students supported per class. Most of the girls were in class 6, followed by P.7 and P.5 in that order. There were also 8 students from P4 and 1 from P.3. This indicates that most students who experience periods are in higher classes in primary school and it could as well explain why the dropout rates are high in those upper classes as many drop out due to lack of sanitary facilities.

Table 1: Students surveyed per class

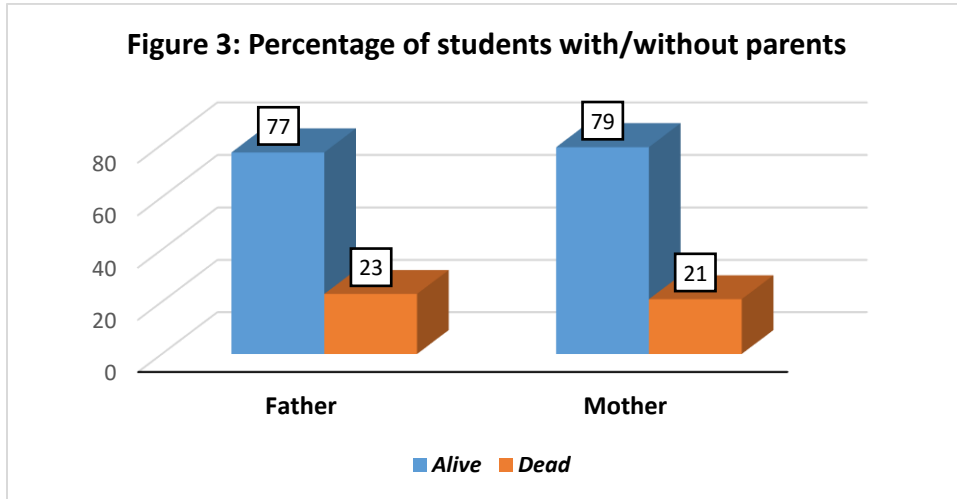
Class	Number of students per class	Percentage
P.3	1	0.75
P.4	8	6.02
P.5	34	25.56
P.6	49	36.84
P.7	41	30.83
Total percentage		100

Table 2 presents the general characteristics of the supported girls. First, the results indicate that most of these girls (70%) are day scholar meaning that they study while commuting from home. Secondly, these girls commute for an average of 57 minutes (almost an hour) to school. Also, majority of the supported girls eat only two meals per day. They live in large families with an average of 7 children per family.

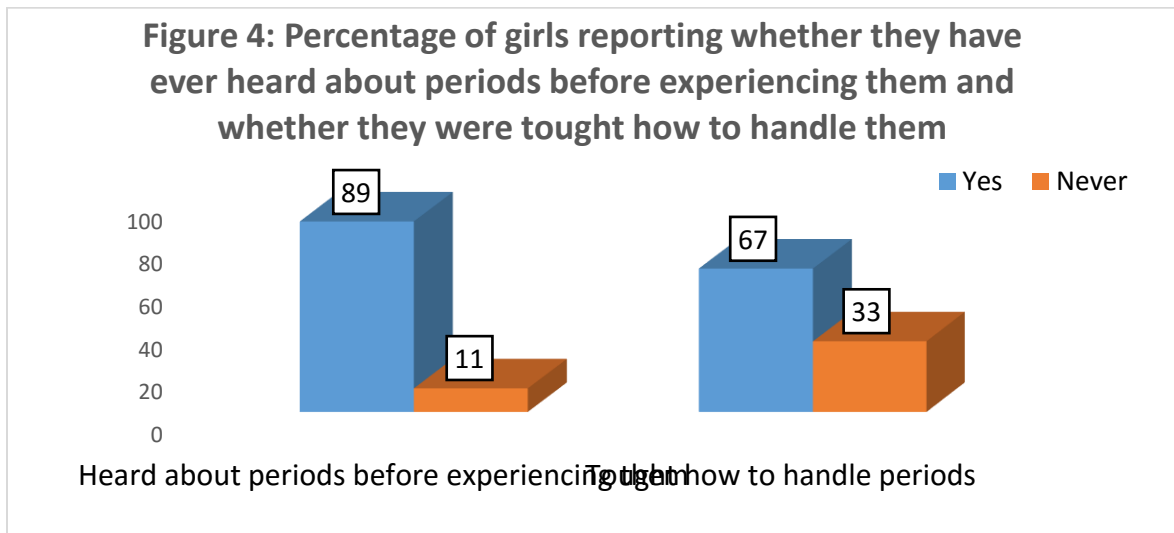
Table 2: Student characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Percentage in boarding section	30%
Minutes they take to walk to school	57
Number of meals per day	2.1
Percentage of students living with parents	79
Number of family members	9
If not living with parents, how many people they live with	11
Number of children in family	7

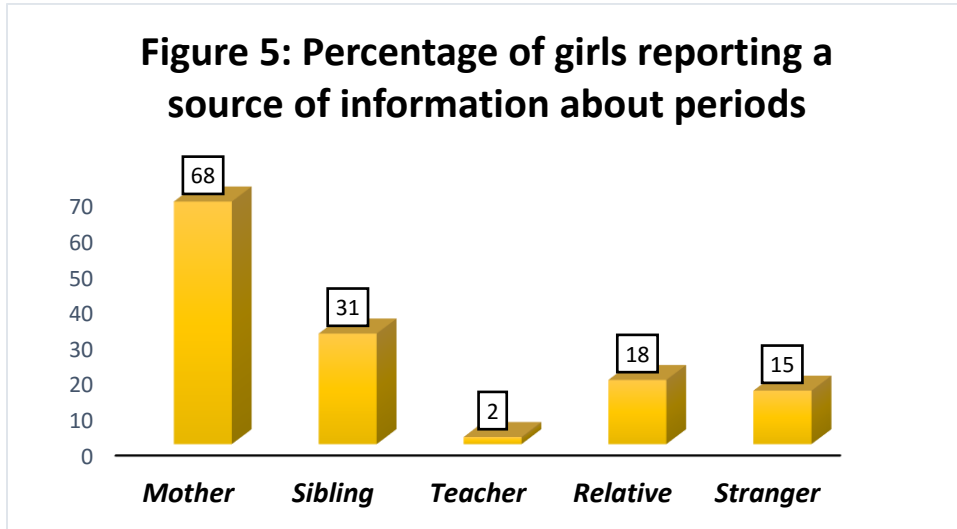
Figure 3 shows that a significant percent of children do not have their fathers or mother. For instance, 33% of the supported girls reported that their fathers are dead and 21% reported that their mothers are dead.



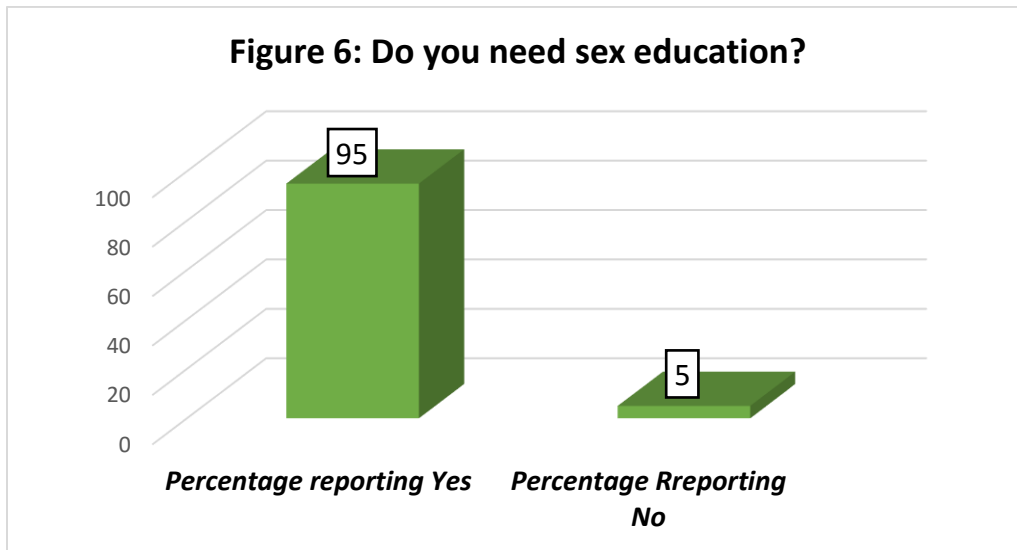
The study elicited information on sex education and how a girl-child is prepared for menstrual periods. For instance, figure 4 presents the results on whether the children had heard about periods and had been taught how to handle before experiencing them. While most girls (89%) reported that they had heard about periods, a few had been taught how to handle them. About 33% of the girls reported that they had not received any advice on how to handle periods prior to experiencing them.



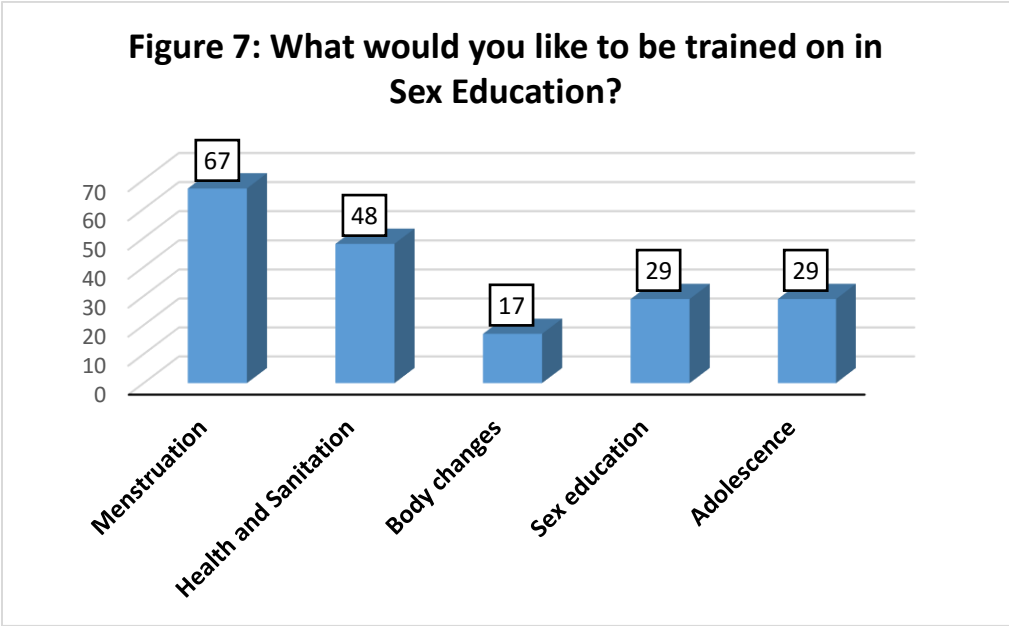
When we asked the supported girls on who had share information about periods with them, most reported that it was from their mothers and their siblings while a few (2%) reported that they got information from their teachers (see Figure 5).



We asked girls whether they needed sex education as 95 % of them reported that they need it (see results in figure 6).

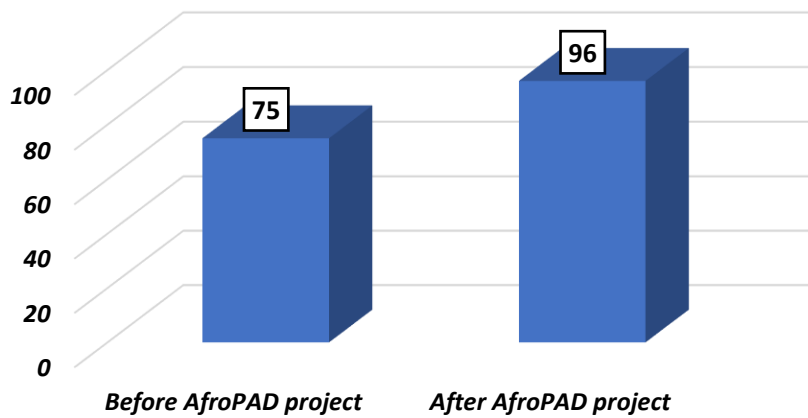


When asked what they wanted sex education to focus on, majority (67%) said that it should focus on menstruation and 48% said that they wanted to focus on health and sanitation. Other areas of focus mentioned included body changes, general sex education and adolescent life styles.



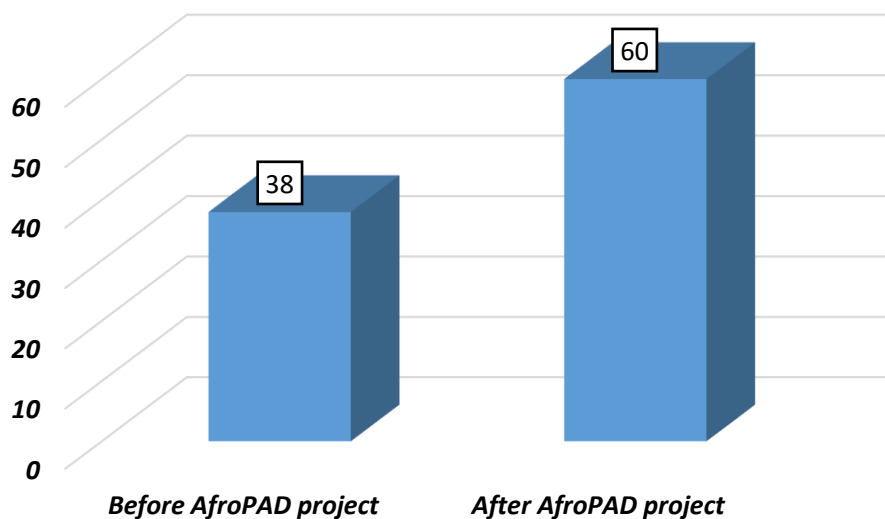
The study elicited information on whether the girls know about sanitary pads. This information was elicited before and after the intervention. Before intervention, 75% of the supported girls knew about sanitary pads while 25% reported that they did not know about sanitary pads. However, after the intervention, the knowledge about sanitary Pads increased. In the follow up survey, 96% of interviewed girls reported that they knew about sanitary pads (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage Reporting that they know about Sanitary PADS



In addition to knowing about sanitary Pads, the study elicited information on the use of Pads when in periods. Before the support, 38% of girls reported to be using sanitary Pads during the menstrual periods whereas after the intervention, 60% of the girls reported to be using sanitary Pads (see figure 9 below). These findings suggest that the intervention increased the rate of use by 22 percentage points.

Figure 9: Percentage Reporting that they use sanitary PADS when they are in periods



For the girls not using sanitary Pads, the study asked why they were not using them and most of the girls (71%) reported that it was because they did not have money to buy them. Other girls (17%) reported that they were ignorant about sanitary Pads, while the remaining girls cited other reasons such as lack of interest as they thought other alternatives can work as well as sanitary pads.

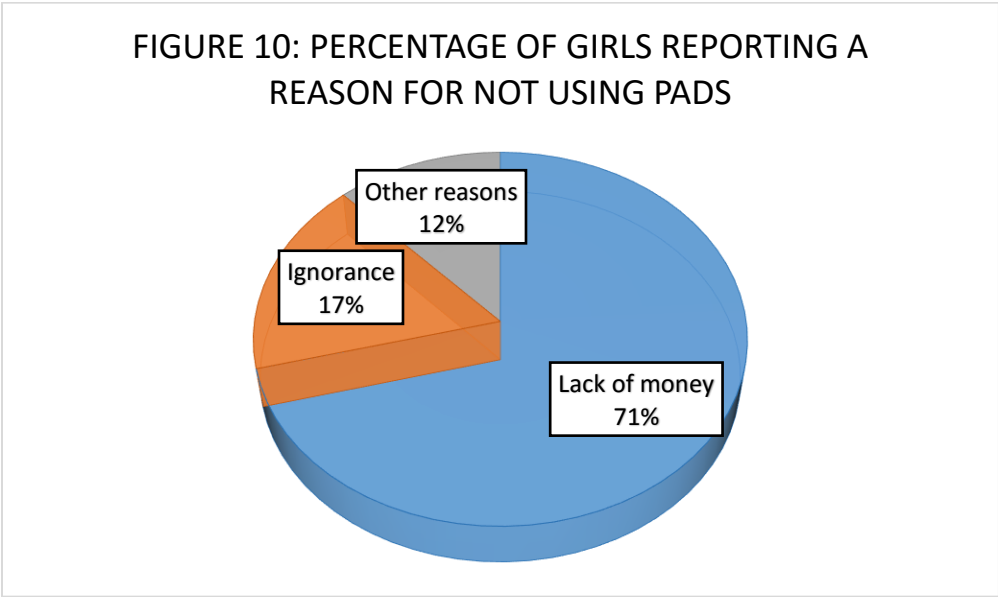
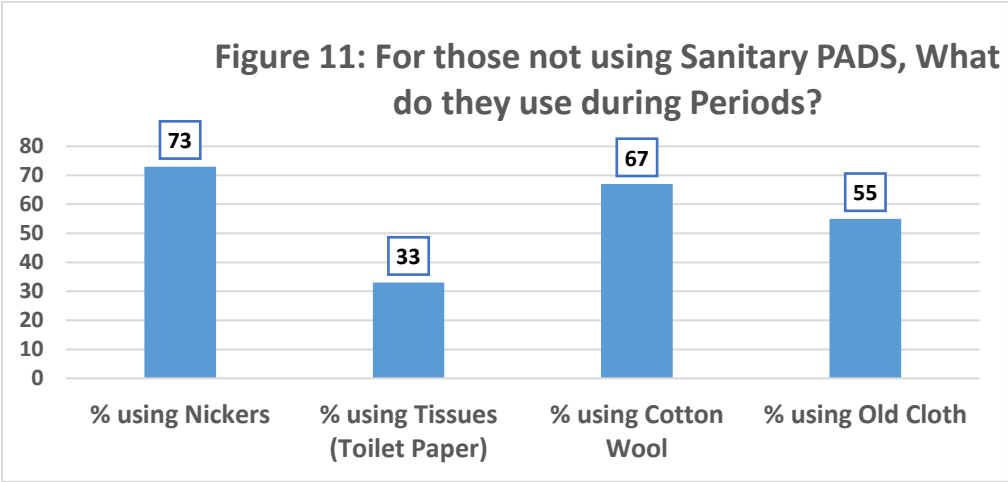
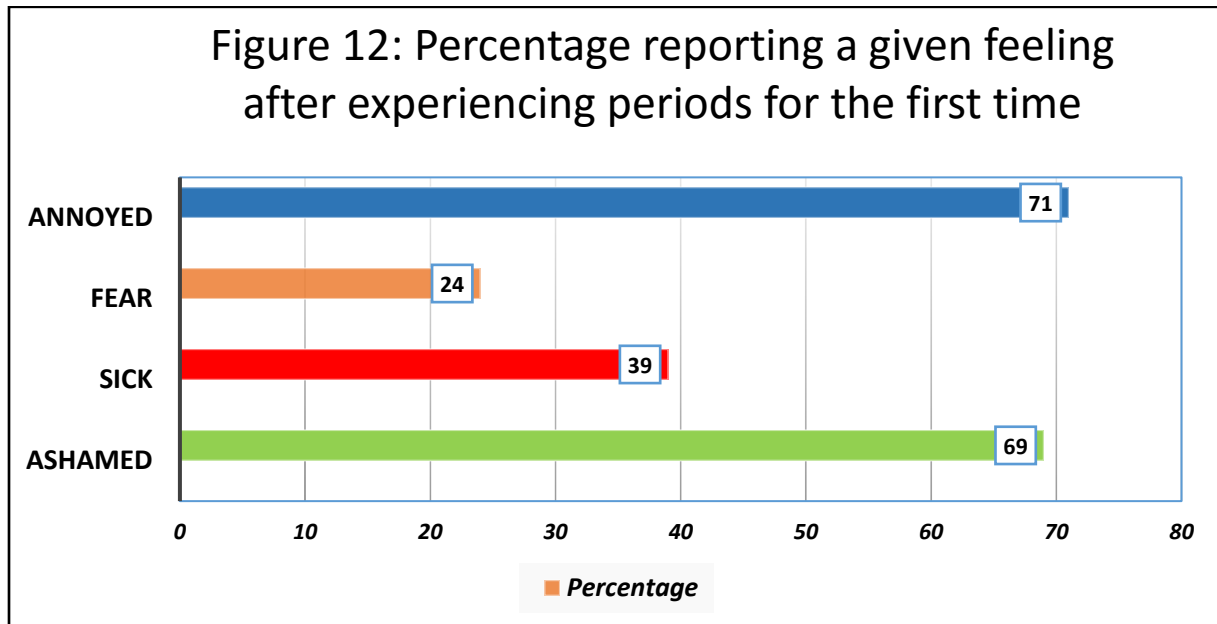


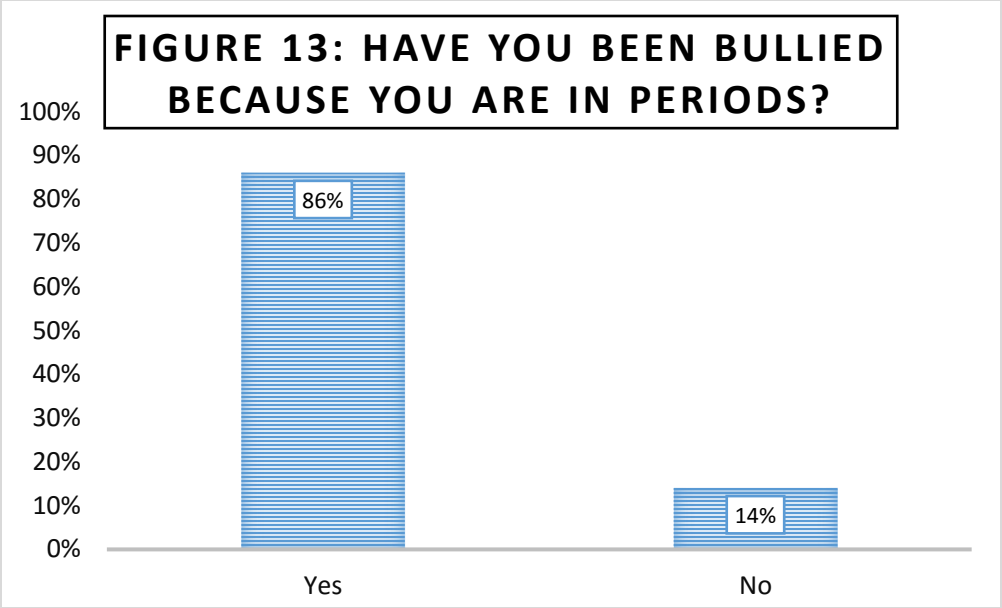
Figure 11 presents results on what girls who do not use sanitary pads use. Most of the girls who do not use sanitary Pads reported that they use nickers, cotton wool, old cloth and toilet paper, in that order. The danger with the means is that they are not clean and can lead to other infections.



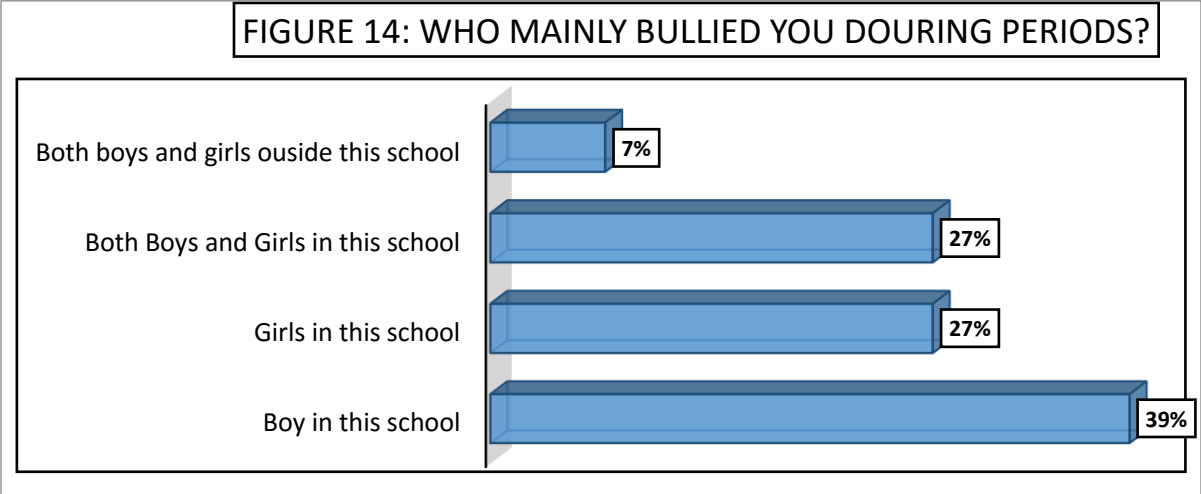
The study also asked girls how they felt during menstrual periods. Most of them reported that they felt ashamed and annoyed. The feeling of shame suggests that they had not gotten sex education and that their colleagues bullied them when they experienced periods. Other girls reported that they feared the menstrual feeling while others (about 40%) reported that they felt sick (see Figure 12).



The supported girls were asked if they have been bullied when they are in periods and 86% answered yes to the question (see Figure 13). This alludes to the fact that sex education is lacking both in schools and in societies where these girls come from.



When we asked about who bullies them most when they are in menstrual periods, majority (39%) reported that boys in the same school they were attending who bullied them. The results also indicate that the girls also bully fellow girls when they are experiencing menstrual periods (Figure 14).



To understand how menstrual periods affects these primary-school girls, we asked about school absenteeism during periods. For instance, we asked the girls the number of times they were absent because of menstrual periods a month prior to the survey. We asked the same question during the follow-up survey. The results show that many girls without Pads were absent for many more times

than those with sanitary Pads (see Figure 15). For instance, the number of girls not using sanitary Pads that were absent for three times and more are about 68%. However, those with Pads who were absent for 3 and more times are only 25%. This indicates that a simple intervention such as giving free sanitary Pads can significantly reduce student absenteeism.

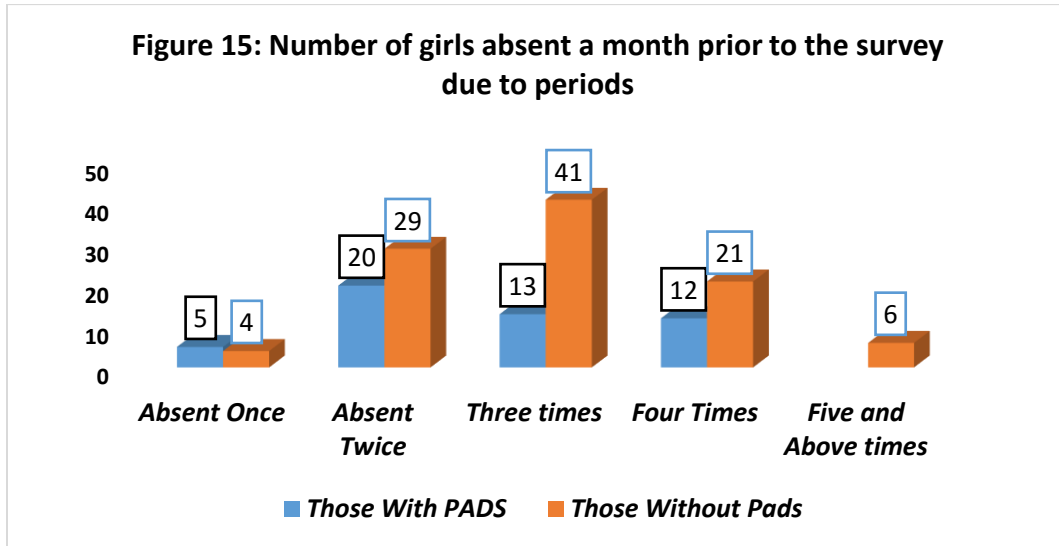
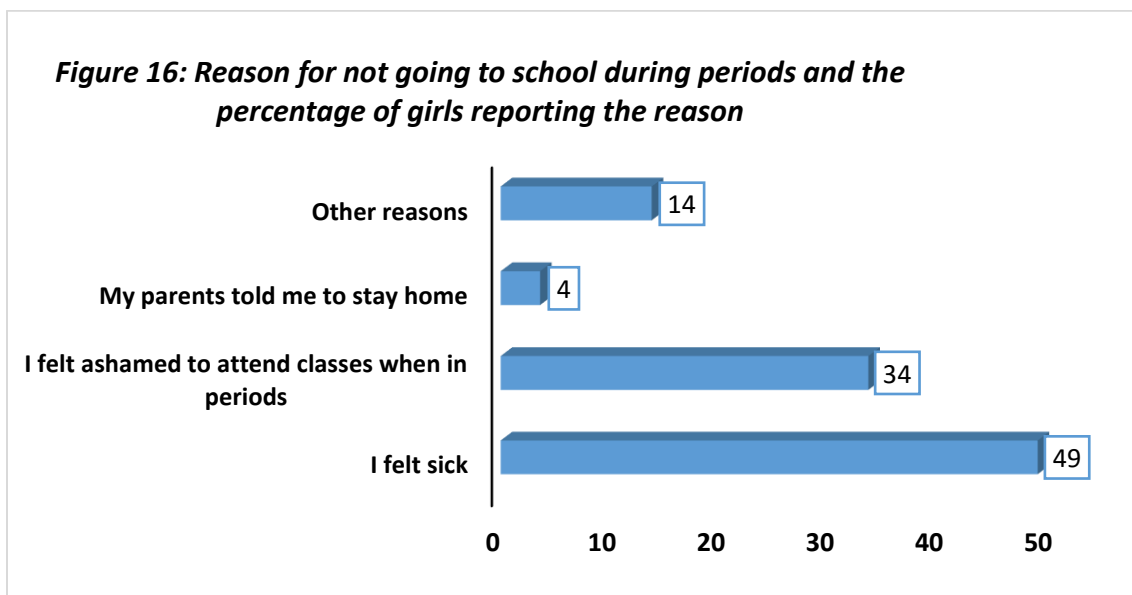


Figure 16 presents the statistics on why the girls do not go to school during menstrual periods. Majority (almost 50%) of girls reported that they felt sick. Other reported that their parents told them to stay home.



To investigate the challenges girls meet due to menstrual periods, we asked the girls to report whether they have missed exams because they are in periods and 45% of the girls responded in a formation. We also asked the girls whether the lack pf sanitary Pads was a problem affecting them and almost 90% reported that was a major problem (Figure 17).

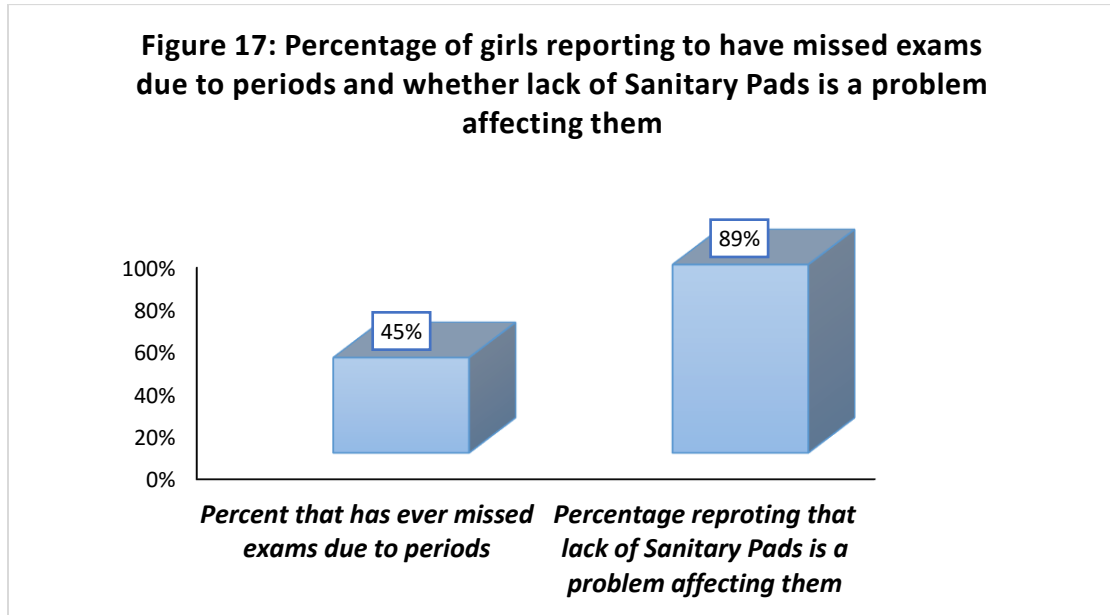


Table 3 presents the results on the student’s performance before and after the intervention with free sanitary pads. The study found that the average performance of girls significantly improved in the second term after free sanitary Pads, for both Math and English. Forinstance, in term one, the surveyed girls scored as average of credit 7.4 in Maths and 7 in English. The results for both subjects significantly improved to 4.9 for math and 4.4 for English. In Uganda’s education system, the best performance id a distinction One (D1) and the last is a failure 9 (F9). Therefore, credit four (C4) is a much better performance compared to (credit 7) C7.

Table 3: Average performance before and after Sanitary Pad project

<i>Average Subject Performance</i>	<i>Before project Intervention</i>	<i>After project Intervention</i>
Math Performance	7.4	4.9
English Performance	7	4.4

Note: The best grade is D1 and worst is F9.

Conclusion

The study results indicate a great need for sex education, and support with sanitary Pads. With regard to the impact of the intervention, the results indicate an after project improvement the use of sanitary Pads, knowledge about menstrual periods, and an overall improvement in Maths and English grades.

The study explored the characteristics of the students and found that 70% of girls are living with family and walk for an hour to go to school. Many girls who live with their family cannot access sanitary pads, when asked why they reported that they are expensive. This means that during the menstrual periods, these girls walk long distances to, and from school without proper sanitary pad.

Regarding sex education, 95% of the interviewed girls indicated that they need sex education and when asked what they want that education to focus on, 67% reported that it should be about menstruation. One of the interventions focused on sex education and the results of this intervention were observed in the post-project visit. For instance, the number of girls knowing about sanitary pads increased by 22% after the project. Overall, the results indicate that girls need to know about menstruation as well as its management with proper usage of sanitary pads. According to figure 9, 10, and 11, 62% of girls reported that they were not using Sanitary Pads before our intervention due to lack of money. They instead used cheap but unhygienic alternatives such as nickers and cotton. However, such unclean materials can cause them infection. Thus, after our intervention, 22% of girls are increased to use our provided reusable sanitary pads (AfriPad) which can prevent from infection.

The study also finds that girls feel ashamed and annoyed when they experience. This might be because their copleagues bully them. Indeed, 86% of the interviewed girls reported that they have experienced bullying from their colleagues when in periods. Surprisingly, the study found that it is not only boys that bully them but also girls. Therefore, sex education to both boys and girls can help reduce such bullying behaviors.

The study also found that menstrual periods affect school attendance and grade attainment because girls who are in periods miss classes and exams. After providing sanitary pads, we see the improving their performance of Math and English subjects.

In conclusion, our study finds that girls suffer because of menstruation because of bullying, and use of unhygienic materials. The study also finds that simple interventions such as giving reusable sanitary pads and sex education can greatly improve school attendance and education results.