

Improvement of school environment to combat Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) challenges to Stop Adolescent Girls' School Dropouts in Uganda project

Menstrual Hygiene Management & Sex education

Date: 20th/04/2017

Venue: Kibalinga Primary School (Time: 10:00am to 1:00pm)

Lwawuna Primary School (Time: 02:00pm to 04:30pm)

Date: 4th/05/2017

Venue: Precious Child Learning centre

Introduction

Menstruation is something very sensitive; SORAK and her implementing partner (Global Bridge Network) conducted a baseline survey with a purpose of enlisting situation of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and identified the existing gaps, challenges adolescent girls and senior women teachers face.

Challenges at target schools

The baseline survey at Kibalinga primary school, Lwawuna primary school, and Precious Child Learning Centre provided benchmarks for the interventions.

- ◆ Adolescent girls at **Kibalinga primary school** face the following menstrual related challenges,
 - Boys teasing them when they experience accidental menstrual flow.
 - Inadequate knowledge on how to effectively manage their own menstruation.
 - Inadequate infrastructure at Kibalinga makes it very hard to effectively promote MHM. These include wash rooms, only 3 toilet stances for girls.
 - Lack sanitary towels to use during emergency.

Our earlier interventions on MHM only reached 10 pupils from Kibalinga P/S (7 girls and 3 boys) we needed to cover a bigger audience who expressed interest and the urge to know about menstruation and their sexual rights.

- ◆ At **Lwawuna primary school**, the base line survey conducted identified issues including
 - Having limited budget to cater for sanitary towels to adolescent girls during their menstrual periods
 - Parents neglecting their roles of providing sanitary towels to their children
 - Schools having limited infrastructure (toilets and changing rooms) among others.

- ◆ The baseline survey conducted reveals MHM at **Precious Child Learning Centre** (NGO founded) is far better than Lwawuna and Kibalinga P/S (Government owned). Pupils who participated in the baseline expressed the urgent need to learn more about menstruation in order to fully promote MHM. Adolescent girls' sexual rights are being violated every day and some of the perpetrators are relatives, friends, local leaders and a few teachers. Young girls need to know how to report and defend themselves from sexual abuses

Children named the following:

- Bad touches like touching on the opposite sex's breast, waist, thighs, buttocks.
- Boys rounding up girls for forced sex
- Teachers asking for sex to girls
- Motorcycle transporters forcing girls for sex
- Older men in bars asking for sex from girls whose mothers own bars, etc.

Therefore, MHM and gender awareness including sex education sensitization is urgently needed to address the above key issues in order to create a good learning environment for the adolescent girls at all schools.

The following were the training objectives:

1. Have a clear understanding of the MHM and be able to explain it to their peers.
2. Understand their individual roles and responsibilities in MHM.
3. Equipping them with techniques on how to defend themselves from sexual violence and harassments.
4. Understanding the biological differences between Male/Boys and Female/Girls in a broader context

Topics covered

- Understanding a period or menstruation,
- Understanding the menstrual cycle,
- Roles and responsibilities of parents, pupils and teachers in MHM.
- Defining sex and its characteristics
- Effects of child marriage and early sex-Sexual harassment.
- Nature and forms of sexual violence and harassment.
- How to report/handle sexual violence and harassment.
- Forms of sexual abuse in schools which must stop and how to stop them.
- Sexual Violence and harassment by a Teacher.
- Sexual violence and harassments by other Adults.
- Helping a victim who has experienced sexual violence.

What they learn about MHM

Participants that included both girls and boys were instructed on the following;

- Age of onset of Menstruation period
- Menstruation as a sign of body growth and development among girls
- Menstruation being health and good for the reproductive health system of a girl

- Menstruation being an indicator that a girl can become pregnant if involved in unprotected sex
- How to keep clean during menstruation period
- What to use when experiencing menstruation period – the available options of padding oneself
- The manufactured sanitary pad and the reusable sanitary pads
- The advantages of reusable sanitary pads ;like being cheap in the long run, lasting longer, good for the rural poor who are far from the super markets
- Dangers of using unsafe padding materials –namely ;getting infections in the girls sexual reproductive system.

Facilitators:

1. Nakayi Florence-Executive Director JOYI-Uganda
2. Nnakiruuta Hadijah-Program Officer SORA
3. Muhamad Kyeyune-Executive Director SORAK
4. Muhumuza Adolf –Program Officer SORAK

Training participants by gender

All participants were drawn from primary four (p.4) to primary seven (p.7); the age bracket was between 10-16 years of age. The following are the participants basing on gender.

< Kibalinga Primary School >

Boys: 145, Girls: 172



Adolescents excited to list the forms of sexual abuse;
with Facilitator Florence pointing at one of them at Kibalinga Primary School

<Lwawuna Primary School>
Boys: 132, Girls: 165



Lwawuna P/S pupils listening to their roles and responsibilities in MHM

<Precious Child Learning centre>
Boys: 28, Girls: 59



Some Primary seven girls and boys benefiting from MHM training at Precious child learning centre

Training outcomes

The training achieved the following results;

- Participants were able to learn and understand MHM and its key concepts in menstruation such as menstruation cycle, menstrual cramps.
- Through experience sharing, participants gained a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in MHM.
- Pupils understood sex and the biological difference between Male/Boy and Female/Girl.
- Girls were empowered on how to defend report and end sexual abuses and violence both in schools and in communities they live in.
- Boys were able to mention their roles and responsibilities in MHM and sexual and reproductive rights.
- Boys realized that they have a role to play in promotion of sexual rights among girls. This involves reporting suspected issues of sexual violence plus defending girls.
- Pupils could mention where to report cases of sexual abuse and harassments

“This is interesting, I can now report rape and defilement cases plus helping my peers given these facts I have got” P.6 A girl student PCLC

“All along have been thinking that Menstruation is feminine think but I was wrong.... From today on wards am going to support adolescent girls using my powers as a head boy.....” P.7 Head boy PCLC



Pupils giving recommendations on what can be done to promote MHM at Kibalinga Primary School



Participants discussing the roles and responsibilities of key stake holders in MHM at Lwawuna P/S



Nagayi Rehma Lwawuna P/S giving some of the nature and forms of Sexual violence in plate 2 above



Children and teachers listen attentively to MHM training messages at Precious child learning centre

Recommendations and Way Forward

There is need to involve police department because sexual violence and harassment cases are handled at the police posts/ stations. By fully engaging the police it will help to reduce on the cases being settled outside the law