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Global Bridge Network

Improvement of school environment to combat Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)

challenges to Stop Adolescent Girls' School Dropouts in Uganda



Impact Assessment Report on Menstrual Hygiene Management among primary school girls in Kibalinga and Nabingoola Sub-Counties Mubende District

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report presents the findings of the impact assessment exercise on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) among girls from three (3) primary schools in Kibalinga and Nabingoola Sub Counties in Mubende District. The impact assessment exercise was conducted by Irene Murungi on behalf of SORAK Development Agency with support from Global Bridge Network (GBN) during the month of October 2017. It was specifically carried out in 3 primary schools in Kibalinga and Nabingoola sub-counties, Mubende district. This study set out to enlist the impact created by the project on girls Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) both at school and at home. The selected adolescent girls answered questionnaires, responded to key interviews as prepared by the team. The assessment also employed comprehensive interactions with parents, senior women and male teachers and school administrators on MHM issues on a basis of getting the impact created by the information shared by the project on addressing menstrual challenges that adolescent girls face both at school and at home.

1.1 The Project

SORAK implemented the Menstrual Hygiene Management and Reusable Sanitary Pad making in Kibalinga and Nabingoola Sub-counties in Mubende district. The project was guided by the goal to equip pupils, parents and teachers with knowledge and skills on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and making of reusable pads. The project was piloted in 3 primary schools in Kibalinga and Nabingoola Sub counties Mubende District. The study targeted Precious Child Learning Centre- an NGO operated for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), St. Josephs Kibalinga- government aided and catholic founded and Lwawuna Primary School – a government aided and Muslim founded respectively.

This impact assessment was aimed at evaluating the knowledge levels and attitudes towards menstruation, practices of Menstrual Hygiene Management among rural 'in school' adolescent girls as a result of the project intervention. This is aimed at assessing the value for the intervention and informing future interventions. The goal of the impact assessment therefore was to examine the milestones achieved by the Menstruation Hygiene Management project, and realize the related implication on menstrual challenges on school absenteeism among Primary school female students and how adoptive reusable pads has been among school girls.

1.2 Criteria for selecting the 3 schools

There are several contributing factors to girl child drop out of schools. Currently in Uganda, Menstruation has become a key driver to drop out of school. However, the existing social-cultural belief creates gaps between male and female. Most of the traditional and religious beliefs have played a great role in exposing boy children to opportunities and holding back the girl children in the domestic arena. Preparing them as home makers and mothers; thereby promoting gender imbalances between males and females. It was upon this back ground that the three schools were selected. It was aimed to establish the magnitude of Menstrual Hygiene Management problem on the Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC), and children from different religious backgrounds both in the Catholic and Muslim founded. This enabled the survey to bring out pertinent issues as presented in the findings section.

1.3 Gender and Age of the respondents

Menstruation and managing its related challenges are a gender issue. It is an issue that affects specific gender and it is influenced by age. Participants in the impact assessment survey were females drawn from primary four (p.4) to primary seven (p.6). It focused on young adolescent girls between 10-17 years of age.

1.4 The Impact Assessment Exercise

The impact assessment exercise aimed at finding out the impact created by the MHM project implemented by SORAK. This assessed the different interventions of the project including:- parent sessions, pupil sessions and making the re-usable sanitary pad for improved MHM in 3 schools. The impact assessment also proposes recommendations that will help future projects aiming at improving performance among adolescent girls.

◆ The specific objectives of Impact assessment were;

1. To assess the impact of the MHM project of girls' practices at school and at home.
2. To assess the impact of the re-usable sanitary pad making and utilization intervention in improving MHM among adolescent girls.
3. To assess the suitability of MHM interventions among school-going adolescent girls and boys, teachers, and parents.

1.5 Respondents for the Assessment

The assessment applied a cross-sectional approach. The study population was sampled from three primary schools; among female pupils of P4 and P7 between the ages of 13-16 years. The total selected sample size of the respondents for the assessment was limited to 42 respondents. Respondents for the impact assessment included 6 parents, 6 teachers and 30 girls participated in key informant interviews, 13 girls responded to the questionnaire. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also conducted in order to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible. FGDs complimented other methods, for example observation, one-to-one interviews and questionnaire surveys. Data collection was carried out on the 6th, 10th and 11th October 2017; and a total of 3 FGDs were conducted with a total of 7 participants in each lasting for 40 minutes.

Table 1: Participation of pupils in the assessment exercise

Parish/ Sub County	Village	Name of School	School Type	No of Informants
Key Informant Interviews				
Kibalinga	Lusalira	Precious Child Learning Center	NGO founded	3
	Kibaling	Kibalinga Primary School	Government	6
Nabingoola	Lwawuna	Lwawuna Primary School	Government	4
Focus Group Discussions		All schools		7
Questionnaires		All schools		13

Source: Field Data 2017

The impact assessment exercise administered all the tools to pupils, in order to get comprehensive and detailed information; in addition to getting coherence of the information generated during the exercise. The number key informant interview respondents was dependent on their availability. Administering questionnaires to eighty (13) adolescent school girls that had already started their menstrual periods for not more than three (3) times from all the three selected schools (Kibalinga P/S, Lwawuna P/S and Precious Child Learning Centre) from the two sub counties of Kibalinga and Nabingoola in Mubende district. Three (3) Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for each school were conducted with adolescent girls on Menstrual Hygiene Management. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted with parents, adolescent girls, and senior male and female teachers on Menstrual Hygiene Management. These were aimed to supplement data collected through questionnaires.

2.0 Findings of the Impact Assessment:

2.1 Initiatives taken when girls get menstrual accidents

Before the project, -whenever a girl got her menstruation while at school she could seek permission from the teachers and goes back home. This was because sanitary towels to use were never available all the time they used to get a few from ministry of education which couldn't cater for all pupils. Girls were very shy to talk about issues concerning menstruation with their parents, peers and senior women teachers. Teachers' attitudes were not friendly especially women and this limited self-disclosure on MHM issues; and boys used to laugh at girls whenever they see a girl's cloth stained with blood.

After the project, school administrators increased budget allocation to cater for buying more reusable sanitary pads. In fact, Lwawuna P/S went to the extreme of engaging parents to contribute 1,000ugx for each girl from primary five to primary seven. These schools have also spared some rooms to work as changing rooms for girls though it should be noted that these rooms are not up to standards, but they are readily available for use. Girls now talk freely on issues concerning menstruation to their parents, peers, teachers and other elder persons. Teachers are now so friendly and very free, they talk to pupils and support them on how to manage their menstruation effectively; and boys no longer laugh at girls when she gets her cloth stained with blood but rather support them



Nnakiruuta Hadijah –SORAK programmes Manager with the girls after an interview at Kibalinga PS (left) Hadijah during FGD with the girls at Lwawuna PS (right)

Table 2: Initiatives taken during menstrual accidents

Initiatives taken when girls get menstrual accidents	No of Informants	%
Senior woman teacher gives counsel, a sanitary pad, and a uniform to change in plus a bath.	30	78.9
Has never experienced it	2	5.3
Tie sweater around waist and go to senior woman teacher	4	10.5
I get a cloth and pad myself	1	2.6
Parent offer first aid only, I give a pad to use	1	2.6

It was noted that 78.9% of all the respondents had consulted the senior woman teacher for counsel, a sanitary pad, and a uniform to change in plus a bath at school. This innovation was started after SORAK’s interventions on MHM and it is in two primary schools of ST. Joseph Kibalinga and Lwawuna Primary schools. It was also observed during FGDs that when confronted by a menstrual accident and their clothes are stained with blood during school time, girls use sweaters to cover the stained area of the dress. The scenario affects the girls differently. Girls in the boarding section go to their dormitories and change, whereas day scholars go to the senior woman teacher who supports them with a pad and a spare dress. Senior woman teacher noted that in Lwawuna PS, noted that she counsels the girl and gives a pad. The project has been impactful in establishing a supportive environment at schools.

Source: Field Data 2017

Mother to Muhooza Diana P.7 at Lwawuna P/S narrates, ‘I counsel her and give a cloth to use temporarily and take her to teacher for help. We contribute 1,000/= to the school to cater for such. If I have something to use, I give her to pad herself. If I have money I buy for her disposable pads.’

2.2 Boys’ bullying of Girls over menstrual accidents

Table 3: Boys’ bullying in schools

Bullying of the girls over menstrual accidents	No of Informants	%
Am not sure but it is obvious they laugh at them	2	5.4
Not observed it	4	10.8
Not anymore, boys no longer bully girls	23	62.2
some boys still disturb	1	2.7
Only one boy in PCLC still bullies, but all the others are of help in case of a problem	7	18.9

Ms Najuuko Jane, Senior woman Teacher, Precious Child Learning Center noted that, ‘It is no longer there, it was once there before the project; but after the training by SORAK who ever sees a girl with a problem, they help her.’

Source: Field data 2017

It was observed that 62.2% of all the respondents said that boys no longer bully girls, and their attitude has totally changed. However, one boy in P.7 in Precious Child Learning Center is still bullying girls. Other respondents noted that they had not observed it and others believed that boys should still be laughing at girls who have stained their clothes. It was clear that the project was impactful in changing the boys' attitude towards girls' menstrual accidents.

2.3 Teachers' assistance to girls during menstruation.

Table 4: Teachers' Assistance

Teachers provide any help during your menstruation	No of Informants	%
School, administration and teachers provide pads, a knicker, a spare dress and counselling	36	78.3
never asked teachers for help	1	2.2
Senior woman teacher offers a lot of guidance and counselling to the girls	5	10.9
Packs pads because knows how to count her cycle	4	8.7

It was noted from 78.3% of all the respondents that school administration and teachers have changed their attitude and offer assistance to the girls whenever they seek for help. Before the project, teachers were rude and unbothered to the girls that had menstruated. The project intervention was impactful in the target schools and it has created changes in the attitudes of teachers and school administration. It was proved that teachers are very supportive to the girls since project intervention. Girls had poor menstrual practices, they would not change and wash their reusable clothes in time. There was no counsel offered by the teachers to the girls. But after the training on menstrual hygiene management, schools started providing water and soap to help girls while menstruating.

Source: Field Data 2017

2.4 Use of reusable/washable menstrual absorbents

※Absorbents is including both reusable and disposables, cotton wool, piece of cloth, nickers, toilet papers

The issue of using disposable sanitary pads at school came from boarding students at Precious Child Learning Centre because they said it is not comfortable for them to hang their reusable sanitary pads on their beds since there are some girls who are still young (7-8 years). In fact one girl (Nalule Shakira p.7) recommended that SORAK and the school administrators can get a small changing room separate from the dormitories where girls can hang their reusable pads. They expressed much interest in using the reusable sanitary pads at school though they fear questions and suspicions from their colleagues who are still young.

Some girls at Lwawuna and Kibalinga P/S who are day students said that they use reusable sanitary pads while at school and during lunch time they go to the bathroom, take a bath and change the reusable pad and pack the used reusable pad in a bag for washing when they are at home.

The reason as to why most girls said that they use disposable sanitary pad is because we trained very few girls (7 each school making a total of 21 girls), other girls who missed the training expressed the need to learn how to make

and use reusable sanitary pads. This came out in the focus group discussions we conducted that combined all girls who started their periods.

3.0 Proper Menstrual Hygiene Management

This section analyses the menstrual hygiene practices of the girls before and after the project intervention. It considers issues of using soap and water while washing of reusable menstrual absorbents.

3.1 Availability of water and soap in school for girls to use while menstruating

Before the project, it was noted that parents and teachers aware all not bothered about what the girls need to use or what they use during menstruation. Girls' would spend a whole day without washing and changing pads, those who bathed only used water and no soap. The project raised the parents and teachers awareness to the menstrual needs for the girls in promoting proper MHM. Some of the interviewed parents from Lwawuna P/S noted that they contribute 1000/= which they consider not to be enough, considering the many needs involved in menstrual hygiene management. Parents believe that there is need to add some money and buy soap to provide for our girls while at school. All the target schools have access to water and in some schools there is harvested rain water. Only one school and that is PCLC has tap water, the other two schools have rain water harvested, but also fetch from the boreholes and ponds near the school. The project impacted on the girls' menstrual hygiene and practices, it was noted that girls now bath, change and wash their reusable absorbents during the day.

3.2 Washing of reusable menstrual absorbents when at home and at school

Before the project, girls used water only to wash their reusable pads. It was noted throughout the assessment exercise, that girls have improved their menstrual hygiene management. Girls used to stay with one pad throughout the day, but after the sensitization sessions, girls started changing pads as indicated below.

Table 5: Changing of reusable pads

Frequency of changing reusable/ washable menstrual absorbents	No of Informants	%
Between 2 -3 hours	9	21.4
Between 4 - 5 hours	10	23.8
Between 6-7 hours	16	38.1
n/a	7	16.7

The assessment exercise revealed that girls no longer use a sanitary pad for an entire day as they used to. 21.4% of the girls interviewed confessed to changing a pad every 2-3 hours, 23.8% change pads ever 4-5 hours; whereas the majority 38.1% change every 6-7 hours (preferably at lunch time). However, it should be noted that there were girls among the respondents (16.7%) that had not attended to the sensitization and they noted that they do not change the pad until evening when they get back home.

Source: Field Data 2017

Nalule Shakirah P.7 at PCLC remarked, 'I never knew that using one pad for the whole day is dangerous which can lead to infections. But now after the training I stopped doing it...she also noted, 'I learnt how to make reusable pads which I use now. I made 3 of them which has saved my mother the burden of buying disposable pads every month'

3.3 Period of washing reusable menstrual absorbents when girls are at school

Before the project, it was found that washing reusable menstrual absorbents for the girls when at school was problem. This had a lot to do with convenience issues and comfort in exposing their linens. Even after project intervention, the girls still find it safe and convenient to use and wash reusable menstrual absorbents during holidays.

Table 6: Washing of reusable menstrual absorbents

When do you wash your reusable menstrual absorbents when you are at school	No of Informants	%
n/a	2	11.8
I only use reusable pads during the holidays	6	35.3
no	1	5.9
I wrap it and pack it in a polythene bag and wash from home	4	23.5
I use old clothes and throw, because of an unfriendly environment at school	1	5.9
I wash at lunch time	3	17.6

Girls agreed that they still use reusable/washable menstrual absorbents and they wash reusable menstrual absorbents from their bathrooms and dry them in a changing room, bathroom, and on their bed poles and cover with clothes including handkerchiefs at school and at home. It should be however noted, that there are very few girls using reusable pads during school times. Some of the other girls trained were said to still be using reusable pads although they left the schools where they were trained from. Day schooling girls use and after a few hours they change and pack the used pads in a different bag and wash them when they get back home in the evening.

Source: Field Data 2017

Kusemererwa Mariam mother to Nakiberu Shaurah noted that, ' we have a bathroom where she washes from, but I put for her a string in her room where she dries them'

Mother to Nakagwa Souda noted that, ' behind the house there is our bathroom, and that is where she dries them'



SORAK staff during an interview with a senior woman teacher (left) and interviewing one of the girls at Precious Child Learning Center (right)

3. 4 Drying of menstrual absorbents

Girls did not know that it is unhygienic to wash reusable pads and dry them indoors. The sensitizations for the girls and parents session during implementation of the MHM project, enabled the girls to know the essence of proper drying before use in promoting menstrual hygiene management. Girls have taken it up and noted that they no longer use reusable pads that are not thoroughly dried.

Table 7: Drying of reusable pads

Drying of menstrual absorbents	Number of Informants	%
Dry them in the bathroom at home	10	20.8
We have a changing room with a hang line, where we dry our pads at schools	16	33.3
In a different/ changing room that was offered by the school administrators	2	4.2
n/a	13	27.1
I do not wash at school	1	2.1
Have a separate place where they hang their knickers, clothes and menstrual absorbents at school	1	2.1
Put them on their beds and cover them with a cloth or a handkerchief till it dries at school and at home	5	10.4

27% of the girls confessed that they only use reusable pads over the holidays so washing and drying pads at school is not necessary as they use disposables. However, 33.3% noted that they utilize the hang lines in the changing room provided. 20.8% assured the interviewers that they dry at home in their bathrooms. There are however those that do not find it convenient and dry only from home, but for boarding girls who feel the same, they spread on their beds and cover with handkerchiefs until the pad dries. The girls however noted that after the training they realized that drying in the sun is ideal. They informed the assessment team that when they go for holiday and over the weekends they dry them on the sun and iron them when they are at home.

Source: Field Data 2017

3.5 Sharing washable menstrual absorbents with other people

It was noted that, none of the girls shares their washable menstrual absorbents with other people. They exclaimed it as an unhygienic act. It was evident that girls have realized how vital it is to maintain proper hygiene during periods, they also know that sharing washable menstrual absorbents with other people exposes them to infections.

One of the parents mother to Nakagwa Sauda noted that, ' I heard from my mom in law that they were trained in making reusable sanitary pads, in fact she showed me what she had made by herself'

One pupil, Rehema , ' when I told my grandmother that I had got my periods, she told me that the first time you get periods, you do not cross the road, you do not prepare food, so that is why I did not come to school.

3.6 Purchase of disposable menstrual pads

Probing about this, was aimed at establishing the cost of disposable pads and the likely reason as to why girls do not; and also find out where they get them from incase they do not buy. Below are the prices that the girls shared.

Table 8: Cost menstrual pads

Cost of disposable menstrual absorbents	No of Informants	%age
2000-3000/=	19	33.9
3000-4000/=	33	58.9
5000 - 6000		0.0
n/a	2	3.6
no I have never used	2	3.6

70.6% of all the girls interviewed, have had their mothers buy their disposable menstrual, 5.9% have no mothers and their fathers buy the sanitary pads. 11.8% of the girls of all use disposable menstrual pads when provided by the senior woman and charity organizations.

Source: Field Data 2017

3.7 Use of disposable menstrual pads

Considering the poverty situation in households where these girls come from, there was a likelihood that girls do not use disposable menstrual pads every month. The impact assessment investigated this in order to establish what happens and these are the responses:

Table 9: Use of disposable menstrual pads

Use disposable menstrual pads every month	No of Informants	%
Yes	5	27.8
Easy to use, but at night I use	1	5.6

pieces of clothes		
I use only at home during holidays	1	5.6
What I made was taken by my friend	1	5.6
Not every month	9	50.0
n/a	1	5.6

Girls confessed to have learnt how to dry menstrual absorbents. 27.8% of the girls noted that they use disposable pads. However, other respondents confessed that the cost of disposable pads is high and their parents cannot afford, so they do not use them on a monthly basis. Because of the related costs, 50% of the girls noted that they do not use

disposable every month. The girls noted that disposable absorbents are good but very expensive and only use them when at school, but when at home they prefer using reusable pads.

Source: FGD- Field Data 2017

3.8 Items used during menstrual periods

Before project intervention, girls were using clothes, knickers and others stayed in their respective homes because they did not have anything to use during the menstrual periods. After the MHM project, there are a number of items used by girls during menstrual periods and these include:

Table 10: Items used

Items used during menstrual periods	No of Informants	%
Reusable and pieces of clothes	10	15.6
Disposable	10	15.6
Knickers	1	1.6
Use both disposable, reusable and pieces of clothes	28	65.7
n/a	1	1.6

All the girls have however used disposable pads with the support from the senior woman teacher and schools administration provision; they have also had experience with reusable pads, especially during the holidays. With experience from using both disposable and reusable menstrual absorbents, the girls were able to make comparisons on which of the two are better. It was noted by the girls that the advantages of using these disposable pads outweigh the reusable pads, including: user friendliness, ease to wear; strong enough to prevent menstrual stains and no need for washing.

Source: Questionnaire Field Data 2017

15.6% of the questionnaire participants use disposable pads and another 15.6% use reusable pads. The period was however very short and the girls had not fully appreciated reusable pads because SORAK did not have full-scale making and supply with well-tailored/sewed with a machine. Girls made all the reusable pads with hands on which they based their conclusions. It should be however noted that reusable menstrual absorbents are sometimes heavier and strong enough to prevent blood stains, if designed with good materials and sewn with machines. Reusable sanitary pads also allow aeration and minimizes infection.



SORAK conducting FGD with parents of the beneficiaries at Lwawuna PS from MHM project

One of the parents, mother to Nakagwa Sauda noted that, ' When I have money I buy for her, but when I don't have, I give her smooth pieces of cloth. She only uses disposable pads when at school'

3.9 Solution for menstrual hygiene in schools

Before project intervention, there was poor menstrual hygiene. After the training girls were able to realize that there are structural and perception issues that need to be addressed. Solutions to menstrual hygiene as identified by the girls include:

Table 11: Solutions to menstrual hygiene

Best solution for menstrual hygiene in schools	No of Informants	%
Having a changing room, so helpful especially for day scholars	1	7.1
To stock and provide more sanitary pads to schools and to teach pupils who do not know anything about menstruation	7	50.0
Teachers talking to pupils every after two weeks about proper MHM and the related issues, now it is done once a term	3	21.4
Talking to parents to provide pads to use during menstruation	1	7.1
Counselling to first timers	1	7.1
Constructing separate bathrooms for teachers and pupils	1	7.1

50% of the girls that responded to key informant interviews noted that in order to improve menstrual hygiene there is need to stock and provide more sanitary pads to schools and to teach pupils who do not know anything about menstruation.

Girls also advised that having a changing room to support day scholars, sensitizing teachers and parents, counseling for first time menstruators and constructing separate rooms would equally help in improving menstrual hygiene in schools.

Source: KII Field Data 2017

3.10 Menstrual Hygiene Management project conducted by SORAK

Table 12: Menstrual Hygiene Management project

About the menstrual hygiene management project	No of Informants	%
Promote proper MHM	8	33.3
Learning to count the menstrual cycle	7	29.2
Making reusable pads	5	20.8
Trained pupils in roles and responsibilities in MHM	1	4.2
How to behave when in periods	2	8.3
Open disclosure	1	4.2

The interviewed participants spoke highly of the MMH project conducted by SORAK; especially on having acquired knowledge and understanding on the following topics:- proper MHM, Learning to count the menstrual cycle, Making reusable pads, trained pupils in roles and responsibilities of parents in MHM, How to behave when in periods and Open disclosure.

Source: Field Data 2017

4.0 Impact of the MHM Project on the girls in schools

This literary means that the MHM project created a big impact on the girls' hygiene, boys attitude and establishing a conducive environment for girls at school

4.1 Changes about approach MHM after taking the MHM workshop among girls and parents

All the girls that had participated in the trainings, remarked that there are so many outstanding changes and these among others include the ones listed below:

- 31.3% of the respondents confessed to have learnt and had started putting into practice the basis on proper MHM.
- 18.8% of the girls that interviewed noted that they learnt counting their cycle and this has helped them to prepare for menstruation periods thus, they no longer get accidents
- 37.5% of the respondents were proud to have acquired skills on how to make reusable pads and to use them.
- Unlike in the past when girls used to think that knowing there is a problem after experiencing mood swings and abdominal pains, 6.3% of the respondents have to come to appreciate that these are pains and mood swings are normal during menstruation.
- Older girls are now supportive of the younger ones who experiencing periods for the first time.
- After the training, the girls who were trained wanted to teach their friends to make reusable pads, but materials are hard to find.
- Pupils that the data collecting team interacted with noted that their parents' attitude towards menstrual challenges had changed and had become more supportive.

- All the interviewed parents had participated got information about what transpired in the parents sessions and had conceptualized their roles and responsibilities in promoting MHM amongst their daughters.
- Girls never used to talk to their parents and guardians about menstrual issues. However after the training 6.3% acknowledged to have started opening up to their guardians. After the training, it was noted that girls and their parents have started open discussions about sexual reproductive health and menstrual hygiene management issues. Even parents who had not participated had learnt from their friends that they have to have open discussions with their daughters and had started disclosing.
- 4 of the 6 parents interviewed, had not participated in the parents' sessions and were regretting for not having taken part of the parents' session. They all acknowledged to have heard from their fellow parents that the session were very vital in helping to keep their daughters in school. The other 2 parents that had participated in the training sessions were proud to have been a part of the sessions. They noted that the sessions were educative and impactful.

Nalunkuuma Angellah P.7 Kibalinga PS, talking about how the parents' sessions impacted on her father, my father used to complain that why he used to buy pads all the time, yet money is a problem. But after the training, my father's attitude has changed. Now when I ask him for pads, he no longer complains.

4.2 Findings some differences in the school environment and teachers and boys attitude towards MHM

Before project intervention, school and boys' attitude towards girls during periods was unfavourable for the girls to stay at school and concentrate on their studies. There was a negative attitude among all stakeholders (parents, teachers and boys at school). However after project intervention, many changes were created in the schools and among the girls that benefited and these changes include the following:-

➤ **At school:**

96% of the girls reached by the assessment exercise remarked that boys and even fellow girls who used to laugh no longer disturb/laugh at girls; there is now open disclosure to teachers, now girls open up open up to the senior women teachers in case of a menstrual accident. School administrators are now changing uniform when one gets a menstrual accident. All targeted schools have separate latrine rooms for the girls, but they small and stuffy. PCLC also provides pads and PMS kits during menstrual emergencies.

One parent mother to Nakagwa Sauda says, ' Before the project our girls never used to get help at school, in case they got period. But now, we are very comfortable well knowing that if anything happens, she can get help'

➤ **About Teachers:**

Before project intervention, teachers' negative and rude attitude towards girls during menstruation was playing a great role in demoralizing girls from attending classes. It was realized during the assessment exercise that teacher's attitudes have totally changed. When girls get any challenge, teachers are supportive they give pads and counsel to the girls and talk freely.

➤ **Changes in boys' behavior towards menstruation**

Boys behavior changed after the sensitization and they no longer laugh at girls. They help with sweaters and jackets in

Mr Lubinga Jowab, Deputy Head-Teacher, Precious Child Learning Center noted that, 'Before the project, learners would miss schools because of stigma associated with menstruation; but now they are free. 'Nagayi Rehema P.6 recently had a menstrual stain on her uniform, she moved out comfortably and no boy laughed.'

case of an accident and when they see a girl with a stained dress they ask other girls to help with a pad.

4.3 Challenges faced by girls during menstruation

Some of the girls coming from vulnerable homes, remarked that, sometimes there is no soap at home to wash absorbents, and they have to keep them till they get soap; and sharing with brothers a room at home makes the girls very uncomfortable.

- Some of the girls coming from vulnerable homes, remarked that, sometimes there is no soap at home to wash absorbents, and they have to keep them till they get soap; and sharing with brothers a room at home makes the girls very uncomfortable.
- 25% exclaimed that there are no changing rooms in Kibalinga and Lwawuna P/S and PCLC girls use dormitories. in their schools. However these changing rooms are considered in adequate because of space and poor aeration.
- 12.5% also noted that pads provided at school are not enough and sometimes there is a stock out.
- 12.5% of the girls also noted that some few teachers still have a negative attitude and are not supportive, so girls fear to approach them. They however added, that they were aware that school administration has the situation under control.

4.4 School attendance during menstruation

Missing school in the past 3 months because of menstruation periods: 95% of the female pupils interviewed noted that they had not missed school because of periods. However 5% of them had misses 2-3 days in the last periods because of menstrual cramps, abdominal pains, backache, swollen legs and headache.

4.5 MHM Project Challenges

This section analyzed the possible challenges as identified by the girls with regard to the recently implemented MHM project. The following table demonstrates challenges that were faced during implemented of the MHM project.

Table 13: Challenges as identified by girls

Challenges of the project	No of Informants	%
Did not provide enough of required materials to make sanitary pads for the school and for girls to start making their own reusable sanitary pads;	28	41.8
Project lacked machines to be used in reusable pad making, girls only used hands.	1	1.5
The project needed to put more emphasis on teaching the young girls how make reusable pads. It did not offer enough time to the learners to perceive what they learnt. The process was hurried through	2	3.0
No challenge, everything went well and achieved	15	22.4

The project targeted a few pupils yet there are many pupils in the school that have started menstruation	12	17.9
To provide enough pads for all the girls' reusable pads, only few got.	2	3.0
To provide changing rooms which they can use to change during periods, especially day scholars	1	1.5
To engage teachers fully especially on construction of separate washrooms	1	1.5
To provide demonstration on how to use both disposables and reusable sanitary pads for the girls	5	7.5

Source: FGD and KII- Field Data 2017

From the respondents, it was clear that the MHM project implemented by SORAK with support from GBN was impactful. However, it was short-lived and as a result was confronted with so many challenges. These included, but not limited to:-

- 41.8% noted that the project did not provide enough of required materials to make sanitary pads for the school and for girls to start making their own reusable sanitary pads;
- 17.9% the project only targeted a few pupils (7) yet there are many pupils in the school that have started menstruation.
- However, 22.4% felt that there was no challenge and that the project performed extremely well and created a great impact regardless of the short time of implementation.

4.6 Girl's recommendation

4.6.1 Best solutions for menstrual hygiene in schools

By taking HMH training by SORAK, pupils has some recommendations that if menstrual hygiene in schools is more to improve, there are needs for schools, parents and other stakeholder to do the following:-

- 50.0% of the respondents noted that there is need for stocking more sanitary pads for senior woman teachers to keep at school so that girls do not stain their dresses and pain killers to reduce menstrual pain; as well as providing an extra uniform to every girl.
- 6.3% said that there is need to provide more materials for the girls to make reusable pads, because they are scarce.
- 7.9% remarked that conducting guidance counselling for girls on MHM, open disclosure and proper MHM as well as training girls to make actual counts of their menstrual cycle to avoid accidents of staining clothes are vital issues to consider.
- 23.4% advocated for separate bathrooms from teachers and constructing a changing room and washrooms.
- 4.7% requested that teachers should stop punishing/ beating pupils during periods and should teach pupils to do exercises to minimize chances of cramps.
- 4.7% of the girls noted that having a committee of girl child leaders (girl mentors) would help in assisting the senior woman and other teachers for girls that cannot open up.

- 3.1% noted that sensitization of parents' especially during the parents' meeting on their roles and responsibilities in proper MHM of their children is key.

4.6.2 The girl's recommendations of MHM project

The project was hailed for the good work in promoting proper MHM among the girls in schools in order to improve retention in school and minimize chances of dropping out of school as a result. However, according to the respondents:-

- 13.5% said that the project should have increased on the number of boys that attended the workshop, since they are the biggest problem; and also reached all the girls in puberty and beyond for greater sensitization.
- 32.7% remarked that the project should have provided more materials (enough) for making reusable pads, which would be a skill that girls would sustain in future, not only for menstruation but as a life skill.
- 11.5% the project should have constructed a changing room where girls especially day scholars would go to change.
- 42.0%, however felt that the project was one of its kind in supporting vulnerable girls and had achieved its objective.

4.7 MHM project conducted by SORAK

This was a main concern to all respondents, having been the core of the impact assessment. During the Key Informant Interviews, questionnaires and FGDs, parents, teachers and the girls noted that the MHM project implemented by SORAK created a great impact in their lives. The impact created ranged from changes in attitude of boys, parents and teachers, behavior of the girls during periods, promotion of proper MHM and the menstrual cycle among others. All the respondents (regardless of whether trained or not) were aware of the MHM SORAK project. Some of them had missed the meeting, they had heard that the training was for a few boys and girls in making reusable sanitary pads.

5.0 Recommendations for future project interventions

It was recommended that for, SORAK and other future projects should:-

- Extend services to school level, by bringing trainers to the schools; and employ more people to ease the trainings.
- Conduct quarterly trainings since girls keep on getting periods and picking girls who have started periods regardless of their class for trainings
- Engage adolescents in schools in making reusable pads to ensure sustainability and to cater for operational costs
- Enroll and train more girls and parents on proper MHM since, some of the trained girls left school; continue to sensitize girls on how to behave when they are in their periods; and engage more boys
- Construct a changing room and separate bathrooms for boys and girls and teachers.

One parent mother to Nakagwa Saida remarked, ' I recommend that future projects continue sensitizing our pupils who missed your previous project; but we thank you so much for the work done.'

- Should ensure that every girl accesses reusable sanitary pads and other scholastic needs for vulnerable pupils as a source of income they get from selling the reusable sanitary pad
- Should conduct refresher courses and more sensitization workshops on the recommended MHM methods and empowering girls to be independent.
- Should train more girls and offer enough time for the trainings on making reusable pads; as well as provide enough raw materials for making pads in a timely manner in order to perfect what they have just learnt.
- Should sensitize more parents and girls and having joint sessions as some parents are still reluctant in providing materials

APPENDIX I

List of pupils that participated in responding during questionnaire administration

Name of school	Name of pupils	Age of pupil	Class
PCLC-	Nagayi Rehema,	16	p6
	Nandigwa Faith	16	p7
	Nalule Shakirah,	14	P7
	Kobusingye Shadia	14	p6
Kibalinga	Tushemereirwe Tayebwa	16	p5
	Atulinda Erina	15	p7
	Nakasiko Prossy	15	P5
	Kitone Moreen	14	P7
	Nalunkuuma Angellah	13	p6
	Nakimbugwe Lydia	14	P7
Lwawuna	Muhooza Dianah	15	p 7
	Nakazibwe Sofia	16	P7
	Nasaazi Shamim	15	P7

	Namuddu Christine	13	P7
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APPENDIX II

List of pupils, parents and teachers that participated in responding KII and FGDs

<p>Interview guide for parents.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nalujja Siyema mother to Nakagawa Sauna p7. 2. Kusemererwa Mariam mother to Nakiberu Shamirah p6. 3. Nakanjako scovia's parent. 4. Nusifa C. Kyaakyo mother to namugabi Bes p6 15. 5. Kabimucya Grace mother to Kibale Makutu. Lwawuna PS. 6. Namatovu Zayituni Nalongo mother to Namuli p.6. 	<p>Teachers interview guide.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Senior man Zziwa Ronald Deputy Head Teacher Lwawuna. Lwawuna PS. 2. Nakanwagi judith senior woman teacher Lwawuna PS. 3. Senior woman teacher Kibalinga ps. 4. Senior man teacher Kibalinga ps. 5. Deputy Head Teacher Mr. Lubinga Jowab PCLC 6. Senior woman teacher Precious Child Learning Center (PCLC) PS
<p>Key Informant Interviews - Female Students</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nasaazi Shamim P.7 Lwawuna P/S 2. Namuddu Christine Lwawuna Primary School 3. Katushabe Clementina P.7 PCLC 4. Alibagiza Janet 	<p>Focus Group Discussions - Female Students</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lwawuna P/S FGD 2. Precious Child Learning Centre (PCLC) FGD

5. Muhooza Diana P.7 6. Naluwombo Joan Kibalinga P/S 7. Namukwaya Evelyne Kibalinga P/S 8. Kyomugisha Emily Kibalinga P/S P.6 9. Nakyeseo Justine Kibalinga P/S 10. Akampulira Sharon P.5 14 Kibalinga P.S	3. Kibalinga FGD
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APPENDIX III

Topics emphasized by the MHM project and gender awareness session

The project tackled many topics during sensitizations during MHM and gender awareness sessions. When parents and the girls were asked topics they preferred, the following were their responses.

1. Knowledge about gender related rights by gender awareness session

80% of the respondents that had participated in the gender sensitization had knowledge about their gender related rights. Some of the rights the female pupils highlighted included:-

- A right to say no to early marriages, because it is an offence, though usually arranged by parents and local leaders.
- A right to select spouses of their choices
- A right to access and use pads
- A right to make decisions (to avoid early pregnancies and the related health implications).
- A right to protect self from sexually transmitted diseases
- A right to access information on menstruation

- That forced sex and sexual harassment are abuse to one sexual reproductive health rights
- A right to protected sex and how to prevent unwanted pregnancies and diseases.
- A right to access to health and justice by a victim of rape is a sexual reproductive right
- A right to report all forms of sexual harassment.

2. The MHM project emphasized a number of topics during parent sessions and these included the following:-

- Parents roles and responsibilities in promoting MHM. The benefit of parents' sessions was that parents became supportive to their daughters regarding MHM.
- Sensitized the public, parents, teachers and girls on how to make and use reusable sanitary pads. The benefit from this topic was because of the advantage of reduced costs on buying disposable pads.
- Girls and boys were taught to know that menstruation is normal and not an issue to laugh at. Girls benefited from this topic, because boys no longer laugh at girls. Both boys and girls got to know that they have a role in MHM and sanitation.
- The training emphasized how girls need to behave during periods and how to help their friends on MHM. This was of great benefit to the girls, because teachers also learnt how to handle girls during their menstrual periods.
- Open disclosure to parents/ guardians and teachers was another topic emphasized. This helped the girls to learn to open up during their Menstruation periods.

3. Topic liked most by the girls

All the topics trained about, were considered thrilling to the girls. The topics made the girls aware on the following:-

- How to make reusable sanitary pads as the best, because sometimes our parents do not have money to buy disposable pads.
- The menstrual life cycle and how having fluctuation of days in the menstrual cycle is normal.
- How to behave while in periods and avoiding boys.
- That helping friends when they get menstrual accidents is important, because were ignorant.
- Of proper disposal of pads and how it helps in reducing diseases and infections. Proper MHM and disposal or menstrual absorbents and how it helps to minimize bad smell and infections resulting from poor hygiene.

Ms. Najuuko Jane, Senior woman Teacher, Precious Child Learning Center noted that, 'More assistance is needed to provide our learners with pads to use, because not all parents can afford to buy disposable sanitary pads for their children and if not helped it can lead to girl's dropping out of school because of menstruation and its associated

One girl noted that, 'I used to bath once while in my periods, but after the training I shower twice. Nowadays during periods I feel healthier and more comfortable during my periods.

It was noted by the respondents that girls were ignorant about the menstrual cycle and how to count their cycles to avoid menstrual

accidents. They also acquired a skill and had never known how to make and use reusable pads, plus the financial implication where it reduces costs of buying disposable sanitary pads, and they noted that with the skills acquired, if they got money they could buy materials and make reusable pads and sell. Girls did not know that poor MHM causes infections, and they learnt all this from the sensitizations on proper MHM.