



Project: “Improvement of the School Environment to Combat Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Challenges to Stop Adolescent Girls’ School Dropouts in Uganda”

Activity: Child-child MHM, gender awareness and sex education by MHM peer clubs

(Activity2-2-1 Facilitating gender awareness session by MHM peer club)

Date and Location:

May 5, 2018 Precious Child Learning Centre

May 7, 2018 Kibalinga Primary School

May 30, 2018 Lwawuna Primary School

Introduction

SORAK, with the help of senior woman and male teachers from the three project schools formed three MHM clubs of eight girls and four boys per school. The purpose of these clubs was to spearhead MHM, gender awareness and sex education by reaching out to fellow students through the child-child approach in order to ensure sustainability and project ownership. The three clubs formed from the three targeted schools were trained in MHM, gender awareness and sex education, including sexual and reproductive health rights awareness. The MHM clubs from the three project schools conducted gender awareness raising sessions (one session in each of the three schools). Other topics besides MHM and sex education will be conducted toward the end of the second term and at the beginning of the third term, respectively.

Purpose of the training

- To raise gender awareness
- To enhance skills for handling gender/social issues at home and school

Participants

Precious Child Learning Centre	Boys: 42	Girls: 58
Kibalinga Primary School	Boys: 151	Girls: 116
Lwawuna Primary School	Boys: 123	Girls: 145

Process of the activity

The three clubs from the targeted schools had a prior meeting with SORAK staff and the two teachers (senior male and female persons in charge). The 3 clubs were given a training manual which they used to prepare the content for presentation before their fellow pupils.

At Lwawuna primary school, the three most active pupils were selected by their individual teachers (two girls and one boy) to take the lead in the gender awareness workshop and the rest were given the role of providing assistance to the workshop. At Precious Child learning Centre, five persons were selected and each was given a topic to handle, with other members of the club providing assistance and answering questions that arose from the current presenters. At Kibalinga Primary school, two boys and two girls

were selected to lead the gender awareness training workshop, the same as in the other two project schools, whereby the rest of the members provided assistance and answered the questions from other pupils.

The teachers and SORAK programme staff also provided assistance and guided the training sessions for topics covered by the club.

- Differentiating gender and sex:

The three clubs talked about gender and sex differences, for example, they mentioned that gender is the differences between sexes as biologically determined while sex is something we are each born with.

- Examples of gender characteristics:

The club members mentioned some examples of gender characteristics. These include women taking care of domestic or home duties such as cooking food, washing utensils, house cleaning, among others. In this respect, they can seek help from their children, especially girls, and men are expected to work and earn money for the family. At the same time boys study mathematics more than girls, and girls, who have more empathy, girls do better in art subjects, among others.

- Different gender roles and responsibilities:

The club members brought out the different gender roles and responsibilities done by women, men, boys and girls. They said that some roles that can be done at school by girls include cleaning utensils during free time; cleaning classrooms while boys cut down weeds on the compound and fetch water. At home, members said that girls mostly take care of the young ones and wash utensils, while boys are able to fetch water and do some gardening work.

- Roles of students/pupils as change agents*:

The roles as change agents that the three clubs emphasized included creating an awareness of existing gender roles, reporting and referring cases to responsible persons in case someone's rights are being abused basing on gender.

* Change agents' means a model or to be used as leaders of change to spread knowledge and information to other community members

- Roles of teachers/educators as change agents

Teachers/educators must be mindful of the words and language they use while in classes or communities that does not promote gender discrimination. The club members from the three targeted schools talked about some teachers, using words like "big girl for nothing" or "acting your age." Such words offend some pupils, especially girls.



Left photo: Lwawuna P/S MHM club having a prior meeting to prepare for the training

Right photo: Akugonze Joselyn, who is a member of the Lwawuna MHM club, facilitating the training



Left photo: SORAK Program staff asking pupils questions from the presentations made by the Lwawuna MHM club

Right photo: PCLC preparing presentation content



Left photo: Semmata Ponsiana P.7 pupil and also a member of the MHM club explaining the difference between gender and sex

Right photo: SORAK program staff noting down what learners have learnt from the training



Left photo: Kibalinga MHM club preparing for gender awareness training

Right photo: Kibalinga primary pupils attending gender awareness training

Outcomes /Achievements

The following were the activity outcomes:

- Pupils were able to differentiate gender and sex, which wasn't the case before the awareness training. MHM club facilitators clearly indicated that sex is a biological characteristic of men and women whereas gender is just a difference between women and men's roles and responsibilities in a given society or culture.
- At the end of the training, pupils were able to freely mention most of the gender roles and responsibilities segregated according to gender. They clearly showed the roles a girl does while at school and at home. The activities girls can do while at school pupils mentioned cleaning utensils,

sweeping the compound and cleaning classes, whereas for boys they mentioned cutting down weeds on the compound and fetching water among others. At home, pupils mentioned girls being responsible for taking care of the young ones (babies) with supervision from the parents/guardians and cleaning utensils, while and boys do some gardening, fetch water, and collect firewood among others.

- The MHM club members informed pupils about their roles and responsibilities as change agents. Female pupils (girls) were tasked to act as promoters and advocates against Sexual Gender Based Violence.
- Teachers were also reminded of their roles and responsibilities in promoting an environment that is gender sensitive, as clubs had discussed in the presence of their teachers and pupils. The discussions included, among others, being gender sensitive and mindful of the language and words used while teaching, such nicknaming pupils, avoiding comments that make fun of pupils (“big for nothing,” “acting his or her age”, etc.), which do not promote gender inequality.

Gender related issues and recommendations

Gender inequalities strongly exist, and some parents believe that it is not necessary to educate a young girl; therefore, they do not provide basic education requirements for girls including menstruation materials. This causes a difficult educational environment, including girl’s menstruation issues, causing many girls’ to drop out from schools. It is therefore recommended to create a committee comprised of respective representatives on behalf of pupils, teachers, parents and political representatives in all the three project schools and address issues of gender inequalities. A further recommendation is that the District Education Departments should spare some time to talk to parents during parent-teacher conferences and remind them of children’s rights and the likely consequences for violation of these rights. These recommendations must help to achieve a positive impact of the project “Improvement of the School Environment to Combat Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Challenges to Stop Adolescent Girls’ School Dropouts in Uganda” as well.