

**MENSTRUAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY ACTIVITY REPORT THAT TOOK AT  
NAGURU GO-DOWN.**



**PROJECT REPORT**  
**(16<sup>th</sup> August 2022)**

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### Acronyms/Abbreviations

VLF	Visionary Lady Foundation
GBN	Global Bridge Network
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
MHHM	Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
Qn.	Question

**Winnie Nakatudde (Rapporteur) – Visionary Lady Foundation**

# INTRODUCTION

Menstrual hygiene is fundamental to the dignity and wellbeing of women and girls and an important part of basic hygiene, sanitation, and reproductive health services for which every woman and girl has a right. However, menstruation is too often seen as a taboo, with many negative cultural attitudes associated with it, including the idea that menstruating women and girls are ‘contaminated’, ‘dirty’ and ‘impure’.

Visionary Lady Foundation implements the Menstrual Health Management project in districts like Pallisa and Kampala. On the day of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2022, together with their funders from Global Bridge Network, Visionary Lady Foundation implemented an outreach at Naguru Creative infant nursery and primary school which is located in Kampala municipality, Naguru parish where it has been based for more than five years. The main objective of this activity was to assess the understanding of Menstrual Health Management issues among schoolgirls, teachers, parents, and school committees, looking at the factors affecting menstruating girls at schools including the effects of unimproved Menstrual Health Management on girls including low-class concentration and dropping. Moreover, to see if the school and the community at large offers a friendly environment for menstruating girls. By Understanding various barriers affecting girls at school will help to improve the girls’ performance in slum schools.

## Naguru Slum Tour

The tour in the Naguru slum took place in the morning before all the activities. This was led by the director and the head teacher of the school who was well acquainted with the area. They were able to lead the team through all the narrow routes in the slum which included jumping of the big trenches that help with the water drainage. While moving around, the team met different families who were mostly led by single mothers. These narrated their survival journey on how they managed the home alone plus educated their children.

Most of them unveiled that they face a lot of difficulties while combining the two on their own to a point of even giving up and this is mostly due to the low income that is earned from retailing vegetables in the compound of their homes. They were also asked to explain what they know about menstrual health management and how they handle it with their girls. Their response was positive, but they had the challenge of not having enough funds to buy for their daughters’ sanitary pads due to their condition.

## Meeting the school administration

The school administration addressed that menstrual products for an emergency are mostly not within the school priorities and budgeting since there are always a lot of important issues to

address for the school than stocking menstrual products for girls. The interviewed School committee and schoolteachers revealed that they had never planned and allocated the budget for MHM for example disposable sanitary pads for emergencies, dust bins, and incinerators in their schools because they are costly. So they had left that matter to be the responsibility of the parents yet even the parents themselves have their own issues that they are handling concerning their well-being and school fees.



*GBN & VLF meeting with the school administration*

The school administration also unveiled that parents do not provide enough education on Menstrual Health Management to their daughters. This has been associated with shame and silence pervading the issue of menstruation within the family and the community at large has never discussed the agenda. They completely abandon the issue to be handled by the schoolteachers from school leaving all the responsibility to them, yet it becomes more challenging without the involvement of the parents.

Another issue that was addressed by the school committee was inadequate, poor, and unsafe menstrual health facilities at schools. The school that was visited did not have sufficient SWASH facilities including water, changing rooms for privacy, and soap. The available SWASH facilities were in bad condition which caused stress and pain to schoolgirls during the menstrual period for example in the focus group discussions, girls revealed that during menstruation they usually feel like they smell bad like a rotten egg due to the absence of appropriate facilities at schools and home places hence feeling ashamed, embarrassed, and restricted. They hence decide to isolate themselves from others by staying at home throughout the menstrual period without attending school.

## Meeting the students club

The school has a club for girls, and this was pioneered by the Visionary Lady Foundation after joining the school about five years ago. The students shared their experiences with the visitors on how they handled the issue of menstrual health management. They said that most of the girls feel so embarrassed to share their needs regarding that and also to ask for help when they start their periods. They find a lot of ease in going back home when they see their periods than staying in school and asking for help for studies to continue even when they are in such a condition.

The group also revealed that they face the problem of poor waste management and hygienic disposal of used rags and sanitary pads. It was revealed by schoolgirls that, they usually drop

used materials in the latrines and sometimes carry them home in their school bags to dispose of them making their bags and even exercise books smell bad. Girls also mentioned that boys like to check their bags and if they find them there, they tease/embarrass them.

*“Menstrual Health is a Human Right. Girls need a stigma-free environment that enables them to menstruate with dignity,”*

-- Daisy Arutun

## Presentations from groups

In addition to the conversations, the students from the menstrual health club presented a skit or a play that demonstrated the problems that girls who have seen their periods from school face. The skit demonstrated the different roles of different stakeholders in the school concerning the issue of menstrual health plus showed how girls drop out of

school due to that issue. Most girls in addition to lack of school fees and scholastic materials, drop out of school to the shame of starting their periods. This is because their fellows including fellow girls laugh at them once, they see their blood stains. This makes them lose morale and as a result, drop out of school.

## Giving out Reusable Pads to Students

Disposable Sanitary pads are not affordable and are accessed easily in slum areas of Kampala. Most of the interviewed school menstruating girls use rags in managing their menstrual bleeding including pieces of dresses, or scraps of old towels or blankets, most of the girls who use these materials seem not to be happy with the type of materials they used as they mentioned them to be ineffective as blood leaks and stains their clothes. Commercial disposable sanitary pads are used primarily among girls who get financial support from their parents.

This group of people from Japan, [through interns of GBN](#), came to rescue the poor girls from such kinds of problems by providing them with reusable sanitary pads that could be maintained for more than a year while using them on different occasions without them leaking. These pads are very manageable because even washing them is very easy due to their softness, mostly for young girls who do not have a lot of energy to wash hard clothes.

*“Menstruation is not a women’s issue. It is an issue for all of us. Menstrual Health integration is still minimal largely due to low participation of women in decision making. When we address issues on women participation, we shall create an environment with opportunities. When we reduce period poverty, we increase women’s participation, reduce intergenerational sex, teenage pregnancies, child and forced marriages and Gender Based violence.”*

about how the machines operate went on to also show us how it is done and how they can be able to make their own reusable sanitary pads to enable them to save money on disposable sanitary pads.

## Meeting the women’s group

The women’s group has mostly students’ mothers and female teachers who work together to ensure the wellness of the girls in school. This group also mentioned that it helps in career guiding the students in order for them to carry on visible careers according to their area of study. They also revealed the problems they face with the girls but since we had mentioned some of them in the other version.

## Launching the Tailoring Center

The group also launched the tailoring center which will help to solve some of the challenges attached to menstruation, for example making reusable sanitary pads for the girls. This was done by providing a number of tailoring machines by the interns from Global Bridge Network from Japan. These machines were to be operated by the team of the parent committee and to be maintained by the school administration committee and the Menstrual Health club for the school. The interns from GBN Japan demonstrated how the machines operate to the students and to the parents who were available in that the operation of the activities can start on the spot. Some of the students who had learnt something

## Conclusion

The problem of menstrual health management is a major problem affecting the people in the slums and those who leaving in the wetlands. This leads increased rate of girl dropout from primary schools and secondary schools because of the embarrassment and shame it causes to them. The solution recommended for this by Visionary Lady Foundation and the Global Bridge Network was to always engage the community in school activities because they also become part of the team once they take their children in school. This reduces the risks and challenges that girls go through while in the early stages of their menstruation.





Time/Duration	Session	Session Objectives	Responsible Person
9:30am-11:30am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registration and setting pace &amp; introductions</li> </ul>	To capture names and designations of all participants	VLF & Teacher Clare
11:00am - 12:00pm	<b>Meeting with school administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduction</li> <li>Objectives of the meeting &amp; Share Expectations</li> </ul>	To enable participants understand the goal of the meeting, share expectations and assess knowledge gaps in key areas	Head teacher & VLF
12:00am -1:00pm	<b>Naguru Slum Tour</b> -To see and understand the slum environment	To enable participants, explore and understand slum live	Head teacher & Teacher Clare
1:15pm -4:45pm	<b>Meeting students/School Club Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Club presentations</li> <li>Talking to students about MHM</li> <li>Giving students Reusable pads &amp; Zoom Call</li> <li>Handing Tailoring Machines to Visionary Club</li> </ul>	To enable students understand interact and share experiences with Japanese students about MHM	VLF & Global Bridge Network
4:45pm -5:00pm	<b>Meeting Women Group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the women activities</li> </ul>	To enable the women to share their experiences	Group Chairperson/Head teacher
5:00pm -5:30pm	Closing Remarks	Summarise the day's events and share the project way forward	VLF



*Visionary club Members*



*Slum community*



*Group Picture*



*Interns meeting with the School Head teacher*



