

Non-Profit Organization Global Bridge Network

Fiscal Year 2021 Activity Report

1. Activity Period: 2021/4/1~2022/3/31

2. Activity Summary

Although projects have been restricted due to a state of emergency and semi-emergency measures that have been declared in Japan, as well as an extended lockdown in Uganda, as COVID-19 infection spreads, we have managed to start conducting two projects when the spread of infection slowed down. In November 2021, Global Bridge Network (GBN) has started a project, “Improving school’s educational environment for adolescent girls by addressing menstrual hygiene challenges in Uganda,” with a grant from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) after developing the GBN original project “Improvement of school environment to combat Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) challenges to Stop Adolescent Girls’ School Dropouts in Uganda” for three years. In addition, we have started a new project, “Promoting a clean environment through environmental education and garbage collection,” at the Lusalira trading centre in Mubende district, Uganda, as an environmental protection project with support from TAISEI CORPORATION.

We also participated in an online event, “SDGs Yokohama CITY Winter,” in an effort toward International Communication Promotion and held a seminar under the theme of “girls who cannot go to school due to MHM challenges.” We had some inquiries from high school students who were interested in our projects, and we were interviewed and gave advice regarding respective activities being conducted.

During FY2021, GBN has provided information and reported our projects by utilizing our webpage, Facebook, blogs, and YouTube aiming to raise awareness on our International Support projects and promote cross-cultural understanding as well as building network with other organizations. As part of JICA’s NGO capacity building training based ICT, we started to create a new website using Word Press while receiving advice from experts. We also actively participated in the NGO training series held by JICA Yokohama. In FY2022, the focus has been set on continuing and developing our ongoing projects, revising our webpage, accepting internships, and visiting Uganda to monitor the project sites.

3. Activities Conducted

GBN activities consist of two key areas: “International Support” and “International Communication Promotion.”

① International Support

1) Improving schools’ educational environment for adolescent girls by addressing menstrual hygiene challenges in Uganda

(Supported by JICA’s Kusanone Partnership Program)

- Date: 2021/11/1～2024/4/30 (2.5 years)
- Location: Uganda Mubende district, Wakiso district, Butambala district
- Beneficiary : 4,310 people (3,000 students, 60 teachers, 1,200 community members, 50 trainees at Happy-Pad Promotion Centre) (2.5 years)
- Project Overview :

At our project site, it has been an issue that girl students who cannot afford sanitary pads due to poverty reasons cannot go to school during their menstrual period. There has been also related problems which possibly lead girls to dropout of school such as inadequate school facilities, namely toilets and washrooms, lack of knowledge about menstrual hygiene management, contracting infections from using unsanitary substitute including old cloths, and being teased by boys about the leakage of blood.



Meetings held to kick off project prefecture



Booklets to be distributed to students

In this project, we first focus on promoting teachers’ capacity building to tackle these MHM problems while conducting making reusable sanitary pads training, spreading appropriate knowledge on menstruation and hygiene and sex education, and rising



Toilets with fixed doors



Radio talk show in Butabmala

awareness on gender equality as well as improving the school facilities such as girls' toilets, washrooms, changing rooms, and water tanks so that girls can keep going to school even during their menstruation period in an effort to enable them to complete their basic education.

GBN has also established a promotion center to promote awareness for girls' education in the community, to produce reusable sanitary pads, and to conduct training of sanitary pad making in order for the reusable pads to become well known. We will try to encourage government officials to engage in the menstrual related issues and to consider introducing this as part of a curriculum.

Radio talk show in Butabmala

In FY2021, we conducted a baseline survey/report summary, investigation, and renovation of school facilities. In carrying out such efforts, we produced brochures to advertise the Happy-Pad Promotion Centre and our project, as well as booklets regarding MHM, sex education, and gender issues, manuals for teacher training, preparations to operate the promotion centre, and radio talk shows on a regular basis at all target districts to raise awareness in the community.

It was noted that some teachers were not aware that menstruation was one of the contributing factors to absenteeism by girls. In most cases the girl will not openly state the reason why she missed classes because menstruation is associated with stigma, and at times girls would be subjected to beating for not coming to class in case they failed to present the medical receipts from health personnel. This reaffirmed the importance of rising awareness among teachers through training.

The project was welcomed by the local government at all three target districts, recognizing that such activities would improve girls' attendance at school, and they promised to work hand in hand with the project team. For example, in Butambala district, a subcounty political leader (woman councilor) volunteered to participate in a talk show. As a result, the project was well received, garnered political support, and will be accepted in the community and districts served.

Radio talk shows have been great opportunities to introduce our project to a wide range of listeners. Some listeners requested project expansion to their respective schools and communities, while others requested to be allowed to learn reusable sanitary pad making with schools supported in their respective areas.

The main change we noticed so far is that school management committees, teachers of target schools and government officials have become aware of “girls who cannot go to school due to MHM reasons” and gave them the chance to engage in this issue. The fact that we visited each district leaders before initiating this project and involved them in selecting target schools seems to have successfully involved the local government in this project. In Butamabala, the project awakened the need for the district to recruit and employ a female school inspector.

(Activity reports : <http://globalbridgenetwork-jp.blogspot.com/2020/03/blog-post.html>)

2) Promoting a clean environment through environmental education and garbage collection (Supported by TAISEI CORPORATION)

- Date: 2021/11/1～2022/12/31
- Location: Uganda Mubende district, Lusalira Trading Centre
- Beneficiaries: 1,000 community households, about 5,000 people
- Project Overview :

The Lusalira Trading Centre is one of the fastest growing rural growth centres in Mubende district. It is located in the centre of Kibalinga subcounty at one of the busiest road junctions that connects to the Kampala-Fort portal DR. Congo boarder. This trading centre has a population of about 5,000 people ,who are generating and indiscriminately dropping at least one half a ton of garbage per day, and as a result such waste ends up in the soil and affects soil aeration. The same waste clogs water channels and streams leading to contamination of open water sources used by both people and domestic animals, further worsening the situation due to resultant water-borne diseases.



Garbage is scattered around the water.



The dumped garbage is burned by residents.

The prime cause leading to this situation is people’s lack of knowledge about the damage on both human health and the environment by the indiscriminate disposal of waste. The fact that neither a waste collection system by the government or a recycling system does not exist in the area is also part of the main cause.

The objective of this project is to promote education and raise awareness on safe disposal and an alternative use of garbage, and to practice sorting and utilizing waste as manure and raw materials for recycling in order to continue to enforce proper and viable garbage disposal and to maintain environmental cleanliness at the Lusalira Trading Centre.

In FY2021, we have spread information on the issues related to garbage disposal and solutions through radio talk shows to the whole community by utilizing the community radio system. We have also established a garbage monitoring committee to check and report safe garbage disposal and sorting in the community. The project team had a meeting with the government officials and worked toward formulating safe garbage disposal by-laws. The by-laws are planned to be passed in May 2022.

(Activity Reports : <http://globalbridgenetwork-jp.blogspot.com/2022/01/blog-post.html>)

3) Economic Empowerment of girls, women, and youth through a microcredit-driven entrepreneurship in Mubende, Uganda

- Date.: 2021/4/1~2022/3/31
- Location: Uganda, Mubende district
- Beneficiaries: 12 youth (6 girls, 6 boys)

In FY2020, GBN has started a microcredit-driven entrepreneurship project to support the economic independence of women and youth in Mubende, Uganda. In FY2021, we conducted training for youth, producing doughnuts and bread, developing marketing and distribution, and repairing open spaces of the factory because doughnuts had not been rising due to the lack of heat inside the factory. We also acquired a diesel engine to enable continuous production since the electricity supply was not stable.



Even amid the COVID situation, we kept producing bread and doughnuts for supply, and there was a time when the demand increased as a result of developing the market.

However, the COVID second wave lockdown has greatly affected the market due to the continued closure of schools, which comprise the majority of our market. Also, increasing prices of fuel and raw materials, namely wheat, cooking oil, and sugar, have had a major impact and made the business less profitable, which prevented us from implementing the planned microcredit activity. Regrettably, the decision was made to end this project.

(Activity Reports : <http://globalbridgenetwork-jp.blogspot.com/2021/01/blog-post.html>)

② International Communication Promotion

1) Revise of the website

From FY2021, we started to create a new website using Word Press through the support from JICA as part of NGO capacity building training based ICT. We have been working on revising the website while receiving advice from experts on a monthly basis, and the process will be continued during the FY2022 to transition to a new website

2) Transmitting information

GBN has been advertising the organization via its website, Facebook, blogs, Syncable (a donation website), and YouTube. We basically post our project reports both in Japanese and English so that more people can get to know about our activities. Despite a lack of participation thus far, we will continue to try to get more supporters and members by encouraging them to attend activities and through the announcement of events.

3) Supporting students with their Inquiry-Based Learning

A Zoom meeting was conducted in response to the questions and consultations for high school students from Meijo University Senior High School regarding the GBN project “Improving school’s educational environment for adolescent girls by addressing menstrual hygiene challenges.” The students tried to help girls in Africa who have no choice but to miss classes or else drop out due to menstrual hygiene challenges by sending hand-made reusable sanitary pads through the organization in Kenya. However, it was not easy to communicate with the local NGO and its beneficiaries, and it was difficult for students to see whether their practical activities are meeting local needs. They therefore asked GBN to share information on the local site and to find possibilities of providing support through the partner local organization to improve their activities. We will continue to advise them to develop more effective activities. Two university students who graduated from this high school are going to join GBN as an internship from FY2022.

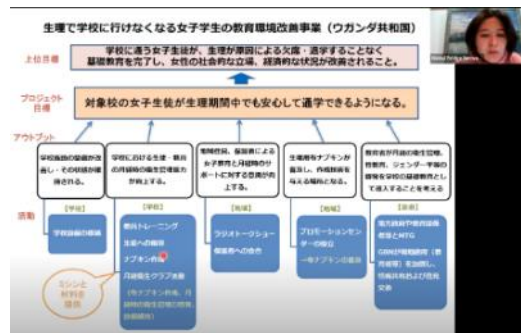
4) Event underscoring international cooperation/multicultural coexistence

Online event SDGs Yokohama CITY Winter

Seminar “Talk on girls who cannot go to school due to MHM reasons”

- Date: 2022/2/20
10:30-11:30, 15:30-16:30 (twice)
- Method: Online using Zoom
- Participants: 42 total (20: first session, 22: second session)

GBN joined to conduct an online seminar on “Talk on girls who cannot go to school due to MHM reasons.” We introduced our mission, ongoing projects, and a brief overview of Uganda in the beginning of the seminar. Subsequently, we explained the progress on how the GBN representative got to know about the problem on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Uganda and why GBN was established as an NPO in 2015, with the former project “Improvement of school environment to combat Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) challenges to Stop Adolescent Girls’ School Dropouts in Uganda” supported by LUSH Japan during 2016-2019, as well as how this new project shown above started in 2021 supported by JICA’s Kusanone Partnership Program.



This has given us opportunities to introduce our activities to those who had not known about us, and to provide information about the progress and further development of recent activities to those who have followed our initiatives for the past several years. Various participants, such as high school students or those who are familiar with the International Cooperation, joined our seminar. Some individuals who could not attend have even asked to share its archive, which showed that people have a high interest in this topic.

(Details on the event report :

<https://globalbridgenetwork-jp.blogspot.com/2022/03/blog-post.html>)