

Non-Profit Organization Global Bridge Network

Fiscal Year 2022 Activity Report

1. Activity Period: 2022/4/1~2023/3/31

2. Activity Summary

In fiscal year 2022, we have continued our two projects: “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), and “Promoting a clean environment through environmental education and garbage collection” at the Lusalira trading centre in Mubende district as an environmental protection project with support from TAISEI CORPORATION. We were able to support these projects in spite of being under the pandemic situation. From November 2022 to January 2023, a lockdown due to the ebola pandemic was imposed in Mubende and Wakiso districts where our target schools are located and some of our activities were delayed; we, however, managed to carry out most of the planned activities as scheduled. The GBN members, Ms. Ohnishi and Ms. Yokota, flew to Uganda in August 2022 to monitor the projects accordingly after a period of three years.

As an international project related an exchange program in Japan, at the request of an elementary school in Yokohama, we held a lecture for school children as part of the SDGs class. We also received two university students as interns who were able to collect donations through a crowd funding platform to start an MHM start-up project and also traveled to Uganda, monitored a target school, and also to conducted an MHM workshop at the school.

During FY2022, GBN has been providing information and reported our projects utilizing our webpage, Facebook, blogs, and YouTube in an effort to raise awareness on our International Support projects and promote cross-cultural understanding as well as building various networks with other organizations. The building of the GBN website has been conducted throughout FY2022 and is scheduled to be launched by FY2023.

In FY2023, we will continue activities, while considering the conclusion of the JICA project scheduled to end in April 2024, and what initiatives to carry out as our next project. This year as well, we plan to travel to Uganda for an on-site inspection, confirm the progress of the project, and conduct local networking with stakeholders for the further development of activities.

3. Activities Conducted

GBN activities consist of two key areas: “International Support” and “International Project-related Exchange 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
- Beneficiaries: 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 other related problems that also possibly lead girls to drop out of school such as inadequate school facilities, namely toilets/washrooms and changing rooms, a lack of knowledge about menstrual hygiene management, contracting infections from using unsanitary substitute materials that include unsanitary old clothes, and being teased by boys about the leakage of blood.

In FY2022, we worked on improving school facilities such as toilets, washrooms, and changing rooms at all of our target schools in three districts (30 in total). The established Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) clubs are responsible for cleaning and maintaining those facilities and the projects team is also making sure conditions are maintained by visiting regularly to monitor.

We also conducted training sessions for teachers at each school so that they can conduct learner training from an informed point of view. Many schools have added MHM, sex education (sexual and reproductive health), and gender awareness to their school curriculum, and as a result, it is reported that girls have become able to handle their menstruation by themselves even while being at school, and more boy students are helping girls’ students instead of teasing them.

In order to gain support from parents and local community members, we conducted community awareness meetings in 30 different communities where our target schools

are located and 1,218 people were informed through the meetings. In addition, we have continuously conducted radio talk shows and spot messages to raise awareness on support for girls' education. Through such efforts, we are receiving many positive comments and requests from the listeners.

At each target school, pad making training was conducted and a total of 337 (298 students, 36 teachers, 3 community members) from Mubende, 730 (592 students, 65 teachers, 73 community members) from Wakiso, and 229 (139 students, 32 teachers, and 58 community members) from Butambala participated in the training; however, many schools have reported to us that the number of sewing machines and the materials used in the training sessions were not enough to cover all those who were interested.

Regarding the Happy-Pad promotion center, since we faced some difficulties in the pad making training, sanitary pad production as well as marketing, we reduced the scale of the center in Wakiso and established a new Happy-Pad promotion center in Butambala in February 2023. Similar activities will take place in both the two districts. A "school to school learning visit" was conducted in Butambala in March 2023 with the aim of providing opportunities for students and teachers to learn from each other. The same activity is planned to be held in Wakiso and Mubende in the next fiscal year.

In March 2023, a Mid-term review meeting was also conducted in Mubende and Butambala. The main purpose was to share the progress and the challenges of the project and to have local government and schools to exchange their opinions. The meeting in Wakiso is planned in the next fiscal year.

During the GBN's visit to the project site in August 2022, we had opportunities to visit the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and local government (Nansana Municipality, Butambala local Government) with our two counterparts SORAK and VOTU to introduce our project and to report on its progress. They promised us to work hand in hand with the project team towards the success of the project activity implementation.

In January 2023, a 2-hour online session regarding MHM was conducted twice, and we received participants from a total of 25 organizations. We are planning to hold more online sessions in FY2023 on various themes such as support for people with

disabilities regarding MHM and cultural myths/taboo about menstruation, among other matters.

Based on the interviews with the teachers, our indicators for achieving goals, namely (1) Decrease in girl students who feel anxious about going to school during menstruation and (2) Decrease in absenteeism and dropout rates due to menstruation, have been making an effect to a certain extent.

Our main target in FY2023 is to establish a structure that enables us to sustain pad production, and also realize the stable production, sales, quality assurance of reusable sanitary pads at the promotion center in addition to spreading the pad-training activity to reach out to more beneficiaries together with our counterparts SORAK and VOTU and other stakeholders.

(Details: <https://globalbridgenetwork.org/en/mhmgirlseducation/>)

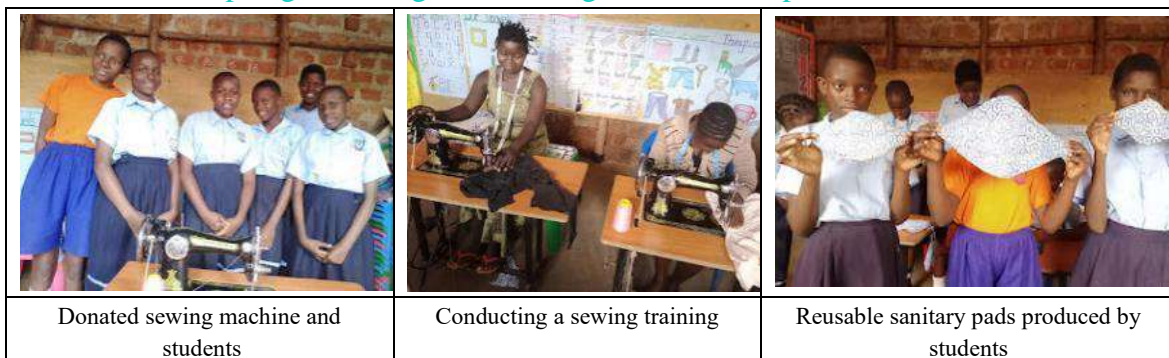
		
Students learning MHM	MHM Club members	GBN members visited Uganda
		
A Male teacher teaching how to make reusable sanitary pads	Conducting Radio talk show	School to school learning visit
		
A training at the Promotion center in Butambala	A Mid-term review meeting	Online session via Zoom

2) MHM start-up project (crowd funding)

- Date: 2022/8~2023/3
- Location: Uganda (Kampala municipality, Naguru Parish, Naguru Creative infant nursery and primary school)
- Beneficiaries: 30 students and 10 parents
- Project Overview:

In cooperation with Visionary Lady Foundation (VLF), a local organization in Uganda, we conducted a tailoring training for 30 girls students at Naguru Creative infant nursery and primary school located in Kampala municipality, Naguru Parish, using three sewing machines, which were purchased with the funds our interns managed to raise and donated on August 17. This was done to introduce the girls to tailoring skills, so that they can get familiar with using the machines and materials that are used. The girls, who are members of the health club at the school, can now tailor simple clothes, mend torn clothes, etc., by themselves. Upon acquiring a basic understanding of the tailoring skills and also learning how to use the machine, they are now learning how to make reusable pads. Training is held every Friday afternoon and on some evenings, and they practice on their own twice a week. The women in the community who are parents/guardians to the students are also taking training on the weekends, with the motive of empowering women so that they can gain self-sustainable skills so as to make them economically independent.

(Details : <https://globalbridgenetwork.org/en/mhmstartup/>)



3) Promoting a clean environment through environmental education and garbage collection

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

The Lusalira Trading Centre had been facing a serious problem of poor garbage disposal. Trash/garbage was comprised of mostly of non-decomposable rubbish which was being thrown out anywhere. Such waste would end up affecting soil aeration as well as contamination of open water sources used by both people and domestic animals. Therefore, we implemented this project with the objective to promote education and raise awareness on safe disposal and about the alternative use of garbage, which includes the



practice of 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.

Throughout the project we continuously conducted environmental education radio talk shows along with spot messages to educate and inform community members on the importance of maintaining a clean and safe environment. Garbage collection containers were procured and placed at five different locations, ensuring that community members practice proper garbage sorting and safe disposal. Besides this, we continued to promote a clean environment by cleaning up the community through the project.

Before project starts	Current situation
	
Garbage heap behind main road market	Kiosk install and green grass regenerates
	
Photo at Zifa olaba road before the project	Now market stalls selling bananas etc. have been installed in the cleaned place
	
Behind Kulubyas meat Butcher - a no dumping signage was installed by the enforcing group	Now grass regenerated

In addition, a community based environmental protection monitoring group composed

of local leaders and residents was established to monitor the inappropriate disposal of garbage and to keep raising awareness among the community. Safe garbage disposal by-laws were also formulated and enforced, and by imposing penalties for illegal dumping, community cleanliness was able to be maintained.

The following positive changes and impact have been achieved.

- Community members have learned the safe disposal and alternative use of garbage.
- Good waste disposal practices of sorting and the use of garbage as manure and raw material for recycling of plastics have been promoted.
- Increased income generation opportunity among plastic dealers who collect and sell the recyclable garbage.
- Increased soil fertility among decomposable garbage users generated from sorting.
- There is now a better and improved garbage disposal practice and a clean environment.

The community members and local leaders are now more concerned about the garbage disposal initiative and the area that used to have a heap of garbage is now available and having space for stands and kiosks to be built. The project goal was successfully achieved considering the tremendous improvement and continued state of overall environmental cleanliness of the targeted area.

(Details : <https://globalbridgenetwork.org/en/trash/>)

4) Consideration of a new project about women MHM related issues in Pakistan

Since we received a new member, Mawara Naeem, from Pakistan, who has a strong interest in women-related issues and MHM, we started to consider a new project in Pakistan basing on our project in Uganda, “Improving schools’ educational environment for adolescent girls by addressing menstrual hygiene challenges”. We are still at the consideration process while exchanging opinions with organizations that could be our counterparts in Pakistan, for instance, preparing a project proposal and discussing how to raise funds.

② International Communication Promotion

1) Revamp of our website!

From FY2021, we started to create a new website using WordPress with 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. In FY2022,

we were able to complete our website in Japanese and we are ready to launch the new website in FY2023 after completing the English version in June 2023. We also participated in a 2-hour online meeting “Fourth NGO-JICA roundtable @Yokohama” on February 4, 2022, in which we shared our progress of training as well as exchanged opinions with other organizations.

2) Transmitting information

GBN has been promoting 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. In our endeavor to succeed in inviting more people to become our members, we will continue to try to gain more supporters and members by encouraging them to know about our activities.

3) Acceptance of interns and cooperation for students’ exploratory learning

In FY2021, from April 2022 to November 2022 we accepted two internship students from whom we received inquiries regarding our project “Improving schools’ educational environment for adolescent girls by addressing menstrual hygiene challenges in Uganda” when they were still high school students doing subject research. They were tasked with editing video clips, translating, writing blogs, and fundraising through crowd funding. The funds collected were then allocated (as a donation) for purchasing sewing machines and other materials needed in sanitary pad making to the Naguru Creative infant nursery and primary school which our counterpart, Visionary Lady Foundation (VLF), has been supporting, and with all of the support of many donations, we were able to achieve the target amount.



(Crowd funding detailed report:

https://readyfor.jp/projects/thankyousupport_uganda)

The two interns went to Uganda in August 2022 together with GBN Director Ohnishi

and General Secretary Yokota. They accompanied us as part of our project monitoring of target schools on the first week, and then visited Naguru Creative infant nursery and primary school in order to deliver the purchased sewing machines and other materials needed for pad making. More so, they donated hundreds of reusable sanitary pads made by students from Meijo University Senior High School as part of their school program, and during the time of giving the pads to the students, they were able to connect online to students in Japan.

(Intern’s blog: <http://globalbridgenetwork-eng.blogspot.com/search/label/Intern>)

4) Carrying out a lecture during a visit to an elementary school in Yokohama.

On January 16, 2023, we visited and conducted a 95-minute lecture for 5th grade students at an elementary school in Yokohama. A girl, who found out about our “Improving schools’ educational environment for adolescent girls by addressing menstrual hygiene challenges in Uganda” project as part of their SDGs studies, inquired about learning more about the project.



We introduced not only about our GBN organization but also about Africa and Uganda, and then explained the current situation regarding the aforementioned project and how we are engaging in this initiative by providing visual materials including photos and video clips about the concept for them to easily understand.



We also took some time for a group discussion with the aim of trying to come up with any solutions towards some challenges being faced by girl students in Uganda such as the “lack of sanitary products due to poverty associated reasons”, “lack of knowledge regarding MHM”, and “having no one around to consult about MHM.”

Although we mainly focused on the theme of girls’ challenges and education regarding MHM during the visit, it was positive to find out that some students understood that in order to solve the main problem, it is important to first deal with the many interconnected problems such as poverty, water resources, facilities at schools including

toilets and changing rooms, and also traditional customs that hinder the situation to be changed.

The teacher commented that it was a good opportunity especially for boys to learn and to think about menstruation.