

JICA Monthly Report November 2023

IMPROVING SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS BY ADDRESSING MENSTRUAL HYGIENE CHALLENGES

<Activities conducted>

1. Radio talk shows
2. Spot Messages to raise awareness on support for girls' education and increase on reusable sanitary pad users
3. School to school MHM club learning visit
4. Project school monitoring visits
5. Happy pad promotion center (Butanbala)

1. Radio talk shows

In Mubende

A talk show was conducted in a duration of one hour at Luna FM located in Kibalinga sub county on 24 /November /2023. Parents were encouraged to be supportive towards availing material used for making reusable sanitary pads in order to ensure availability of pads at the school and to avoid missing school due to lack of pads. This is because lack of material for pad making is a common problem in schools. Learners were encouraged to implement the lessons learnt from the school-to-school MHM club visits in order to ensure the continuity of the project. Listeners were encouraged to create a friendly MHM environment for the learners who were yet to have their holidays.

In Wakiso

A one-hour talk show was conducted at Tiger FM on 27/ November /2023 beginning from 7:00pm to 8:00pm. The Executive Director took listeners through the project overview and the achievements attained so far. He encouraged parents to give a chance to their children to complete their education cycle. This was in reference to some parents who wished to discontinue their children from studies in order to make them concentrate on sewing as a skill. He appreciated the project schools for the commendable job of implementing the project activities. He requested parents to be supportive to their children as far as MHM is concerned especially during holidays.



The Executive Director during the radio talk show at Tiger FM

In Butambala

VOTU visited voice of Butende and voice of Kikambwe to sensitize a wider community using community radio known as Bizindaalo about happy pads. These are members include, (Twahah Sekitto, Atala Christine, Nakato Aziida, Adam Musoga and Buzimwa Ismah). The activity was successful.

The topic of discussion was “What age is appropriate for children be educated about body changes, reproductive health and menstruation?”

The team leader informed the community about the varying ages at which children start to experience adolescent signs. “Today, children experience their first period at an age younger than 8 years while others start later. Even at 16 years”, explained the team leader.

He advised parents, teachers and guardians to pay close attention to child development. Mrs. Atala emphasized the need for parents to engage their children in the friendliest approach to build their confidence and help them open up.

“Many girls continue to live in fear and isolation as they start to experience body changes like breast enlargement and growth of pubic hair. This is attributed to being naïve and uninformed,” lamented the host at Voice of Butende.

“When children know about their bodies and their reproductive health, they are more aware and careful not to engage in irresponsible acts of sexuality which can lead to pregnancy and ultimately dropping out of school”, continued Mrs Atala.



VOTU Team leader is giving an example on female staff Ms Atala as one people that undergo menstruation in a studio



Nakato, the tailor demonstrating on how the pads are made in Kikambwe studio

2. Spot Messages to raise awareness on support for girls' education and increase on reusable sanitary pad users

Spot messages about Menstrual Hygiene Management, girls' education and reusable sanitary pads are aired as follows;

- Mubende: via Luna FM 6 times a day.
- Wakiso: via Voice of Kiryagonja 10 times a day.
- Butambala: via Voice of Kikambwe 8 times and Voice of Butende 8 times. Still the usual time very early in the morning 4times and evening hours at 7:30pm 4 times making it 8 times.

3. School to school MHM club learning visit

In Mubende the learning visit was conducted on the 13/11/2023 where the schools converged at St Mary's Gwanika as one of the best schools in implementing the project activities. The session was conducted in a duration of two and half hours where the different Senior teachers from the respective schools shared their experiences in line with the project activity implementation for others to borrow a leaf. This was followed by the representatives of the MHM club members from the different schools who shared their experiences as members in a participatory manner. The total number of participants included 32 i.e., 12 female students, 9 male students, 9 female teachers and 2 male teachers. Worth noting is that Gwanika Primary School was selected to host the learning visit because their performance regarding implementation of the project activities is commendable.



Participants during the learning the learning visit

In Wakiso, the learning visit was conducted on 16/November/2022 at Ssayi Bright Primary School. Four schools including; Kitungwa C/U, Kitanda C/U, Kirolo UMEA and Ssayi Bright Primary School participated with an objective of sharing experiences among participants to guide implementation of project activities. A total of 30 participants attended including 25 learners of which 7 were boys and 18 were girls. The teachers who participated were 5 including one male. Each visiting school had 3 representatives i.e., the senior woman teacher and two learners.



Participants during the learning the learning visit

In Butambala,

It was designed as a competition within the beneficial ten schools in Butambala District and to make these achieved, schools could have met in one venue to go that competition. Because votu did this last year, This time around VOTU decided to change the mode this way:- (One school visited another and each school formulated their own 15 questions from within the matter about our project ever since it started to now. They fire questions among themselves and whichever answer is correct, is a mark then after we sort out the scores to get the winner and the winner awarded)

We managed to move around the ten schools alerting them for the program and to give them transport allowance for those who are going to be the guests, so we could do this in order to check the progress about the project and above all we manage to identify the best performer in ten schools. This means 5 schools visited five and the order was as bellow:-

It was a proposal from the participants that the five winners compete again to get the number ONE best winner out of the ten schools, but according to the design, that is the mode.

GUEST

HOST

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| 1. Kiwala Umea primary school | vs. | Butende Umea primary school |
| 2. Lwamasaka Umea primary school | vs. | Butaalunga c/s primary school. |
| 3. Kitagobwa c/s primary school | vs. | Nkokooma c/s primary school |
| 4. Bule Umea primary school | vs. | Namwango c/u primary school. |
| 5. Kayenje c/s primary school | vs. | Ntolomwe Umea primary school. |

Activity photos

	
<p>Two teams facing each other</p>	<p>Group photo after the session</p>
	
<p>Nawango and Bule during and after the session (competition)</p>	
	
<p>Group photo of both teams (Nkokooma and Kitagobwa)</p>	<p>Both teams receiving their awards (Nkokooma and Kitagobwa)</p>

4. Monitoring project schools

Mubende

On the 20-21/November/2023 the project schools were visited with the aim of assessing the progress of the project activities including; training learners in MHM, formation of MHM clubs and reusable sanitary pad trainings among others. Also, to follow up on the implementation of lessons learnt from the MHM club school to school visits.

Key findings

- All the ten schools have a conducive MHM environment i.e., emergency reusable sanitary pads, changing rooms, clean washrooms among others.
- Girls in the ten schools are no longer shy when it gets to issues of MHM and can freely seek for support from the relevant persons at school.

- Most of the MHM club members in the ten schools had reduced in numbers due to the fact that Primary Seven students had finished their Primary level and left the schools for vacation. However, in all schools they recruited others to fill up the gap.

Challenges

- Schools still have a challenge of a big number of learners who cannot fully benefit from the practical training in pad making. They plan to engage parents to contribute towards buying some more sewing machines.
- Material used for making reusable sanitary pads is still a problem in most of the schools like Kasasa, CAWODISA and Katega Primary Schools.
- Schools still face a challenge of water scarcity especially during dry seasons where the water reservoirs are dry.

Wakiso

On the 21 -22/ November/2023, the project officer conducted the monitoring visit to the ten project schools with the aim of assessing the progress of the project activities including; training learners in MHM, formation of MHM clubs and reusable sanitary pad trainings among others.

Key findings

- Many learners have perfected the art of sewing especially the boys at Kitanda C/U and Ssayi Bright Day primary school. Each of these schools had a boy who could confidently make ten pads a day.
- Head Teachers of the different schools have been very supportive when it comes to repairs on the sewing machines for example Ssayi Bright P/S.

Challenges

- All the ten schools still lack material used for pad making. Parents are encouraged to be supportive in that regard.
- All the ten schools have few machines given the total number of learners who use them.

Butambala

On the 2/November/2023, VOTU visited schools to check the state of the washrooms and counseling sessions among the ten schools. This time around the washrooms were clean and equipped with menstrual materials. Both boys and girls participated in cleaning the washrooms. This makes us be so satisfied that our project has benefited both boys and girls. And also we saw other schools participating in pad making such as Butende primary showed us how to make pads



The status of changing rooms is being inspected by Atala and Nakato during the field time. (Lwamasaka primary school, Ntolomwe primary school, Kiwala primary school).



Construction pit latrine of Kitagobwa primary school



Kayenje washroom



During their training using machines as well on how to make reusable sanitary pads (happy pad)



Monitoring of their changing rooms with senior woman in Butende primary school



Nakato (VOTU member) training Lwamasaka students another skill of hand crafts.



Lwamasaka MHM club group photo with VOTU

Most school has similar problems facing reusable pad making are lack of enough materials for making pads and lack of enough water to support the MHM club.

Learnings the children have received from the trainings are how to run the machine, how to care about yourself, how to care about the girls, and how help others.

5. THE HAPPY PAD PROMOTION CENTRE BUTAMBALA

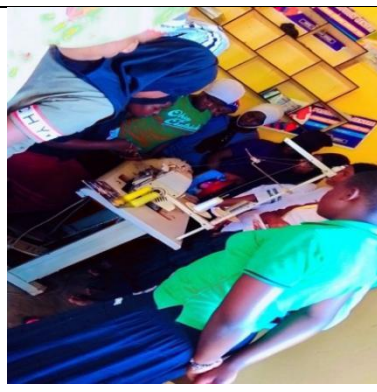
This month of November has been the best month because the number of trainers has increased this is because it’s a holiday period where students are at home. So many of them come for training.

We manage to produce 155 pads with a total of 35 trained in the month of November, and we sold 10 pads to the community members and 50 pads were distributed to students mostly during the school to school visit. The winning team was also given pads during the competition.

From the time of production VOTU has so far produced 1,556 reusable pads since March 2023 and it has sold 502 pads and donated 150 pads



Manufactured pads at the Training centre



Trainees at the training Centre participating in pad making



Trainees learning how to use the sawing machines at the training centre



Positive influences of all activities

- Listeners to the radio talk shows appreciated SORAK for the project work.
- During the school-to-school MHM club visits, the host school was eager to host the event (Mubende and Wakiso).

Challenges

- Most of the schools were preparing for the Primary Leaving exams and end of term exams hence allocating little time for the officers during the monitoring visit for Wakiso and Mubende.
- During the school-to-school MHM club learning visit, participants came late due to heavy rain. The project team waited for them to turn up in order to start the function in Wakiso and Mubende.
- Our visits were being interrupted by rain since it is a rainy season and we had a very big task to reach other schools as the type of roads we use.
- Few of the pupils were very active so teachers (senior woman and senior man) should add more efforts so as to make the pupils improve on their performance.
- These schools have really learnt to make pads but they have a challenge of materials for making more pads.
- Lack of enough support from the parents. Most pupils whenever they ask for help from their parents they are always let down. This happens due to poverty because the parents do not have money to give them.
- The senior woman and senior man have a challenge of allowances so they are demanding for allowances for example when carrying out the counseling sessions and supervision of the club and changing rooms. They would want a monthly token to show the appreciation of our organization.
- School activities, the busy schedule of the school activities also affects the club activities this because time is limited for the club activities.

Lessons Learnt

- Sensitization of parents about issues of MHM is still wanting.
- School to school learning visits enable the participants to identify new strategies of doing things.
- Boys can also help girls, how? By reporting or taking those who have experienced their period at school to the person concerned e.g. senior woman, senior man and the teachers on duty.
- They have learnt how to make pads and help each other when going through menstruation

Recommendation

- School to school learning visits should always be conducted for shared learning among the project beneficiaries.
- The schools wished for more machines to be distributed so as leads to more pad making.
- The schools also claim that the senior woman and senior man to be given allowances so that to motivate them to work harder.
- More of the materials should be distributed to schools so as to support pads making.
- More schools are interested in joining the project but unfortunately the project was limited to ten schools only due to limited funds but we pray next time they include other schools.