

JICA Monthly Report October 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. Monitoring project schools (Mubende and Wakiso)
4. Happy pad promotion centre (Butambala).

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 25th /October /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. Listeners were informed of the sixth coming online training (Dec 1st 2023) about gender inequality in schools and encouraged to attend.

In Wakiso

A one-hour talk show was conducted at Tiger FM on 29/ October /2023 beginning from 7:00pm to 8:00pm. The Executive Director took listeners through the project overview and the achievements attained so far. He however stressed the need to provide material for making reusable pads. In that regard, he encouraged parents and other key stakeholders to be supportive. listeners were encouraged to make use of reusable sanitary pads as ever which are cost effective and eco-friendly. Listeners were encouraged to join the sixth online discussions about Gender inequalities in schools planned Dec 1st 2023,



The Executive Director during the radio talk show at Tiger FM

In Butambala,

Two radio talk shows were conducted once at Voice of Butende and once at Voice of Kikambwe with a purpose of marketing our product, the happy pad. We informed the community where they can access the reusable pad in Butambala at the promotion center. We educated the community about Menstrual Health Management and briefly what it entails. Proving to the parents how important the project was to both the girl and boy child who will enable actors to deliver information in order to put together knowledge and practices to promote improved Menstrual Health in schools and communities.



VOTU team during a radio talk show delivering information to the about the MHM.

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. Monitoring project schools (Mubende and Wakiso)

Mubende

On the 15/10/2023 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.

Key findings

- a) On average at least each school has two learners who are well conversant with making reusable sanitary pads
- b) Learners know how to manage themselves during menstruation periods
- c) Girls are no longer shy about issues of menstruation and they freely request support where need may arise
- d) Boys are supportive and no longer tease girls.
- e) Teachers use the MHM booklet and teachers' training manual during MHM sessions
- f) Schools have emergency pads which are used by learners during menstrual emergencies.
- g) The hygiene of learners has generally improved due to the fact that they are taught how to clean themselves during the guidance and counselling sessions.
- h) Some schools like Kabowa P/S have emergency uniforms whereas others are planning to have them available in order to support girls during menstrual emergencies while at school

Challenges

- a) Schools have a big number of pupils which can not effectively benefit from learning using one or two sewing machines that are available.
- b) There is general lack of material used for making reusable sanitary pads
- c) Schools face a challenge of water scarcity especially during dry seasons

Wakiso

On the 25 -27 /10/2023 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

- a) A big number of learners including boys and girls in all schools have knowledge about MHM issues.
- b) As a result of the trainings in reusable pad making, one of the parents at Ssayi Bright P/S was impressed by his son who is now an expert in making reusable sanitary pads. The parent plans to buy a sewing machine to his son for him to continue with the skill in the community.
- c) Learners don't miss school whenever they are to practice sewing at Ssayi Bright p/s.
- d) Each school has at least four learners who have mastered the use of the sewing machine.

Challenges

- a) Maganjo UMEA has a big population whereby, their MHM sessions are conducted under the tree and when it rains, they are affected.
- b) Materials used for pad making are still a challenge in all the schools. Parents are encouraged to be supportive in that regard.
- c) Parents believe learner perform better in private schools and usually take their children for upper primary elsewhere. As a result, newly recruited club members are lost. This is solved by continuous recruitment of members in case they leave.
- d) Schools that have Primary Seven learners in the club tend to have a shortage of members in the club because they tend to be so committed to academics.
- e) Some senior men teachers are not active and leave most of the work to the senior ladies. They are encouraged to work hand in hand with the Senior Women.
- f) Interaction with learners was limited as most of the schools were doing their midterm exams and others were preparing for Primary Leaving Exams and this was solved by reaching out to a few who were available for some minutes.
- g) Being a rainy season absenteeism is so high in all the schools which affects the MHM training timetable. This is solved by post ponding the sessions.
- h) A class room block at Kitanda Church of Uganda P/S collapsed due to a storm and this led to limited space for both classes and meetings of the MHM club however a new block has been put up by the Ministry of Education.

Happy pad promotion centre (Butambala)

The trained team at the promotion center has played a big role in attracting the rest of the community and pupils to being part of the project.



Teacher Winnie inspecting to the trainees making a pad.



Teacher Winnie teaching trainees how to fix a sewing machine

	
<p>Trainees learning how use an Over locking Machine.</p>	<p>Trainees learning how to measure and cut pads.</p>
	
<p>Teacher Nakato teaching a trainee how to shape a pad</p>	<p>Teacher Nakato teaching a trainee how to cut a pad.</p>

A total of 58 girls were trained, 280 pads were produced and 50 pads were sold in the month of October, and from the time of production VOTU has so far produced 1,401 reusable pads since March 2023 and it has sold 492 pads and donated 100 pads

Positive influences of all activities

- There is increased replication in the making of the reusable pad among the pupils.
- Most of the learners are adopting to using the reusable pads. (Butanbala)
- Listeners to the radio talk shows appreciated SORAK for the project work. (Mubende and Wakiso)
- The parents at Christ the King appreciated the efforts by SORAK and agreed to cooperate to support the girls during menstruation. (Mubende)
- Head teachers and the learners are appreciative of the project activities in their schools

especially reusable sanitary pad making.

Challenges

- Materials for making reusable pads are still a major problem to most schools.
- Most of the schools were preparing for the Primary Leaving exams and end of term exams hence allocating little time towards the officers during the monitoring visit for Wakiso and Mubende.
- A permanent technician is still on demand for repairing the broken sewing machines in Butambala.

Lessons Learnt

- There is need for continued sensitization of parents about issues of MHM where chance prevails.
- If schools have enough sewing machines, a big number of learners can have the potential to make more reusable sanitary pads.
- If there is a permanent technician to cater for all the breakdowns for the sewing machines in all the schools there will be an increased number of learners and increased reusable pads produced.

Recommendation

- There is need to come up with a strategy of ensuring availability of material for pad making.
- Schools should come up with strategies of acquiring more sewing machines in order to enable a big number of learners to learn how to make reusable sanitary pads.
- There should be school exchange learning visits where learners visit other project schools located in the different districts for sharing experiences.