

Non-Profit Organization Global Bridge Network

Fiscal Year 2023 Activity Report

1. Activity Period: 2023/4/1~2024/3/31

2. Activity Summary

In the fiscal year 2023, we continued conducting our 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) and Ohnishi and Yokota from the GBN members have flown to Uganda in July-August 2023 in order to monitor the project sites and check its progress.

As an International Communication Promotion in Japan, we joined “SDGs Minato Conference” held at the end of February 2024 and conducted a session introducing our project activities.

During FY2023, 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. The new website we had been developed since FY2021 has finally completed in both Japanese and English which has been published.

In the FY2024, we are going to focus on wrapping up the project “Improving school’s educational environment for adolescent girls by addressing menstrual hygiene challenges in Uganda,” since it is going to end at the end of June 2024, and also on planning and preparing application for up-coming projects. In April-May 2024, Ohnishi from GBN is planning to visit Uganda to check the progress and the achievement of this project, as well as to network with the local leaders to exchange opinions considering next projects.

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: 2021/11/1~2024/6/28 (extended two months therefore 2.5→2.8 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 have been also related problems which possibly lead girls to drop out 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.

In FY2023, we continued to work on improving school facilities such as toilets, washrooms, changing rooms, and water related facilities at all of our target schools in three districts (30 in total). The established MHM (Menstrual Management Hygiene) clubs are responsible for cleaning and maintaining those facilities and the projects team is also making sure the condition is maintained by visiting regularly to monitor.

The teachers who had received teacher training became able to conduct learner's trainings. Many schools have added MHM, sex education (sexuality and reproductive health) and gender awareness as part of their school curriculum and have practiced the trainings regularly. As a result, it is reported that girls became able to handle their menstruation by themselves even while being at school and more boy students are helping girls' students instead of teasing them.

As part of community awareness, we have continuously conducted radio talk shows and spot messages in all three districts and raised awareness on support for girls' education. We received many positive comments and requests from the listeners.

At each target school, pad making training was conducted and a total of 866 (786 students, 37 teachers, 43 community members) from Mubende, 2,328 (2,270 students, 36 teachers, 22 community members) from Wakiso, and 761 (414 students, 37 teachers, and 310 community members) from Butambala participated in the training. Many schools have reported that the number of sewing machines and the materials used in the trainings were not enough to cover all those who were interested but some of the schools mobilized the parents for funds to purchase sewing machines and the materials and to continue the activity.

Regarding the Happy-Pad promotion center, a new promotion center was established in Butambala in February 2023 after the one in Wakiso being closed down and all the equipment, materials, and activities were moved from Wakiso to Butambala. In the FY2023, a total of 227

people took the pad making training, 3,434 pads were produced, 732 pads were sold and 778 were donated to the students as samples.

“School to school learning visit” was conducted in Wakiso and Mubende in April 2024 (The same activity in Butambala was conducted in March, 2023) with an aim of giving opportunities for students and teachers to learn from each other. In April 2024, Mid-term review meeting was also conducted In Wakiso. (The meetings in Mubende and Butambala was done in March, 2023) The main purpose of this meeting was to share the progress and the challenges of the project and to have local government and schools to exchange their opinions.

During the GBN’s visit to the project site in August 2023, we visited the Ministry of Health and local governments (Nansana Municipality, Butambala local Government) with our counterpart SORAK and VOTU. We had opportunities to report on its progress and the challenges and also to exchange opinions.

In April, May, July, and December 2023, 2 hours online session regarding MHM was conducted discussing on different subject on each month. We received a total of 83 participants from different organizations such as government officials, women’s groups, and groups supporting with disabilities resulted in strengthening our network with those organizations that are interested in MHM and gender equality. It was also encouraged one of the organizations participated in the online sessions (local NGO) to start the sanitary pads production.

Our main indicators of this project 1. Decrease in number of girl students who feel uncomfortable going to school during menstruation, 2. Decrease in number of absenteeism and dropouts of girl students due to menstruation, have been achieved which had been confirmed through the teachers’ interviews done by our counterpart during the monitoring visit as well as the GBN’s project site visits. The motivation to participate in the pad making training was high in all schools and many schools reported that especially boy students participated positively in the activities. We also received reports saying that parents encourage students to participate the training actively considering that the sewing skills may help them attain jobs and have more income in the future.

The main challenges for the future are to establish a system and to keep securing funds in order to sustain the pad production at targeted schools and to continue the monitoring and training even after the project ends, and also the stable production, sales, quality assurance of the reusable sanitary pads at the promotion center and spreading the pad-training activity to reach out more beneficiaries. With all these challenges being considered, we will continue exchanging opinions

with JICA, among other organizations, government officials and other stakeholders to discuss on the strategies to continue the activities and to plan a new project.

■ List of activity reports :

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

■ Introduction video of the project:

(<https://www.youtube.com/@gbnglobalbridgenetwork4808/videos>)

		
Monitoring visit in Mubende	Monitoring visit in Wakiso	Visiting the Ministry of Health
		
The sanitary pads produced and sold at the promotion center in Butambala	JICA project monitoring (Butende Primary school in Butambala)	Meeting with the Municipal Education Officer of Nansana Municipal Council

2) MHM start-up project

- Date: 2023/8
- Location: Uganda (Kampala municipality, Naguru Parish, Naguru Creative infant nursery and primary school)
- Beneficiary: girl students from Naguru Primary School
- Project Overview :

Under the cooperation with VLF (Visionary Lady Foundation), a local organization in Uganda, additional support providing two sewing machines and other materials was conducted in August 2023. At the donation ceremony, the students performed dances, plays, and demonstration of sanitary pads making. Since the quality of the pad making was a little low, our counterpart organization VOTU from the JICA project provided some advice and techniques.

We plan to expand the activity as a business with the aim of empowering women by providing

pad making trainings to women including parents and community members.

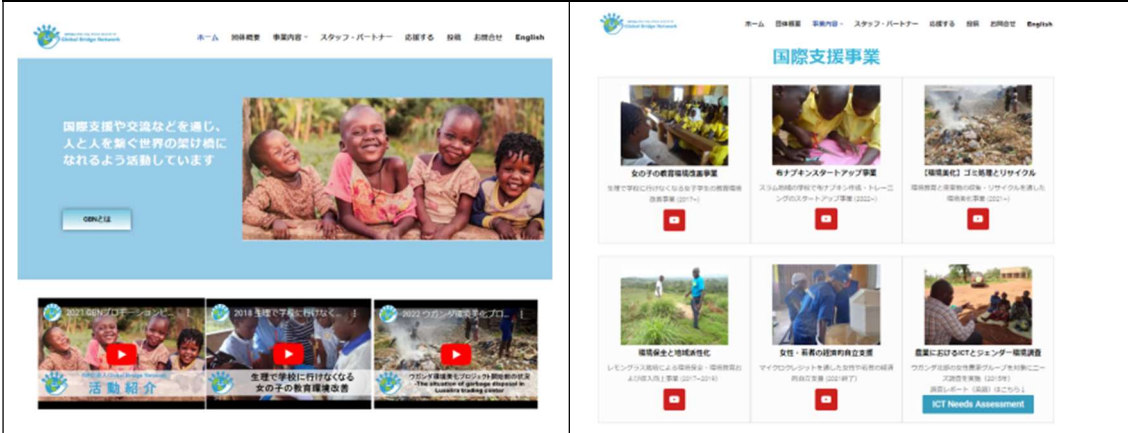


	
<p>Purchasing of a sewing machine as an additional support</p>	<p>Presentation ceremony</p>
	
<p>Dance performance by the students</p>	<p>Pad-making training</p>

② International Communication Promotion

1) Revise of the website

From FY2021, we started to create a new website using Word Press with the support from JICA as part of NGO capacity building training focusing on ICT, and 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 in FY2023 we completed and published our website in English.



- Website in Japanese : <https://globalbridgenetwork.org/>
- Website in English : <https://globalbridgenetwork.org/en/>

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 our effort to increase the supporters and members as encouraging them to attend activities and also through the announcement of events, we did not have any new members joining this year due to the little opportunities we had to see face to face but we shall continue making efforts to acquire new members.

3) Seeking possibilities of cooperating with other organization

As managing projects in Uganda, we received many requests for collaboration and cooperation from organizations in Japan and overseas including Uganda, and we considered collaborating with some of them. For example, we supported the representative of one of the organizations in Uganda introduced by the Japanese NPO Awa Cultural Heritage Forum by giving our project overview and inviting him to the promotion center in Butambala to show how to make sanitary pads so that he could deepen his understanding of the project and prepare for the sanitary pads production planned by his organization. We also had opportunities to exchange opinions and to seek possibilities of cooperating in the future with several NPOs in Uganda that we had connected with through online sessions or their inquiries..

4) Acceptance of the interns and cooperation for students' exploratory learning

In FY2023, we received several inquiries hoping to join GBN as a volunteer and some of them actually worked with us as a video editor even though it was a short period of time. We will continue accepting volunteers in the next fiscal year.

5) Project activity introduction

On February 27th 2024, we participated in “SDGs Multicultural CITY Forum” and explained the above-mentioned project in Uganda to the general public. Since it was only for the face to face participation, unfortunately not many people could join but having a few people enabled us to receive more questions and have enough time to explain the overview, objectives, and challenges of our project. As this lesson learnt, we would continue to work on publicity to deliver announcement of our events to more people interested in our activities.



At the seminar



Responding to the questions from the participants