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REPORT ON STRENGTHENING SCHOOL MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

ORGANISED BY: CHILD HUH UGANDA

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PARTNERS: VOLUNTARY SERVICE OVERSEA AND LIRA-RRH

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TRAINING VENUE: AMUCA, BARAPWOO AND OLAKA ANNEX P/S, UGAND

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Introduction

Child Hug Uganda (CHU) is a non-profit Community Based Organization established in 2011 with the general objectives of holistic values towards humanities. It is legally registered under the non-governmental Organization registration statute 1989, Regulation 1990 and the Local Government Act 1997 and amendment 2001 and licensed to operate as a community Based Organization in Lira. (Reg No: LDLG/2013/236), and in Kole district (Reg No: KDLG/022). It is also registered with the Lira NGO Forum (Reg. No: LF/NGO/LR/1161). The focus of CHU's activities are aimed at improving health, education and psycho-social wellbeing, as well as promoting sports in its community and surrounding areas.

CHU received an alumni activity grant of 8,500 DKK from DFC and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark to promote Adolescents Sexual Reproductive Health with a focus on strengthening school menstrual hygiene management. The project works towards the achievement of SDG 3.

Goals of the project

The overall goal of the project is to strengthen the capacity of adolescent girls, boys, teachers and school management in Lira Sub-County, Lira District, to manage their menstruation effectively and in a hygienic way through improved knowledge, attitude and practices and access to affordable reusable sanitary menstrual materials.

Specific Objectives

- To increase the number of school attendance by adolescent girls, while reducing school absenteeism during menstruation period;
- To enhance the capacity and knowledge of adolescent girls and boys on menstrual hygiene management;
- To equip these adolescents with knowledge on making handmade reusable sanitary pads;
- To improve and create awareness on menstrual hygiene management to teachers and school management committee.

Expected outcomes of the project

- ✓ All adolescent girls and boys demonstrate knowledge and best practices on improved personal hygiene and menstrual hygiene management;
- ✓ Boys and girls are empowered to talk about menstrual hygiene management and best practices to other peers;
- ✓ Myths and misconception associated with menstruation are eliminated;
- ✓ It has been advocated for easy access to hygienic sanitary menstrual pads.

Approach of the project

Methodologies used during the training sessions

During the training, the following methodologies were taken used:

- Plenary sessions
- Questions and answers sessions
- Sharing personal experiences
- Demonstration of materials for menstruation and their usage
- Teaching practical skills on making reusable sanitary pads.

Topics covered during the training sessions

During the training, the following five (5) main topics were covered with sub themes:

1. Child growth and development
 - Stages in childhood
2. Adolescence
 - Changes during adolescents
 - Challenges of adolescents
 - solutions to overcome these challenges
 - Key messages to adolescents.
3. Menstruation
 - Premenstrual signs and symptoms

- Myths and misconception of menstruation
- Types of menstrual cycles
- Challenges of menstruation.
- Management of menstruation
- Key messages of menstruation

4. Menstrual hygiene management and practices

- Definition of MHM
- Materials use during menstruation
- Hygiene during menstruation
- Waste disposal of materials used
- Key messages on MHM

5. Practical skills

- Components of RUMPS
- Measurements
- Steps follow in making a shield and a liner.
- Cleaning and washing of reusable sanitary pads

Content of the topics

1. Child growth and development

During the training, child growth was defined as increase in height and weight of a child, while child development means acquiring new skills. For example, in milestones like sitting, crawling, standing and talking.

Stages of child growth were defined as:

- Early stages 0-3 years
- Middle stages 3-12 years
- Late stage 12-18 years

All the characteristics of these stages were discussed.

2. Adolescence

In Uganda, “adolescence is defined as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood characterized by physical, psychological and biological changes, and comprises those in the age group from 10-24 years” (National Adolescent Health Policy in Uganda, Government of Uganda (GoU) 2004).

During the sessions, changes during adolescence in both girls and boys were elaborated on.

- Changes in girls included: Development in breast, enlargement of hips, menstruation, softening of voice, attractiveness to opposite sex, development of pimples among others.
- Changes in boys include: chest widening, deepening of the voice, weight gain, wet dreams, growth of hair under the armpit and pubic hair.

In addition, challenges during adolescence were discussed. For example, that girls may experience challenges like unwanted pregnancies, early and forced marriages, school dropout, infections such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, urinary tract infections, peer pressure, low self-esteem, or abortions. While boys may experience drug abuse, cigarette smoking, taking alcohol, peer pressure, infections, indiscipline behaviors, accidents, or injuries.

The possible solutions to overcome adolescents’ challenges may include encouraging them to abstain from sex, to practice the concept of being faithful to themselves, to seek guidance and counselling from their teachers and parents, and to report any sexual abuse and/or forced to their teachers, local leaders and cultural /clan leaders.

Key messages during the sessions to adolescents included:

- Adolescence is a normal stage that everyone goes through when growing up.
- The changes that occur during adolescence like menstruation in girls and wet dreams in boys are normal and healthy.
- Each person is different and so everyone goes through the period of adolescence in his/her own schedule.
- Some of the changes can lead adolescents to dangers such as drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- It is not an issue if boys and girls to remain without a boy- and girlfriend until when they have completed their studies and can make informed decisions about their lives.

3. Menstruation

During the sessions, menstruation and the female cycle were also described. Menstruation was defined as the monthly flow of blood from the uterus through the vagina. It begins from the age of 9-12 years. The first menstruation in girls is called menarche and the end of menstruation in women is known as menopause and normally from 45 years and above.

In this session, we involved the pupils to brainstorm on pre-menstrual signs and symptoms, which include breast tenderness, waist pains, abnormal cramps, growth of the pimples, nausea and vomiting, and tiredness. This was discussed in a participatory way, as we wanted to create awareness to the girls for early preparation before their menstruation starts and to help them be psychologically oriented that menstruation can start anytime.

We further discussed about the various types of menstrual cycles that differ from each female individual:

- 21 days menstrual cycle,
- 28 days menstrual cycle and,
- 30-34 days menstrual cycle.

It was stressed that all these are normal cycles in girls and women.

Moreover, we discussed two phases that occur after menstruation: safe and unsafe periods. In safe periods, the uterus is still regenerating the worn-out tissues and here conception cannot take place. However, one is not safe from acquiring infections like HIV/AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhoea and other STIs. A condom should therefore still be used. This was clearly explained to the participants in all the schools that training took place in.

Meanwhile, unsafe periods are occur when the uterus is well prepared for conception to occur, if unsafe or unprotected sex is initiated. Every girl or woman has their own calendars to use during menstruation and each menstrual flow takes different days in different women in the interval of 1-7 days of flow. The first day that you see your menstrual flow will be your first date of menstruation (despite the date on the calendar of the year). The menstrual cycle was illustrated as shown below:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

31.

Red indicates menstrual flow in process that may last 1-7 days (or longer) in a monthly cycle.

Blue indicates the start of safe days including the day when you first saw the menstruation flow.

Purple indicates the start of unsafe days that start from the 11th day after your menstrual flow to the 20th day. Here the number of days has gone beyond as we wanted to encourage them to delay sexual relationship since research shows young girls has higher fertility rate than in older women of reproductive age.

Furthermore, it was described that during normal menstrual flow, discomfort can be experienced such as abdominal cramps, waist pains, nausea and vomiting, or dizziness. The use of a warm water bottle applied on the lower abdominal in a circular manner may be used to prevent abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting. In addition, we encouraged the girls to eat fruits and small frequent meals and to take plenty of fluids to prevent dizziness, while eating eat all types and available foods (proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and iron-rich food).

It should also be noted that the various myths and misconception associated with menstruation were clearly discussed and clarified to the participants. The participants were given opportunities to mention some of the myths and misconception that are within the community regarding menstruation.

Myths and misconception	Right information
When a girl on menstruation touches a jack fruit, it will rot.	Menstruation has nothing to do with external factors since it is a normal biological change.
A girl who is on menstruation should not hold the waist of a young girl who has not yet started her menses because it will make her to also start her menses before her time.	Menstruation is a normal process that every girl will undergo when their time comes, especially from 9-12 years of age.

A girl on menstruation should not carry a newly born baby because she will make the baby to have incurable skin rashes.	This is not true as menstruation is natural and the mother of the baby also goes through the same cycle and continues to carry her baby.
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Key messages during the session on menstruation included:

- Menstruation is normal and healthy for every girl or woman.
- The beginning of menses does not mean that you should start having sex or be married.
- The beginning of menses does not mean that your body is mature to have children.

4. *Menstrual hygiene management and practices*

Menstrual hygiene management was defined as the ability to have knowledge, skills and positive attitude to use safe and hygienic materials to deal with menstruation safely. There are several types of menstrual materials used during menstruation. Some are considered as good and as others are bad materials. All these were discussed to participants and they includes:

- **Good materials:** There are two types of good materials for menstrual hygiene, which is re-usable and disposable materials.

Re-usable materials	Disposable materials
Handmade reusable pads	Cotton wool wrapped with gauze
Reusable pads like Afri-pad, So-sure	Pads such as always, silk, feathers
Under pants	

- Bad materials:
 - Toilet paper
 - Plain cotton wool
 - Sand and mud
 - News Paper
 - Sponge or mattress pieces
 - Leaves
 - Polythene paper
 - Rough dirty pieces of clothes (nylon, kaki materials etc.)

- Rugs.

It is ideal to always maintain high level of hygiene during menstruation using right and hygienic sanitary materials, bathing, and frequent change of pads at thrice a day. This helps to promote good health, to prevent infections and bad odour, and to ensure confort among peers.

Furthermore, we discussed the handling of menstrual waste disposal. We emphasized that used sanitary pads should be disposed in the pit latrine or be burnt. This helps to keep our environment clean and tidy and it also prevents diseases.

Key messages on menstrual hygiene managemet:

- Good hygiene practice during menstruation promotes good health.
- It prevents other diseases.
- It maintains our environment clean.

5. Practical skills training

The participants were taken throuh the practical session on how to make reusable menstruation pads (RUMPS), for which you need:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| ● Soft clothes with bright colours | ● Needles | ● Cotton clothes |
| ● Walker material | ● Scissors | ● Threads |
| ● Baby plastic material | ● Razor blades | ● Safty pins |
| | ● Buttons | ● Tape measure |

How to make RUMPS

A liner and shield are needed a reusable menstruation pad.

The **Liner** can be in 2 pieces or 8 pieces. For the purpose of our tarining we used 2 layers. A liner should have a bright colour to ensure that it is easily seen when not properly wash. For example we encouraged the use of light blue, pink or white colour. When measured and cut, it has octagon shape (8) sided figure. The liner was measured at 8 1/4 +9 inch (21 + 23 centemeters) (soft clothe). Making the liner involves these steps:

1. You put plastic material

2. Add two pieces of cut shield cloth
3. After sewing, you leave one side open for turning
4. You put plastic material
5. Add two pieces of cut shield cloth
6. After sewing, you leave one side open for turning



Pupils of Amuca primary school participating in cutting a liner.

The **Shield** consists of:

- pocket cotton
- walker materials
- buttons
- baby plastic

Baby plastic was cut $9\frac{1}{2} + 7\frac{1}{4}$ inch (24 + 20 cm). This is a soft plastic material as shown.



The pupils of Olaka primary school cutting the baby plastic to form a shield.

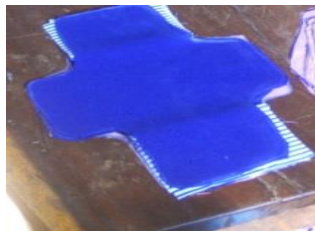
Pocket cotton was cut at 10.8cm and made out of a soft cotton material as shown below:



With all the cut materials, the shield is made using the following steps:

1. You put baby plastic material first
2. Add on a walker material
3. Put a pocket material on both sides
4. Then you put a new walker material again on top
5. Put safety pins on both sides to hold it firm while sewing
6. Then you put the buttons on both sides

When a shield is measured and cut (at $9\frac{1}{2}$ + $7\frac{1}{2}$ inch (walker materials)), it looks like a cross and it is cut out of walker materials:



Cleaning and washing of reusable sanitary pads

During the training, we emphasized on proper ways of keeping reusable pads clean and safe for the next use. After making the handmade sanitary pads, consider the following;

- Before use: wash with clean water and soap 2-3 times
- Clip on a drying line using a safety pins or its buttons
- Place the soft side up and leave it to dry
- Check if properly dried and pack in a clean dry place
- After use- roll and button and keep it
- When you reach home, remove and put in a bucket of water, rinse 2-3 times to remove the soak blood

- Then in a clean water, wash with detergent or a tablet soap until when its clean
- Rinse with clean water 2-3 times
- Hang on a line wire under the sun, put a light cloth on top and leave it to dry for the next use.
- Reuse after drying the pads

Achievements of the project

- 46 pupils in three selected schools were trained, who were chosen from primary four, five and six respectively.
- 3 representatives from school management committees (SMC) and 3 representatives from Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) were trained at the selected three schools.
- 3 senior female teachers and 3 senior male teachers from the selected schools were trained and sensitized.
- All the deputy head teachers of the selected schools were trained and sensitized.
- School health clubs at Amuca and Olaka Annex primary schools were reactivated. These schools had established the school health clubs but it was dormant.
- A new functional health club at Barapwo primary school was established.

Challenges

- The allocated time for the training was limited. This was because we spent only two days per school in conducting the training.
- The time we received the grant was late and this affected our time scheduled for conducting the training as the schools were very busy with the National examination and pre-end of term examinations in schools.
- Inadequate funds that did not allow us to conduct more sessions at other schools.

Lessons learnt

- During the training, we learnt that the pupils are still shy to discuss menstruation issues openly.

- We learnt that in all these schools, they lack adequate sanitary facilities for girls. For example, the private wash rooms, changing rooms for girls and no sick bay at schools.
- We also learnt that in some schools, girls share wash rooms with their teachers to take their bath during menstruation and they used their teachers' houses when changing their sanitary pads. This can be risky for them and uncomfortable.
- The teachers also had inadequate knowledge on menstrual hygiene management package.
- We also learnt that some of the teachers have inadequate knowledge on counseling and good communication skills to the pupils.
- We further learnt that pupils learnt best with peer to peer training. This was observed when we engage them in a short recap.

Recommendations

- We recommend that in the next training, the grant should be released and sent early to allow us plan early and follow the school schedules.
- We recommend that if possible we should support the schools in establishing girl's sanitary facility that will be convenient for them.
- We recommend more trainings on menstrual hygiene management to other schools that were not considered in this first batch of the training.
- We further recommend for follow up or refresher training to the already trained schools, so as to strengthen the school health clubs.
- We recommend conducting a separate training to the school teachers on menstrual hygiene management and basic counselling and guidance skills to build their capacity empower them.
- We recommend that the alumni grant activity should be increased if possible to help facilitate more days of trainings in schools and purchase of practical materials for making the handmade reusable pads.
- We also recommend facilitation for community dialogue and sensitization about menstrual hygiene management.
- We further recommend training the schools on liquid soap making as this will help them to make their own detergents for washing the toilets, bathrooms and provide hand washing soap. This will improve on their sanitation and hygiene.

Conclusion

This has been a timely orientation training that will increase the number of enrollment in schools, maintaining girls in schools and improve their performance in schools. We strongly believe that this short training has given the pupils, teachers, representatives from SMC and PTA the basic skills and knowledge to disseminate the right information about menstrual hygiene management and practical skills on hand made reusable sanitary pads.

Appendices

Overview of Schools and participants

Date	Name of schools	No.of teachers trained		No.of pupils trained		No.of SMC + PTA		Total school enrollment	Total number trained
		M	F	B	G	M	F		
14-15/11/2018	Amuca p/s	02	04	05	10	-	02	1554	23
16-19/11/2018	Barapwo p/s	02	02	06	10	01	01	1711	22
20-21/11/2018	Olaka p/s	02	02	05	10	01	01	722	21

Photos



The pupils and teachers of Amuca primary school posed for a group photo with the made sanitary pads after the training.



Different materials for making reusable sanitary pads displayed and ready for sewing.



Brenda and Peter at Olaka Annex primary school.

Different materials for making reusable sanitary pads displayed after being cut by the pupils.



The pupils of Olaka Annex primary school participated actively during the training and asked different questions.



Thee pupils of Olaka Annx primary school during Lunch.



The

pupils of Amuca primary school participates in sewing a liner and the teachers and school management teams also participated actively.

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