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REPORT ON SUSTAINING YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS THROUGH MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

ORGANISED BY: CHILD HUG UGANDA

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

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Goals of the project	2
Specific Objectives	2
Expected outcomes of the project.....	3
Approach of the project.....	3
Methodologies used during the training sessions	3
Topics covered during the training sessions	4
Content of the topics	5
1. Child growth and development.....	5
2. Adolescence.....	5
3 Personal Hygiene and prevention of early teen pregnancy.....	6
4 Menstruation.....	7
5 Menstrual hygiene management and practices.....	9
6 Practical skills training	10
Achievements of the project.....	13
Challenges.....	14
Lessons learnt	14
Recommendations	14
Conclusion	16
Appendices	17
Overview of Schools and participants	17
Photos	17

Introduction

Child Hug Uganda (CHU) is a nonprofit Community Based Organization established in 2011, in Lira, Northern Uganda. It was founded to provide holistic care and champion the interests of children, young adults and mothers. Fully registered under Ugandan law, we focus on two main areas: health and education. Our aim is to bring hope to the community, improve the quality of the life and set the foundation for sustainable development by brightening the future for people.

CHU is 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 CHU vision is to see a transformed and empowered community that respects and values vulnerable children, youth, mothers and adults for a sustainable development in education and healthcare. The CHU mission is to creatively empower and transform the lives of the vulnerable people in community through empowerment, respect and promotion of their rights and welfare as human beings by means of proper education and quality healthcare

CHU received an alumni activity grant of 9000 DKK from DFC and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark to Sustain Young Adolescents in schools through Menstrual Hygiene Management to achieve SDG 3 & 4.

Goals of the project

The overall goal of the project is to develop the capacity of adolescent girls, boys, teachers and school management in Lira Sub-County, Lira District, to manage their menstruation properly and to sustain girls in schools through improved knowledge, change in attitude and ensure affordable and hygienic reusable sanitary menstrual materials.

Specific Objectives

- To make a follow up on the trained young adolescents in three schools trained in 2018. The follow up was conducted to check on how the young adolescents are managing and continuing with MHM at their respective school health clubs.
- To increase on the number of training days of each health clubs by supporting the trained groups in the health clubs with startup materials for making handmade reusable sanitary pads. The materials are walker materials, plastic materials, pocket cotton, buttons, baby plastics, needles, threads, razor blades, tape measure, and pair of scissors.

- To improve on the sanitation and hygiene of the three trained schools by providing them with waste disposal containers.
- To impart knowledge through education to the parents of the trained young adolescents on the importance of MHM practices, thus creating awareness.
- To encourage and motivate both the young adolescents and the trained teachers by awarding certificates to them.

Expected outcomes of the project

- ❖ All adolescent girls and boys demonstrate knowledge and best practices on improved personal hygiene and menstrual hygiene management;
- ❖ Three schools supported with materials for making handmade reusable sanitary pads
- ❖ Three schools supported with waste disposal containers for improved sanitation and hygiene.
- ❖ Knowledge, Attitude and Perception changed towards menstruation
- ❖ 46 young adolescents skilled and motivated to manage Menstrual Hygiene at school and out of school through certificates awarding.
- ❖ 10 school teachers encouraged and motivated to further conduct education and practical knowledge on MHM in schools to pupils.
- ❖ Publicized Danida Fellowship Centre and Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs as funders.

Approach of the project

Methodologies used during the training sessions

During the training, the following methodologies were used:

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

Topics covered during the training sessions

During the follow up training, the following six (6) main topics were discussed with their 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. Personal Hygiene and prevention of early teen pregnancy.
 - Key messages on Personal hygiene
 - Key messages on early pregnancy
4. Menstruation
 - Premenstrual signs and symptoms
 - Myths and misconception of menstruation
 - Types of menstrual cycles
 - Challenges of menstruation.
 - Management of menstruation
 - Key messages of menstruation
5. Menstrual hygiene management and practices
 - Definition of MHM
 - Materials use during menstruation
 - Hygiene during menstruation
 - Waste disposal of materials used
 - Key messages on MHM
6. 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 issues 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 *Personal Hygiene and prevention of early teen pregnancy*

a) Personal Hygiene Management

During the follow up training, we also included in our topics personal hygiene management. Here we emphasized that self cleanliness should be observed by every pupil while at school and at home.

We cover among other things examples of personal hygiene to be maintained included;

- Bathing twice a day using clean water and soap
- Brushing teeth thrice a day with a tooth paste after every meal to avoid tooth decay.
- Washing and changing underwear after taking a bath to avoid getting infections
- Washing hands after visiting toilets with soap to avoid getting germs.
- Cover your mouth while coughing to avoid spreading germs to others.
- Cutting your figure nails short to avoid getting germs as well.
- Shaving hair off from the private parts such as under the armpits to avoid getting bad smells.

b) Prevention of early teen pregnancy.

During our follow up training, we also covered a new topic under prevention of early teen pregnancy. This topic was covered because in Uganda, there is a challenge of teen age pregnancies at 25% which is very high (PMA 2018 round 6 survey). Thus, we discussed several ways through which young adolescents can prevent teen pregnancies such as;

- We emphasized abstaining from sex and being faithful to themselves.
- To avoid staying and associating with wrong groups

- Avoid walking at night to avoid being rape by bad groups.
- Use condoms if they cannot abstains.
- To seek for a contraceptive guidance from a qualified health care workers and be enrolled
- Being open to discuss with your teachers, parents and a friend any challenges you are facing that might lead you in to sexual temptations.

4 Menstruation

During the discussion, menstruation and the female cycle were also described and the pupils defined menstruation 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 follow up, 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 involve the pupils to discuss about the various types of menstrual cycles that differ from each female individual:

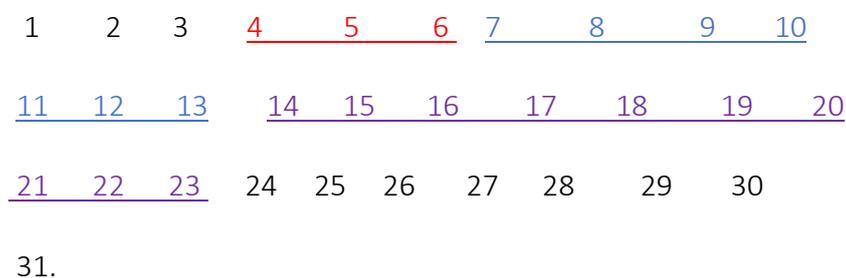
- 21 days menstrual cycle,
- 28 days menstrual cycle and,
- 30-34 days menstrual cycle.

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:



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 discussed 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).

We also reviewed and discussed that the various myths and misconception associated with menstruation and the pupils were the ones who gave the different myths associated with menstruation while we clarified to them by giving the right information as put in the table below.

Myths and misconception	Right information
When a girl/woman is on period and passes by a garden where groundnuts are planted, it will dry.	Menstruation has nothing to do with external factors since it is a normal biological change.
When a girl is on menstruation and greets a boy, she will get pregnant.	Menstruation is natural and occurs in every woman.

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.

Key messages during the follow up training 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.

5 *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 emphasied 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.

6 Practical skills training

The participants were asked to demonstrate to us the practical skills 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 for making 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 $8\frac{1}{4} + 9$ 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 sowing, you leave one side open for turning



Pupils of Barapwo and Olaka Annex primary school participated 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 Barapwo primary school demonstrated 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:

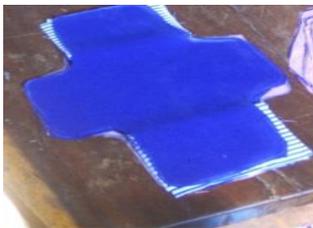


Brenda measured while the volunteer learned how to cut a pocket cotton as above.

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

- 215 more pupils in the three selected schools were followed up during the training. In each school for example, Amuca primary school, the health club trained more 100 girls and 50 more boys, Olaka Annex trained more 25 pupils and Barapwo trained more new 50 pupils with practical skills and knowledge on making reusable sanitary pads respectively.
- Reduction in school dropouts and absenteeism among girls during their monthly menses. This was stated by female school teachers from all the three schools.
- There are more girls trained with practical skills and knowledge on MHM in all the three schools.
- The project has achieved in creating a social platform for both girls and boys since both of them were trained together.
- Achieved in promoting self-awareness and control among the girls trained through a thorough discussion on good personal hygiene and other topics discussed.
- Achieved in eliminating misconceptions regarding menstruation.
- 3 senior female teachers and 3 senior male teachers from the selected schools were trained during the follow up and sensitized with new knowledge on MHM.
- School health clubs at Amuca and Olaka Annex primary schools that were reactivated during the first training are still active and functional.
- A new functional health club at Barapwo primary school that was established is active and functional with a close supervision from the school health club teacher.

Challenges

- Inadequate rooms at schools for girls' private use especially changing and washing rooms or facilities.
- Inadequate funds that did not allow us to conduct more sessions to other schools.
- The materials for making reusable pads are very expensive for the schools to afford on a regular basis.
- There still exist negative attitudes and practices from some pupils regarding menstruation especially young boys.

Lessons learnt

- During the follow up training, we learnt that one school trained few pupils in to the health club because they could not buy enough training materials for many pupils.
- We learnt that in all these schools, they still lack adequate sanitary facilities for girls. For example, the private wash rooms, changing rooms for girls and no sick bay at schools.
- We further learnt that pupils learnt best with peer to peer training. This was observed when we engage them in a recap, and further we made boys in each school demonstrate the steps to be followed while putting on and using reusable sanitary pads.
- We also learnt that, there is need to expand our training to more schools with practical skills and knowledge on MHM packages. This will help to promote girls retention at schools and improve on their performance.
- In addition to training young adolescents on MHM packages, we learnt that there is need to train them with some new skills on making liquid soap which they can make their own at home to wash their pads since the materials for making it is cost effective.

Recommendations

- 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 constant follow up or refresher training to the already trained schools, so as to strengthen the school health clubs and to monitor their progress with the project.
- We recommend conducting a separate training to the parents on the importance of menstrual hygiene management and basic counselling and guidance skills to build their capacity in supporting their children so as to take up reusable pad making as a way to reduce on the cost of purchasing disposable pads monthly.
- 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 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 was a suitable and appreciated] follow up training that encouraged and motivated all these three schools to continue educating and training more young adolescents with both theoretical and practical skill development on making reusable pads. Child Hug Uganda believes that this project has achieved its set objects and the overall goal for which the project was set to achieved.

Appendices

Overview of Schools and participants

Date	Name of schools	No.of teachers during follow up		No.of pupils during follow up		No.of SMC + PTA		Total school enrollment	Total number during follow up
		M	F	B	G	M	F		
12/06/2019	Amuca p/s	02	03	50	100	-	-	1554	150
13/06/2019	Barapwo p/s	02	01	5	20	01	-	1962	25
14/06/2019	Olaka p/s	02	02	15	25	01	-	1075	40

Photos



The pupils and teachers of Olaka Annex primary school posed for a group photo with their made sanitary pads after the follow up training.



The pupils of Barapwo primary school also for a group photo after the follow up training.



Pupils of Olaka Annex during class follow up training with our CHU volunteers.



Pupils of Amuca primary school during a refreshment break.



Different materials being cut and displayed by school SMC and CHU staff.



School pupils of Amuca cutting the baby clothe.

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