



EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN UGANDA IN MENSTRUAL MANAGEMENT AND MAKING OF REUSABLE SANITARY PADS

Lessons learned from the DREAMS Innovation Challenge

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MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is defined by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program as “Women and adolescent girls using clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials.”

In Uganda one of the critical factors that undermines the benefits associated with the use of sanitary pads among girls is the limited knowledge and support from men and boys, which appears to be informed by the societal construction of gender relations. Efforts have been made globally in closing the gender gap in education by paying attention to the specific needs of pre- and post-pubescent girls.

World Vision and the Center for Transformative Parenting and Research conduct sessions for making reusable sanitary pads to empower adolescent girls and boys with skills in making their own reusable sanitary

pads as a way of improving attendance and retention of girls in school. This also helps prevent gender-related violence against girls and women as boys deconstruct their attitudes, beliefs, and views on menstrual management as something normal and part of adolescent growth and development. The training includes 35 girls and 15 boys in every school and has trained 8,068 adolescents to:

1. Equip girls and boys with skills to make reusable pads
2. Empower girls and boys with knowledge on hygiene of the reproductive organs and general body

“But when [my daughter] is talking about her menstrual time, she doesn’t fear. First she used to talk to my wife, but now she can really talk to me, telling me what she is missing. Whatever she wants, she can ask from me. —Father of adolescent girl”

“I was so ignorant about how I would effectively manage my periods. Sometimes, blood could just stain my uniform, it was really a shame and it felt really demeaning and so uncomfortable especially when I was among a group of boys. —Agnes”

Far left: Reusable sanitary pads contribute to improved attendance and retention of girls in school.

Middle left: The reusable sanitary pad secures safely to clothing, preventing leaking and other challenges.

Middle Right: The students work together creating the reusable pads, which helps boys view menstrual management as normal.

Far Right: One of the adolescents shows off her handiwork.

