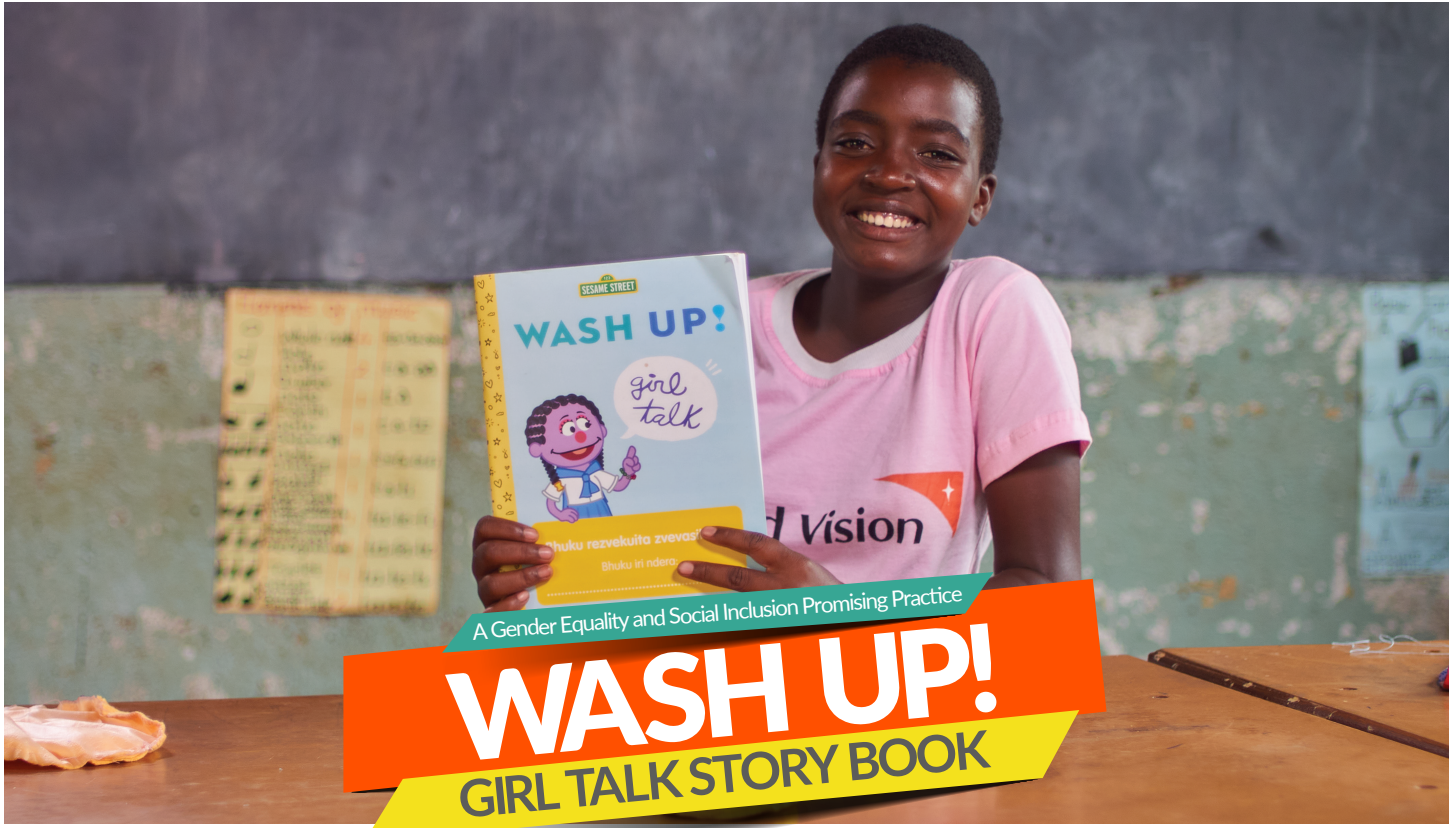
SESAME STREET
WASH UP!
girl talk
A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice
WASH UP!
GIRL TALK STORY BOOK

SESAME WORKSHOP

دبي العطاء
Dubai Cares

World Vision

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice

WASH UP!

GIRL TALK STORY BOOK

2 Acknowledgements
3 Introduction
4 World Vision's Five GESI Domains
5 Access Domain
5 Participation Domain
6 Decision-making Domain
8 Systems Domain
10 Well-being Domain

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A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice

WASH UP!
GIRL TALK STORY BOOK

Acknowledgements

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The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) story book on WASH UP! Girl Talk Project was developed by World Vision Zimbabwe team in collaboration with World Vision U.S. Special thanks to the following:

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Introduction

World Vision is committed to advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) through innovative integrated approaches that elevate intervention projects from being GESI Sensitive to GESI Transformative. This WASH UP! Girl Talk Story book is a testimony of how World Vision Zimbabwe and its partners are working to reduce vulnerability among the most vulnerable girls and boys in the areas where we operate.

Before the implementation of the WASH UP! Girl Talk project menstruation was a taboo subject in Zimbabwe. Most people did not openly or publicly talk about menstruation and how to prepare and manage it at home and at school. Girls and boys were not taught about puberty and menstruation. Girls were not taught how to manage their first period and could not access accurate information. The menstrual health and hygiene need of girls and women were often not met due to cultural taboos, gender inequality, discriminatory social norms, poverty and lack of basic services. Many adolescent girls face stigma, embarrassment and social exclusion during menstruation and there can be far reaching negative impacts on their lives to include restricted mobility, freedom, and choices; and reduced attendance and participation in school and community life. Consequently, this compromises their safety and causes stress and anxiety.

With funding support from the Imago Dei Fund and Technical Support from the World Vison United States, World Vision Zimbabwe documented the WASH UP! Girl Talk Project as a GESI Promising Practice. The WASH UP! Girl Talk project was first implemented in Zimbabwe from 2017 with funding support from the Dubai Cares Foundation and technical support from Sesame Workshop for developing contextualized child appropriate multi-media content and educational materials on puberty, healthy body, menstrual cycle, menstrual hygiene management and girls' empowerment. Today, the WASH UP! Girl Talk approach has been scaled-up and is being implemented in all World Vision Zimbabwe Area Projects implementing the WASH Technical Project.

The project developed contextualized child appropriate multi-media content and educational materials on puberty, healthy body, menstrual cycle, menstrual hygiene management and girls' empowerment. The project targeted remote, low resource communities in rural Zimbabwe and reached more than 34,974 girls and 18,188 boys in 150 schools between 2017 and 2022. An evaluation report showed that the project enhanced knowledge of adolescent health and dispelled commonly-held myths about menstruation with participants showing significant increases in knowledge of puberty and menstruation and reporting that they were more likely to talk with friends, family, and teachers about these topics.

As a promising practice in Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), the WASH UP! Girl Talk project challenged the harmful and discriminating socio-cultural systems, norms and taboos around menstrual hygiene and puberty that girls and boys experienced. It addressed gaps in pubertal health and menstrual hygiene education for pre-adolescent and adolescent girls and boys and established the notion that puberty and menstruation are a way of growing up and a natural fact of life that should be celebrated. This project empowered primary school aged girls and boys to practice and promote healthy water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)

This story book presents some of the success stories of school girls and boys, School Health Teachers, parents and other community members on the impact of the project on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) .

This Story book is a critical step in our ongoing efforts to document and share GESI Promising Practices and the evidence of their impact of the most vulnerable pre-adolescent girls and boys. The book uses uses World Vision's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) framework that promotes equal and inclusive access, decision-making, participation, systems and well-being (GESI domains) of the most vulnerable; transforms systems, social norms, and relations to enable the most vulnerable to participate in and benefit equally from development interventions, builds individual and collective agency, resilience, and action and promotes the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable children, their families and communities.

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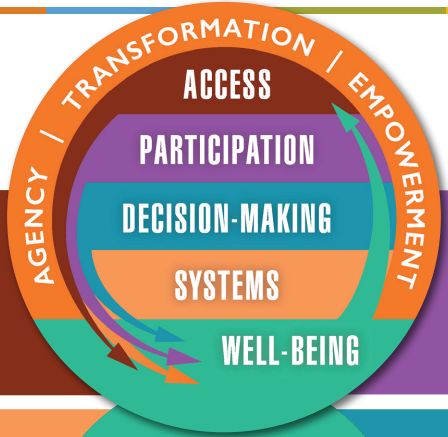
World Vision's **Five GESI Domains**



ACCESS
The ability to access, use, and or own assets, resources, opportunities, services, benefits and infrastructure.

PARTICIPATION
The ability to participate in or engage in societal affairs and systems of power that influence and determione development, life activities and outcomes.

SYSTEMS
The availability of equal and inclusive systems that promote equity, account for the different needs of vulnerable populations. And create enabling environments for their engagement.

WELL-BEING
The sense of worth, capability, status, confidence, dignity, safety, health, and overall physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being. This includes living free from gender-based violence and all forms of stigma and discrimination.

DECISION MAKING
The ability to make decision free of coercion at individual, family, community and societal levels. This can include control over assets and ability to make decision in leadership.

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A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice

WASH UP!
GIRL TALK STORY BOOK

ACCESS DOMAIN

Shantine Rusinga

Increased access to safe and clean reusable pads

"Before the WASH UP! Girl Talk project, my sister and I used to live in a primitive world. A world in which old dirty pieces of linen were used as menstrual pads. It was a taboo to talk about menstrual cycles and puberty changes. Our parents and village leaders thought this would trigger us into having sex with boys.

Clean, safe and reusable menstrual pads are now being used because the WASH UP! Girl Talk project taught me how to sew reusable pads. I have sewn some reusable pads for my sisters. My sisters are now able to make their own reusable pads.

A healthy body is a healthy mind. I am healthy and I concentrate on my school work. I am focused. I am now living in the modern world. I have learnt that I can do anything when menstruating. All misconceptions about menstruation were erased from my mind. I now know the truth about life'.

PARTICIPATION DOMAIN

Shyline Nganga

Allowed and free to do anything

"Thumbs up to the WASH UP! Girl Talk club for its good teachings. Before the Girl Talk project, I was totally confused on issues concerning growing up. The project helped me in demystifying menstruation. A lot was said about menstruation. Our parents used to say that when you are on your menses you should not cook or fetch water, or go to church. This is now history because we now know that you can do anything during your menses.

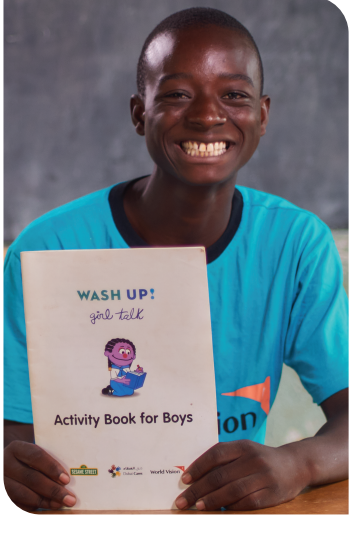
I am happy that my parents are now allowing me to cook and go to church when I am on my menses. At school I even play games when on my menses. The days when I am on my menses are just like any other day. I am now able to take good care of myself when I am on my menses. I am now a health champion. I am now able to teach my friends and relatives on hygienic management of menstrual cycles."

A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice

WASH UP!
GIRL TALK STORY BOOK

DECISION-MAKING DOMAIN

Hazvinei Chundu



Back to school boys support group

"I am now sharing my new knowledge to lure out of school boys back to school so that they may also complete their primary education. To date, I have managed to bring back to school 6 boys who had felt too old for primary school.

We have formed a boys' support group to share knowledge and support each other. We are looking forward to add more members targeting as many out of school boys as possible. I call upon all out of school boys and girls out there who feel too old for school to go back to school and complete their education. Do not let puberty get between you and your aspirations. Rather celebrate puberty as a normal way of growing up."

Chris Billy

Allowed to decide for myself

"I am a member of the WASH UP! Girl Talk Club at our school. My grandfather is a village head. I used to share the things we learnt in the club with my grandfather but he used to ignore me. He used to organize and decide for the whole village because he is the village head. He threatened to kick me out of the home if I continued telling him about what we learnt on puberty and menstruation.

What happened after he attended a GESI workshop at our school surprised me. My grandfather is now a transformed person. He now calls for meetings of the whole village so that they can make decisions together as a village. My grandfather is now a good person even at home. He now allows mew to decide for may self."

Charity Chimupunga

We are all equal despite disability

"We have a girl with disability in school. Most of the students in my school did not like to associate with this girl in various ways such as sharing food, doing group work in class and even sitting next to her.

As members of the WASH UP! Girl Talk Club. we shared with other students what we learnt on GESI that everyone is equal despite his or her disability. Now, everyone wants to play with and share things with the girl with disability. Some students even gave her clothes and shoes".

Sean Tegama

Keeping my body healthy and clean

"When I joined the WASH UP! Girl Talk Club, I learnt about taking care of my body during puberty. I also learned that when growing up, girls and boys should eat healthy foods or a balanced diet. I learnt that during puberty boys and girls need to exercise in order to stay fit. They also need to drink a lot of water and bath to keep their bodies clean, healthy and fit.

I told my friends and taught them how to take care of their bodies during puberty. My mother is happy that I joined the WASH UP! Girl Talk Club that has taught me about hygiene."

A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice

WASH UP!
GIRL TALK STORY BOOK

SYSTEMS DOMAIN

Tapiwa Matsvedu

The importance of a healthy body

"Our Health Facilitator explained to us the importance of a healthy body. On that day, on my way home, I collected a variety of traditional fruits like tsvanzva, maroro and sosotwe. My mother scolded me saying traditional fruits are backward. I explained to her that we had learnt at school that traditional fruits are equally nutritious. On the same day, my mother saw me doing physical exercises and she complained that it was not good for me and was a waste of time. I also explained to her the importance of doing exercises.

From that day everyone at home is now doing physical exercises and eating a balanced diet. We also realized that traditional fruits are always available."

Edeline Jazi

Lets openly discuss puberty!

It used to be a taboo to discuss about puberty. The taboo was broken by the coming of the WASH UP! Girl Talk sessions. The lessons we got from the trained health coordinators have opened dialogue among children, teachers and even parents. Girls and boys can now discuss "The clubs that were formed at our school helped us to gain confidence in sharing information about puberty. Our health coordinators helped us and our parents to understand the changes that occur during puberty. Some of the local parents supported our project by forming the Mother Support Group, which together with the Men's Forum helped break the silence by openly discussing puberty."

Sharon Chamturikwa

Celebrate menstruation!

"Mothers and aunties were not carrying out their duty to support young girls during puberty and menstruation. Parents did not discuss menstruation with their children. This deadlock was then broken by the coming of WASH UP! Girl Talk sessions that were facilitated by our health teachers that helped us to understand that menstruation is a way of growing up. What was regarded as a secret is now discussed by peers, parents and teachers."

"As a girl child, I am very happy because we are now free to tell our teachers, parents or guardians about our cycle. They can help us with pads and even encourage us to participate in our daily routines. Our community now understands menstruation is a way of growing up and has since removed the stigma and restrictions. I celebrate menstruation as a way of growing up and thank World Vision for bringing Girl Talk to our community."

Darlington Nechirinda

Support menstruating girls!

"I used to laugh at girls who stained their school uniforms, but now, it is a thing of the past. I have so far assisted three girls at my school with jersey to cover their stained clothes and have informed them to get assistance from the female teachers of their choice. I am now supportive."

"Talking to girls about puberty and menstruation changes was a taboo. I am now able to discuss these issues with girls. I help girls to sew reusable pads. My parents now know what my sisters need when they are on their menses."

A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice

WASH UP!
GIRL TALK STORY BOOK

WELL-BEING DOMAIN

Nomvelo Mabhena

Discuss puberty with parents!

"When I joined the WASH UP! Girl Talk club, I learnt about growing up and how to take care of my self during menstruation. I told my mother about what I was learning in the club and how it has helped me. My mother was very happy because the club has helped me to open up and discuss anything with her. Now I am able to share information and teach others about growing up and how to take care of themselves during menstruation."

Tanyaradzwa Manyende

I now practice personal hygiene when on my menses

"Thanks to World Vision's WASH UP! Girl Talk project. Before this project, I was very shy to talk about menstruation and changes that occur during puberty. I did not practice good menstrual hygiene. The lessons gave me confidence and I now know that I can do anything at school and at home when menstruating. All misconceptions associated with menstruation have no value to me. I can now cook for my parents, play with others, control my feelings and sew my own reusable pads. I now know what is important. Now I practice good personal hygiene when on my menses".

A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice

WASH UP!
GIRL TALK STORY BOOK

Mercy Gudu School teacher

The importance of strong parent child relationships

"I grew up as a pastor's daughter. I and my siblings lacked guidance on menstruation and we did not spend much time with our parents. Most of my parents' time was spent in church services and counselling sessions for others leaving us unattended. Through WASH UP! Girl Talk, I discovered on the importance of a strong relationship between parents and children."

Tafadzwa Chomusina

My first wet dream experience

"As a boy, thirteen years old, my first wet dream came as a surprise and frightened me. I did not have anyone to share my experience with until I got into the WASH UP! Girl Talk project. I learnt that from as early as 10 years children undergo some changes in the body such as growing hair on private parts for both sexes and menstruation for girls. I used to laugh at girls when they accidentally stain their clothes, but now I am helping them take care of themselves. I make reusable pads to assist girls. Now, I understand that wet dreams and menstruation are normal at puberty. I share my experience with other boys so that they are not surprised and frightened when they experience their first wet dream."

Hazvinei Chundu

Boosted my confidence

"I am one of the boys who stayed at home for about three years due to lack of school fees. After three years, I was 15 and my parents forced me to go back to school. I had developed a hoarse voice and pimples on my face. Some kids laughed at me because of my voice and pimples and this made me uncomfortable among other school children. I wanted to quit school forever. I could not freely participate in class or play sports like other children. I felt too old for school especially primary school. The WASH U! Girl Talk project came along and I was invited to join by my school teacher. I was reluctant to join because I did not understand what it was all about. I kept missing class sessions until one day I decided to check it out. This was the best decision of my life. WASH UP! Girl Talk boosted my confidence significantly.

I was introduced to puberty sessions and I learnt that the body changes I was experiencing were a normal process of growing up. I also learnt that all boys and girls go through puberty, and they should not be ashamed of those changes. Boys develop a hoarse voice, beards, pimples and even experience wet dreams. On the other hand, girls develop breasts, pimples on their faces and start menstruating. This realization that these were normal changes at my age made me more confident to help other younger boys going through puberty"

Anesu Hanyire

Big feelings!

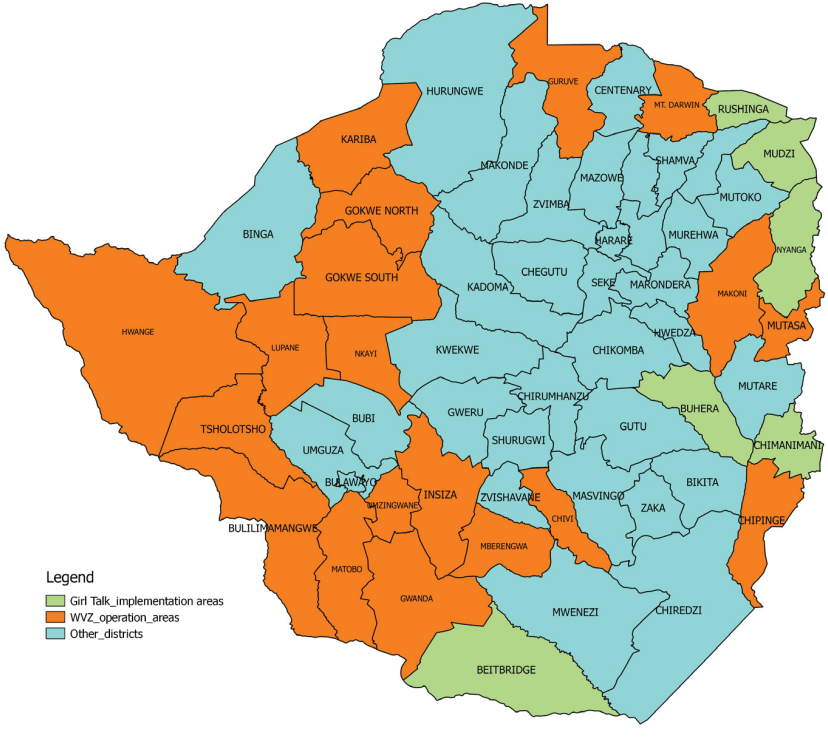
"Before the introduction of the WASH UP! Girl Talk project I often quarreled with my sister. My sister used to be angry at me all the time and I ended up hating my sister. Our Health Facilitator taught us that during puberty everyone's body has a lot of hormones inside it. These hormones can make anyone to have big shifts in feelings such as being happy or sad and being angry or nervous."

"I realized that my sister was experiencing these changes when she became angry, scolded me and picked up fights with anyone. I explained the facts about puberty and the influence of hormones to my sister. As from that day, my sister is able to manage her feelings. Now we are best friends."

Conclusion

This storybook demonstrated how the lives of schoolgirls and boys were collectively and individually transformed through integration of WASH UP! Girl Talk and World Vision GESI transformative approaches. This approach enhanced access, decision-making and participation, and challenged stereotypes, taboos, and other harmful social norms on puberty and menstruation issues. All these improved the overall well-being of girls and boys at school, home, and in the community as parents and community members embraced GESI transformative approaches at household and community levels. The transformation at community levels proved that young people are effective change agents as they successfully managed to influence their parents with knowledge acquired from school. The stories are individual testimonies of learners demonstrating the impact of the project on their lives and those close to them. These stories were documented as a GESI promising practice to share and inspire other girls, boys and parents out there to take a leaf from their fellow colleagues on puberty and menstrual hygiene management. The storybook helps girls and boys to demystify and dispel common myths about puberty and menstruation and celebrate puberty and menstruation as a normal way of growing up. It also encourages parents to be supportive of their children during this time.

A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice
WASH UP!
GIRL TALK STORY BOOK


HURUNGWE
GURUVE
CENTENARY
MT. DARWIN
RUSHINGA
KARIBA
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GOKWE NORTH
BINGA
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MARONDERA
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