



Creating period friendly communities

ANNUAL REPORT

"Promoting Period Possitive Schools and Communities."



2021

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ACRONYMS

AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
BBC	British Broad Casting Corporation
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
COVID-19	Coronavirus
CBO	Community Based Organisation
DCDO	District Community Development Officer
DEO	District Education Officer
DFID	Department of International Development
DIS	District Inspector of Schools
IIEA	Irise Institute East Africa
LC1	Local Council One
MH	Menstrual Health
MHE	Menstrual Health Education
MHM	Menstrual Health Management
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non Government Organisations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TPEN	The Period Equality Network
UBC	Uganda Broadcasting Corporation
UK	United Kingdom

FOREWORD

The year 2021 was vastly challenging for both women and girls and the community Irise Institute East Africa works with. It also demonstrated how resilient we can be by working together to adjust with the unanticipated public health and social economic emergencies or challenges associated with the global covid-19 pandemic. In our community, women and girls have undoubtedly been affected in different ways. Moreover, students and pupils were locked down due to closure of schools leading to another epidemic of teenage pregnancies.

The recent UN population study found that a total of 354,736 teenage pregnancies were registered in 2020, while 295,219 teenage pregnancies were registered between January to early September 2021. This is a call to act together in shaping gender response mechanisms that protect women and girls, and their future, and for funders to enhance support to menstrual health organizations. In 2021, we launched the 10 million Futures report on the impact of covid-19 among women and girls during menstruation, the findings revealed that girls traded sex for pads, lacked information on menstruation and some were forced to get married from their first period. Girls should be supported with information and skills to make right and appropriate decisions.

DEBORAH ASIKEIT - BOARD CHAIRPERSON

In the same year, we launched our first call for small grants to grassroots organizations championing menstrual health at the grassroots. 7 grantees have benefited and impacted communities in Kenya, and Uganda. We worked with our sister organization to establish the Period Equality Network, in East Africa, the network has 90 member organizations from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. We established and/ or strengthened various platforms such as "The Period Equality Network" - TPEN that provide an opportunity to work together. We must embrace the power of a group of organized networks of women. We remain focused on this journey to menstrual freedom.



MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

I am yet excited again to share 2021 year's Annual Report with you. With the hit of the second wave of COVID-19, what a year it was to register and create such massive impact around the communities Irise Institute East Africa works.

For us in the menstrual health and hygiene sector, it was a double testing of our innovations to ensure safety and provision of menstrual health solutions for thousands of girls who risked to drop out of school for inability to access menstrual products. The pandemic caught us off-guard but we readjusted to co-opt and deliver in prevalent new modes. The realization of systemic menstrual inequity in our communities with school closures due to lockdowns exposed the other social structures that could help expose the unfinished business of our movement.

At IIEA, we rolled up our sleeves and got to work, more inspired than ever to advance the menstrual health rights and well-being of girls and young women most oppressed in communities. I'm so proud of what IIEA achieved last year in promoting period positive communities supportive of the girl child. We engaged in collaborative advocacy around to advance the menstrual health issues in our communities and worked with our period equality network members from the grassroots to mobilize communities to care for the girl child with menstrual products like reusable pads, and menstrual cups. Your support of our mission has meant the world to our team and the communities we serve.

I remain motivated by IIEA's vision for a future where no woman or girl is denied to reach their potential because of periods. This Annual Report is a testament to our collective community power and together, we can build a world in which women are unlimited by periods.

It's our great honor to contribute to this movement collectively.

LILLIAN BAGALA - REGIONAL DIRECTOR



2021

2021 SNAPSHOT

5

Grassroots organizations sub granted to catalyze menstrual health interventions.

4

Projects implemented by IIEA - Rise Up, Tomorrow is Different, Period Positive Schools and flow cup menstrual solutions.

1000

Menstrual flow cups distributed to secondary school girls.

80+

The Period Equality Network has grown to a membership of more than 80 organizations across East Africa

200+

IIEA held virtual MHM conference with more than 200 participants

IIEA is recognized by Uganda's Ministry of Education and sports as a contributor to menstrual health

IIEA MHM project activities reached 2,900 school going children spread across 24 schools in 10 districts

INTRODUCTION

Irise Institute East Africa is a gender responsive sexual and reproductive health agency working with local and international partner organizations to strengthen sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls. During the course of the year, Irise East Africa amidst global challenges remained an advocacy voice ensuring that sexual and reproductive health and rights form an integral part of the development discourse that must not be overlooked. Without sufficient access to menstrual health support, women may not only suffer serious health complications, but they may also experience stigma and rejection from the community and loss of dignity. In addition, lack of menstrual health supplies can limit the mobility of women and girls, thus negatively affecting their ability to access to required basic services including education, health services, and livelihood opportunities.

Amidst the operational challenges throughout 2021, Irise East Africa with its implementing partner organizations in the country planned strategically and innovatively to ensure the continuation of essential sexual and reproductive health services to the menstruating women and girls. With support from our funders, Irise implemented a number of interventions to fulfil the menstrual health and hygiene needs of vulnerable women and girls in our project areas. This section of the report highlights our interventions and success realized during the course of the year.



Where we are
TODAY

IIEA'S PROGRAM THEMATIC AREAS OF INTERVENTION





MENSTRUAL HEALTH EDUCATION AND PRODUCT DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM.



**In the 9 schools, 1000
girls, and boys of ages
8 - 15 were reached
with MH sessions and
distributed 900
reusable products.**

**"With support from Irise International and
through the Period Positive Schools project, 9
primary schools were reached with
information on supporting girls living with
disabilities on management of MH."**

With financial support from The Cova Project, Irise International and the Africa Women Development Fund, IIEA continued to scale up implementation for menstrual health education and product distribution components in the districts of Jinja, Kumi, Soroti, Wakiso, Kabale and Rukiga respectively. The MHE sessions and community engagements aimed at providing accurate information for girls, young women and community members on MH, raising awareness on the existing challenges that girls face in their social life as they menstruate and addressing social norms and taboos surrounding MH as we contribute towards creating a menstruation friendly environment, both in schools and communities especially after the COVID -19 pandemic impact.

In 2021, IIEA's menstrual health program was rolled out in 24 schools, 5 secondary and 19 primary schools in Jinja district Uganda reaching a total of 9495 girls and boys were reached with menstrual health education sessions, 7210 girls benefited with menstrual health solutions/products, flow cups for secondary school girls and reusable pads for primary schools and 150 school administrators including senior women and men teachers, matrons, career masters/ mistresses. 9 primary schools are new sites for the project and it is the first time they are being engaged in menstrual health programs. Our primary focus in all these schools was to deliver menstrual health education, provide sanitary products, train the teachers as trainers of MH and engage community members and leadership structures.

Through the Period Positive Schools Project in the 9 primary schools, we shed light on supporting girls living with disability. This initiative was specifically under Irise International. While the Cova Project support reached out to 13 schools; Tomorrow is different project supported by AWDF is covering 25 schools. With support from Irise International and through the Period Positive Schools project, 9 primary schools were reached with information on supporting girls living with disabilities on management of MH. In the 9 schools, 1000 girls, and boys of ages 8 – 15 were reached with MH sessions and distributed 900 reusable products.

Specific Achievements

DFID supported Menstruation Friendly Schools Project.

DFID supported IIEA to implement a 12-month project titled Menstruation Friendly School Project. The project aimed at creating menstruation friendly and supportive schools free of stigma and associated ills. As a result of this intervention:



Giveaways:

320 boys and 548 girls from 10 schools received menstrual health education and the 548 girls each received a pack of reusable sanitary pads.

MHE Training:

46 teachers from 10 schools took part in a refresher MHE training.

Engagement:

322 women and 238 men were reached with menstrual health education messages through door-to-door engagement by community champions.

Outreaches:

883 people that comprised of girls, boys, women and men reached through community replace activities by trained champions who conducted 5 outreaches. The community champions lead behavior change aimed at challenging stigma and taboos, clarifying on myths and misconceptions whilst encouraging the development of a gendered and supportive environment for women and girls during menstruation.

A)PERIOD POSITIVE SCHOOLS PROJECT:

Period positive schools is a project, an approach and a strategy of protecting lives and safeguarding futures through supporting girls in school. It targets to reduce stigma, shame and embarrassment by normalizing periods through open conversation, and ensuring that both boys and girls are educated equally. In its entirety, period positive schools involve: building on a comprehensive approach to ending Period Poverty by: investing in provision, infrastructure, knowledge, and challenging stigma; provision of washable sanitary pads to pupils of menstrual age; supporting teachers to equip their pupils with knowledge on menstrual health, hygiene and reproduction and building privacy-screened changing facilities to enable girls to manage their periods without embarrassment.

The mobilization was done through churches, community radios and door to door. As a result, 319 girls (186 from BBFS schools 59 Nkondo ,73 Mafubira, 54 Kyomya and 133) were reached with MH information and also provided with re-usable pads. Among these, 3 were girls with disabilities. MHE sessions were further extended to a total of 608 girls, 414 from BBFS schools; Bubugo 99, Butangala 54, Namaganga 90, Buyengo100 and Iwololo71 and 194 girls from the community including 2 girls with disabilities The intervention has contributed to increasing school attendance for girls, increasing knowledge on management of periods without shame and leading to creation of period supportive environment in schools.

Specific Achievements

Period Positive School Project.

Through the Period Positive School Project, IIEA has achieved the following:



Enrollments:

Enrolled 9 out of targeted 15 schools in the vulnerable/marginalized schools with disabilities list identified by the Inspector of schools Jinja District.

Training:

18 local community members with links to the intervention schools were trained as menstrual health community champions so as to increase access to menstrual health education and sensitization in schools and communities. The community champions have provided MHE to approximately 720 both in school and out of school children.

Education:

322 women and 238 men were reached with menstrual health education messages through door-to-door engagement by community champions.

Outreaches:

18 local community members with links to the intervention schools were trained as menstrual health community champions so as to increase access to menstrual health education and sensitization in schools and communities. The community champions have provided MHE to approximately 720 both in school and out of school children.

By the end of 2021, Period Positive Schools reached to 900 girls from 9 primary schools with MHE and reusable pads. Despite limitations imposed by Covid19 restrictions, the community champions and local leaders continued to mobilize communities to support MHM agenda and activities. IIEA coordinated with Head Teachers, Community champions and LC1 Chairpersons of 3 schools under BFFS ie: Nkondo, Mufubira and Kyomya primary Schools to mobilize for the MHE sessions and product distribution.

Snapshot of period positive schools projects in numbers:



548

Number of girls that
received menstrual
flow cups

500

Number of girls that
received reusable
pads

24

Total schools engaged

82

Teachers trained
in MHM

18

Community
Champions
trained

2,911 Girls & Boys

Number of pupils
reached with
Menstrual Health
Education

09

New schools enrolled in to Period Positive Schools Project

**Assets from the Period Positive
School Project.**

Top left and Bottom Right: Girls from Mafubira & Kimaka Jackson champion Kyomya Primary Schools excited after MHE sessions & pads distribution. **Top right and bottom left:** Girls from Buyengo & Butagaya primary School in MHE session.



FIRST PERIOD EXPERIENCE: A BENEFICIARY

QUESTION: WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH PADS?.

“My first-time experiencing periods, I was 12 years, it was at night and I was very scared since I had no idea of what was happening, I cried throughout the night but feared to wake my parents. The following morning, I told my mother who bought me pads. Apart from buying me pads and teaching me how to use them, she did not explain to me what was happening, this left me with a lot of questions in my head but I later hard it from my friends. Till now I feel embarrassed discussing periods because it is private.”

MAGERO SYLVIA 14 YEARS MAFUBIRA PRIMARY SCHOOL UNIT OF DISABILITY.

B)THE COVA PROJECT:

The Cova Project supports IIEA to provide menstrual cups and menstrual health education to girls who menstruate in selected schools and communities in the districts we operate in. This is done in an effort to help bridge the 24 to 30-day school attendance gap due to menstruation. IIEA works with local partner grassroots organizations to distribute the menstrual cups and education materials specifically tailored to the communities we are impacting. IIEA has therefore distributed educational materials, with accurate visual representation of the girls to build their confidence as they strengthen their knowledge around personal health and development.

Through the Cova project, the following results have been attained: IIEA delivered MHE sessions to 9 girls' secondary schools around Jinja, Wakiso and Kumi districts respectively using the flow cup as an alternate product for period management that has a gestation period of 10 years. Through this initiative, the girls have been empowered and supported to go through school safe and able to manage their period with dignity.



Key Achievements

The Cova Project

Working with our girl power centered grassroots partners i.e., Ask8 CBO and Awesome Mind Speaks and using the Cova project manual, 1,200 secondary school girls from Jinja, Wakiso and Kumi were reached with MHE sessions.

IIEA conducted feedback sessions at St. Stephen SS Budondo, St. Gonzaga and Kakira High schools where 50 students were engaged in the exercise. The purpose of the feedback sessions was to generate girls' experiences in using menstrual cups, assess relevance of MHE content provided, identify best practices, key challenges and lessons learnt. Some of the feedback was that the school teachers were supportive to the girls by clarifying information on MHM. Furthermore, the feedback was that girls were no longer feeling anxiety on using a new product. They also gained assurance and confidence and never worried about how to get pads for the next period. All this feedback is said to contribute to improving girls' education at its resultant outcomes.

IIEA in partnership with the Cova Project organized and held the flow cup virtual conference in September 2021 drawing participation of over 300 participants from Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi as well as others from Europe, USA, Australia. The virtual conference enabled IIEA show case its expertise in MHM and also reached out to different communities of practice in MHM programming.

700 girls in Jinja schools were supported with flow cups to enable them manage their periods while a further 150 girls in Kumi, and 150 in Wakiso respectively were supported with flow cups. This has enabled IIEA to meet its target of reaching 1,000 girls with menstrual cups.

More assets from the Cova Project. Secondary school girls with their flow cups after the MHE sessions in Jinja and Kumi Districts.





POLICY ADVOCACY AROUND MENSTRUAL HEALTH, BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNICATIONS.

"Building a network of organizations working directly with communities around menstrual health."

Building a network of organizations working directly with communities around menstrual health.

With the stewardship of the Program Officer in charge of Policy Advocacy and partnerships, IIEA advocacy centered on advancing the rights of girls and young women in menstrual health through building a network of organizations working directly with communities around menstrual health so as to strengthen coordination and build a critical mass of community of best practice. Through building partnerships, a new set of 95 grassroots organizations joined TPEN. Expanding partnerships is leveraging and widening our reach to the most vulnerable girls and young women that are most often not reached with development programs. The policy advocacy and partnership building efforts enabled IIEA to convene several virtual policy advocacy meetings with several stakeholders including partners to define advocacy issues to promote menstrual health in East Africa.

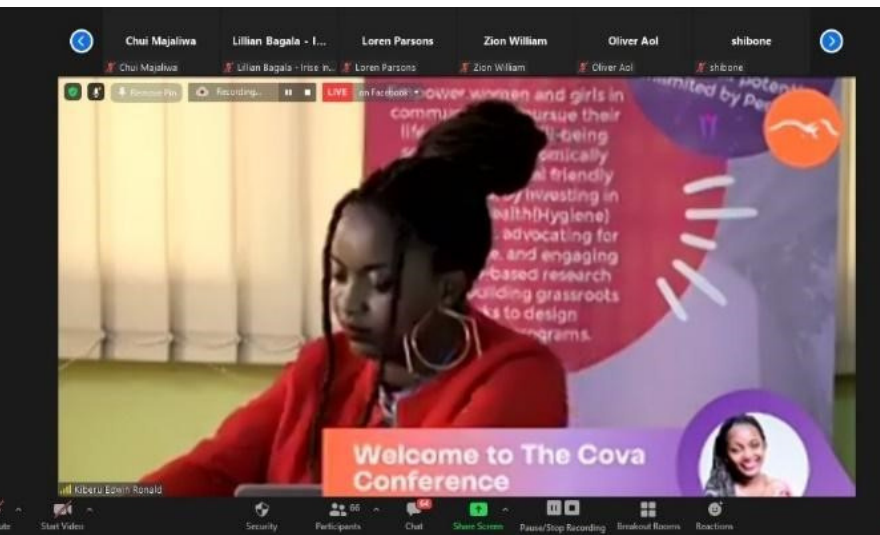
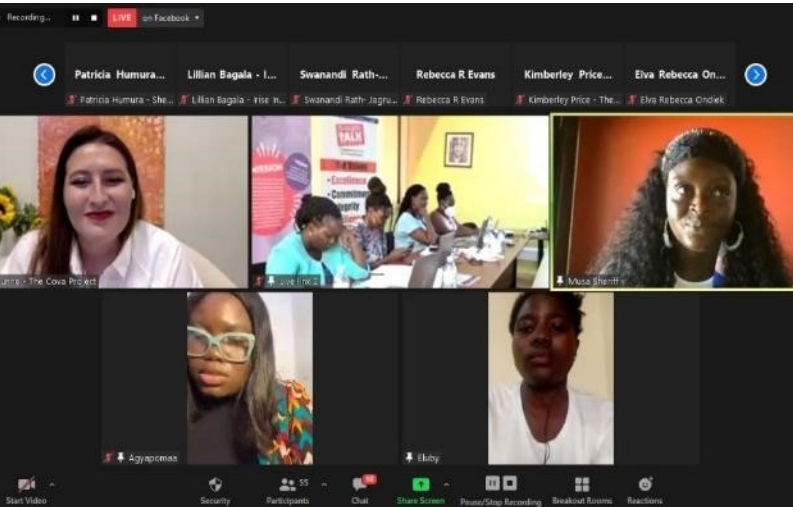


A. IRISE COVA CONFERENCE CONVENING:

During the course of the year, IIEA amplified its engagements by undertaking effective advocacy on policy and resource priorities focusing on menstrual health rights for girls and young women in and out of school across Africa. Through these advocacy efforts, IIEA in partnership with the Cova Project held the first menstrual cup conference on the 30th of September 2021, drawing participants from across the world to share their experiences, learnings and lessons on use and distribution of the flow cup. The conference brought on board panelists from Uganda's Ministries of Health; Education and Sports; Cova project implementing partners from Malawi, Ghana and Liberia and school girls/ beneficiaries of the flow cup from Jinja district who shared personal testimonies.

At least 200 participants attended the virtual conference across the world including Uganda, Australia, Sweden, Kenya, Tanzania, India, UK, Liberia, Malawi, and Ghana among others. Some of the key recommendations from the virtual conference were that: key stakeholders support initiatives to popularize menstrual cups use, increase MHM education for all women, mobilize involvement of men and boys; increase advocacy for development of MHM policy and strategic framework to guide national and local level engagement and interventions. The Cova Irise Conference blog was published and shared with different networks. It can be found here.

<https://www.thecovaproject.com/cova-conversations/2021/11/24/the-irise-cova-conference-usage-of-menstrual-flowcups-in-africa>



Conference panelists from different participating nations during the COVA conference and student beneficiaries from Jinja District sharing their experiences on using the menstrual flow cup during the COVA conference.

B. INCREASING VISIBILITY, ENGAGEMENT AND DISCUSSION THROUGH INCREASED INFORMATION SHARING AND BETTER, ACTIVE COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS:

IIEA has registered milestones in its efforts in networking, communicating, building partnerships, coordinating and collaborating with like-minded organizations. This has contributed to increasing our visibility, followership and engagements, through online discussions, posts and hashtags that have generated collective thinking, ideas and actions on menstrual health and empowerment of adolescent girls and young women through our social media platforms. IIEA has been active on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and established a mail chimp for information sharing. Similarly, Irise International continued to host our blogs with successes from implementation. Our communication on these social media platforms has attracted the attention of donors like Africa Women's Development Foundation and leaders in civil society organizations as well as government departments.

C. 'TOMORROW IS DIFFERENT' PROJECT:

With funding from the African Women's Development Fund, IIEA officially launched the 'Tomorrow is Different: Leadership Development for School and Community Girls' and Young Women's Menstrual Health Advocacy and Gender Equality promotion in East Africa' project through a breakfast meeting held on 24th November 2021 at Protea- Marriott Hotel in Kampala. The launch was officiated by the Woman Member of Parliament for Soroti district, Hon. Anna Adeke Ebaju, and was attended by over 50 guests including MP for Rukiga district Hon. Roland Ndyomugenyi, a representative for Jinja District Woman Member of Parliament, representatives from Ministries of Health; Education; Gender, Labor and Social Development; members from The Period Equality Network; adolescent girls and partners from partner and collaborating Civil Society Organizations.

The key outcome of the meeting was the commitment by Members of Parliament to lobby for increased budgetary allocations to MHM, tax exemption on Menstrual Products and to tackle emerging menstrual health issues. The meeting also resolved that Menstrual Hygiene and Health is considered a vital aspect of health education to both girls and boys. Advocacy, coordination and resource mobilization were also recognized as crucial for the successful implementation of MHM in Uganda. The launch further recommended that sanitary materials should be safe, hygienic, comfortable, appropriate, affordable, available, sustainable, environmentally-friendly and effective.

Key Achievements

Tomorrow is Different Project

The "Girls in Crisis in Uganda and UK" – BBC Interview was held and aimed at increasing global awareness about contextual issues on menstrual health and emergencies that have affected women and girls during the Covid-19 pandemic.

From the communicating using different social media platforms, IIEA registered tremendous growth. Mail chimp subscriptions rose from 0 in January 2021 to 200 people by September 2021. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Instagram – Regular updates were posted on these social media platforms. In the month of September, Twitter followers increased from 646 to 715, Facebook followers increased from 422 to 455 while likes increased from 389 to 414, Instagram followers increased from 87 to 93 followers, LinkedIn connections increased from 34 to 37.

COVID-19 Stories E-book Launch., The strengthened collaboration between Zamara Foundation Kenya, the organizers of the e-book launch and IIEA will increase awareness on regional challenges experienced by women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences documented shall be used for research to influence advocacy, program designing among others.

IIEA initiated a Tweet Chat with over 50 non-government organisations. The tweet chat strengthened our advocacy engagements resulting in IIEA being invited for a radio talk show on UBC Red Radio's "Gender Forum Program" where the Program Manager and the Partnerships, Communications & Policy Advocacy Officer discussed the importance of women's day and menstrual health management.

Key Achievements

Tomorrow is Different Project

Tweet chat on Parent - Child Sexuality communication and its contribution to SRHR. This was aimed at strengthening collaboration with Joy for Children Uganda (NGO) one of our partners and results from the tweet chat will be used for supporting programming and advocacy for SRHR interventions.

From the communicating using different social media platforms, IIEA registered tremendous growth. Mail chimp subscriptions rose from 0 in January 2021 to 200 people by September 2021. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Instagram – Regular updates were posted on these social media platforms. In the month of September, Twitter followers increased from 646 to 715, Facebook followers increased from 422 to 455 while likes increased from 389 to 414, Instagram followers increased from 87 to 93 followers, LinkedIn connections increased from 34 to 37.

IIEA in partnership with the Cova project on 30th September 2021 successfully convened the 1st annual virtual conference on the usage of menstrual flow cups under the theme, "Looking back; Managing menstruation using flow cups." 200 participants from over 10 nations around the world participated in the virtual conference.

IIEA developed several tools, instruments and a platform to support its partnership building efforts such as; developing the Partnership strategy, designing Period Equality Membership form, matrix composed of the partners and a virtual platform to ease communication, information sharing and coordination of and among network members.

IRISE INSTITUTE EAST AFRICA

Tomorrow Is Different Project - Launch



Hon. Anna Adeke, Woman MP Soroti committing as an ambassador after her address to champions Mental Health work



With support from  AFRICAN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT FUND

Project Launch!

Tomorrow is Different

Championing Policy Advocacy and
Building Young Women Feminist Leaders



Date: Wednesday , 24th November, 2021
Time: 7:30 am to 10:30 am
Venue: Protea Hotel Marriot
Hashtag #PromoteMenstrualHealth





D. LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT:

IIEA met two Members of Parliament with an aim of gaining and leveraging their support in MHM advocacy. The two Members of Parliament were the Woman MP Soroti district Hon. Anna Adeke and the MP Rukiga district Hon. Roland Ndyomugenyi. IIEA briefed them on "Tomorrow is Different" project and the role of Members of Parliament in advancing the Menstrual Health agenda for improved policy and practice in Uganda. Other MPs that were engaged virtually include the Woman MP Jinja district, Hon. Manjeri Kyebakutika, and Hon. Christine Apolot, the Woman MP Kumi district.

E. THE PROJECT INCEPTION MEETINGS WITH DISTRICT LEADERS AND BASELINE STUDY ON THE STATUS OF MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROCESSES, AND MHM POLICIES IN UGANDA:

As a prerequisite before project implementation, IIEA conducted a baseline study for the 'Tomorrow is Different' project that is funded by the African Women's Development Fund. The purpose of the baseline study was to gather qualitative and quantitative baseline information on Menstrual Hygiene Management and its impact on girls' participation in school leadership processes in the 5 project districts. The baseline study collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The findings of the baseline study revealed that: COVID 19 had disproportionately affected girls than boys in the following ways: Increased sexual and gender-based violence against girl children in form of defilement, child to child sex, engagement in transactional sex all of which have contributed to the spike in teenage pregnancies resulting in increased child marriages, loss of lives due to unsafe abortions, increased exposure to HIV and other STIs.

The closure of schools also meant disassociation from friends and peers and increased the burden of unpaid domestic work hence affecting the mental health of the children. The baseline also revealed that many of the girls were not willing to get back to school due to body changes such as growth in body size and height. Some girls were reported to have been involved in economic activities that give them direct cash and hence no longer interested in going back to school. Statistics obtained in Kumi district revealed that 2,100 girls had been impregnated during the lockdown.

F. MEETING WITH DISTRICT LEADERS TO MAP OUT THE MOST VULNERABLE SCHOOLS:

IIEA conducted subsequent project inception meetings with leaders in the districts of Jinja, Kabale, Kumi, Soroti and Rukiga. The purpose of the inception meetings was to identify and select the most vulnerable schools to implement Tomorrow is Different project. The meetings took place at respective district headquarters with targeted leaders including CAO, DCDO, DEO and DIS present. The objectives of the meetings were to introduce and orient district leadership about the new project, negotiate the signing of Memorandums of Understandings between respective districts and IIEA and to select vulnerable schools where the project would be implemented.

In the respective districts, the following schools were therefore selected for project intervention: In Jinja St Gonzanga, St Stephen, Magamaga SS (Secondary schools) and Buyengo and Bubugo primary schools.

In Kumi district; Atutur Seed School, Ngero Rock High School and Akulony Primary school were selected. All the 5 districts had concerns of spikes in rates of teenage pregnancies and child marriages following the closure of schools due to COVID 19. District leaders from all the five districts were impressed with the project and its objectives, and delighted that the project would play a critical role in increasing school retention of girls and building their confidence to take up leadership roles. They therefore committed to render all necessary support to the project team for effective implementation.

G. PARTICIPATION IN STAKEHOLDERS' MEETING:

IIEA was engaged in a meeting with the stakeholders to share a draft research report on the funding for children and youth-led organizations in Uganda. From the report, areas of governance, SRHR and limited support to the mental health of leaders in organizations were identified. IIEA was asked to share an organizational profile for future engagements. IIEA was also invited to participate in filming for the 16 Days of Activism documentary by Defend Defenders.

Participation in the meeting with local government district authorities and headteachers to select nine schools for the period positive schools

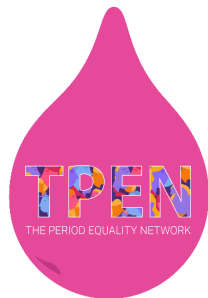


Jinja District Inspector of Schools addressing Headteachers of schools on participation in the selection of period positive schools.





Some of the TPEN members during the commemoration of MH day at Hotel Africana



THE PERIOD EQUALITY NETWORK AND SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

TPEN was successfully launched in April 2021 and the membership has grown to 95 organizations spreading across East Africa region. They consist of national and grassroots level. The Network has representation in the following countries; Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi being subscribed members.

The purpose of the network is to build a community of best practices, specifically in areas of advancing Menstrual Health Management, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Mental Health, Women's Rights, Economic Empowerment and Improved livelihoods, youth development and leadership."

Specific Achievements

IIEA mid 2021 formed "The Period Equality Network" - TPEN, a robust network with an active membership of over 80 organizations comprised of NGOs and CBOs. TPEN is community of grassroots organizations with period equality initiatives in East Africa and beyond. The goal of TPEN is to build a movement of best practice among grassroots organizations to support positive menstrual health/SRH/ economic empowerment and leadership development for young women and girls' initiatives in East Africa and beyond.

Since its formation, TPEN has registered the following successes:

Growth:

Membership has grown from 30 network members in March 2021 to 80 network members by December 2021 and Seven (7) Executive Directors from the Period Equality Network member organizations were recognized and received awards from the Ministry of Education and Sports as national menstrual health champions.

Interaction:

7 network members have accessed small grants to catalyze MHM interventions at grassroots level.

Leadership:

TPEN leadership has created a WhatsApp group with over 80 members where they share experiences, work and have supported one Network Member to hike for change. Through TPEN, more organizations have been connected to platforms such as the Youth SDG Secretariat.

Members:

Two Network Members ie TOUCH Ministries and AICAT Foundation have been supported to implement the Cova Project flow cup distribution in Wakiso and Kumi districts with Twelve (12) Period Equality Network members were recognized by the Ministry of Education and Sports for the tremendous contribution towards menstrual health hygiene management in Uganda.

Community:

The Period Equality Network was recognized in the global community of organizations advancing the MHM agenda by the Menstrual Health Hub in Uganda which has led to the setting of the national agenda to prioritize menstrual health for women and girls.

A. SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM WITH SUPPORT FROM II-UK THROUGH WATERLOO FOUNDATION:

With a grant from Waterloo foundation a charity organization based in the UK and through the Irise International, IIEA has piloted small grants support to organizations in the TPEN that are advancing menstrual health interventions. Each of the 5 beneficiary organizations received a grant of \$2,000, after IIEA conducting a due diligence process on the 5 organizations. This was done to confirm and consolidate legal and programmatic status of the 5 organizations selected to benefit from the small grants.

- The five organizations that were selected and have benefited from the small grants project include: Faraja, Girl Power Connect, Development Foundation for Rural Areas and Dodi Community.

B. CAPACITY BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING:

In its efforts to strengthen organization development processes and project implementation in the five grassroots organizations, IIEA program team conducted monitoring and supervision visits to all five beneficiaries and the following were key highlights:

The advocacy department of IIEA mobilized The Period Equality Network members and the five grantees for training on safeguarding and menstrual health evaluation.



As a result, 30 Period Equality Network members and grantees participated in the Safeguarding and evaluation for menstrual health training where they were equipped with knowledge and skills to use in their work.





"IEA conducted 2 -in person entrepreneurship tailored trainings for 20 young women entrepreneurs"

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

"The tailored training was planned to enhance entrepreneurship skills and provide the participants with concepts and skills to meet their specific needs in creating successful businesses, build capacities of female entrepreneurs and strengthen their businesses in preparation for scale up, increase their insight into the challenges and barriers girls face accessing the products and increase access to further investment."

Specific Achievements

With the financial support from Kulczyk foundation channeled through the Irise International, IIEA was able to design and implement the Rise-up project, an economic empowerment model that seeks to empower young women in business around menstrual health with skills to grow their businesses.

Specifically, the following achievements were realized by the Rise-Up project;

Profile:

The project profiled 20 young women business initiatives in Kampala and Jinja districts

Interaction:

A virtual platform was formed for the group (20 young women entrepreneurs) to coordinate themselves and share knowledge in product packaging and marketing. A WhatsApp group with the 20 participants was created to promote a virtual space that offers opportunities to the entrepreneurs and for easy mentorship, coaching, coordination and communication.

Podcast:

3 podcasts detailing the entrepreneurship stories of 3 young women are in preparation stages being compiled by Faraja Digital Africa, a partner organization that is a member of the Period Equality Network with experience in digital storytelling for selected businesses.

Skill Development:

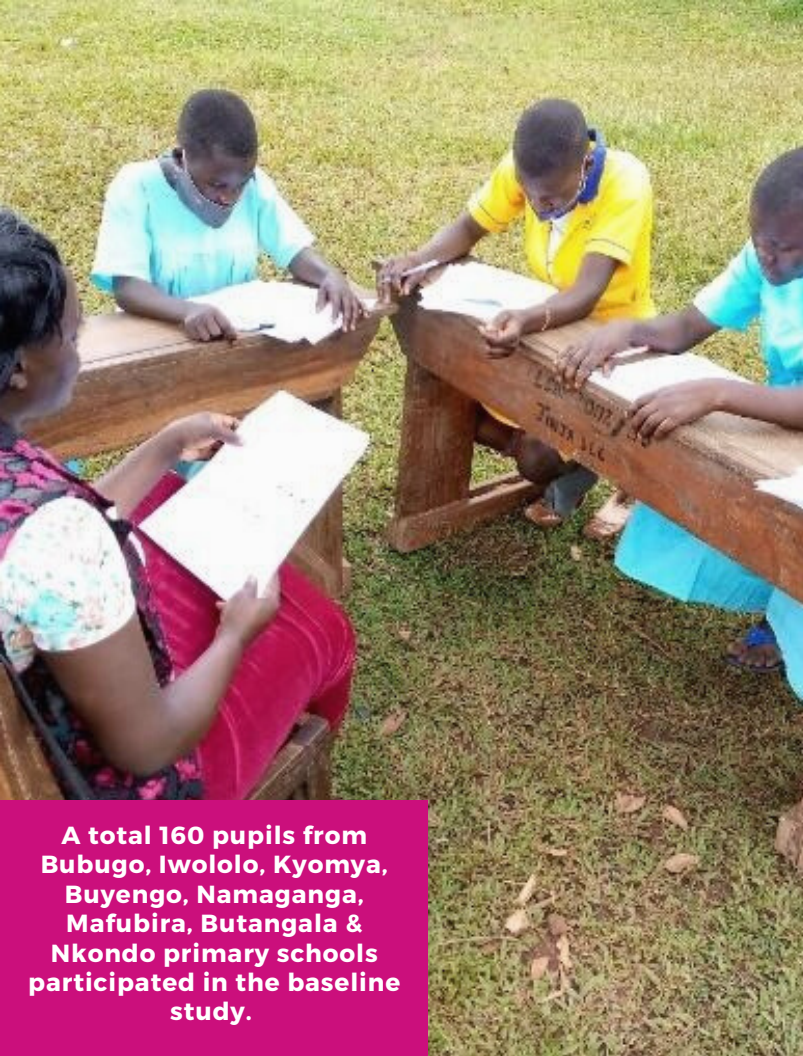
A three-day tailored training in business skills and entrepreneurship development for 20 young women was conducted. The training has gone a long way in preparing the young women to get ready to make breakthrough in the world of entrepreneurship and business

Training:

A business training for 40 secondary school girls selected in Jinja with interest in business has been conducted. The training content included: understanding an entrepreneur, design thinking, marketing, product analysis, pricing, financial literacy etc



Training for young women entrepreneurs



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A base line study was conducted for the new Period Positive Schools project in 8 schools in Jinja District. The exercise was a guided self-assessment groups (10 for girls and 10 boys in each of the schools).

A total 160 pupils from Bubugo, Iwololo, Kyomya, Buyengo, Namaganga, Mafubira, Butangala & Nkondo primary schools participated in the baseline study.

BASELINE STUDY - PERIOD POSITIVE SCHOOLS

The exercise was a guided self-assessment groups (10 for girls and 10 boys in each of the schools). The baseline was used to ascertain the knowledge level of the pupils about menstrual health management. The baseline results shall be used to inform IIEA future implementation approaches while it engages the learners in different schools. A total 160 pupils from Bubugo, Iwololo, Kyomya, Buyengo, Namaganga, Mafubira, Butangala & Nkondo primary schools participated in the baseline study. The baseline collected Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) results for the previous years as a benchmark for comparison with performance during and after Period Positive Schools project implementation. Menstruation friendly checklists were also administered during the baseline to assess the schools' level of vulnerability. One of the key observations was that whereas some of the schools have poor sanitation facilities some did not have facilities at all.



Girls participating in the base line study

DFID END OF PROJECT EVALUATION:

With funding from DFID, an external consultant was hired to carry out the endline evaluation of Menstruation Friendly Schools project. The evaluation was designed to evaluate knowledge, attitudes, practices/ behaviour on MHE for both the pupils and the trained teachers. The external evaluation further assessed the Impact of the Menstruation Friendly Schools project interventions on schools and community. The evaluation covered 5 of the schools are in Buwenge TC and 5 in Walukuba TC in Jinja District. Local government leaders, teachers and community leaders provided Key Informant Interviews while FGDs were organized for girls, boys and community members. Results from the evaluation shall be used to inform future projects with a similar approach upon receipt of the final report.



CHALLENGES FACED

DURING THE YEAR

"BEING A YOUNG ORGANIZATION, IIEA IS STILL RESOURCE CONSTRAINED TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR MHM INTERVENTIONS IN THE COUNTRY."

IIEA was no exception to the continued spread of Covid19 and its related impact. Uganda continued being in the lock down as a strategy is prevention and reducing the rate of spread of Covid19. As a result, school going children continued being at home for a second year running with exception a few in candidate classes. This further exposed young girls of menstruating age to further abuse in form of; dropping out of school, high incidence of teenage pregnancies, initiation into transactional sex as a livelihood, defilement, forced child marriages and even early deaths due to illegal abortions. This continued to water down some of the achievements attained by several actors including IIEA in MHM, safeguarding and SRHR programming.

Uganda continues to lack national MHM policy and Strategic framework in place. This leaves several MHM interventions being haphazard, sporadic, ad-hoc, uncoordinated and poor in reach and depth. This affects the impact from different intervention spread all over the country to address MHM.

Being a young organization, IIEA is still resource constrained to meet the demand for MHM interventions in the country. The donor base in country has continued to shrink hence limiting IIEAs efforts to fundraise locally. This limits our reach geographically and also scale up of promising interventions.

SUCCESS STORIES

A.CREATED THE PERIOD EQUALITY NETWORK WHATSAPP AND FACEBOOK GROUPS:

We have the IIEA WhatsApp and Mentorship groups. The Facebook group consists of 812 members while the WhatsApp group consists of 61 non-government organisation member representatives

B.ONLINE TRAINING:

TPEN members participated in IIEA online zoom trainings and policy campaigns during COVID 19 lockdowns. 30 Period Equality Network members and grantees participated in the Safeguarding and evaluation for menstrual health trainings where they were equipped with knowledge and skills to use in their work.

C.PROJECT LAUNCH

Successfully launched two projects and the CAO Jinja District appends his signature on a customised project launch board as a sign of the official launch of the BFSS project to promote period positive schools and Tomorrow is Different project by AWDf

D.COVID-19 STORIES E-BOOK LAUNCH:

IIEA participated in a webinar to launch the COVID-19 story E-book featuring experiences of young African women feminists in relation to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 30 organizations participating in the webinar and E-book were supported by Urgent Action Fund. IIEA's team was part of the panel and shared deeply about period poverty in Uganda and the aspects of mental health that emerged. The E-book [1] was officially launched and shared on the website of Zamara Foundation with stories of young women.

A poster that was shared online with IIEA panellists and another one for the zoom meeting.

on Meeting You are viewing Calum Smith's screen View Options

Participants (19)

Key messages

- Every person has rights irrespective of their status
- COVID-19 has made some people more vulnerable to abuse
- GoU is committed to prevent and safeguard all persons from abuse
- Core function of IRISE & partners is identify, prevent and support anyone at risk of or experiencing abuse.

#KeepADistance

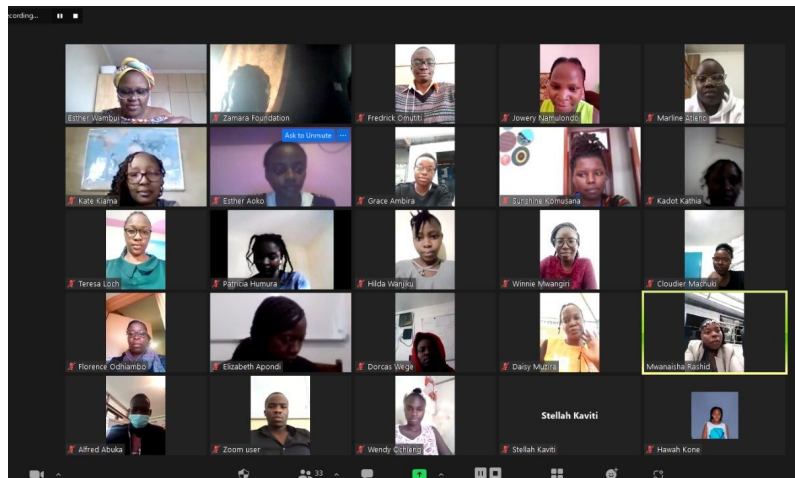
Participants (19)

Find a participant

- JN Joweri Namulondo - IIEA (Me)
- CS Calum Smith (Host)
- NP nakandi peninah
- SD Sadii Ncamba
- AC Ayikoru Christine
- BM bira margret
- BK Bridget Kigambo
- DA Daphine Ayesiga
- HK Harriet Karen-GLS
- H Hilda
- JP Joseph PCHF
- K Kulabako
- maganda patricia
- MM Muhumusa Michael Clyde

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Participants during the virtual sessions



E. TRAINER TRAINING:

Successfully conducted a Training of Trainers for 18 community champions, 2 selected from the community around schools across 6 sub counties of Budondo, Butagaya, Buwenge, Busede, Buyengo and Mafubira in Jinja District. Trained champions shall mobilise their community to participate in menstrual health related programs, meetings and sensitization events and provide accurate information on menstrual health and management, address taboos and myths that are barriers and drivers of stigma, social, religious and economic exclusion for girls and women in the rural settings.



A champion delivering MHM session to a group of p/6 girls (the rest of the class became pupils)

CONCLUSION OF SUCCESS STORIES

Girls shared on menstruation and why IIEA interventions are critical to continue looking out for the disadvantaged girls within the community.

My name is Nairuba Resty 15 yrs. in P.6 Kyomya primary school This is my first experience of menstruation. I felt lower abdominal pain at night and in the morning I saw blood flowing from my vagina. I was so worried and terrified as no one had told me about menstruation I was living with my father and step mum whom I told and she told me not to worry as she was going to tell dad to buy me pads.

When she told him he asked her if I was in a boarding school to buy for me pads. I went crying to my sister who provided me with 1 piece of pad and 2 clothes and she encouraged me to be using that for the meantime as she looks for money to buy me more pads.

Nakuba Amina 16 years in P.6 from Kyomya primary school. (With disability). I started my periods at 13 years, it was the most terrifying moment in my life as no one had ever told me about it. I told my mother about it and she gave me a cloth to use. Since then, I have been using cloths yet my sisters can access pads from my uncle. Whenever I tell our uncle to buy for me pads, he says he does not have money yet he buys for my other sisters. In my opinion he neglects me because of the disability.

An interview with Magero Sylvia 14yrs in P.2 at Mafubira primary school unit of Disability. My first-time experiencing periods, I was 12 years, it was at night and I was very scared since I had no idea of what was happening, I cried throughout the night but feared to wake up my parents. The following morning, I told my mother who bought me pads. Apart from buying me pads and teaching me how to use it, she did not explain to me what was happening, this left me with a lot of questions in my head but I later heard it from my friends. Till now I feel embarrassed discussing periods because it is private.

My name is Awori Sarah am 16 years in P.6 at Kyomya primary school. My first experience on menstruation was horrible because it came with a lot of abdominal pain. I was ignorant about menstruation since no one had ever told me about it. When I started, I cried and had fear to tell my mother about it so I spent the whole day in bed, refused to eat but later my sister saw blood stains on my bed. She went and told mummy who gave me a rag to pad myself.

CAPACITY BUILDING

A. CAPACITY BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING:

The PCPA and LD departments mobilized the Period Equality Network members and grantees for trainings on Safeguarding and menstrual health evaluation. The trainings aimed at building capacities of the TPEN grantees and members in developing risk assessment/safeguarding policies and effective delivery of MH sessions respectively.



Mr. Semakula Henry MoES meeting with Casey English discussion of Flow cups



B. BOARD ENGAGEMENTS:



IIEA Chairperson visits the Kampala Secretariat Office.



End Of Year Staff Meetings

Meet the team



Lillian Bagala
Regional Director



Helliot Opiem
Finance Manager



Patricia Humura
Programme Officer,
Communications and Policy Advocacy



Joweri Namulondo
Programme Officer,
Leadership

Meet the team



Susan Alubo

Programme Officer, Economic Empowerment
& Gender.



Sarah Namumbya

Programme Officer, Menstrual Health
Education & Products.



Joyce Akello

Programme Assistant, Menstrual Health Education &
Products.



Betty Adeke

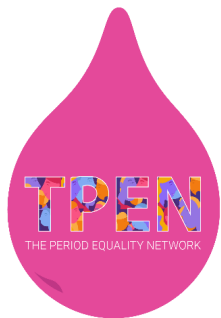
Administrative Assistant.

PARTNERS:



Irise International

thewaterloofoundation*



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FUND