National Best Practice in Advocacy for Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) for Schools in Uganda presented at 4th Annual Menstrual Hygiene Management in WASH in Schools Virtual Conference 2015

Margaret Kasiko
Gender Technical Adviser
Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports (MoESTS)
Population and Background

• **Uganda** is located in eastern Africa, west of Kenya, south of South Sudan, east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and north of Rwanda and Tanzania

• Uganda is landlocked with no access to the sea (**total**: 241,551 square kilometers)

• Uganda’s total population is 34,856,813 (Males 16,935,456; Female 17,921,357)
Background Statistical Evidence

- While Uganda has achieved gender parity in primary education, girls lag behind in completion of primary education with 51% for girls and 56% for boys in 2010.
- Fewer girls than boys sit for Primary Leaving Examinations with 55% boys and only 42% females in 2010 and 55% in 2013 for girls.
- Survival rates to P.5 and P.7 remain low at 30% for boys and girls (EMIS 2013).
- Transition to secondary with only a paltry 45.7% by 2012.
- BTVET (UPPOLET) with only 29.8% for girls in 2010/2011.
- Significant regional disparities with participation of girls in Karamoja, North Eastern region remaining very low.
- Drop out of girls’ from school increasing due to teenage pregnancies 34%, poverty 28% and engagement in sex 11% (FAWE 2011)-The UNHS indicates 23 percent first had sexual intercourse before age 15, 64 percent before age 18.
Context of Advocacy Programme

• In Uganda between 1986 and 1996 Primary school enrollment rose from 2.2 million to 3.1 million and to 5.3 million with the introduction of UPE in 1997 and USE in 2007.

• Enrollment placed stress on various aspects around education facilities including sanitation facilities.

• One of the impacts - lower class attendance of girls during menstruation days/ eventual drop-out in some cases.
Advocacy Programme

• A comprehensive and strategic advocacy strategy started by the Gender Unit /MoESTS in 2012.

• **Focus of programme:**
  – 18,408 primary schools
  – 3,000 secondary schools
  – 508 post primary and tertiary institutions

• **Key stakeholders:**
  – MOESTS and key relevant line Ministries
  – National Level CSOs and Education development partners (Including UNICEF)
  – Local governments and schools
  – Community and Local leaders including religious and cultural leaders
Major Goals of Programme

1. Deepen stakeholder understanding on impact of poor menstrual hygiene management

2. Advocate for policy review through engagement with parliament and key relevant ministries

3. Develop strategies for operationalizing existing policy and programmes

4. Demonstrate sustainable practices on menstrual hygiene management
Policy Achievements

• Parliamentary resolution on MHM in schools
  – Charter signed by Speaker of Parliament in May 2014 supporting MHM in schools

• Circular by MoESTS to all schools and stakeholders to support MHM

• Two International Conferences on MHM to share experiences

• MHM integrated in School Health Policy and National Strategy for Girls Education

• Development of the National Inter-sectoral committee on MHM
Programme Achievements

• Developed a video on understanding and managing menstruation
• Created action plans for districts and schools on MHM implementation of circular
• Trained Karamoja teachers on MHM and development of training manual
• Constructed MHM responsive sanitary facilities.
Local Achievements

• Formation of school clubs
• Flyers and materials on MHM
• Girl friendly sanitation facilities
• Community meeting at places of worship on MHM
Challenges

• Deep rooted cultures and customs facilitate negative attitude and taboos on Breaking the silence on MHM
• Limited financial capacity for parents to support the advocacy processes
Opportunities

1. Responsiveness of key decision makers to support development of policy and guidelines
2. Timeliness of development of school health policy
3. Key stakeholders participation in provision of research and funding for MHM as a priority for WASH
4. Availability of funds by UNICEF, UNWOMEN, SNV, IRISH AID
Monitoring and Evaluation

- Gender monitoring of all districts
- MoESTS Annual School Census
  - Schools with girls washrooms
  - Incinerators
  - Emergency locally made sanitary towels
  - Menstrual kits
- Research impact follow up by UNICEF on Karamoja region programme training
- Qualitative /physical follow up by gender unit/MoESTS and inter sectoral committee on MHM
Recommendations

1. Joint advocacy efforts with all key stakeholders at all levels
2. Girls advocating for their own cause
3. Identification of key allies i.e. parliament /CSOs
4. Building champions for the cause from within the institutions themselves in this case MoESTS.
Launching Menstrual Hygiene Reader by the Minister of Health in Uganda on MHM day 28/05/14
Launch Charter at the Parliament of Uganda
28/05/15
Children (girls and boys) presenting a song at Parliament during the MHM day 28/05/15