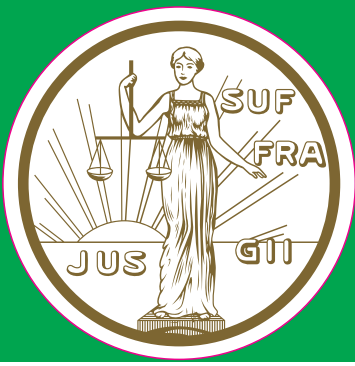


Entering Womanhood

A project of International Alliance of Women





WOMEN'S COMFORT CORNER FOUNDATION REPORT

Menstrual health is a public problem that depends on access to availability of water and pads. In order to achieve the sustainable Development Goals Menstrual Health Education needs to be intensified in particular in the rural areas. Although studies have documented the prevalence and consequences of lack of menstrual health the issue of menstrual is still poorly understood which will unfortunately make it realise gender equality and human rights of the affected girls. Hence the multi-sectoral investment is needed to comprehensively address the issue of menstrual health.

In cascading the program we interacted from girls and boys from Epworth High School, Muguta Secondary School, Domboramwari High School and St Giles Special School.

Girls with Disabilities



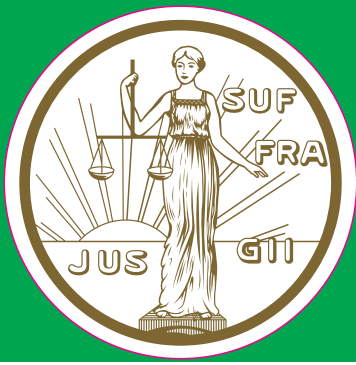
Equity in menstruation is of paramount importance as the girls living with disabilities face greater obstacles due to stigma and practical challenges. In all schools which we have visited the facilities are not user friendly for school children living with disabilities with the exception of St Giles Special School which caters mainly for children living with disabilities.

Managing menstruation for girls with disability

According to the submissions made in the meeting with girls living with disability have special requirements and their first menstrual cycle differently compared to their counterparts who have no special requirements. The girls stated that they mostly suffer from extremely painful periods which at times was accompanied by heavy periods. The participants further alleged that due to the frustration which seems to be ignored in most schools inevitably results in menstrual hygiene issues. Restrictions in mobility, reduced visual and speech cognitive capabilities often result and mood and behavioural changes. The girls with special requirements stated that society puts barriers that excludes and disadvantage people living with disabilities and feel that their rights are deliberately ignored.

The girls further submitted that they are hesitant to document their fears and hopes as they are generally stigmatized and discriminated. In interacting with the various people they have noted extreme ignorance about disability and continuing lack of social support for most of those caregivers who are supposed to care for them for example the following points were singled out:

- They have limited physical abilities to cater for personal hygiene which usually takes longer



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because of their limitations. Delays irritate those without special needs and are not patient with girls living with disabilities.

- The infrastructure in schools visited so far does not cater for the school children living with disabilities
- The girls living with disabilities further stated that the support received from administration and schools can be categorised as nonexistent.
- In Zimbabwe where Women's Comfort Corner Foundation works from, there are very few schools catering for different learning requirements and the unfortunate part is that those schools for girls with special needs are far beyond their reach.
- Few teachers specialise on teaching children living with disabilities a disadvantage which result in girls not accessing sufficient support pertaining to their health requirements

Recommendations After Interacting With School Children On Menstrual Hygiene Management

The under-representation of girls living with disabilities as ably demonstrated by the affected girls is devastating. The girls lamented that very few interventions incorporated girls with disabilities in various programmes and the discrimination was impacting negatively on them. What the girls crave on is the basic right to be treated and included in empowering projects.

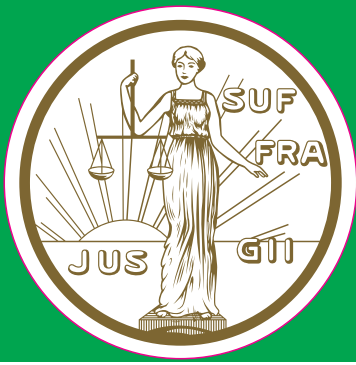
It is important to interact with girls living with disability in the implementation of any interventions in order to

obtain satisfactory outcomes. One simple way is to raise awareness about the rights of girls living with disabilities and encourage them to lead or be actively involved in the process or implementation.

In order to reduce stigma the access to relevant information is key. We also noted that the shorter sessions were welcomed and enthusiastic engagement abounded which also support submissions if incorporated in programs girls living disabilities play a central role in recognizing and defining the problems they experience. It is has also helped our organisation on how to work effectively with girls living with disabilities in schools and in the communities.

Donations





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Women's Comfort Corner Foundation donated pads to various schools. Yolanda confided into us about her first period staining her uniform and the wheel chair. She had never heard or been told about menstrual periods. After confiding to her teacher, she explained what was happening to her and even drove her home after buying pads for her. She implored us to cascade the programs to other school housing girls living with disabilities.

Women's Comfort Corner Foundation will be advancing disability rights to improve access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for women and girls with disabilities across the country. Women's Comfort Corner Foundation (WCCF) also donated pads, face shields to the girls and boys. In Zimbabwe it is still mandatory to wear masks or face shields although the cases of COVID have reduced dramatically and are almost nonexistent. We hope to partner with schools to make awareness and advance disability rights initially in Zimbabwe. We are positive that the partnership will make a difference to the lives of girls with special needs and also educate recipients and caregivers on menstrual health management.

Awareness and education is important. The ABCs booklets are perfect in that is written in simple English and can be easily understood by Primary School Children and appropriate to be used at any early age in order to avoid future problems in particular for girls who experience their menstrual periods much earlier. This will reduce menstrual period stigma which is always experienced by girls at the beginning of their menstrual periods.

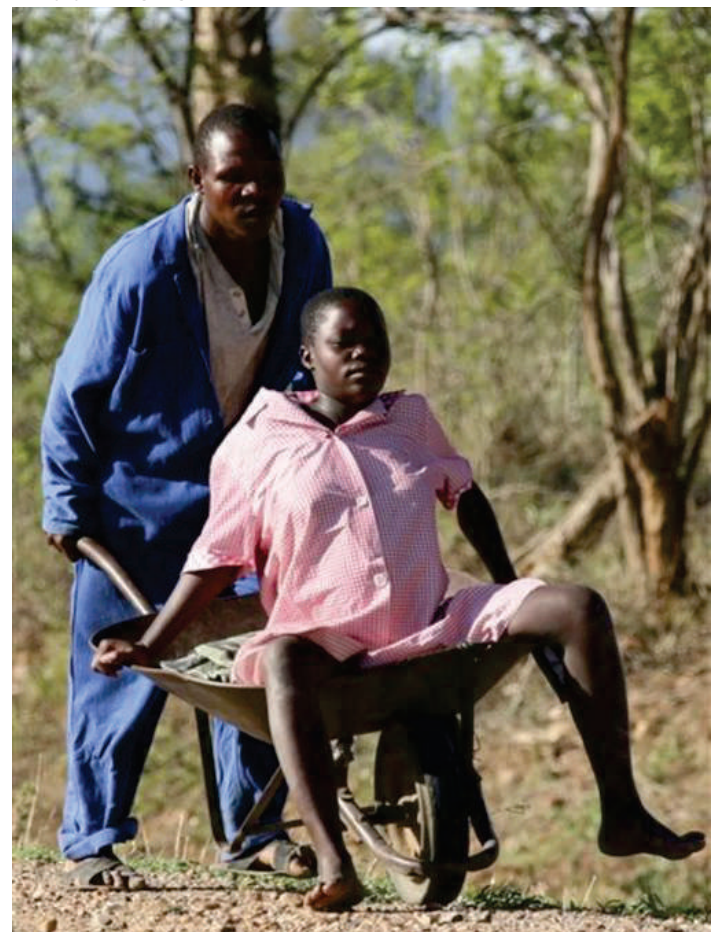
School Drop Outs and Community Interactions

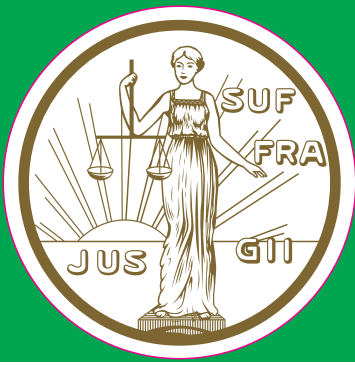
The meeting with married teenage girls was important. According to the latest findings made by the Zimbabwe

Teachers Association and the Union of Education Norway:

"Some (pupils) lost their parents or guardians, while others joined the informal trading sector and gold panning. The girl child, in particular, was the most affected. Some of them got married and became pregnant at a very young age. The situation was quite bad."

Given this painful glaring reality Women's Comfort Corner Foundation deemed it necessary to engage the community and focused on the children married at a very young age.





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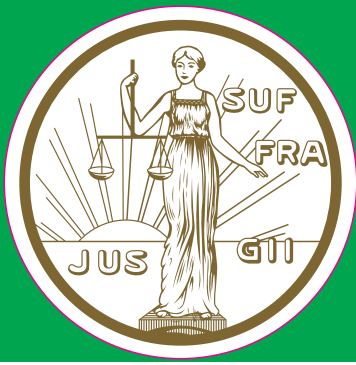


Impact of Project Booklets

The WP Projects Booklets have proven to be successful and impacting to schools. Several teachers and children who took advantage of this initiative in their respective community immensely benefitted with some testifying of behavioural change as well as becoming enlightened by the information learned. School prefects including boys cascaded the knowledge learnt by educating others after having had been empowered by Women's Comfort Corner Foundation with the aid buttressed with the booklets. The booklets are thus a vital component or tool

in transforming and educating children on the issues of water and pads project.

We were impressed by Terry one of the boys who was part of the students attending the workshop commented as follows after reading the booklets: ***“these are very useful books and has helped us to appreciate some of the rights that our sisters and mothers have including the importance of water in order to enhance their dignity and wellness.*”**



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An impact of our WP Booklets is significant in that requisite knowledge was shared by the schools and community. Children come from the community and obviously share the booklets with relatives and neighbours which means the booklets reach a wider audience. We also discussed various topics on menstruation through the whatsapp platform. The booklets which we are distributing are in essence causing girls to become assertive.

A meeting with the community highlighted issues of an increase on sexual activities by young children due to increased poverty. The community also requested that the WP Project in doing outreaches focus on sexual crimes and early marriages which was spreading like wild fire. It was highlighted that young girls of the age 14 years turn into child prostitution.

