

Water and Pads for Schoolgirls – Empowerment for Life



LA COLOMBE in Togo -
a project in collaboration with
International Alliance of Women IAW / AIF



Activities at the Complexe Scolaire le Guide school in Vogan, Togo
November 29, 2022 and February 20, 2023

A report by Mrs. Thérèse AKAKPO Adjoa, Coordinator of the NGO LA COLOMBE



Introduction

As part of the implementation of the project "Water and Towel for Schoolgirls" WP the organization LA COLOMBE received funding from the AIF to carry out activities at the Le Guide school complex located in Vogan in the Prefecture of Vo, maritime region of Togo.

This report will focus on the following points:

preparation of the activities, awareness sessions, difficulties and results obtained.

1. preparation of the activities

The "Complexe Scolaire Le Guide" has been chosen for the second year to benefit from this project. Mr. DEGBE Ablam the school's director supported it. Following the ministerial note forbidding extracurricular activities, steps were taken with the inspector of the prefecture of Vo in order to have the authorization. The animator of LA COLOMBE was responsible for the implementation of the project.

2. awareness sessions

Mr. TOSSA Anani and Ms. OURO KOURA Farida, a sexual and reproductive health specialist working with "Plan International", were the main facilitators of the awareness sessions.

2.1 Tools used

Posters on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), charts on puberty, and the two brochures transmitted by IAW about puberty and menstrual hygiene “La puberté et l’hygiène menstruelle” and “Devenir femme en sérénité” were the main tools used.

2.2- Conduct of the awareness sessions

The awareness sessions took place on November 29, 2022 and February 1, 2023.

2.2.1 Awareness-raising on gender-based violence (GBV) and sexually transmitted infections (STI)

This session was facilitated by Mr. Tossa Anani, facilitator.

Violence against women and girls that has an impact on health was mentioned. These include physical, psychological and sexual violence (rape, sexual harassment).

Common sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS were discussed. Signs of sexually transmitted diseases were also mentioned. Many questions were asked. This means that more awareness sessions are important.



2.2.2- Sensitization on menstrual hygiene management MHM

This session was facilitated by Mrs. OURO KOURA Farida and Mr. TOSSA Anani and gathered boys and girls. It was an opportunity to exchange on the issues of menstruation and hygiene before, during and after menstruation.

The introduction of the theme consisted in talking about puberty and the changes that take place in the body. This led the girls and boys to understand the existence of menstruation.

The two booklets mentioned above were used. The few signs before menstruation were mentioned.

Girls should pay attention and listen to their bodies. A MHM kit was recommended. This kit (pouch containing, sanitary napkin, soap, underpants) should be in their bag everywhere they go, so that there are no unpleasant surprises. Reusable cotton sanitary napkins were recommended to the girls.

The students were very interested. The girls were very comfortable asking questions and sharing their first experience with others.

All of the girls admitted that their moms had never talked to them about this. Discussing sexuality is a taboo in most families.

The boys understood that girls are not responsible for the biological cycle, and that it is natural. They made a commitment not to make fun of girls who are seen with menstrual blood stains. Several questions were asked about the age of the first menstruation, discussion of the subject with parents etc.



3. results obtained

- 189 students, including 78 girls and 111 boys, increased their knowledge of health, violence against women and girls, sexually transmitted diseases and menstrual hygiene management.
- Five girls chosen at random were interviewed by the facilitator a few days after the end of the awareness sessions.

Some questions

A.What change has occurred in your life?

- Since the NGO LA COLOMBE started the sensitization sessions in our school, I am no longer afraid to talk about my problems with my mother.
- I am no longer ashamed to talk about my feelings to my parents.
- I know now that the menstrual cycle is a natural phenomenon, and I am not ashamed anymore when I have the period.
- I know now that I have to finish school before I can think about sex
- I know that if I don't protect myself, I can get a disease and die, and that would scare me.

B.Do you discuss at home with your parents?

- 1 answered once.
- 1 said she is afraid.
- 3 said yes.

C.Have you talked about it with friends?

Four girls talked about it to their peers and friends outside of school. A total of 60 girls were reached by these four schoolgirls.

In fact, all the students were very happy to have gained new knowledge about the dangers of infectious diseases and want to approach the topic of sexuality in a responsible manner in the future.
four schoolgirls.

4. conclusion

The Water and Pads project was implemented as soon as the booklets were received by postal shipping. This project is financed by donations and the technical support is provided by the WP team in Europe. It has been very beneficial for the boys and especially the girls. It has strengthened the visibility of IAW / AIF as well as the partnership with the school. The school director would like to see these sessions repeated every year. The quick evaluation showed that the girls have become aware of the existence of sexually transmitted diseases and are protecting themselves.

We say our thanks to IAW / AIF for being concerned about improving the health of schoolgirls and young people in our country!

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