



**AWARENESS WORKSHOP ON THE GIRL CHILD EDUCATION
HELD AT DEGIBA PARISH AYIMINI VILLAGE, MIDIA SUB COUNTY KOBOKO
DISTRICT.**



ORGANISED BY STAD UGANDA.

DECEMBER 2020

Introduction:

The impact of covid-19 has had and is still having devastating impact on the children and especially the girl child and girl child education in Uganda. Over the past 9 months since Uganda declared its first COVID-19 cases and pronounced closure of schools and social places, many children who were in boarding schools re-united with their parents, relatives and others remained with friends thus increasing number of households. In most families, parents are forced to combine teenage boys and girls to share bedrooms due to limited space. The youth who were so active in schools became idle and unproductive. Some of the girls were not able to access basic needs like pads as such they had to negotiate for unsafe sex from their perpetrators in return for simple basic necessities.

Most parents failed to have a healthy and harmonious relationship with their children and others do not have time to monitor their children's behaviors as they were struggling to fend for their living. Parents employed in the private sector were the hardest hit as they lost their means of income. The failure to manage and provide for these children resulted to an increased teenage pregnancies and unruly behavior among the youth in the Country. According to the Uganda New Vision Tuesday July14, 2020, the rate of teenage pregnancy among adolescent girls aged 14-15 in two districts was estimated at 60%. Whereas the Ugandan Daily Monitor on the same date, reported that urban households are three times more likely to receive support from government than the rural homes. This claim is evidenced by a reported case of a 16-year-old girl forced into marriage in exchange for one sack of cassava flour. These are attributed to poverty and lack of finances to put food on the table. In Eastern Uganda, teenage pregnancy among girls aged 15-19 stands at 37%. Gender based violence among the women during the lockdown was very high due to poverty. Unfortunately, most of these cases are not reported to police

In Koboko District, the number of teenage pregnancies increase to over 970 cases by July 2020. These cases have been attributed due to impact of COVID-19 - uniformly felt by all groups of humanity. It is on this ground that STAD management decided to undertake an immediate response to the looming future of the girl child education and social status in the future.

Main Aim of the workshop to sensitize parents, youth and teachers on the rampant teenage pregnancies due to the pandemic lockdown

Specific Objectives:

- To support community members to organize community meetings and dialogue on social gender-based violence (SGBV) and report cases to the authorities
- To promote girl child education
- Educate parents, relatives and communities on the culture of treating the girl child as a source wealth or property.
- To report sexual Gender Based Violence and Domestic violence to authorities.
- To engage the youth in sports c activities to reduce idleness.

STAD recruited GBV professional facilitators who used a participatory approach of all stake holders including the girls, boys, parents, elders and religious leaders. Participants were asked to present the most pressing challenges they face in the community during the lockdown and how they can be mitigated or completely eradicated. Secondly, the facilitators pre-selected topics such as domestic violence, menstrual hygiene and problems girls face at homes and at school and in the community. Members were made to sit in groups and discuss a topic and suggest solutions on how to mitigate or resolve it. The facilitators also

used pictorial charts and demonstrations to convey the message to the beneficiaries. Pads were distributed to the Girl child and mothers.

Discussions:

Domestic Violence.

One of the facilitator Mrs. Rose Leya discussed the topic on Domestic Violence. She was so clear and precise about the causes and dangers of Domestic Violence. She said Domestic Violence is mainly caused by misunderstanding, gender stereotypes, household responsibilities, fights between a husband and a wife and even among children and parents, socio-economic difficulties etc.

The facilitator together with the participants came up with some causes of Domestic Violence among others as wives and or husbands who over drink alcohol and thus end up fighting; high unemployment and poverty levels; lack of awareness about the dangers of Domestic Violence; disrespect by wives and husbands towards each other; the tendency of producing many children and when responsibility becomes a problem, it leads to fights in a home; wives who work while their husbands stay at home tend to feel and behave superior leading to violence; influences from in laws, high bride dowry making men think women are their properties

Below: Gender Based Violence materials being distributed to participants



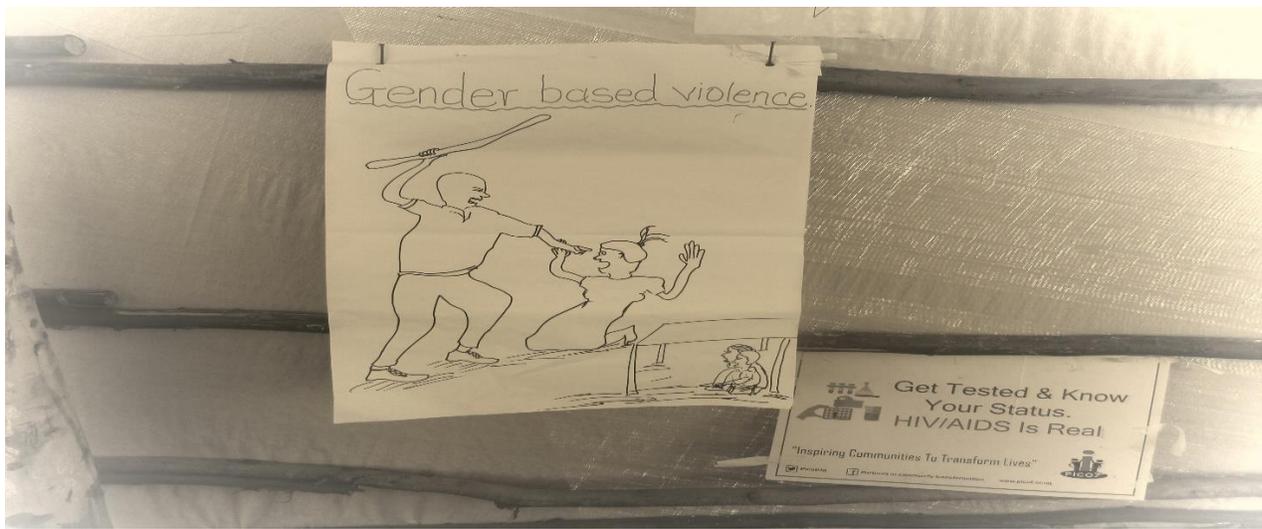


Illustration of Gender based violence on children (Frightened children)



The Dangers or effects of Domestic Violence

Participants were taken through the dangers and impacts of domestic violence on people and outcomes such as family separation (divorces), children running away from home, drugs, drinking, suicides and early girl child marriages as some of these ends up marrying with the thought that they might find peace at their own home since their own parents are always fighting; disability when physical fighting is involved.

Menstrual Hygiene and problems girls face at school

According to Mrs. Ajiba Rosemary the facilitator, menstruation is the monthly flow of blood that a girl or woman goes through. In girls, it begins at the age of 12years (though it varies some earlier or later). It is that time or period when a girl's hormones produce the eggs. At this stage, a girl is expected to protect herself as much as possible to avoid teenage pregnancy that may lead to early marriage.

Below: Facilitator explaining what a pad is and distributing them to both mothers & the girl child



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The facilitator demonstrating how to use a pad & also guiding a girl on how to use the pad

Menstrual Hygiene is how a girl can keep herself clean while or when experiencing this blood flow. Normally when this period comes, girls and or women have some materials to use. These include sanitary pads; cotton wools; reusable pads; others may use cloth. She demonstrated to them on how to use the sanitary pads the reusable pads. Wash the reusable pads after use and dry under the sun, then keep them well for next use; those who use cotton wool also dispose in pit latrine or burn them.

A non-reusable pad can't be reused since it may be harmful to your body. According to the facilitator, Parents especially mothers and aunts are supposed to be close to their daughters at this point in time advising them on how to conduct themselves at this particular period. Having sexual intercourse at this period in life can be harmful and dangerous resulting into unwanted or planned pregnancies. Encourage girls to focus on their studies and relationships, marriages, sex can come later. Encouraging them on the benefits of education.

Problems Faced by girls at home:

Together with the girls, they mentioned some of the problems they face in their respective homes.

- Child marriage. They are always considered as a source of wealth from dowry payments.
- Denied education. The belief that one being a girl, all is to grow up and get married. No school.
- Too much home chores. When a girl has grown to some stage, she is being overworked, with home chores, even the farm work in the names of training her to be a good wife for her future husband.
- Taking care of the Siblings. That normally happens when the girl is the elder, she is supposed to cook and wash for the siblings including even the parents which sometimes becomes overwhelming and tiresome.
- Lack of basic needs. No provision of basic needs like body lotion, sanitary pads which in most cases makes them ask from their boyfriends and in return, leading to unwanted pregnancies
- Rape. You find that some of the girls in their homes are being raped by their brothers and even fathers and that lowers their self-esteem which sometimes lead to death due to the shame that the poor girl is supposed to live with.

Problems Girls face at school.

- Pressure from teachers. One Girl said the school teachers often disturb them and wants to have sexual intercourse with them. Since they feel he's a teacher and might give you the marks you want or won't punish you in school, you give into sex and most times leading to STIS and STDS.
- School Leadership Positions: There are other positions which are open for both boys and girls but in most cases, some are believed that boys can lead in them better. So as a girl when they try to challenge that, they are always being demoralized by the boys in any way possible.

- Performance in class. Normally when a girl scores less marks in class or in a given test, she is laughed at by the boys even those boys who perform badly also laugh at them. Just because they can't bully them, they feel uncomfortable which in most cases causes them to dropout from school.
- Disability. One girl said due to her condition she can't move or even write so when she goes to class she is often laughed at and discourages by her mates as a result she is still in primary one yet she is already 15 years.
- **Peer pressure.** Being influenced by other mates just to follow the kind of luxurious life they lead which makes some of them to seek those luxuries from other ways which in return ruin their lives.
- **Low self-esteem.** Most girls aren't proud of themselves and their background. So they always want to show off at school and that makes them to turn to other ways to make them fit the level that they want. For instance, their parents hardly tell them how beautiful or lovely they look hence they only find these words in school among peers thereby compromising their confidence.



This girl above is 15 years old but still in primary one.

Discussions on how these problems can be avoided:

- Parents and teachers at school should take an active part to educate the girls on the dangers of early sex since it leads to unwanted pregnancy and early marriage.
- A parent said, girls should be advised to dress decently and avoid night movements to avoid things like Rape from happening.
- The boy child should be taught respect towards the girl child. The boy child should look at the girl as a sister, someone equal but not an object that can be used and dumped at any point.
- People with disability should told that disability is not inability. Whatever condition one is in, that particular person is important.
- Parents should be able to respect themselves and stop Domestic violence so as their children can be of respect towards them. Community should involve the youth in sporting co-curriculum activities to reduce idleness to keep them busy as their minds kept productive.



Challenges.

Poor time management. The program was planned to start by 9:30 am but at 1:00 pm. Most of the parents first went to the sambas before reporting to the function.

Space was small – as attendance was high

Recommendations - Way forwards to some of the challenges

- More awareness and sensitization needed in Ayimini Village among the youth, children and parents.
- Through STAD, the villagers have requested for more learning facilities and materials
- A member in the community thanked STAD and the facilitators for the program and requested that more of such trainings to be conducted in the village to educate the women and girls of the village.
- A girl said she is happy for the open space learning that STAD has brought to Ayimini Village and that they pray it continues for the betterment of their future. They are learning a lot during the lockdown
- The LC1 of the village thanked the facilitators and STAD for the things happening in their village and requests this education and information to continue for the betterment of the people of his village.
- A member, in the schools' body requested that, there is need to constitute a team to support the girl child.



The boy child voicing their support to protect the girl child in their community



Conclusion:

The girl child awareness campaign is part of the OSLP sponsored by Haella and is the first kind of awareness raising activity implemented in Asimina Village. Due its successful implementation and the

enormous and encouraging response from the community, STAD has identified and underlined a number of program interventions that target community - men and women, girls and boy's empowerment (especially parenting) and community or traditional customary laws (judicial systems) that overlook women not only in villages of Ayimini and Bango but in other villages too.

Vote of appreciation and gratitude is extended to Haella and STAD by community, participants and Local Council one (LC1) of Ayimini Village.

Reported by

Verified by

Mrs. Rose Leya and Mary Ayiba, facilitators.

STAD management team (Uganda)