



WOMEN'S COMFORT CORNER FOUNDATION WCCF ZIMBABWE 2023 WATER AND PADS PROJECT

Report about activities at Epworth High School and the Speciss College in July 2023

By providing some basic learning about handwashing after the bathroom use Women's Comfort Corner Foundation WCCF has got a great impact. In fact schoolgirls and teenagers living in rural areas, or residing in expanding agglomerations and townships are the most affected. Reaching out to the rural areas is hard, because the roads are bad, but progress is being made.

Promoting Hand Washing

Promotion of handwashing is essential in the management of menstrual hygiene as well as WASH education in general. WCCF seeks to promote a positive change through organized WASH stakeholder meetings which will involve political leaders, religious leaders, media, communities, adolescent girls from the targeted schools.

Wash – Water – Sanitation – Hygiene!

The washing is important especially for vulnerable schoolgirls who are not able to get expensive menstrual pads. The lack of improper menstrual hygiene leads to a plethora of infections in the form of reproductive tract infections and bacterial vaginosis. The ongoing Water and Pads project WP is targeted to the adolescent schoolgirls. It has developed extensively among communities, teachers and school children.

A lack of education on menstrual hygiene results in poor performance and poor attendance among schoolgirls. Availability of clean water, clean toilets/bathrooms enables a supportive environment and a menstrual hygiene management friendly is essential for the girl child to thrive.

School Clubs

As Women's Comfort Corner Foundation we have formed clubs in 5 (five) schools to promote best hygiene practice within schools, as well as school girls (adolescent) have the forum on whatsapp to discuss their challenge and address the challenges. There has been positive outcomes in schools in particular the open discussions on menstrual periods and the school attendance greatly improved.

Stakeholders targeting changes with WASH programs

Members of Parliament, Chiefs, Civil Society CSO, Local Government Authorities and Communities are addressed.

Outcome of the project being achieved.

The community including teachers, chiefs and religious leaders were our partners. This collaboration has strengthened and increased the community awareness on proper sanitation and hygiene practice in schools and communities.

The engagement of influential people in the community including politicians to advocate for improved water, sanitation and hygiene has made a tangible positive difference.

Women's Comfort Corner Foundation has gone into churches to speak to the congregants about the benefits of the Water and Pads project.

Progress on the objectives

The Water and Pads Project has received increased community awareness. Other schools are openly inviting us to launch the project at their schools or within their community.

Purpose

We have generated a lot of interests and awareness within the community at Harare, the capital city and at Bulawayo, the second capital city of Zimbabwe. There is greater appreciation for menstrual hygiene management, which is linked to the water, sanitation hygiene programme

Outcome

There have been isolated cases of cholera in Zimbabwe and Women's Comfort Corner has played its part in having the diarrhea greatly reduced. The girls are bold and confident and can access to affordable menstrual hygiene practice. The number of girls attending classes has dramatically increased.

Outputs

The International Alliance Women together with Women's Comfort Corner is making a big difference within the communities.

Results

We have happy communities with improved health and awareness about the importance of WASH.

Evaluation and monitoring method

In order to measure the effects of the ongoing program we obtained information from the teachers, communities, coordinators and school prefects.

The project's sustainability

Women's Comfort Corner Foundation was fully engaged with Secondary Form 1 students (those progressing from Grade 7) in an annual cycle as those targeted school children are expected to be at school for a period of 4 years. We are also interacting with Form 4 and Form 6 students to spread the project at home and in the communities.

Beneficiaries of the IAW programme

The total number of beneficiaries at school and in the communities keeps multiplying including indirect beneficiaries within the communities and at home. They get this valuable information mainly from the schoolchildren. The great interest inspires us to continue to work for a change.

Schoolchildren are effective Agents of Change

The schoolchildren in collaboration with the communities are very effective agents for change thanks to the success of the Water and Pads Project. They have also asserted that in places, where some children cannot read and write they help them by interpreting the contents of the booklets. This IAW project is an inspirational initiative for the children by making a difference in the lives of the illiterate and less fortunate people in the society.

Conclusion

WCCF wants to discourage the schoolgirls from believing in myths and taboos and resorting to unorthodox practices during menstruation. We encourage them to use safe and hygienic methods by using water and clean pads or wash the material used as pads.

The girls must travel a long way to get access to water especially in the rural areas. This situation unfortunately has also spread to towns. This is the reason why we are engaging influential people, within the society, e. g. politicians to make investments of boreholes. As women and girls are also encountering much in isolated places, we also demand to reduce gender-based violence.

Most of the schoolgirls mentioned are at a great potential risk of early or child marriage, early sexual activity, teenage pregnancy, rape, sexual harassment and school dropout. There are also the problems of inadequate water, sanitation/hygiene facilities in schools and the no access affordable reusable sanitary pads. To reduce the stigma it needs an open discussion among policy and decision makers about menstrual hygiene.

Menstruation is no longer seen as a secret and regarded as taboo. Girls and young women who never had the privilege of information in relation to a good menstrual management are now receiving adequate support from home, schools, or the community. The fact that girls and women can overcome challenges on their own is enough to encourage us to continue cascading the program.

Report by Ms. Rita Marque Mbatha