



Fund for Innovation
and Transformation

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GIRLS OF TOMORROW FOUNDATION

Combating Menstrual Stigma Through Female-Centered Permaculture Gardens

Context

In Uganda, students at the Secondary school level have significant drop out rates of 65% for both girls and boys, with even higher rates in rural areas. Girls are especially affected due to the lack of income to access menstrual products and the added burden of household responsibilities. This leads many girls to repeatedly miss school, fall behind in schoolwork and eventually drop out.

The Innovative Solution

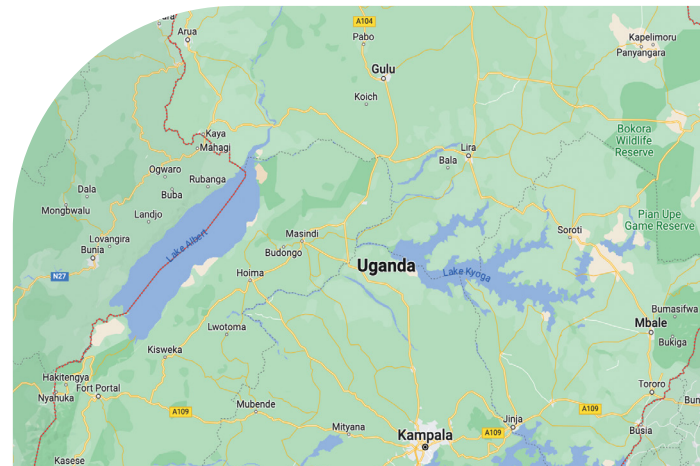
Supported by FIT, Girls of Tomorrow with local partner St. Jude Family Projects tested an innovative Female-Centered Permaculture Garden solution to combat menstrual stigma in rural Uganda. The project hypothesized that teaching 13–16-year-old female and male youth, as well as their parents and teachers, to create female-centered permaculture gardens would lead to a reduction in menstrual stigma. The permaculture gardens reduced stigma through the hands-on lessons on the human physiology and growing of locally available foods to support the menstrual cycle.

Advancing Gender Equality

Gender Equality was advanced through the engagement of men and boys in activities on menstruation, equipping girls, boys, teacher, and mothers with the skills to make reusable pads and knowledge on how to manage symptoms and hygiene of periods.

Testing Framework

The innovation used a pre-post testing methodology and mixed methods approach to data collection making use of surveys, focus groups, and observations. Throughout the testing process feedback was collected in formal and informal ways to ensure the testing approach was meeting needs while being culturally appropriate.



COUNTRY

Uganda

AMOUNT

\$159,792

TESTING PERIOD

11 months

Ended May 2023



GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE (GE3)

THEME: MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Results and Impact

- Menstrual stigma was reduced significantly in schools. At baseline, 82% of girls reported experiencing menstrual stigma in school which decreased to just 20% at endline.
- There was a decrease in school absenteeism with 66% of girls reporting missing school because of their period at baseline and only 18% at endline.
- Parents reported providing more emotional support by endline increasing rates from 34% to 63% for mothers and 66% to 77% for fathers.
- There was a 25% increase of female student leaders around the issue of menstrual health and hygiene in their schools by endline.
- The percentage of girls experiencing bullying related to menstruation dropped from 20% to just 0.8% by endline.

Key Lessons

1. The inclusion of elders was key to addressing menstrual stigma rooted in misunderstandings of cultural practices. The innovation had not planned to include elders however, taking feedback into consideration, involving elders during workshops became an essential part of the project.
2. The provision of snacks was not enough for participants, there was an expectation for the project to provide an actual meal. This learning seemed small but set an important mood and tone for interacting with participants.
3. The initial plan was to have a select group of students at each school participating in the workshops, however, because of the vast interest from students, the innovation's reach was expanded.

“We learned about different plants and their benefits, including the green heart tree which is used by the local herbalists to help with the balancing of hormones in the female body. We also learned about lavender and how it can be used to calm the nervous system and emotions. That evening when I went home I passed this knowledge to my mother and my sister. I gave my sister a lavender sack I had made to help relax her next time she has her periods. I felt good knowing I can help”

—Nicholas

PARTNER ORGANIZATION

St. Jude Family Projects

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

437 (81 women, 73 men, 144 girls, 139 boys)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ABOUT FIT

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.



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