



دبي العطاء
Dubai Cares



WASH UP!

Girl Talk Project

ZIMBABWE



A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Promising Practice

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WASH UP!

This document presents WASH UP! GirlTalk program as a promising practice in integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programming in Zimbabwe. WASH UP! GirlTalk project empowered primary school-aged children (pre-adolescent and adolescent girls and boys) to practice and promote healthy water, sanitation and hygiene behaviors, particularly around menstrual health, and hygiene. The WASH UP! GirlTalk program was implemented in Zimbabwe in 2017-2020 with funding from Dubai Cares Foundation. Dubai Cares is a philanthropic organization working to provide children and young people in developing countries with access to quality education. Dubai Cares believes that education is an asset and essential right of every child. World Vision partnered with Sesame Workshop to develop contextualized child appropriate multi-media content and educational materials on puberty, healthy body, menstrual cycle, menstrual hygiene management, and girls' empowerment. Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization making a meaningful difference in the lives of children worldwide. Its mission is to help kids grow smarter, stronger, and kinder. The project targeted remote, low-resource communities in rural Zimbabwe.

A summative research evaluation suggests that the project enhanced knowledge of adolescent health and dispelled commonly-held myths about menstruation, with participants showing significant increases in knowledge of puberty and menstruation and reporting that they were more likely to talk with friends, family, and teachers about these topics. The project reached more than 26,000 girls and more than 14,000 boys in 150 schools in Zimbabwe. It worked to break the socio-cultural systems and norms around menstrual hygiene and other bodily changes that girls experienced during puberty. It addressed gaps in pubertal health and menstrual hygiene education for pre-adolescent and adolescent girls and boys.

THE CONTEXT

Menstrual health and hygiene are vital to the empowerment and well-being of women and girls worldwide. Focused beyond just access to sanitary pads and appropriate toilets, menstrual health and hygiene includes ensuring women and girls live in an environment that values and supports their ability to manage their menstruation with dignity. Menstruation is a natural fact of life and a monthly occurrence for the 1.8 billion girls and women of reproductive age around the world. Yet millions across the world are denied the right to manage their monthly menstrual cycle in a dignified, healthy way.¹ Cultural taboos, gender inequality, discriminatory social norms, poverty, and lack of basic services often cause girls' and women's menstrual health, and hygiene needs to go unmet. Many adolescent girls face stigma, harassment and social exclusion during menstruation, and there can be far-reaching negative impacts on the lives of those who menstruate—restricting their mobility, freedom, and choices; affecting attendance and participation in school and community life; compromising their safety; and causing stress and anxiety. These challenges are particularly acute for girls and women living in poverty, humanitarian crises, and fragile contexts.

Prior to the inception of the WASH UP! Girl Talk project, menstruation was a taboo subject in Zimbabwe. Most people did not openly or publicly talk about menstruation or using pads, including how to acquire, change/discard a pad at home or in school. To date, some girls are still not taught how to manage their first period, and they find it difficult to access accurate information. Because it is a taboo subject, and a sense of shame attached to it, girls may hesitate to talk to their mothers or guardians, and schools often have male educators for health and sanitation classes, creating another barrier for girls to obtain necessary information. Without a knowledgeable and approachable adult—particularly a female adult—girls reach out to peers who are likely to pass on misinformation.²

Girls in Zimbabwe can miss up to 20% of the school year because of menstruation challenges, including inadequate and unsafe sanitation facilities in schools, insufficient access to menstrual hygiene materials, and limited access to extra uniforms. All these challenges contribute to school dropout rates.³

In many low-income countries around the world, this lack of access to WASH infrastructure, menstrual hygiene knowledge and resources is compounded by a lack of comprehensive information about menstruation and a culture of silence around this topic. As a result, many girls begin menstruating without knowing what is happening to them, which causes fear, pain, and shame. These global realities hold true in Zimbabwe. In the Zimbabwean context, an effective solution to these challenges had to address school infrastructure concerns and limitations in knowledge, attitudes, and practices around WASH—including menstrual hygiene management (MHM)—and girls' education. As of 2020, only 67% of schools in Zimbabwe had a clean water supply, and less than 50% had improved sanitation facilities (toilets/latrines) and basic hygiene services, which include access to handwashing stations with soap.⁴

1 UNICEF. 2019. Guidance on Menstruation Health and Hygiene. UNICEF: New York.

2 SNV-Netherlands Development Organization. 2015. Girls in Control: Compiled Findings from Studies on Menstrual Hygiene Management of Schoolgirls in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe. Addis Ababa: Ethiopia.

3 SNV-Netherlands Development Organization. 2015. "Girls in Control: Compiled Findings from Studies on Menstrual Hygiene Management of Schoolgirls in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; UNICEF. 2014. WASH in Schools Empowers Girls' Education: Tools for Assessing Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools. UNICEF: New York; UNICEF. 2015. Advancing WASH in Schools Monitoring. Working Paper. UNICEF: New York.

4 WHO and UNICEF. 2020. Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: Special Focus on COVID-19. New York: WHO and UNICEF.

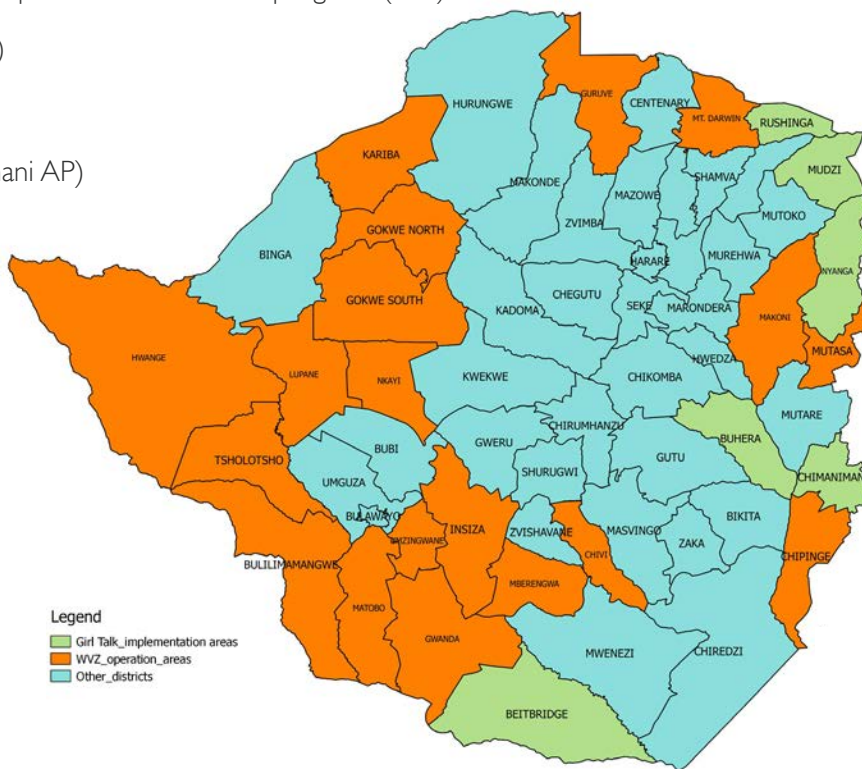
MHM refers to management of hygiene associated with the menstrual process. Menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) encompass both MHM and the broader systemic factors that link menstruation with health, well-being, gender equality, education, equity, empowerment, and rights. These systematic factors have been summarized by UNESCO as accurate and timely knowledge, available, safe, and affordable materials, informed and comfortable professionals, referral and access to health services, sanitation and washing facilities, positive social norms, safe and hygienic disposal and advocacy and policy.⁵

Key World Vision WASH priorities in Zimbabwe are aligned with improving sanitation and hygiene, and general activities include latrine construction that are girl and disability friendly in the households, schools, and health care facilities. WASH activities at both community and institution level also include drilling of new boreholes, establishing solar powered piped water schemes, and the rehabilitation of non-functional water source, hygiene promotion in communities and institutions and capacity building/enhancement among others. WASH UP! GirlTalk is a comprehensive program that builds on this work through integrated WASH and menstrual hygiene education in rural schools and communities.

Located in the southern part of Africa, Zimbabwe is a landlocked country that shares a border on the south with South Africa, and on the southwest and west with Botswana, on the north with Zambia, and on the northeast and east with Mozambique. World Vision operations are spread across 9 out of the 10 provinces of the country, and there are 31 area programs.

The WASH UP! GirlTalk program is implemented in six area programs (APs):

- Beitbridge District (Limpopo AP)
- Buhera District (Buhera AP)
- Chimanimani District (Chimanimani AP)
- Nyanga District (Nyanga AP)
- Mudzi District (Mudzi AP) and
- Rushinga District (Rusambo AP)



5 UNICEF. 2019. Guidance on Menstrual Health and Hygiene. UNICEF, New York.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WASH UP! GIRL TALK PROJECT

The overall goal of the WASH UP! GirlTalk project was to empower young girls and boys in schools with information and skills to meet their menstrual hygiene management, reproductive health needs, pubertal health, and to provide them with resources, opportunities, and life skills to complete their education and to succeed in life.

The specific objectives were to:

- 1 Improve **WASH facilities** and **infrastructure** in schools
- 2 Provide an educational experience through school-based health clubs to improve learners' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors on the **menstrual cycle, menstrual hygiene management and puberty needs** of girls and boys aged 10-14 years in rural Zimbabwe.
The education experience would:
 - Empower girls to: be self-confident, courageous and assertive when expressing themselves; identify their dreams and aspirations; understand they are not limited by their gender and feel proud of being a girl; know their rights and advocate for them and participate in celebrating and supporting other girls.
 - Create an awareness of puberty and help boys and girls to: understand the biological, emotional, cognitive and social development that takes place during puberty; have positive attitudes towards puberty and menstruation; understand the appropriate personal hygiene and self-care practices related to puberty and be comfortable discussing puberty and menstruation with trusted peers and adults.
 - Help girls to understand menstruation cycle and menstrual hygiene management including: understand symptoms and how to care for themselves during menstruation; using safe, clean absorbents; managing reusable pads hygienically and disposing of used sanitary wear in hygienic and responsible way; and building and participating in a menstrual support network.
 - Dispel common myths about menstruation that often exclude girls from important activities, and provide information on available support and empowering young people to seek support on menstruation or puberty.



NGATIKURUKURE NEZVEKUTEVERA
KWEVANASIKANA PAJEKERERE
MUNHARAUNDA YEDU

EVIDENCE OF IMPACT



WASH UP!

girl talk

A summative research evaluation suggests that the project had significant impact on students' knowledge about puberty, menstruation, and menstrual hygiene management. It empowered girls to be self-confident, courageous, assertive and comfortable seeking support in their schools. We believe this leads to greater self-confidence and comfort for girls to seek support in their schools and communities. Girls who participated in the program gained an improved understanding about their menstrual cycle and how to maintain proper menstrual hygiene. The program greatly improved both girls' and boys' knowledge about puberty and adolescence, with an emphasis on menstrual health, and helped dispel common myths on the dignity of girls and menstruation.

THE STRUCTURE OF WASH UP! GIRL TALK

The project built on an existing partnership between World Vision and Sesame Workshop in Zimbabwe to promote health water, sanitation, and hygiene behaviors (WASH). The WASH UP! program focused on the promotion of school-based hygiene behavior change program that encouraged the girls and boys in target schools to practice and promote healthy water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) behaviors. The program utilized fun and engaging materials and characters, created by Sesame Workshop, to educate children on healthy WASH behaviors and empower them as agents for change in their own communities. The WASH UP! GirlTalk component carried out menstrual hygiene management, puberty, and early adolescence educational campaigns and awareness. Interventions included an afterschool club that

provided educational resources, practical knowledge, and skills on how to manage menstruation and other changes that came with puberty and early adolescence. The program integrated girls' empowerment education and addressed the key issue of dignity and menstrual hygiene education, which influence girls' consistent attendance and retention in school. The GirlTalk program also targeted teachers and caregivers, seeking to increase educators' and caregivers' knowledge and practice of healthy hygiene behaviors and menstrual health. It also sought to improve WASH and menstrual hygiene management facilities in school settings. Overall, the WASH UP! GirlTalk project addressed these key factors:

- **ACCURATE AND TIMELY KNOWLEDGE** | The project targeted girls and boys at pre-adolescent age, prior to start of menstruation. Participants received information that helped them be better prepared and know what to expect during puberty. Additionally, various stakeholders work together to provide accurate information for this group.
- **AVAILABLE, SAFE, AND AFFORDABLE MATERIALS** | The project empowered and trained learners, both girls and boys, to make reusable pads using locally available materials. It also taught the girls how to safely use and clean these pads.
- **INFORMED AND COMFORTABLE PROFESSIONALS** | The curriculum and project materials were created in partnership with Sesame Workshop, and the Government of Zimbabwe's Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to ensure accuracy, ownership and alignment to policy. The teachers were equipped to educate learners accurately, comfortably, and confidently about the topics relating to menstrual hygiene management, puberty, and pre-adolescence.
- **REFERRAL AND ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES** | The project used activity books that informed student on where to get information and who to consult if they had questions. Teachers were equipped as mentors to support students.
- **SANITATION AND WASHING FACILITIES** | The project constructed or renovated the existing school sanitation and hygiene facilities to ensure girls could safely manage their menstrual hygiene.
- **POSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS** | The project worked on developing accurate knowledge and positive social norms, including addressing misconceptions that menstruating girls were unclean or they should not attend school or conduct other activities.
- **SAFE AND HYGIENIC DISPOSAL** | The project focused on reusable pads (not disposable) and taught participants how to safely wash, dry, and reuse them.
- **ADVOCACY AND POLICY** | The project mobilized and engaged in and out of school learners, women in the community and mothers support groups. This helped to bridge the gap between school and community.

The impacts are summarized along the five GESI domains.

ACCESS

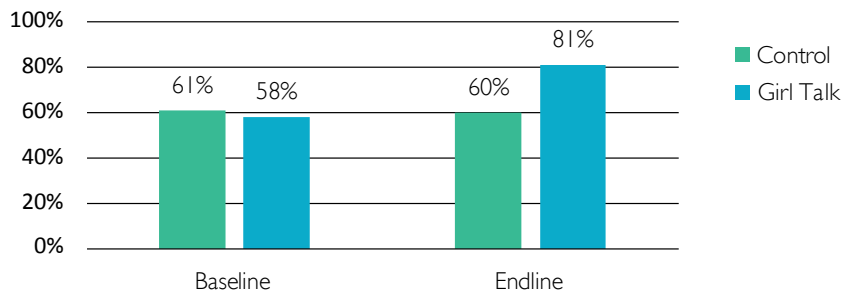
The WASH UP! Girl Talk project improved access to WASH infrastructure and hygiene enabling facilities in 150 schools in rural Zimbabwe. These facilities included disability accessible toilets and separate toilets for girls and boys that provided spaces for menstrual hygiene and privacy for girls. The project improved access to menstrual hygiene products, particularly reusable sanitary pads for all the girls in the program. Reusable sanitary pads are sustainable and renewable, so girls could wash and reuse them rather than having to buy disposable pads every month that were not affordable for many girls.

Learners also learned how to make their own reusable pads, and this enabled them to have access and to continue attending school during their menstruation.⁶ Through mother support groups, the project reached out-of-school adolescent girls and young women and taught them how to make reusable pads for personal use and for sale to generate income.

Furthermore, the project increased access to educational information and resources, and improved knowledge on puberty and menstruation. The evaluation revealed that the average score on pubertal knowledge assessment (weighted average) was 81% for students who participated in Girl Talk compared to the 60% for students in the control group. Girl Talk provided girls with access to practical knowledge about their menstrual cycle and how to maintain proper menstrual hygiene management. At baseline 69% of participating students reported learning about their own development and what was happening to their own bodies as they grew up. This number improved to 97% by the end of the Girl Talk program.



% Change in average score on puberty knowledge assessment



The project improved access to teaching materials on puberty and menstruation for teachers. In interviews, the teachers in 2019 revealed how practical the Girl Talk program was compared to their standard teaching materials about menstruation and human development. They felt that the content in the program targeted a critical topic for pre-adolescent and adolescents' girls and boys. The teachers reported that they appreciated the way the topic of menstrual health and hygiene was dealt with in the program. All the teachers involved in the program felt that the print materials and audio-visual videos and activity books were child friendly, useful for both girls and boys, and encouraged the children to ask questions. The pedagogical model of WASH UP! Girl Talk created an environment that fostered student

⁶ World Vision Zimbabwe. 2019. Partnering with Communities for Greater Impact in Children's Lives. *Annual Report*.

questioning which, the teachers felt, allowed the students to explore their doubts and fears. The teachers' knowledge about menstrual hygiene management grew, and they appreciated the materials and the pedagogical approach of the model.

PARTICIPATION

The WASH UP! GirlTalk increased the participation of both girls and boys in learning and awareness raising about puberty and menstruation. Over twenty-six thousand girls, and fourteen thousand boys from poor rural areas were reached by the WASH UP! GirlTalk. Among those, a total of 47 were children with disabilities. Meaningful participation was enhanced by providing lessons in a dignified and appropriate way, with some sessions provided to girls and boys together, and some provided separately, to ensure space for safety and candid discussions.

Attitudes and norms on menstrual cycle can negatively impact how girls participate in school and community, in learning, sports and other extra-curricular activities. The project supported, encouraged, and empowered girls to participate in all school activities including sports even when going through their menstrual cycle. It also supported girls to attend school and participate in academic, sports, and other extra-curricular activities.

The children participated in Girl clubs, which provided a platform for information sharing and learning among adolescent boys and girls, creating a drive to demystify taboos and myths around menstrual hygiene management and increasing girls' participation in school-based activities.

DECISION-MAKING

The WASH UP! GirlTalk project developed decision-making skills in relation to menstrual hygiene management and empowered children to make independent decisions on puberty. It also provided guidance on whom to talk to whether at home, in school, or anywhere in the community. Participants were empowered to make decisions on the best person for them to talk to, based on how comfortable they felt about the different people they interacted with. The WASH UP! GirlTalk project showed a marked increase in the percent of students talking about menstruation or puberty with peers, teachers, or parents. The study indicated that 60% of participants reported having spoken with their mothers in the last month, which was an 11% increase over the baseline; and the number of students who said they had spoken with a teacher went up nearly a third from the baseline to 32%, enabling students to seek support if they needed it. The children were also empowered to contribute to and/or make decisions on improving adolescent girls' (and boys') health. Such decisions included influencing designs of WASH facilities, leading communications, determining content in the awareness and educational materials, controlling their mobility, and other abilities to make decisions free of coercion.



SYSTEMS

World Vision successfully collaborated with the Government of Zimbabwe's Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education, Health and Child Care, and Youth and Women Affairs to build and strengthen school and community-based systems across different sectors of health and education, to promote menstrual health and hygiene management. The school systems, together with its planned learning and after school activities, enabled the establishment and implementation of structures such as the Girl Clubs that were run by teachers and students. The health system provided for the "health masters" who were trained by the Ministry of Health and were part of the government's efforts in providing health extension services in schools. These formal health and education systems worked together to advance menstrual health and hygiene.

The project also sought to address informal systems relating to social norms and behaviors. This included addressing social norms and cultural taboos on menstruation, which often restricted girls' mobility, spread fear and stigma, and result in social exclusion of girls. The project established support systems for girls from parents, teachers, and male peers (boys), which helped to address negative social norms and taboos, and dispel common myths about menstruation. The evidence suggested great improvement in addressing social norms and taboos from baseline data where prior to participating in WASH UP! Girl Talk more than 80% of girls and boys believed myths such as "menstruating girls will break things," and that "menstruating girls should not interact with boys during their periods," and after participating in the program, the number of students who believed in such myths and taboos dropped by 45%.

The project established a supportive peer system through the inclusion of girls and boys in the program. This fostered the development of transformational relationships based on empathy and accurate knowledge. The project strengthened relationships between the learners, and their parents and teachers as it created platforms for sharing of knowledge and experiences on menstruation and puberty.

It created a more supportive environment where girls felt more comfortable seeking support and were able to speak up and seek help whenever they had questions about puberty or menstruation.

WELL-BEING

The project helped to protect the dignity of girls and build their confidence on menstrual health and hygiene, thereby strengthening their sexual and reproductive health and well-being. Prior to the project, many girls begun menstruating without knowing what was happening to them. When they started to menstruate, they were faced with a lot of emotional stress and challenges, including embarrassment, shame, fear of menstrual accidents, confusion, low self-esteem, and social exclusion. These stresses, coupled with the other barriers already discussed such as lack of proper WASH and menstrual hygiene management facilities, lack of knowledge and information, and limited access to water contributed to risks for girls to drop out to school or have an irregular attendance during menstruation.

The focus on overall puberty education – not only menstrual health – promoted the overall well-being of vulnerable girls in the target population. The Girl Talk component built on the key healthy behaviors taught as part of the WASH UP! project, so the content followed a continuum of building lifelong healthy habits. The project reduced school absence and promoted lifelong skills for girls to manage their menstruation safely, hygienically, and with dignity and privacy, and enhance their well-being. The project also empowered girls to feel more comfortable and have bodily integrity.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

It has become apparent that it is necessary to have good baseline data and understanding of factors affecting menstrual health and hygiene such as the socio-cultural context menstrual practices and perceptions, knowledge or skills gaps and needs, social support limits or opportunities, resources or economic environments, and materials or physical infrastructure.

The WASH UP! Girl Talk targeted girls in a timely fashion, to prepared them adequately for their first menstrual cycle, and equipped those who were already menstruating with tools and knowledge on menstrual hygiene management. The partnership with Sesame Workshop led to the development and design of contextualized, multi-media, educational content that featured characters and animations acknowledged by children as appealing to them and helped them learn the key messages. The project developed appropriate content for both boys and girls that could easily be adapted, translated, and replicated for other countries.

Future programming can strengthen interventions that focus on enhancing girls' decision-making and include holistic approaches to creating healthy school environments for girls where healthy equal and inclusive norms and practices can be created and reinforced. The project can also apply a whole-school systems approach to mitigate gender-based violence, teasing, bullying and other anti-social behaviors as well as the promotion of life-long health seeking behaviors, and socio-emotional well-being of adolescent girls. Tools should be developed to systematically collect data on girls' experiences of menstrual health and hygiene and offer evidence-based directional pathways of transformational change along the GESI domains of access, participation, decision-making, systems, and well-being.



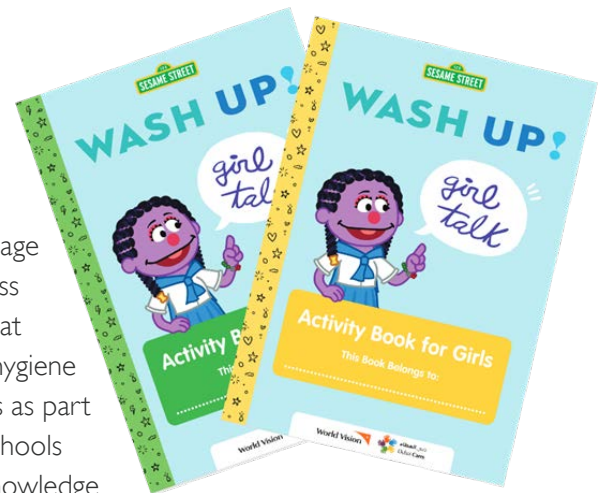
SYSTEMS APPROACH

Systems approach is essential in ensuring good menstrual hygiene management that enables girls to reach their full potential. This requires a combination of interventions at the school systems level, and in addressing the system of social and gender norms and behaviors. WASH UP! GirlTalk eliminated barriers for girls by providing adequate infrastructure and WASH facilities in schools, including separate and safe toilets, and availability of sanitary towels. Girls managed to maintain their menstrual hygiene in safe, private, and dignified ways, which research suggests helps to curb school absenteeism. At the same time, the project addressed negative taboos, stigmas, norms, beliefs, and behaviors on menstruation that systematically secluded girls from participating in every-day school activities. The systems approach makes menstrual hygiene management everybody's business, not just a girl's issue. It is important to engage multiple stakeholders. Given the taboo nature of the topic of menstrual hygiene in many communities, it is important to support teachers and school-based health promoters and provide them with detailed facts and materials during training support teachers. Parents and mother support groups can be important links between home and the school. Men and traditional leaders can help break the silence surrounding menstruation and reinforce the efforts made by the teachers who facilitate the WASH UP! GirlTalk clubs. Engaging community groups, like the mother support groups was done ad-hoc, but successfully. This is something to consider more meaningfully and early on in the future. Boys expressed more interest than expected in being involved in the project activities. Future scale up may need to consider how to engage them throughout the 10 sessions (as opposed to just through 5 co-ed sessions).

INNOVATION

Prior to the introduction of the WASH UP! GirlTalk in Zimbabwe, menstruation was a taboo subject where people did not talk about menstruation especially where men and women were present or making pads, including how to acquire, change/discard a pad at home or in school. Many girls were not taught how to manage their first and subsequent periods, and they found it difficult to access accurate information. WASH UP! GirlTalk is an innovative project that successfully addressed these gaps in puberty, health, and menstrual hygiene education in Zimbabwe. The project provided educational resources as part of a school-based WASH program and upgraded facilities in rural schools throughout the country. It also increased educators' and students' knowledge and practices of menstrual hygiene management. It empowered the girl child in multiple aspects thereby enabling them to confidently participate in school-related activities.

There was an innovation in the GirlTalk content, comprised of printed and digital classroom educational materials and teacher trainings to guide conversations among the students and their teachers about menstruation, what it means, menstrual needs for girls and women, and how girls, boys, teachers, and caregivers can support those needs.⁷ The content was informed by a curriculum seminar which brought together a range of key stakeholders from Sesame Workshop, the Zimbabwean government, World Vision and other experts to discuss the initiative and to facilitate curriculum alignment with existing guidelines, cultural norms and contextual realities. A total of 10 educational sessions were provided for use in the after-school GirlTalk clubs, and were run by two teachers (one female and one male)



7 Daniel Light, et al. 2021. "Improving Students' Knowledge of Puberty and Menstruation in Rural Zimbabwe: An Evaluation of Sesame Workshop's GirlTalk program." *Journal of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Development* 11 (1): 173–178.

who were also “health masters” –teacher representatives of the Ministry of Health and Child Care’s extension program. These teachers were trained by the Ministry of Health in various health topics and were part of the health extension services. Accordingly, World Vision Zimbabwe trained health masters on the Girl Talk program before they launched the club in their schools. The WASH UP! Girl talk also used short, animated videos, with accompanying print materials that presented stories about a school girl named *Didi* and her friends *Raya*, *Sandra*, *Rudo* and *Tinashe* who grew up and supported one other as they dealt with the challenges they experienced during puberty. An example of such a video can be accessed on this link www.youtube.com/watch?v=uONWMhZZskA. These stories presented important information about puberty, menstruation and menstrual hygiene management practices.

FAITH-BASED APPROACH

In Zimbabwe, religious spaces such as churches form communities play an important role in the upbringing of children. The WASH UP! Girl talk project engaged with faith leaders and churches to support children, promote awareness and education, and break myths and misconception associated with puberty and menstrual hygiene. Influential groups amongst faith communities such as Sunday school for children, women’s and men’s ministries, and young adults’ groups, were involved in promoting positive messages about menstrual hygiene and dispelling myths and misconception. In addition, mother support groups members belonging to different denominational churches were formed to provide support to the girls, and also serve as agents of change. Faith leaders were provided with training on advocating for menstrual hygiene management and supporting the well-being of girls within their churches and faith communities.

MITIGATING COVID-19 IMPACTS

Response by the WASH sector became more crucial with the COVID-19 pandemic as the need to ensure access to water as well as sanitation and hygiene was increased in Zimbabwe. Thousands of people were reached through the various WASH interventions including provision of facemasks, sanitizers, soap, and hand washing facilities among others, and millions were reached with COVID-19 related hygiene promotion messages. As is with most countries in the world, schools in Zimbabwe were completely closed for several months of 2020 and 2021, halting implementation of the WASH UP! Girl Talk in most areas. However, in trying to reach out children during the school closures, messages on hygiene promotion and COVID-19 were disseminated through national radio broadcasting, flyers, posters and integrating short health and hygiene talks during food distributions and drive through road shows. The pandemic highlighted the critical importance of the messages of the program as well the need to continue to explore other modalities outside of schools to deliver its core messages.

REPLICABILITY

Although the Girl Talk has so far only been tested in Zimbabwe, it is built upon the WASH UP! methodology that has been implemented in several countries across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. These countries are Ghana, Mali, Niger, Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Honduras, India, Afghanistan, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Kurdish Region of Iraq. The WASH UP! messages on washing hands with soap, and proper latrine use have reached many children through the WASH UP! program and the program has further highlighted the need for community-based approaches to target girls and address menstrual hygiene management, which can increase school attendance for girls, and their ability to reach their full potential.



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