



WORLD ASSOCIATION
OF GIRL GUIDES
AND GIRL SCOUTS

RED PRIDE

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT (MHH) EDUCATION

Menstruation is a normal biological part of a young woman's life – PERIOD.
But for millions of girls around the world, managing their monthly menstrual cycle and society's rules is a major barrier to them making the most out of their life.

At the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) we are working with Girl Guides and Girl Scouts through education and advocacy campaigns to empower girls and to find solutions.



ISSUE:

▶ For many millions of girls around the world, having a period every month is not just an inconvenience. It can have a long-term detrimental impact on their life chances, and cause serious health conditions and social exclusion.

Schools in many countries don't have private toilets and running water, and sanitary pads are too expensive for some girls to buy. As a result many girls often don't go to classes when they are menstruating, or drop out completely when they reach puberty.

A lack of adequate information about this normal biological process allows fear and shame to persist amongst girls and their local community, with cultural beliefs and superstition passed on from mothers, friends, sisters or aunties. Many girls don't even know what a period is until they get their first one.

In some cultures, women are even forced to leave home during their period as it is considered dirty, shameful and unhealthy.

A survey in Tanzania found that one in three girls do not always go to school when they are on their period (U-Report 2017)

In general, UNESCO estimates that 1 in 10 adolescent girls in Africa miss school during their period and eventually drop out.

According to a study in South Africa, 57% of school girls were not aware what their period was before it started. (Johnson & Johnson 2019)

WHY WAGGGS?

“Periods are not something we should be ashamed of or made to feel bad about, they are a natural bodily function. Today as we strive for gender equality, it is time to recognise the challenges that still surround periods for many people. Whether it's shame or stigma, price or pressure, many of us have suffered as a result.”
Kim, Girl Guiding UK Advocate

At WAGGGS, we believe in working with girls and young women to help them identify and overcome barriers - like managing their monthly menstrual cycle - that prevent them from taking part in everyday activities and all the opportunities that life has to offer. As the largest voluntary network of girls across the world with 10 million members across 150 countries, we are in a unique position to be able to do this.

We also believe in the vision of a fairer, more equal world as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 – achieve gender equality and empower all girls. The only way we can achieve this vision is to work with girls to take down the barriers that are holding them back.

In November 2018 we asked a group of eight Member Organisations in Africa about girls'

experiences of menstruations. They all confirmed good menstrual hygiene management was a challenge for girls in their country. Many told us it was the main reason girls were dropping out of school.

All these MOs were already part of our YESS GIRLS programme – an international exchange scheme that sends young women (18-25 years) from Africa and Asia Pacific to live and volunteer with a host Guiding association for six months.

As part of this programme, YESS participants had already identified good menstrual hygiene management a key issues for girls, and were engaging in education and Red Pride advocacy events to help address it.

WAGGGS AND WASH UNITED PARTNERSHIP



With our partners WASH United, we are now rolling out a new educational resource through the YESS programme in Africa. WASH United is an award-winning not-for-profit that aims to change people's attitude and behavior towards the issue of menstrual hygiene.

By combining our extensive experience of working with girls, developing fun and engaging non-formal education curriculums, with WASH United's knowledge and expertise in menstrual hygiene management, we launched our new partnership as a core part of the YESS girls exchange programme in February 2019.

ROSIE'S WORLD PROGRAMME

The 45 young women in 2019 and the new group of 45 in 2020 will deliver MHM education to girls using our badge curriculum "Rosie's World". When girls complete the curriculum, including taking action to reach others in their community, they receive their Red Pride Badge.

Member Organisations who are welcoming back YESS participants are invited to apply for a fund to support further roll-out of the Rosie's World programme; training leaders and reaching more girls.

THE 'ROSIE'S WORLD' curriculum was adapted from an innovative game and education tool that WASH initially developed with girls in India. During the first half of 2019 it was adapted for the Girl Guide and Girl Scout audience in Sub Saharan Africa. The resource will be girl-led, with the voices and experience of girls in these countries helping us shape every aspect of its content.

OUR AMBITION:

OVER 18 MONTHS from February 2019 educate **54,000 GIRLS** (aged 8-16 years old) about puberty and how to manage their periods safely, hygienically and confidently.

45 YESS leaders and at least **20 MORE GIRL GUIDE AND GIRL SCOUT LEADERS**, trained on how to deliver menstrual hygiene management trainings

DEVELOPING A SCALABLE MODEL that can be rolled out across WAGGGS wider global network

UGANDAN CASE STUDY:

Yes!! Girls can manage their period healthily

THE PAD MAKERS OF UGANDA

In central Uganda young women have very little knowledge about periods and there are many cultural misconceptions, like a belief that blood is bad and that if a dog finds a girl's sanitary towel the girl will become barren. Some believe women should not cook or go into the town or city centre while menstruating. There are poor bathroom facilities and many resort to unhygienic methods to manage their monthly cycle.

THE YESS GIRLS WANT TO CHANGE THIS. The participants go into schools and communities; and teach girls about menstruation and how to make easy reusable pads from local materials. They are environmentally friendly and free.

They also talk to boys and teachers about how they can support girls. Previously periods have been called 'ensoga', meaning an issue people don't want to talk about. But the YESS-Girls explain how menstruation is natural and important for having children.

So far, the YESS Girls have helped 1,860 girls, 200 boys and 10 teachers in Uganda as part of the project. They are now looking to engage the wider community by running workshops for older people.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY



28 May
**MENSTRUAL
HYGIENE DAY**

ON 28 MAY EACH YEAR, MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY

is an important moment to raise awareness of good menstrual hygiene management, and the impact it can have on girls' lives. On MH day Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in many countries raise awareness of menstrual hygiene and make noise to show their Period Pride.

In 2018, we wanted to hear directly from girls about their experiences so we could use the findings to call on global policy makers to take action. Through U-Report, a global social media platform that engages young people in development issues, we asked girls whether they felt that workplaces and school provided products and facilities to help them manage their periods.

FROM OVER 5,360 RESPONSES 48 PER CENT OF GIRLS SAID NO.

We also asked girls about attitudes towards periods in their communities -

OVER 35 PER CENT SAID THERE WAS A BELIEF GIRLS SHOULDN'T SWIM OR PLAY SPORT ON THEIR PERIODS

29 PER CENT SAID GIRLS FELT PRESSURE TO HIDE PRODUCTS AND 24% SAID PERIODS SHOULDN'T BE DISCUSSED AROUND MEN.

Our findings demonstrate what a huge barrier many girls and young women around the world face in overcoming cultural prejudices, and the lack of resources available for them to be able to manage what should be a basic health need.

THE MENSTRUAL HYGIENE ADVOCATE: NEPALESE GIRL SCOUT, NIRMALA SHRESTHA

Nirmala is a Girl Scout from Nepal who helps to provide education and sanitary supplies to girls and women in remote communities.

Her home is a hilly, remote area in central Nepal. It backs onto China and was badly affected by the earthquakes.

"There is much mythology around periods and it dictates the way women and girls are treated. When girls are [on their] periods they face different problems," she says. "Girl's aren't allowed in the kitchen. They are not allowed to touch any fruit or plants."

Not being allowed to step into a kitchen means many do not eat properly. They might even be

expected to sleep alone, often outside their homes, until they finished bleeding.

Nirmala wants to challenge these barriers by distributing sanitary wear and basic sexual education. She said women often suffer during their periods but she wants to help them feel free. She also helps to run a public health education programme that aims to challenge negative attitudes around menstruation.

"Our goal is to give women sexual health education and make eco-friendly sanitary pads which are sustainable and hygienic to help them manage their periods; giving women and girls back dignity and freedom."