

**Results of preliminary health interviews with Senior Women teachers, peer counselors and girls at
Kasiisi Project schools August 2009**

Alice Bator, Sarah Quirk and Kabajansi Lucy
The Kasiisi Project
The Kasiisi Project Vanderbilt
The Kibale Health and Conservation Project

“If you reach 18 years old without sex do you develop a bone in your vagina?”

“When I get my period, has something broken inside me?”

“When we get sanitary pads from the office the boys laugh and say, “they have given you biscuits”

“I live with my dad but I fear asking him to buy me knickers, what should I do?”



Goal: To determine level of knowledge of reproductive health issues, ease of access to accurate information and support, girl friendly latrines and washing facilities and adequate supplies of sanitary pads and underwear.

Methods:

- We interviewed Senior Women (the teacher at each school primarily responsible for taking care of girls), peer counselors and a selection of girls from P4-P7 (Grade 4 – Grade 6) at each of the 5 Kasiisi Project schools using a standard questionnaire (*appendix 1*). We abandoned it early in the interviews as it was very difficult to stick by it. Subsequently we used it only to guide our questions and discussions with the girls.
- We obtained data on the number of menstruating girls at each school to assess accurately requirements for sanitary pads and underwear for each school. (Appendix 2)
- We obtained drop-out rates due to pregnancy.

Results:

The results reported here are from information obtained from:

- Answers to the questionnaire and
- The questions asked by the girls (much of the most important information reported here came through this route)

Background information and Interviewers Comments

Spreading rumors and trusting friends to be respectful was a huge concern for all of the girls interviewed. They were afraid that if their friends knew that someone had embarrassed herself by bleeding through a uniform then the whole school would find out.

Both the nature of questions the girls asked and the level of comfort the girls felt in asking questions varied vastly between the schools. The accuracy of the girl's knowledge also varied widely. At some schools the questions they asked revealed alarming ignorance while at others students had in a good understanding of STDs, hygiene, sexual behaviors, and relationships.

Results may indicate that the following factors were responsible

- *Presence of peer counselors:* Kasiisi is the only school to have peer educators and these girls asked very specific and informed questions.

- *Female Principals:* Kasiisi and Kyanyawara have female principals. Girls in these schools girls were much more comfortable talking with us about reproductive issues and also said they bring some of their problems to the principal in addition to the senior woman
- *Investment of parents in Education.* Kiko primary school, located in the middle of a tea plantation, serves mainly the children of tea pickers. Staff at Kiko reported a lack of interest in education for girls who are often kept home from school “ *Most of the mothers do not work outside the home and they see the only future for girls is marriage*”. There are no teachers at Kiko from the local population – something the Senior Woman ascribed to apathetic parents and a general local disinterest in education. The pregnancy rate at Kiko was also the highest.

Senior Woman Interviews

School/ Senior Woman	Role	Peer Guidance	Activities	Parents	Problems	Pads	Pregnancy Rate 2009	# Girls P5-P7
KASIISI Kyakya Beatrice	Guiding and counseling girls	Yes; two trained girls (now in P6); A good idea; Need more	Talks at start of term and when need arises; Sexual harassment and menstrual hygiene	Meetings <i>needed</i> to tell parents about peer ed. and topics girls need to know	Not enough peer educators. Girls need more strategies to protect themselves	Sufficient	None reported	195
KIKO Marunga Ruth	Guiding and counseling girls	No	Health talks; Assistance with problems ≈ 5 girls /month	Senior woman suspects parents do not value education.	Only younger girls report defilement; Sexual activity detected by changing behaviour and teachers investigate; High absenteeism; Girls talk to other girls not to Senior woman; No special counseling for HIV+v students; Lack of underwear; Lack of Peer educators	Enough start of term then run out. Term 3 only for emergency	6 last year 1- P4 1-P5 4- P6 + P7 Girls Drop out	53
RWETEERA Mbabzi Ruth	Guide & council girls	No	Meets girls when necessary Runs GEM club		Lack of underwear; No HIV testing; girls embarrassed to use obvious washing facilities		3 1 –P7 2- P6 Girls drop out	

KIGARAMA	Guide & council girls	No						146
KYANYAWA RA Kobusinge Rose	Guide & council girls	No					2	59

Peer Educators Interviews (at Kasiisi School)

Meetings

They met with peer groups 7 times this year (most frequent meetings right after the training session)

About 2 girls a week come to them with questions or concerns

When a girl has a problem and talks to the senior woman, one of the peer educators will usually be called in to help talk to the girl with the issue.

“That way the peer counselor can help the girl because all the girls know that the peer educators are trained to be confidential and not to spread any rumors”

Topics covered:

How to avoid rape and sexual harassment

Human and child rights **covered as early as P3 in academic setting as well*

Issues addressed

Boys touching girls “private parts” and breasts

Menstruation

Lack of support from parents, especially in girls whose parents cannot help them with soap or underwear

Attitude:

Very positive – *“ because we get a new name and we can achieve many things and are told we are responsible and trustworthy”*

Problems:

Sometimes other children do not believe the information the peer educators give them. The Peer Educators have asked to be able to show movies because they feel they are important to give credibility.

They want more training to be sure they have enough information so that girls can protect themselves – their perception was that fewer girls were getting pregnant – no confirmation.

A question from the interviewer about the use of role-play to teach ways to refuse sexual contact immediately elicited a serious role-play of boys asking girls for sex. Clearly they were all familiar with the ploys that men use to pressure girls.

“I love you so much. Are you trying to kill me? I will die because I think of you all night and have wet dreams. You are a bad friend for not wanting to play sex with me”

“No, I won’t have sex you, I think you have HIV”

“No I don’t, look at my skin, it’s clean”

Student Interviews

Girls from P5, P6 and P7 were interviewed.

Comments from interviewer:

- Kigarama – The girls were very shy – perhaps because they were all in one group since the senior woman required that
- Kyanyawara – the interviews were rushed perhaps because the girls were tired
- Kiko – Kiko in comparison with other schools had significant misinformation about sex and safe practices.
 - This school seems further behind than other schools in developing a culture where girls are actively participating in their own wellbeing.
 - Marunga Ruth, the senior woman at Kiko, guessed that this is because many girls from the area do not even complete primary school. She has many issues with the parents because she does not think they value the education of girls.
 - Parents believe that the girls could be more useful at home. Ruth believes that the parents are ok just surviving. They make little money but are content just putting some food on the table at the end of the day. The location of Kiko, near the tea plantation and forest seems to put the girls’ education at further risk than some of the other schools in the district. The girls are not encouraged to discuss their worries or ask questions about sex at home.

- Kasiisi –The P6 girls were very proud to be in the class with the peer educators and seemed to be well informed about STDs (knew all the names of STDs and ways to tell if you have one)

“The whole Kasiisi is looking at P6 thinking we are so smart and know so much”

The table below shows the number of comments and questions from each group of students grouped under 5 general headings.

School	Class	# of comments and questions per group	Basic information on menstruation reproduction and STDs	Boys teasing Sexual harassment Sexual behaviour of peers	Issues with odour and lack of pads, soap Etc	Home issues	HIV/ STDs	Comments of Interviewer
<u>KASIISI</u> 4 girls	P5	18	10/18	4/18	2/18	2/18 No female relations eg. live with uncle or father		With translator
4 girls	P6	16	3/16	7/16	3/16	1/16 They had plenty of information about STDs but wanted more about adolescence		No translator <i>Sample did not include Peer Educators who are from this class</i>
4 girls	P7	7	3/7 Mixed responses to “my school provides enough info”			4/7 Felt comfortable talking to senior teacher. Less so at home. Some		Seemed quiet- tired? Knew most of what they needed to know

						questions ashamed to ask		
<u>KIKO</u> 4	P5	19	9/19	2/19	2/19		6/19	One girl is HIV+ve
4 girls 11,13,14,14	P6	9	7/9	1/9		1/9		They study menstruation in class but are afraid to ask questions. Don't consult the senior woman; 2 had periods. Senior woman only knew about 1.
4 girls 14,14,15,15	P7	12	8/12		3/12		1/12	There is a girls washing room and basin and there is soap in the office. Girls do not use the washroom because they feel ashamed They think people will and know that they have their menstrual period
<u>KIGARAMA</u>	P5-7	4	1/4	2/4		Teacher led groups talk about health and hygiene issues		With translator. Very shy; (Large group? not very effective) They want to have a more official peer group with trained students and accurate information

<u>KYANYAWA RA</u>	P5-7	5	3/4		1/5		1/5	The girls were tired so the session was quick The girls are very open with Josephine and Rose and seem to be well supported. Seem to feel comfortable asking them anything.
<u>RWETEERA</u>	P5-7	17	9/16	2/16	4/16		1/16	They said they do not have enough information from school about reproductive and sexual health. They only get information from the senior woman during science but they need more information than just body changes.

Conclusions

1. In the rush to provide anti-HIV education information on basic changes during adolescence seems to have has been given less prominence than they should.
2. Peer educators have a valuable role to play filling this gap and this program and should be expanded to increase both the numbers of schools involved and the peer educators in each school.
3. The data show that the bulk of the issues that the girls wanted to discuss concerned in order of importance
 - Basic information about menstruation, pregnancy and STD's
 - The discomfort of boys either teasing them, touching them or pressuring them to "play sex"
 - Practical worries about hygiene, odour and lack of pads and underwear.
 - How to get information without embarrassment from parents and teachers
4. Schools with female principals had better informed girls, more comfortable with talking about their bodies and with asking questions.

5. Parents should be called to a meeting so that they understand the role of the peer educators and best practices to give accurate information.
6. More attention needs to be paid to ensuring that girls have the tools they need to resist being pressured into unwanted sexual activity.
7. More oversight is needed of the pad program to ensure that all schools have enough supplies and that for the girls receiving pads can be done in a way that avoids either walking through a staffroom full of men or the whole school knowing.
8. Senior Women need to be aware of which girls may be living in a home with no woman to talk to (i.e. only a father) so that they can offer extra help.
9. The lack of underwear was a big issue. A way to ensure that all girls have at least 3 pairs needs to be put in place. (If we find a way to provide underpants will other members of their families take them?)
10. Washing facilities need to be enclosed within the latrines so that it is not obvious who is using them and soap needs to be made available in a discreet way.
11. Would more education of the boys lessen the teasing?
12. Is there a way to help the HIV+ve children – are they on ARVs?
13. Do we need to provide Tylenol for menstrual cramps – how much do cramps contribute to absenteeism?
14. We need to continue to regularly monitor the schools to measure the progress and impact of the following programs in a quantitative way:
 - The pad program
 - The peer education program
 - The health education program

APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire

Kasiisi Project Affiliated Primary Schools -Peer and Teacher Educators Program
Student Baseline Surveys

Please circle the number that indicates how you feel about each statement (1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 indicating strongly agree)

1. I *always* feel comfortable talking to my family about female menstruation.
1 2 3 4 5

2. I *always* feel comfortable talking to my family about female sexual health.
1 2 3 4 5

3. I feel ashamed by my monthly period.
1 2 3 4 5

4. My classmates make me feel ashamed of my monthly period.
1 2 3 4 5

5. My *male* classmates make me feel ashamed of my monthly period.
1 2 3 4 5

6. I *always* use sanitary pads.
1 2 3 4 5

7. My *school* provides enough information about female reproductive and sexual health.
1 2 3 4 5

8. I would like to have a designated peer or teacher whom I can talk with about female menstruation and sexual health issues.
1 2 3 4 5

Please answer these questions with free response.

1. Who at *school* do you feel most comfortable talking about issues of female sexual and reproductive health?

2. Who at *home* do you feel most comfortable asking questions about female sexual and reproductive health?

3. What do you use as an alternative when you do NOT have access to sanitary pads?

Appendix 2: Sanitary Pad Budget for Kasiisi Project Schools

	# of girls in P5-P7	Projected Budget Term 3 2009
Kigarama	146	438
Kiko	53	159
Kanyawara	59	177
Kasiisi	195	585
Rweteera	70 **	210
TOTAL @ 2000/-		1569

** This is based on 2008 figures.

Budgeted at 1.5 packets per girl per month for a 3 month term.

They use traditional means at home. If the average length of their periods is 5 days then they need a minimum of 3 pads a day. Which is 1.5 packets per month.

This does not take into account the girls in P4 – Kasiisi must have lots in the lower grades as Lydia reports 250 girls menstruating at Kasiisi.

Total # of packets = 2353 @ 2000/- per packet = \$2353