

GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT, HEALTH AND EDUCATION CAMP – FIRST COHORT

Theme: Promoting Education, Health Awareness, and Empowerment Among Adolescent Girls in Uganda.

Activity Date: 25th June, 2026S

Venue: Joy for Children Uganda Offices, Kampala, Uganda



Background

Joy for Children Uganda is committed to promoting the well-being, protection, and empowerment of children and adolescents through community-based initiatives that address the challenges affecting their growth and development. Recognizing the increasing need to equip adolescent girls with accurate information, life skills, and confidence to navigate the challenges of adolescence, the organization intends to organize a girls' empowerment activity targeting girls aged 10–17 years.

The purpose of this activity was to address the widespread ignorance and misinformation surrounding puberty, menstrual health, reproductive health, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, child abuse, and children's rights among adolescent girls. The activity also sought to empower girls with knowledge on how to protect themselves from abuse, advocate for their rights, make informed decisions, and build leadership skills that will enable them to become confident and responsible young leaders within their schools, families, and communities.

Through interactive learning sessions, mentorship, discussions, and practical guidance, the activity created a safe platform where girls can openly learn, share experiences, ask questions, and gain the confidence needed to overcome social and cultural barriers that hinder their personal growth and development.

Adolescence is a critical stage in the growth and development of every child, especially girls aged between 10 and 17 years. During this period, girls experience physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes associated with puberty. However, many girls in communities continue to face limited access to accurate information and guidance on puberty, menstrual health, reproductive health, personal safety, and their rights. This lack of knowledge has contributed to a widespread information gap, fear, misinformation, low self-esteem, and vulnerability among adolescent girls.

Many girls begin puberty without adequate preparation or support from parents, teachers, or caregivers. As a result, they often experience confusion, shame, and anxiety about menstruation and bodily changes. In some communities, cultural beliefs and stigma surrounding menstruation and reproductive health prevent open discussions, leaving girls to rely on misleading information from peers or social media.

At the same time, cases of child abuse, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and neglect continue to affect many young girls. Due to limited awareness of children's rights and protection mechanisms, many victims remain silent and fail to report abuse. Girls are often unaware of how to seek help, protect themselves, or advocate for their rights within their families, schools, and communities.

Teenage pregnancy and the spread of HIV/AIDS among adolescents also remain major concerns. Many girls lack access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, making them

vulnerable to risky behaviours, early sexual activity, sexually transmitted infections, school dropout, early marriage, and poverty. Peer pressure, poverty, and limited life skills further increase the vulnerability of adolescent girls to exploitation and harmful practices.

In addition, many girls have limited opportunities to develop confidence, leadership skills, and decision-making abilities. They are rarely empowered to express themselves, participate in community discussions, or take leadership roles in schools and society. Without mentorship and empowerment programs, many girls grow up lacking the confidence and skills needed to advocate for themselves and become positive agents of change.

It is against this background that this activity was organized to equip girls aged 10–17 years with knowledge and life skills on puberty, menstrual hygiene, reproductive health, prevention of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS awareness, child protection, and children's rights. The activity also provided a safe and interactive platform for girls to learn how to speak up against abuse, advocate for their rights, build self-esteem, and develop leadership skills that will help them become responsible and empowered young women in their communities.

The camp aimed not only to increase knowledge and awareness among participants but also to establish a network of empowered adolescent girls who will serve as peer educators within their communities. Through continuous mentorship and follow-up engagements, these girls were equipped to share the acquired knowledge and skills with their peers, thereby contributing to the reduction of information gaps, promotion of children's rights, prevention of teenage pregnancy, and improvement of the overall well-being of adolescent girls in their communities. By empowering girls with accurate information, confidence, and leadership skills, the initiative seeks to create long-term community-driven change and promote a future where girls are safe, informed, educated, and able to realize their full potential.

Objectives of the Camp

Overall Objective

To empower girls aged 10–17 years with knowledge, skills, and confidence to advocate for their rights, make informed health decisions, and become positive agents of change.

Specific Objectives

To increase knowledge and awareness among girls aged 10–17 years on puberty, menstrual hygiene, and adolescent reproductive health.

To educate girls on the causes, risks, prevention, and effects of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections.

To empower girls with knowledge and skills to identify, prevent, and report different forms of abuse, violence, and exploitation.

To raise awareness among participants about children's rights and available child protection and reporting mechanisms within their communities.

To strengthen girls' confidence, self-esteem, communication, and decision-making skills through mentorship and life skills training.

Methodology

The methodology included the following approaches:

Facilitators conducted age-appropriate learning sessions on puberty, menstrual hygiene management, reproductive health, teenage pregnancy prevention, HIV/AIDS awareness, child abuse prevention, children's rights, advocacy, and leadership. The sessions will encourage active participation through questions and answers, group discussions, storytelling, and practical demonstrations.

Participants were divided into smaller groups to discuss challenges faced during adolescence, share experiences, and learn from one another in a safe and supportive environment. This approach will help build confidence, promote peer learning, and encourage open communication among girls.

Mentorship sessions were conducted to provide guidance, emotional support, and encouragement to participants. Counsellors' and female role models will engage girls in discussions on self-esteem, decision-making, personal safety, goal setting, and leadership development. Individual counselling opportunities will also be provided for participants who may need additional support.

Training Overview

In this context, Joy for Children Uganda (JFCU) conducted the first cohort of the Girls' empowerment ,health and education camp , a transformative training for both school going and non-school going children aged 10-17 from areas of Bukoto,bwaise with the overall objective to empower them with knowledge, skills, and confidence to advocate for their rights, make informed health decisions, and become positive agents of change.

The activity commenced with the registration of participants and verification of attendance. Girls aged 10–17 years were welcomed by the organizing team and provided with orientation on the objectives of the camp. Ground rules emphasizing respect, participation, confidentiality, and teamwork were jointly developed to create a safe and supportive learning environment. An opening prayer and introductory remarks were delivered, highlighting the importance of empowering girls with knowledge and life skills to enable them make informed decisions and become advocates for positive change in their communities.

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION



Agatha giving the opening statement

The training session opened with a warm welcome and an introductory session led by Agatha. She introduced Joy for Children Uganda as a national non-governmental organization committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children. She emphasized the organization's core focus areas, including ending child marriage, promoting education, advancing child protection, and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights

(SRHR) for all children, particularly girls.

Following the introduction of the organization, Agatha clearly outlined the purpose of the training, stating that it was designed to empower adolescent girls with critical knowledge and skills in leadership, advocacy, and SRHR. She explained that the camp aimed to nurture a new generation of girl leaders who can advocate against child marriage and teenage pregnancy in their communities.

She further presented the objectives of the camp, which included:

To increase knowledge and awareness among girls aged 10–17 years on puberty, menstrual hygiene, and adolescent reproductive health.

To educate girls on the causes, risks, prevention, and effects of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections.

To empower girls with knowledge and skills to identify, prevent, and report different forms of abuse, violence, and exploitation.

To raise awareness among participants about children's rights and available child protection and reporting mechanisms within their communities.

As part of the introductory session, girls were reminded by Sumaeya to appreciate themselves. This included appreciating themselves and being proud of who they are, becoming role models who embody the potential of girls when given opportunities to flourish.

The session also included personal introductions of their names and everyone told us about what they want to become in future

The session also provided an opportunity for girls to express their expectations, which ranged from gaining more knowledge about their bodies and rights, learning how to support other girls in their schools, building leadership skills, and making new friends who share similar values and goals. These expectations helped guide facilitators to tailor the sessions to the real needs and interests of the participants.

SESSION 2: INTRODUCTION TO PUBERTY AND ADOLESCENCE

Facilitated by Nambwere Peninah Mercy



mercy explaining the different body changes girls face when growing up

This session focused on helping participants understand the physical, emotional, social, and psychological changes that occur during adolescence. Facilitators used visual presentations and interactive discussions to explain the developmental changes experienced by girls during puberty.

Participants openly discussed common concerns and misconceptions related to body changes, mood swings, personal hygiene, self-esteem, and peer influence. The session created a safe space

where girls were encouraged to ask questions and receive accurate information. Emphasis was placed on self-confidence, positive body image, and embracing adolescence as a natural stage of growth and development.

5.04 SESSION 3: TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Facilitated by Sumaeya



A demonstration carried out for the girls to identify myths about pregnancy

This session addressed the causes, risks, and consequences of teenage pregnancy. Facilitators discussed factors contributing to early pregnancies including peer pressure, limited access to information, sexual abuse, poverty, and harmful cultural practices.

Sumaeya carried out an interactive session where the girls were supposed to tell the difference between a myth and fact about pregnancy.

Participants learned about the physical, emotional, educational, and socio-economic impacts of teenage pregnancy on adolescents and their families. Through group discussions and scenario-based learning, girls explored strategies for protecting themselves, making informed decisions, resisting negative peer influence, and seeking support when faced with challenges. The session emphasized personal responsibility, self-respect, and future planning.

Key Outcomes

Better understanding of the risks associated with teenage pregnancy.

Improved decision-making skills.

increased commitment to staying in school.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING IN SCHOOL.



Sumaeya briefing the girls on advantages of staying in school

Sumaeya engaged participants in discussions on the importance of education in achieving personal goals and improving future opportunities. Girls were encouraged to view education as a powerful tool for breaking cycles of poverty, reducing vulnerability to exploitation, and enhancing leadership opportunities.

Successful examples of women leaders, professionals, and change-makers were shared to inspire participants. Interactive exercises enabled girls to identify their career aspirations and develop personal educational goals. The session reinforced the importance of school attendance, discipline, hard work, and resilience in overcoming barriers to education. Sumaeya shared an experience of herself being a girl who grew up in an orphanage.

Key Outcomes

Increased motivation to remain in school.

Improved understanding of education as a pathway to empowerment.

Development of personal academic goals.

SESSION 6: MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

Facilitator: Marion and Agatha

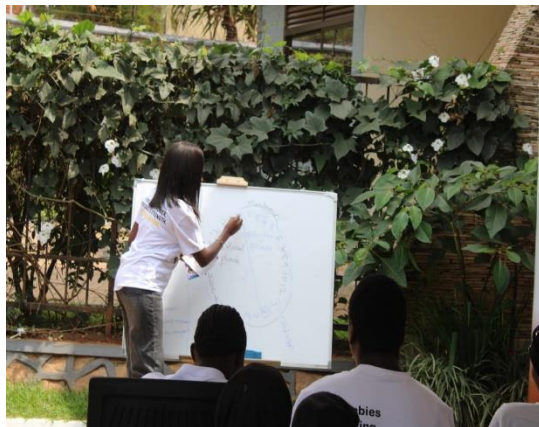


Agatha demonstrating on how the sanitary towels should be worn

The Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) session aimed to equip girls with comprehensive knowledge and practical skills to manage menstruation safely, hygienically, and with confidence. The session was interactive, combining theory with practical demonstrations to ensure clear understanding and application.

Understanding Menstruation:

Menstruation is a natural, healthy part of the female reproductive cycle where the uterus sheds its lining approximately once a month if fertilization does not occur. The discussion emphasized that menstruation is a normal sign of physical maturity and fertility and should not be a source of shame or fear.



A demonstration of the menstrual cycle

Menstrual Cycle:

The session covered the menstrual cycle's different phases, including the follicular phase, ovulation, luteal phase, and menstruation. Girls learned about the typical length of the cycle (usually 21 to 35 days), variability between individuals, and the common symptoms such as cramps, mood changes, and fatigue. This understanding helped girls anticipate and manage their periods better.

Care and Use of Menstrual Products:



explanation the care and use of the pads

Agatha during this session focused on educating participants about menstrual products, including reusable and disposable pads. For reusable pads, instructions included how to properly wash, dry, and store them to maintain hygiene and prevent infections. The Facilitator put main Emphasis on washing reusable pads with soap and clean water, drying them thoroughly in the sun, and storing them in clean, dry places. For disposable pads, participants

were taught how to wear them correctly and the importance of changing pads every 4 to 6 hours to prevent discomfort and infections.

Practical Demonstration:

Agatha taught them on how to wear a menstrual pad . This activity boosted their confidence in managing menstruation independently and helped address any misconceptions or fears related to pad usage.

Additional Topics Covered:

- The importance of maintaining personal hygiene during menstruation, such as regular bathing and changing underwear.
- How to manage menstruation at school, including preparation and dealing with potential challenges like lack of private facilities or sanitary products.
- Cultural taboos and myths around menstruation that often lead to stigma and isolation of girls during their periods.

During the session, the facilitator emphasized the significance of menstruation by stating,

“All of us are a product of menstruation, as it is a natural signal of fertility in women.”

She encouraged the girls to view menstruation positively as a hopeful sign that, at the right age and time after completing their education, they will be able to bear children.

SESSION 4: SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND INFECTIONS

Facilitated by VHT Vicky



session on HIV and STIs

The session began by asking participants if they knew their HIV status. All participants indicated that they did not know their status, highlighting the need for increased awareness and testing.

A session on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) was held during the camp to provide participants with basic knowledge on how these infections are transmitted, prevented, and managed. The session was interactive, with girls encouraged to participate through discussions and questions.

Madam Vicky introduced the topic by explaining what HIV is and how it affects the immune system. The girls learned that HIV can be transmitted through unprotected sex, sharing needles, and from mother to child during breastfeeding, especially if the mother is not on treatment. The importance of antiretroviral therapy (ART) in reducing the risk of transmission was also mentioned.

Participants were given the opportunity to share what they already knew about HIV. The facilitator responded to their questions and clarified common misunderstandings in a simple and clear manner.

The second part of the session covered sexually transmitted infections. Madam Vicky explained what STIs are, how they are spread, and the symptoms of some common infections, including gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, genital herpes, genital warts, and candidiasis. The session highlighted the link between STIs and increased risk of HIV transmission.

Reflection, Evaluation and Closing remarks



girls in groups writing down what they have learnt and what they expect to do back in the communities

At the end of the camp, participants engaged in reflection exercises to share their experiences, lessons learned, and recommendations for future activities. Evaluation forms and verbal feedback sessions were conducted to assess participants' satisfaction and knowledge gained.

Many participants expressed increased confidence, improved understanding of their rights and health, and a stronger commitment to leadership and advocacy. followed by closing remarks from the Executive director who thanked participants for their

active engagement and encouraged them to continue applying the knowledge acquired during the camp.

6. Participation and Engagement



Ada one of the girls from bukoto influencing the fellows

The participants demonstrated high levels of engagement throughout the camp. Girls actively contributed during discussions, asked questions, shared experiences, and participated in group activities.

Several participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn about issues affecting their lives and highlighted the need for more similar engagements in the future.

Closing remarks from ED



the executive director giving closing remarks

As we come to the end of this Camp, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each one of you for making this day meaningful, inspiring, and impactful.

Today has been a day of learning, sharing, and empowerment. We have discussed important topics that affect the lives of girls every day, including puberty and adolescence, menstrual health management, education, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, children's rights, and advocacy. These discussions have equipped our girls with valuable knowledge and life skills that will help them make informed decisions and confidently navigate the challenges they may face.

To our dear girls, I want you to know that you are valuable, capable, and full of potential. Your dreams matter, your voices matter, and your future matters. Never allow anyone to make you believe that your gender, background, or circumstances define your limits. The knowledge you have gained today should empower you to protect yourselves, stay in school, pursue your ambitions, and become agents of positive change within your families, schools, and communities.

As Joy for Children Uganda, we firmly believe that when girls are empowered, communities prosper. Educated and healthy girls grow into confident women who contribute significantly to the social and economic development of our country. We therefore encourage you to continue applying what you have learned and to share this knowledge with your peers who may not have had the opportunity to attend this camp.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our facilitators who dedicated their time and expertise to guide and support our girls throughout this camp. Your commitment to the wellbeing and development of children is truly commendable.

I also thank the parents and guardians for entrusting us with your children and for supporting their participation. Your role remains critical in ensuring that girls are protected, supported, and encouraged to achieve their full potential.

As we leave here today, let us remain committed to creating a society where every girl is safe, educated, healthy, and empowered to reach her full potential. Together, we can end harmful practices such as child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and all forms of violence against children.

On behalf of Joy for Children Uganda, I thank you all for your participation, enthusiasm, and dedication. May the lessons learned today continue to inspire positive action and lasting change.

I wish you safe journeys back to your homes and schools, and I look forward to seeing each one of you become a champion for girls' rights and empowerment.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.

Lessons Learnt

1. Interactive learning methods significantly improve participation and retention of information.
2. Girls require safe spaces where they can openly discuss sensitive issues.
3. Peer mentorship is an effective approach for promoting positive behavior change.
4. Continued engagement is necessary to reinforce knowledge and sustain impact.

Recommendations

1. Conduct regular girls' empowerment camps and mentorship sessions.
2. Establish peer support and child rights clubs in schools.
3. Increase parental and community involvement in adolescent development programs.
4. Provide menstrual hygiene materials and educational resources to vulnerable girls.
5. Strengthen referral systems for child protection and psychosocial support.
6. Conduct follow-up activities to monitor progress and reinforce learning.
7. Ways to navigate through the generational gap {creativity and purpose}
8. Include boys in such camps
9. Talk about conduct (dress code)

Conclusion

The One-Day Girls Empowerment, Health and Education Camp successfully achieved its objectives of equipping girls with knowledge, skills, and confidence to advocate for their rights, make informed health decisions, and pursue their educational aspirations. Through interactive learning and mentorship, participants gained valuable information on puberty, menstrual health, teenage pregnancy prevention, HIV/AIDS, STIs, leadership, and child rights advocacy.

The camp strengthened participants' capacity to become ambassadors of change within their schools and communities. Continued investment in such initiatives remains essential in promoting the wellbeing, protection, and empowerment of adolescent girls

Joy for Children Uganda provided packages consisting of reusable sanitary pads, knickers, backpacks, branded t-shirts, and educational booklets. These kits were provided to equip the girls with supplies to manage their menstrual hygiene and personal development with confidence

Activity Photos

Find attached link for the activity photographs

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tiQp91CgW9GSlq5wMfFdXuk4Hwgjwxxh/view?usp=drive_link

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JFCU	Joy for Children Uganda
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MOH	Ministry of Health
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RH	Reproductive Health
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VHT	Village Health Team
ED	Executive Director

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