



**Brighter
Communities**
Worldwide

CREATING BETTER FUTURES

Menstrual Health Programme



2020 Programme Report & 2021 Programme Plans

“Periods don’t stop for pandemics”

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 Brighter Communities Worldwide

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Cover Photo – Ambassadors from Chilchila participating in Menstrual Health session.

About Brighter Communities

Brighter Communities Worldwide (BCW) is an NGO with almost 20 years' experience of working in community development in East Africa. Brighter Communities Worldwide's community development model considers the whole community, enabling individuals and communities to be authors of their own development, building better futures for all. Our model creates an enabling environment for communities to realise change and uses a partnership-based approach to deliver relevant programmes to meet the needs of communities and individuals.

Creating brighter communities means ensuring:

- Access to good, affordable healthcare;
- Education to help people find a job and be able to articulate their needs;
- An income that can sustain a family;
- Healthier lives with a supply of clean water and better facilities.

Our vision

A world where strong, healthy communities can thrive, building sustainable livelihoods and brighter futures

Our mission

To work in partnership with communities, to deliver programmes that enrich their lives and help create better futures for them and their families.

Our values

Our values underpin everything we do and every decision we make. They also help communicate the way we work and how we do things.

- Integrity - We are an organisation built on integrity and good governance with a track record for success.
- Passion - We work passionately in all that we do to realise our vision across communities.
- Togetherness - We work together with all our stakeholders; all programmes are based on community needs as identified by themselves.

Our values are based on the way we work:

- As advocates for people who don't have a voice;
- In partnership with local people, officials, NGOs and governments;
- Giving people the tools to build on what they already have; and
- Building on the traditional way of doing things to improve lives for everyone.



Menstrual Health Ambassadors; Kenegut; May 2020

Menstrual Health Ambassadors; Kenegut; May 2020

Our Menstrual Health Programme

Brighter Communities Worldwide Menstrual Health Programme has two elements that work towards addressing menstrual health challenges in schools (Girls for Girls) and in the community (Jiamini).

Girls for Girls

Girls for Girls views the education of girls and young women as a fundamental human right. It works with stakeholders to enable girls to remain in school so they may graduate. Stakeholders include various Government Ministries, Teachers, Health Professionals, Community Leaders, girls, and women. The programme was first piloted in 2010, and since then has reached **88** schools and **4185** girls across the region. Girls for Girls integrates education, health and economic empowerment initiatives to enable girls to stay in school. The programme includes:

1. A modularised education programme delivered by trained facilitators
2. Peer learning and mentoring
3. Access to sanitary products (low cost, various options, available each month)
4. Income generation that includes: training; seed funding; mentoring & support and a Savings Scheme
5. Provision of infrastructure (“girl friendly” latrines & washrooms).

As a result of being involved in the Girls for Girls programme, a girl will have regular ongoing **access to sanitary products** - she can **choose** what type works for her; she can **learn about her body** and taking care of it; she can access clean, safe, **reliable facilities with water** available; she is **economically empowered** and therefore is prepared for the world. The intergenerational impacts of Girls for Girls will be seen through more educated and economically empowered women who in turn will seek the same benefits for their children.



Objectives of Girls for Girls

1. To enable more girls to **stay in school** and graduate – resulting in greater life choices.
2. To enable more girls and women to **enter the workforce** through accessing improved menstrual health, having completed formal education and non-formal business education.
3. To enable more girls and women to have **access to independent financial resources** through economic empowerment, in order to make choices in their own Menstrual Health Management (MHM).
4. To engage all sections of communities in Kenya in the issue of MHM resulting in a **change to cultural attitudes and policies**.
5. To contribute towards the **elimination of violence against women** through ensuring that girls remain in school and understand their rights, and have alternatives to early marriage.
6. To create an enabling environment for women and girls to gain the confidence to participate fully in education and economic activities thus enabling them to ensure food security and the highest attainable standard of health care for themselves and their families

Girls for Girls Programme Elements

Education

Brighter Communities Worldwide has developed an education programme which is delivered through facilitated learnings in the school environment. “Train the Trainer” workshops are organised for the teachers who become the facilitators of the G4G programme in their schools. The programme contains 10 modules on health and hygiene including female body and menstruation, HIV and Gender, safe relationships and decision making. As girls graduate from the programme, they become peer educators and work with the G4G teachers as their facilitators.

Access to sanitary products

Brighter Communities Worldwide has partnered with two different suppliers of reusable sanitary towels. Each girl in the programme is given a sanitary kit containing reusable sanitary towels, soap, airtight storage bags, and instructions. The kit will be used by the girl for up to 12 months and 36 months depending on the type of kit. The kits are purchased by the schools from Brighter Communities Worldwide using funds raised through various income generating projects and Savings Scheme.

Provision of infrastructure –“girls friendly” latrines and washrooms

The girl friendly latrines and washrooms are constructed by Brighter Communities Worldwide in partnership with the Ministry of Health and local schools. These latrines have 10 individual cubicles with their own doors - 2 of the cubicles are washrooms incorporated discreetly into the design. All latrine blocks include ventilation pipes and a system of guttering to harvest rain water collected in a tank next to the block and this provides the children with water for handwashing.

Economic Empowerment

In order for the school and girls to generate funds, and therefore be able to purchase reusable sanitary kits, an “economic empowerment” element of G4G was developed that includes:

- Training for teachers and girls
- Seed funding for income generation projects
- Savings scheme
- Mentoring and support

The trainings contain 10 modules which include: Income generation, Saving scheme, Funding my Project, Running my Business and Managing my Books. Each school designs an income generation project and develops a business plan for the project and is then eligible to apply for seed capital from Brighter Communities Worldwide to begin their project. Brighter Communities Worldwide visit the schools and provide ongoing support throughout the project so that income earned from the project is used to sustain the programme and enable more girls to join over time

‘Jiamini’ Programme

Jiamini means “Believe in yourself”, and this is the name of our community menstrual health programme. Through education, eradication of myths and taboos, involvement of men and boys and the provision of reusable sanitary kits, women and girls are enabled to believe in themselves, to regain their self-confidence and improve their livelihoods

Objectives of Jiamani

- To create awareness on menstrual health among community members – men, women, boys and girls.
- To break myths and taboos surrounding menstrual health in the community.
- To eradicate the stigmatization of girls and women due to menstrual related cases.
- To work with all partners involved to tackle challenges around menstrual health.



Menstrual Health Ambassadors demonstrate reusable sanitary kit.



Opening of St Bernard’s Primary School Girls Latrines & Washrooms.

Jiamini Programme Elements

- Community Health Volunteers (CHV) workshop
- Sensitization and mobilization
- Women's workshop
- Reusable Sanitary Pad making

The impact of COVID-19 on Menstrual Health

UNFPA¹ outlines that “*Pandemics make existing gender inequalities for women and girls worse, and can impact how they receive treatment and care.*”

COVID-19 has already had a significant impact on the lives of girls and women across Kericho County. Sexual and Reproductive Health services have been impacted; the provision of menstrual health commodities has been impacted by the strains on supply chains and reduced household income to purchase products; and expectant mother's antenatal care and safe delivery has also been impacted.

In March, the first month of the restrictions there was a 38% reduction in attendance across health facilities; 12% reduction in the number of women attending antenatal care; 45% reduction in women attending postnatal care and 3% less deliveries in health facilities. The numbers are continuing on a downward trend.

Women and girls will bear the brunt of these impacts of COVID-19 in Kericho County. Based on figures and reports from the Gender office there is a significant increase in teenage pregnancies, rape, gender based violence and FGM across Kericho since March. There is a de-prioritisation of sexual and reproductive health services including family planning.

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on household incomes, and hence budget priorities have changed. Access to sanitary products has become more difficult due to rising prices but also due to reduced income.

Schools remained closed until January 2021 – the longer term impacts on learning outcomes, child welfare and drop-out rates will continue for some time. There was an increase number of teenage pregnancies and early child marriages. Accessing sanitary products is a huge issue at this time which leads to poor menstrual health, and an increase in transactional sex as girls try to meet their financial needs. There was a great need for Brighter Communities Worldwide Menstrual Health Programme to continue throughout the pandemic. Girls for Girls couldn't continue in the schools.

Brighter Communities Worldwide designed a Menstrual Health Ambassador Programme to meet the rising need for menstrual health support across communities.



COVID-19 sensitisation and handwashing became a core part of all our programmes in 2020.

¹ <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/covid-19-gender-lens>

Menstrual Health Ambassador Programme

The **aim** of this programme is to **strengthen menstrual health across Kericho County**.

The programme has a number of objectives:

1. To create awareness about menstrual health among all community members – men, women, boys and girls.
2. To contribute towards the elimination of violence against women through ensuring that girls remain in school, understand their rights, have alternatives to early marriage and lessen the risk of early pregnancy.
3. To encourage confidence in girls and women to take part fully in education, learn the skills needed to earn a living and believe in themselves so they and their families will stay healthy and safe from hunger and poverty.
4. To break myths and taboos surrounding menstrual health in the community.
5. To eradicate the stigmatization of girls and women due to menstrual health.
6. To work with all partners involved to tackle challenges around menstrual health.



Girl participant showing her sanitary kit in Kutung

An Ambassador Pack was designed which contains sensitisation tools for the Ambassadors (Information Sheets, Leaflets). These enable Ambassadors to visit households and small groups of community members to increase their knowledge and awareness of menstrual health. The pack also contains information on the prevention of COVID-19 and how to recognise signs and symptoms.

A “Starter” sanitary kit was also designed for girls and women. This kit contains underwear, soap, liners, and information pamphlet and cotton reusable pads as a “starter” for a girl or woman. The Ambassadors teach girls and women how to make additional pads using locally available materials (t-shirts)

2020 Menstrual Health Activity Update

Girls for Girls Programme

- **5** new schools were added to the programme in 2020. This brings the total schools to **88**, with over **4,185** girls benefiting from the programme.
- In February teachers from the **5 new schools** joining the Girls for Girls programme attended a **two day workshop** on Menstrual Health and Hygiene in Soin Sigowet sub-county. The workshop was attended by **10 teachers, 4 head teachers, and 1 principal** from the 5 schools. Representatives from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health also attended.
- The workshop covered all the modules of the Girls for Girls hygiene programme. The teachers set up Girls for Girls clubs in their schools. They will teach the girls on the contents of the 10 modules, and they will be supported throughout the process by Brighter Communities Worldwide.



Teachers attend a Menstrual Health Workshop in Sigowet

- Over the past 12 months, 4 latrine /washroom structures for girls (**impacting 924 girls**) were constructed in 4 schools. 8 water tanks (32,000 litres each) were constructed in 8 schools impacting **2,507 students**. All these infrastructure projects were implemented using cost sharing of up to 50% with the schools and parents.



Girls making sanitary pads in Kutung

Jiamini Programme

- Before COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, 2 women’s workshops were held and training took place in **7 Community units**. **95 women** attended the workshops and **217 people (112 men and 105 women)** attended the trainings.

Menstrual Health Ambassador Programme

- 139 men and women** across **11 communities** were trained as Ambassadors. These trainings took place in small groups.
- In total they have sensitised **4,899 people (405M, 1712F, 568 Boys and 2,214 Girls)** and **People living with disabilities-146** across **11 community unit in 4 sub counties**.
- A total of **1062 girls and 704 women** were identified by the ambassadors as from vulnerable households and were given **starter kits**.



Menstrual Health Ambassadors learn how to make reusable sanitary kits, May 2020

Menstrual Hygiene Day 2020

Menstrual Hygiene Day is a global advocacy platform that brings together the voices and actions of non-profits, government agencies, individuals, the private sector and the media to promote good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) for all women and girls. Menstrual Hygiene Day breaks the silence, raises awareness and changes negative social norms around MHM, and engages decision-makers to increase the political priority and catalyse action for MHM, at global, national and local levels.

The theme for the 2020 Menstrual Hygiene day was **#ItsTimeForAction, #PeriodsInPandemics**. BCW celebrated Menstrual Hygiene Management Day through the Ambassador Programme.

The topics covered during the trainings included the following:

1. Growth, Body Changes and Menstrual Health Overview
2. Hygiene Practices
3. Menstrual Health Challenges
4. All about Reusable Sanitary Pads
5. Menstruation Bracelet Making
6. COVID-19 Awareness and Handwashing Technique

The trainings were replicated across 11 communities where 4899 people participated.



Menstrual Health Ambassador Trainings – May and June 2020

Menstrual Health Integration in Alternative Rite of Passage Girls Trainings

December is the traditional time for holding our Alternative Rite of Passage (ARP) courses for girls as part of our Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) abandonment programme. As outlined earlier in this report COVID-19 has impacted girls and women disproportionately. All girls who participated in the Alternative Rite of Passage courses this year were also sensitised on menstrual health, and taught how to make reusable sanitary kits. Starter reusable sanitary kits were distributed to all participants.

2021 Plans (subject to the impacts of COVID-19)

- Train **200 Menstrual Health Ambassadors** on menstrual health
- Sensitise at least **1000 youths (girls and boys)** on menstrual health
- Support **1500 girls** across Kericho County with reusable sanitary kits and education packs
- Sensitise at least **1,000 women** on menstrual health across communities
- Support **1,000 vulnerable women** with reusable sanitary kits.
- Support local community groups who wish to engage in reusable sanitary pad making as a business.
- Support the construction of **latrines and washrooms** in 8 schools
- Support the construction of **32,000 litre water tanks** in 8 schools



Kenegut Community Health Volunteers receive a sewing machine to enable them to make reusable sanitary kits – August 2020

Thank you to all those who supported our journey in 2020.

You are making a real difference in the lives of girls and women in Kenya

Asante Sana!