

OPEN TALK MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2021

#ISSUE 11



DARE TO THINK

Tackling Period Poverty In Uganda

Giving out
**MENSTRUAL
RELIEF ITEMS**
during the COVID 19
pandemic

Teens take on;
ABORTION,
Importance of **SEX
EDUCATION**

Taking **PEER
EDUCATION**
into Kampala's worst
slums



CONTENTS

OPEN TALK MAGAZINE

DARE TO THINK



Editorial.....	4
Message from the Chairperson.....	6
Message from the Project manager.....	8
Teens talk on Abortion.....	15
Teens talk on the need for Sex Education.....	21
Information on Menstrual Hygiene.....	32
HALEA trainings and Community outreach work in progress.....	36



Managing Editor:
Viola Namyalo

Senior Editor:
Betina Mirembe

Kato Mukasa
Legal Director/Editorial Advisor

Photo Director:
Julius semukasa

Project Editor:
Lukyamuzi Joseph

Editorial Assistant:
Namukose Faridah

Research director:
Nakakawa Teddy

Circulation Director:
Viola Namyalo

Creative Director:
Derrick Mukooki

Production Manager:
Lwanga Obadiah

Setting & Cover Design:
Goldarts and Graphics

Publisher:
Humanist Association for Leadership,
Equity and Accountability (HALEA).
Plot 273/274 Gaddafi
Road/Makerere Hill Road,
Next to LDC



Editorial



EDITOR : *Viola* Namyalo

THE OPEN TALK MAGAZINE is back and rebranded to empower young people most especially on issues concerning **Sexual and Reproductive Health**. This is the only magazine where young people are given a chance to give their views regardless of the 'sensitivity' of the topic at hand, the OTM remains the only secular magazine that not only put the views of young people at the front page but gives its readers articles and information that promotes critical thought and brings in a breath of fresh air in a country influenced by millions of dogmas and hundreds of religions that continue to keep people under bondage, poverty, suffering, ignorance and anxiety.



This publication is largely dedicated to **Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights** among teenagers especially during the pandemic.

Before the closure of schools, we had organised several Open Talk Debates and we gave young people a platform to talk openly through the Open Talk Debates and in all schools where we have operated over the years, debates that promotes critical thinking have been promoted and young people were given a chance to freely discuss themes such as, menstrual hygiene, abortion, and the teaching of sex education in schools. We encouraged young people to write articles on the debated themes and we did interview several of them on matters at hand.

Our aim remains to contribute towards the creation of a self-aware young people who dare to ask the hard questions and think for themselves. We have enabled young people to meet and discuss matters of importance even during the lockdowns. Due to Covid-19 restrictions measures, we have ensured that our meetings are small and very impactful. We have regularly trained a number of people in tailoring skills and we have empowered several girls to learn skills in how to make sanitary towels, aprons, wallets and bags. Today many young people going through our trainings can independently ask the tough questions and are in position to go an extra mile in avoid getting involved in compromising situations that may lead to unwanted pregnancies.

Our lessons have been very important more so during the lock down in which the several months of keeping schools closed have left thousands of girls pregnant and many infected with sexually transmitted diseases. We have managed to inspire several girls to become peer educators and HALEA Ambassador who will

keep on passing the important lessons learnt throughout our trainings.

We are proud to have worked closely with **Humanist International** in promoting these timely skills to several young people in Uganda. We strongly appreciate Humanist International that have enabled us extend our services to young people especially during the trying Covid-19 times. It is because of your generous support that we shall be able to distribute a few free copies to teenagers and take some copies to schools to continue promoting critical thought and empower more people.

To all writers, photographers and the editorial team that made a contribution to putting this together, thank you. Special thanks to the Editorial Team which includes; counsellor and teacher Namuddu Annete, Nakakawa Teddy, Kugonza Patience and Aisha Nansubuga for doing the interviews, following up students, collecting the articles, carefully reading through and editing them to get the best to share in our space, You remain an incredibly wonderful team of great people to work with. To our dear readers, please continue sending us your views by directly writing to us through our official email: haleauganda@gmail.com.

Enjoy this one life we have as you read the Open Talk Magazine and learn more why it is important to empower young people with Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights.

Viola Namyalo is the Director in Charge of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and Managing Editor of the Open Talk Magazine. Viola is a Social Worker, Youth Peer Educator and Human Rights Advocate based in Kampala Uganda.



Message

FROM HALEA CHAIRPERSON

Thanks to *Humanists International*, we are back to empower young people through the Open Talk Magazine. Menstrual Hygiene matters are central in the wellbeing of girls and women. As Human beings, women experience this situation monthly and it comes with physical, mental and monetary costs.

In Africa, period poverty is a threat to the wellbeing of the girl child. Many girls drop out of school because they are ashamed to be at school without being sure of how they will handle themselves during menstrual periods.

My experience as a student attending school and with a Muslim background I know that in the early 1990s, it was common for many Muslim girls back home in Kyazanga to be married off once they started menstruation. Normally a girl must report to the parents once they get into their monthly period. It is the parents that provide the support. However, it is important that parents have the resources to support the girls manage the situation. There are girls in extremely poor families, orphans and girls on the streets all vulnerable due to period poverty.

It becomes even worse for girls in congested slums such as those in Kampala where we have



Aisha Nansubuga

worked since 2007. I am proud to be a founder member of the Humanist Association for Leadership Equity and Accountability (HALEA) and its current Chairperson. I know exactly the journey we have covered empowered youth and more especially girls, women and young mothers.

I have attended the workshops as we trained young people and I have shared with them my experience and important tips to adopt as a way of managing the monthly periods. I am happy that we have trained our participants in several skills including how to make reusable



sanitary towels as well as empowering them in tailoring skills. Many of the identified peer leaders can use the sewing machines to make aprons, bags and dresses and I am amazed how they have learnt a great deal in a limited period of time and more so during the pandemic. I am happy to be part of a Humanist community that supports young people to be better and get busy learning relevant skills during this challenging time. Thank you to our partners and thank you to our trainers as well as the participants for taking this learning exercise very important. I am happy we have reached this far despite the challenges and we are going strong still. I am more proud that Humanism is seen in practice as we take into

account the urgent need of our people as we empower them to think more critically and independently. Thank you all for the good work and to all the readers, please enjoy reading this magazine and share learning points with others we are yet to reach so that our efforts are spread to a larger section of our community, country, regional and the entire world.

Aisha Nansubuga is a founding member of HALEA and the current Chairperson. She is a trained journalist, News Editor and Anchor. She is a social worker, counsellor and Human Rights Activist based in Kampala, Uganda.



TAKING SRHR TRAINING TO YOUNG PEOPLE DURING THE PANDEMIC

VIOLA NAMYALO

The Covid-19 pandemic came with lots of unexpected challenges which brought in the so called New Normal that has left many things upside down. Students were forced to go back home in March 2020 and they have been kept at home for one year and seven months so far.

This has come with unexpected challenges. Thousands of girls have been defiled, and many others impregnated and hundreds forced into marriage. Many girls have engaged into illicit sexual affairs that have put their lives in danger.





The Covid 19 pandemic is associated with increased gender based violence and children, adolescents and the youth have been greatly affected. Many girls have become victims of defilement and teenage pregnancy and slums and refugee centres have been the most hit. UNICEF report of June 2021 indicated that in Kitgum alone, 1,519 girls below 19 years visited a hospital for antenatal care since the corona virus pandemic forced schools shut in March 2020. This means thousands of girls are having sex and many are getting pregnant. The rest of the country has similar or worse cases of how the pandemic has affected young people and most especially girls.

HALEA in partnership with Humanists International engaged in the implementation of a one year long project to empower young people survive the harsh times of the pandemic. We have trained peer educators, went into Kampala's worst slums and distributed menstrual kits to several vulnerable teenagers. A complete menstrual kit has packet of sanitary pads, soap, underwear, threads and needles. These are all important in supporting the teenager go through a menstrual period safely.

We have also empowered peer educators from the representatives of the girls and we are training them to be able to make sanitary towels on their own so that they will continue helping their peers in the future.

We started the projects with *Open Talk Debates* in a few selected schools and when the schools were closed, we resorted to meeting peers on a one on one basis educating them on a number of issues they did not know about reproductive health. We also encouraged them to write articles which our team was able to sieve, and a



Pictorial

of our activities during Trainings

few articles have been published out. We received 87 articles and we did 46 interviews from young people on the themes discussed here. I am happy to report that teenagers have been actively involved in the project and have greatly benefited from the project.

I am grateful to the several trainers with whom we have worked in the implementation of the project. As testimonies reveal in the selected articles, many of our beneficiaries have been greatly empowered and several can now make sanitary pads, aprons, bags and dresses and we are confident that the skills obtained will enable them empower themselves and others and live a better life. Below is a pictorial of a summary of our project.







Menstrual Kit given to our project beneficiaries







Teens
TALK ABOUT SEX AND
REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH MATTERS

TEENS TAKE ON ABORTION: - THE LOCK DOWN EXPERIENCE

Hanifah Makes
a Confession and
Calls for the
Legalization of
Abortion.

NAMUSISI HANIFAH,
17 Years, Kawempe Division,
Kampala.

During this lockdown, I have known three girls who have died because they carried out abortion and did not get to hospitals to get medical help on time. There are several girls who have gotten pregnant in this period and this is because schools were closed and we are exposed to sexual temptations which comes with favours to be given some money to handle daily needs. For us living in slums, it is equally hard to access money since our parents generally are not earning. Our parents have been forced to be home for far too long and we have experienced so much suffering which has made girls engage in casual sex.

Therefore many girls engage in unprotected sex and some get pregnant which in most cases leads to being chased away from home. To avoid challenges that come with unwanted pregnancies, some girls engage in abortion and this often leads to complications because it is done in hiding since it is illegal for unmarried girls to do abortions in Uganda.

I understand abortion to mean the removal of the foetus or the unborn child from the mother's womb. It is mostly done by young girls often below 18 years and younger women who are still in school and the unmarried. Many girls get health complications because abortion is not legalised. It is important that abortion is made legal. Abortion should be legalised according to the following views:

In this lockdown time, many girls are home and very idle and many are getting forced into unprotected, unwanted sex. When a girl is forced into sex, rape or defiled by someone she doesn't know and it results into pregnancy yet these girls despite the lockdown, are still students and have hopes of getting back to school, abortion becomes the best alternative to get rid of the unwanted baby and be able to continue with studies.

There is a problem of alcoholism in slum areas, many people start drinking early and this has been made worse during the pandemic and lockdown. In some cases girls are tricked by the boyfriend's to drink alcohol so that they take advantage of them, and when they are drunk, they have unprotected sex with them and which may result into pregnancy when even the



boyfriend cannot take care of the girl with the baby and the only solution is to abort.

The lockdown has kept many relatives at home and I know some girls who have been raped by their relatives and in case they get pregnant it is hard to keep such babies of incest. Now what do you expect a girl who has gotten pregnant by her father, brother or uncle do? Should they keep the baby, how can



that be possible in our culture? When girls in such situations get pregnant they are forced to abort to keep the relationship secret and remain with respect in the family and it is the relatives who take them to do abortions.

I got pregnant at 15 years and I never wanted to have the baby. I knew my father and mother would chase me from home and I was not ready to get into marriage. The man who impregnated me showed no interest in the baby, he feared that he would be arrested because I am below 18 years. He took me to a home of an old woman who carried out the abortion. I almost lost my life due to excessive bleeding and the pain was too much. I lived in trauma until when I got cancelled by HALEA

counsellors and gave me emotional support to heal. I had even gotten back to school when the lockdown forced us back home. If I had not aborted, I would be out of my home and a baby perhaps on the streets begging.

Abortion is a necessary evil and it is important that it is legalised in Uganda to avoid the increasing situations of children having children. Many girls have no right information and later on access to family planning methods which would prevent pregnancy thus the need for abortion. I thank HALEA for providing us with Sexual and Reproductive Health information and for giving us condoms and for their counsellors for telling us what to do to avoid unwanted babies. The information HALEA counsellors have provided us with has been very helpful especially during this lockdown.

KAITESI JULIAN MONDO,
16 Years, Nzizi, Lwengo District.

Some people think that young people are not having sex. They are wrong. I became sexually active at 13 years and I know three friends who had babies below 14 years. Some friends of mine dropped out of school and it is sad they have babies. I know my age mate who has two babies and she is pregnant again during this lockdown. Just think about it, before she becomes 18 years, she will have three babies already and the father of those babies is a Chappati seller. Her parents forced her into marriage because the man offered to support the family because the family is very poor.



Abortion Should be
Legalized to Secure the
Future of the Girl Child -
Kaitesi Julian Mondo



I do not want to be married before I learn a practical skill or finish an education. I know how important finishing school is to me. But what would happen if I get pregnant? I would have an abortion even when I know that it is not allowed in this country, I will go ahead and get it because I cannot think of having a family, and being married in a miserable situation just like my friend (Jane) is.

Thanks to HALEA, I have benefited from their trainings on Sexual and Reproductive Health. HALEA has empowered us to avoid engaging in sex but also to know what to do in case we get into trouble with rapists and defilers. Abortion can be done within first trimester and second trimester.

Many girls do illegal abortion due to the fear of their parents, and fear of being judged, mocked and abused by the community. Many teens I know are having sex, sadly this is unprotected sex because the parents are not talking to them about sex. This is wrong, when teenagers are ignorant, they are bound to make mistakes, it is better to be informed to avoid getting into trouble or at least know what to do when you get into trouble. This is what I have benefited from HALEA's trainings and outreaches and I now pass on the useful information to fellow teens. I support the legalisation of abortion to avoid the increasing cases of young people getting into parenthood when they cannot even support themselves. I propose that government intervenes to save us during this lockdown where we have spent one year and seven months out of school. Government need to allow us access contraceptives such as injections, pills but also allow us who do not want to have babies, have the legal possibility to do abortion so that we can safely get through it and go back to school. We need safe abortion

and not condemnation and the time is now for all people concerned to intervene. Thank you HALEA for providing space through which we can share our views.

NAMUGABI REHEMA,
17, Nkoni, Lwengo District.

It is hard to manage what girls go through when they carry out abortions but I know that several girls do abortion for reasons beyond their control and I cannot be a judge deciding for them to keep babies they know they will not love.

I understand that abortion is a medical process of removing an undeveloped baby or foetus from the mother's womb by either an approved medical personnel or by using medicine. Even if one went to untrained person to abort, the process should be done scientifically well otherwise it can lead to death. More often, people die because those who aid them to abort do not know what to do and this is very dangerous.

I know teenagers who aborted and got health complications. I know several age mates who got pregnant and got out school. I know students who were able to complete primary seven because they were able to abort otherwise the school would have discontinued them and hence they would not have completed their studies. Our parents are harsh, they often do not sit us down to tell us about sex and things such as unwanted pregnancies. Our parents keep on reminding us getting pregnant means



leaving school, and getting away from home. This scares many young people who resort to abortion as the last chance to stay home and at school. Apart from Pearl Vocational Training College, I do not know any other school in our district which allows young mothers to study as they take care of their babies. Because the home and school environment is too harsh for many young people, abortion becomes a necessity even when we know that it puts life into danger. Legalising abortion would be a very lifesaving thing so that young people can go into clinics instead of dying in the process of doing unsafe abortions.

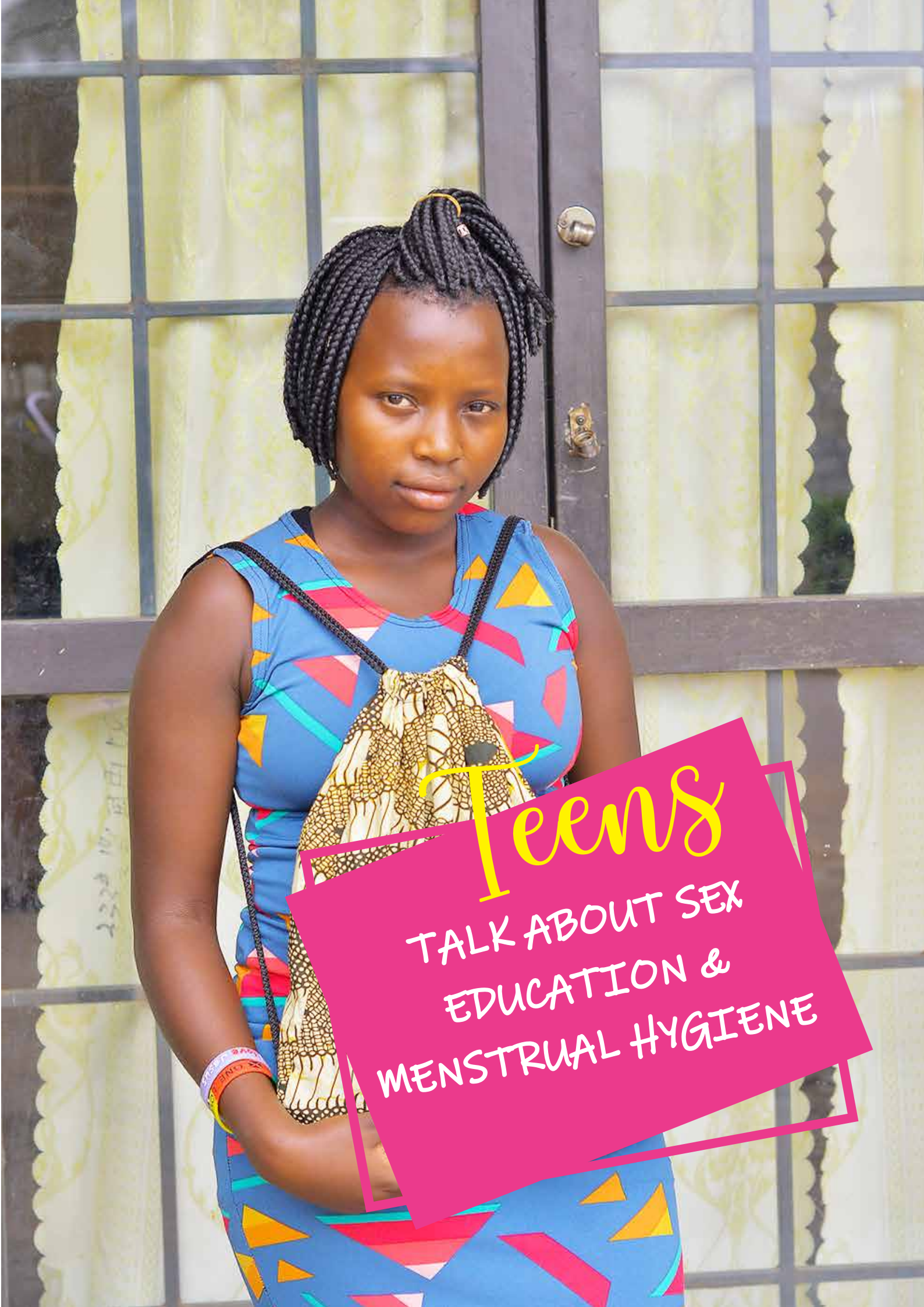
Think of the increasing cases of incest, what would happen if a girl got raped by relatives or by random strangers. The girl child should be given a right to abortion to save them from embarrassing situations which would ruin their lives.

The poverty levels in Uganda are on the increase. Most families in Uganda are poor and how do you expect a teenager to take care of the unwanted child and this means that such a child will live a very traumatising life, abortion becomes a necessary thing to do.

Abortion is not a good thing given the many health conditions associated with it including death. In addition, the health complications are far too many which may lead not being able to conceive again. Then I know cases of excessive bleeding because teenagers are children without knowledge of keeping themselves safe during pregnancies. It is important that girls are allowed to go to safer clinics and get well trained medical experts to handle abortion otherwise we shall continue losing lives because whether we accept it or not, girls are getting pregnant and some are resorting to abortions which may also lead to infertility.



Abortion Should Be
Legalized To Save
Lives



Teens

TALK ABOUT SEX
EDUCATION &
MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

TEENS GIVE REASONS WHY THEY NEED SEX EDUCATION

NAMUGABI RAMULAH,
17, Tagga – Lwengo District.

Sex education is good knowledge despite the negatives associated with it. We have been exposed to sex education by HALEA and this has been good since it has exposed us to personal hygiene especially menstrual hygiene thus helping us to avoid diseases that comes with being dirty. Through sex education, we now know how our bodies function and how to maintain them to prevent them from contracting diseases.

Through sex education, we now know how to use better methods of protecting against diseases, like use of condoms which protects from getting unwanted pregnancies and STDs such as HIV and Aids. Through the teachings of HALEA, I now know how to handle sexual emotions because sex education teaches how to handle sex emotions and I know how to avoid landing into problems.

Through sex education I know how to handle control monthly periods; sex education helps female students to know their time of menstruation which helps them to manage in such difficult days and be able to stay in school. Many girls keep out of school during their monthly period because they have no clearly knowledge of how to handle their bodies

especially controlling the cramps and pain that comes with menstrual period.

Sex education should be taught in school because some parents fear to speak with their children about sex and so what we have is the school and thus the school should offer a platform through which this information can be passed on. Through sex education, we have learnt how to associate with each other especially how boys should associate with girls which helps all of us to control sexual emotions. Through sex education, we learnt how to keep clean and how to treat sexual diseases because they are taught sex issues which saves people from death and diseases because we have been taught issues regarding sex and sexuality. We are grateful to HALEA and Humanists International for the important life changing and saving lessons given to us.

NAKIBULE NOWE, 21

I got pregnant at 12 and had my first child at 13 years. I was helped by HALEA to go back to school as they paid my school fees. But then there was no teaching of sex education, I still got pregnant and had my second child. Then HALEA counsellors started giving me sex education talk when I joined Pearl Vocational Training College. That knowledge has been very important in my life that I managed to avoid getting more pregnancies and managed



to complete my studies and I am now gainfully employed.



divorced families whereby their parents do not get time to talk to them; if sex education is brought in schools, it will help both the student and the parents. I did not grow up with my parents, I was an adopted child and my guardian cared less about telling me about sex. I made mistakes because I did not know what to do. Sex education is important because it saves youth from ignorance and it should be

I Missed
Out On Sex
Education and
I Got Into
Trouble

made compulsory in schools because parents and guardians do not have the courage to talk to young people about sex.

The teaching of sex education should be encouraged because it will stop the increase of unwanted pregnancies mostly in secondary schools. Sex education will lead to more abstinence because the counsellors who teach the students tell them to abstain from early sex until they get married. Sex education also will reduce on the number of students who drop out of schools where by some students drop out of school because they fear to be bullied or scorned by their fellow students.

Sex education enables us to learn about good family planning skills where it is taught in schools. Sex education should be taught in schools because some students grow up in

Today I am, above 18 years but I still need sex education to empower me go through relationships and avoid getting into trouble. We know that in secondary schools many students are having sex so telling them to abstain is not a very practical way of saving them from danger. Sex education covers subjects such as how to use condoms so it may be good if sex education was taught in schools so that the mature students' also get to know how they can protect or safeguard themselves. From my terrible experience, I thank HALEA for being there for me and for teaching me more about sex education and for giving me the skills to continue earning a living without depending on hand-outs.



ALUPO VERONICA,
18 YEARS, MENGO, KAMPALA

I am lucky for having attended some HALEA workshops at HALEA where we learnt about sex education. We also had some debates on the same subject and I participated in them sharing my ideas. I learnt rather many things through the debates and the sex education talks. I wish schools open up space for students to discuss such important matters that can save them from trouble as well as exposing them to lots of important knowledge.



From my experience, I have observed that many girls in secondary do not know when they can get pregnant: they even do not know what they can do to avoid pregnancies. I know this is the reason we have had increased cases of teenagers getting pregnant during the lockdown because they simply do not know how to read their bodies and do not know what to do to avoid unwanted pregnancies. I have seen some girls who are twelve or thirteen years getting pregnant and dropping out of schools. I went to school with several girls and many did not reach primary seven as I did because they got pregnant and had to dropout.

Sex Education
Saves Lives

Pearl Schools exposed us to critical thinking studies and sex education was part of the lessons we learnt. It is important that children in schools are taught about sex education as well as sexuality so that they differentiate between required sex and sex misuse because it's the major cause of death and pregnancy. I have seen young girls getting into trouble because they were not properly advised, it is important that we get the right information at school because we rarely get it from within our homes.

I used to think that having sex is fine but I now know having sex when one is below 18 years is dangerous since one's sexual organs can be destroyed and you can get complication because at below 18 years, a girl cannot hold a baby in her young womb properly and when one is young, the body is not ready to deliver



babies thus it is important not to get s pregnant. We know today that most cases of fistula among young people are because of complications got during delivery and it is important to avoid getting pregnant before the right time.

Thanks to HALEA and support from Humanist International, we have been able to get this important information and we can now easily share it with our peers. I strong encourage the teaching of sex education because the knowledge I obtained during sex education training has saved me and my colleagues to survive the COVID 19 pandemic lockdown which has left many young people pregnant.

NAMWANJE SARAH,
18 Years, Namirembe, Kampala

I am a proud beneficiary of sex education and menstrual hygiene education thanks to HALEA. I did not know how to make sanitary towels and I had trouble being in school without being sure how I would manage my period days. Through the pads training program, I was able to learn how to make pads and I can now manage to have enough materials to use during my monthly periods.

I know several girls who have trouble getting sanitary towels and this keeps many out of school. Others are lured into sexual affairs so that they can have enough money to take care of themselves during monthly periods. It is important that girls are trained to know how to make reusable pads so that they can afford to be clean and healthy during monthly periods.

Periodic pains comes with much trouble and it needs guidance to go through it. As young

Menstrual
Hygiene
Education
Has Greatly
Empowered Us

people, it is important to be exposed to such important education so that we know exactly what to do to avoid pain and to remain healthy. Through sex education, we have been exposed to how to handle monthly periods and now some of us know how to make sanitary towels. This is a very important skill we have learnt through HALEA trainings and we are extremely grateful.

Sex education should be taught in schools because it helps teenage girls to know the days they can get pregnant, these are called unsafe days. I find



this knowledge important to the girl child because it can help them prevent unwanted pregnancies if they engage in sexual intercourse only in their safe days.

Through Sex Education we have been empowered and encouraged to be contented, and confident when dealing with the opposite sex and menstrual hygiene has empowered us to be more confident knowing what to do to avoid dropping out of school.

**SANSA ALEX,
16 Years, Pearl Mukasa
Memorial High School**

Most boys know nothing useful about supporting girls during monthly period. Some think of girls as unclean while others shame them. During the schools debates and Sex education talk, I learnt how best I can support my sisters during monthly periods. I learnt that it is perfectly normal for a girl to go through menstruation and they need all our support and not shaming. I joined in classes of how to make pads and I learnt a lot from them.

It is also true that most parents do not take time to teach their children about sex, parents fear to talk about sex with their children. Many parents think that talking about sex is encouraging girls to have sex which is not exactly true. The parents do think that they are ordering their children to practice sex by mere talking about sex. Some think that by doing so, they are promoting immorality and are encouraging teenagers to get involved in sex. This is not

**Sex Education
Empowered Me
To Know How To
Support Girls**

true.

I have learnt the dangers of engaging in early sex and I want to keep away from unsafe sex until I am ready for sex and the responsibilities that come with it. Sex education has prepared us emotionally to deal with body changes and to avoid temptations that would come with unwanted sex.

In one of the sex education talks, we learnt about dealing with defilement. We were taught how to keep the evidence of defilement and rape and when to report such cases to the



authorities. During the lockdown, I have used the message I learnt from HALEA trainings and I have empowered many of my peers to avoid getting into trouble.

Sex education is important because it creates awareness and saves lives, I therefore encourage parents to talk to us about sex education matters and not to shy away from sharing with us important knowledge that can keep us safe

NALUYIMA HAJARA, 17, MAKERERE KIVULU

I have benefited from the several trainings of HALEA before and during the lockdown. Sex education is not immoral, it is a moral way of keeping us safe. I grew up in Makerere Kivulu slum, one of the worst in Kampala and I have seen several age mates getting pregnant and having unwanted babies. The lockdown forced all

Sex Education
Is Not Immoral
Education

of us out of school and many teens become idle.

When HALEA extended the training opportunity to me, it was the biggest blessing in my life.



Today I know how to make sanitary towels or pads, and I have learnt tailoring skills. I thank HALEA for the lovely teachers who have extended this wonderful training throughout the lockdown and we have been made busy and saved from the dangers of being idle.

The learning at HALEA is very beneficial and very practical. As they teach us about practical skills, they are teaching us about sex education. Sex is part of human life, sex education helps children in school to add value to their lives and maintain their virginity. HALEA staff are not encouraging us to engage in sex, they are encouraging us to remain useful and productive while waiting for the opening up of schools. They have taught us the importance of keeping away from having sex. We are keeping our virginity because we know the dangers of early sex yet those who are sexually active still know what to do to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies, and now I know for sure that sex



education is not about encouraging young people to engage in sex.

It is not enough to tell children that sex is bad because even if you say it's bad, young people are curious, they still want to explore sexual affairs. It is therefore important to tell them the truth about sex and why it is bad to start sex early when not ready. Young people need to keep off sex and get busy doing productive activities. This is what HALEA has supported me and my friends achieve during the lockdown. Parents usually tell us that sex is bad a practice but they never tell us why it is a bad practice. I have seen so many children getting pregnant at 12 years and they drop out of school and the reason is that they don't know the consequences of having sex that means they were not told and taught about sex. Pl thank HALEA for the continuous teaching offered to us especially on menstrual hygiene matters and sex education which has saved our lives.

NAMUKISA SHARON,
13 years, Makerere Kagugube

Menstrual Hygiene is something which is not directly taught in many schools. Practical skills such as tailoring skills are hardly taught in schools. We do not learn a thing about our bodies yet it is important to know more about us. Sex education should be taught in schools because pupils should be taught about the nature and importance of marriage, family life and children's bringing. Our parents are shy to talk about sex and this is very bad and more saddening is the fact that even teachers have the opportunity of teaching us

but still they do not open up to us about sex. It is important that teachers are empowered to do so and talk about sex with young people.

We have been told that having sex is bad manners and we should not engage in sex. But the challenge is that children are having sex even when it is openly condemned as bad. Children are having sex even when we are told that having sex is bad manners, I have seen

I Now Know
More About Sex
Education and How
to Make Own Pads
and Bags

some girls who are 12 or 13 years getting pregnant and dropping out from schools including my own school. HALEA has talked to us about sex education and has provided practical skills to keep us busy.

I have been occupied on a daily basis since May and thanks to HALEA and Humanist International, I was able to walk from home each day and I would find trainers ready to teach and sewing machines ready to be utilised. I have had



the opportunity to make my own pads, bags in which to keep the pads safe and I Have learnt how to make bags for commercial purposes.

In our homes, we rarely have parents dedicating time to teach us about important things that matter. Our parents spend little time with us children whereby they are shy talking to us about important lessons because they feel sex education is obscene. It is for this reason that I thank organisations such as HALEA that have constantly provided us with life supporting practical lessons that have kept us safe from trouble.

HALEA Has
Empowered me
With Critical
Thinking Skills

NAMAJEJE ALLEN,
20 Years, Nakulabye

I grew up in Mityana with parents who are uncomfortable to talk about sex education with children. There were no critical thinking lessons at my school. I did not also study any practical skills in my school. When I came to Kampala, I was lucky to be enrolled at HALEA for a training course which has empowered me with practical skills and critical thinking skills.

I had heard that sex education leads to unwanted pregnancy in schools. People would say that when we talk about sex, we want to have sex but this is not true. Instead through sex education sessions at HALEA, I now know how to protect myself from dangers of having unwanted sex. I am not eager to have sex because I am aware of the dangers of having



unplanned, unwanted sex.

I have also learnt to question things I did not question before. I now question why we give money to witchdoctors or pastors who claim to offer miracles to us. I know the value in working and saving before one spends recklessly.

It is wrong to assume that sex education leads to school dropouts because a girl and a boy can practice sex because the teacher taught them about that thing which leads to school dropout. On the contrary, sex education empowers us to think critically of every sex decision we make because it impacts on our life negatively. Joining

HALEA has empowered me with practical skills and today I can make own sanitary towels, aprons and bags and I can proudly show off what I have learnt and I encourage other youth to learn practical skills that will enable them live a purpose driven life.

From the skills I have acquired from HALEA, I can now teach my peers about family planning methods, need to avoid unwanted sex, what to be done if raped or defiled and also why it is important not to trust dubious people who keep on asking for money from people who believe that they are God's representatives when they are thieves stealing from the poor. I have learnt skills that I can use to support myself today and in the future and I am happy that all this was made possible with the support from HALEA and Humanist International.



AMUKO EVE,
24, Nakulabye, Kampala

Today I know that saving is important and it does not matter how much you earn, it is very important to save from the little you earn. HALEA has taught me financial discipline which I lacked before joining it and I am confident such skills will help me succeed in life

I joined HALEA in March 2021 to learn tailoring skills. The training has been offered for free and for seven months, I have studied several skills in tailoring that I can today say I can make aprons, dresses, wallets and commercial bags.

I have also learnt saving skills because HALEA encouraged me to join a savings club they created for slum women and today I am happy to have some money that I have saved with the club with an aim of empowering myself after the training.

I have learnt critical thinking skills which are important to survive in the pandemic situation. The skills I have learnt will enable me earn own money and know how to save it from misuse.

HALEA Has
Empowered me
With Tailoring
Skills.



A young woman with a red beanie and a black and white striped shirt is standing outdoors. She is holding a blue book titled 'CARE BOOK' in her left hand. A pink graphic overlay with the text 'MANAGING MENSTRUAL DAYS' is positioned in the lower right corner of the image. The background shows a brick wall and some industrial structures.

MANAGING MENSTRUAL DAYS

CARE BOOK

MANAGING MENSTRUAL DAYS

As trainers, we generally take our participants through lessons that can empower them to manage menstrual periods. Apart from giving them re-usable pads and training them how to make their own sanitary towels, we generally discuss with them information that can empower them to manage menstruation. Below is a summary of the information we pass on and a pictorial of what has been done.

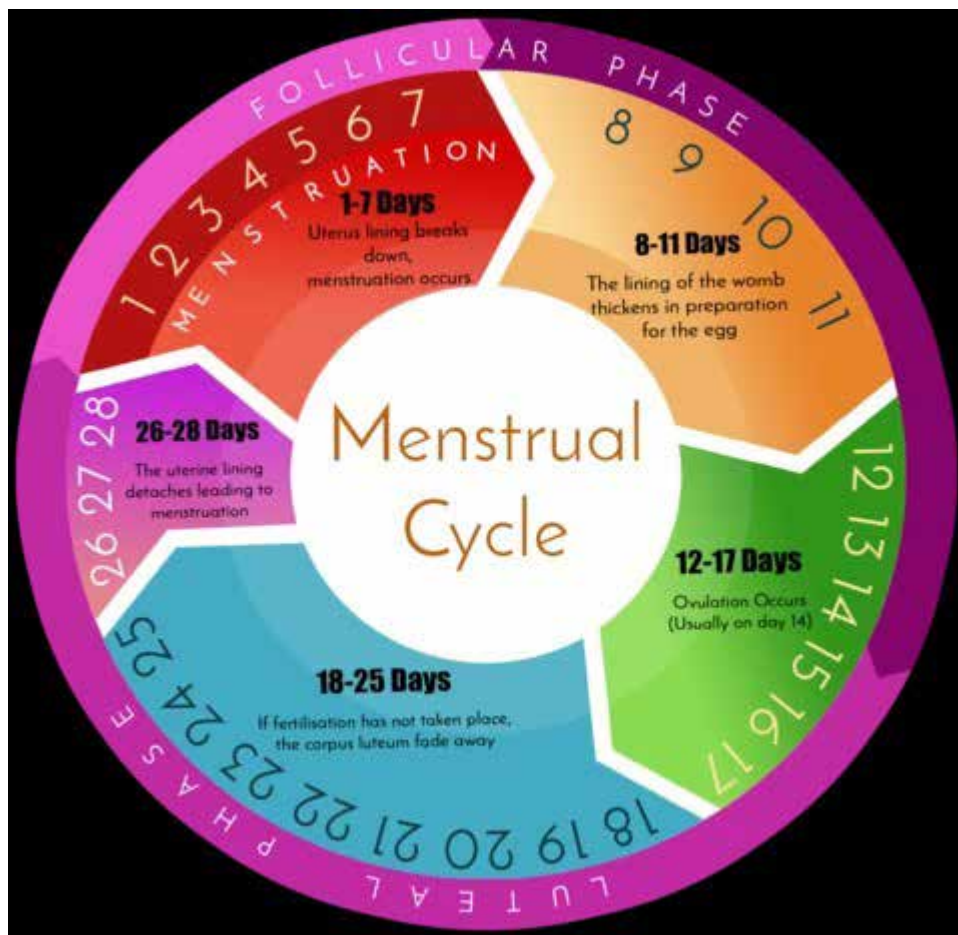


Figure 1, we show the important message that participants need to understand the menstrual cycle and menstruation.



MENSTRUAL PAIN TREATMENT



Figure 2 is an illustration of menstrual pain treatment and it empowers the participants to know exactly what to do to manage menstrual pain.

S



Figure 3 is about the Menstruation Hygiene day which is held on the 28th day of May each year. It is important for all of us to mark this day and create awareness that menstruation is normal and we need to support the girl child and women manage menstruation.





Figure 4 is about creating awareness that menstruation does not stop because we are in a pandemic. It is important that female health care workers are given breaks to keep clean and healthy at work. Patients need to be given special attention so that their menstruation needs are taken care of

JUST THE FACTS: UNDERSTANDING MENSTRUATION

THE BASICS

MENSTRUATION IS NORMAL! IT IS THE MONTHLY SHEDDING OF BLOOD AND UTERINE TISSUE AND AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE REPRODUCTIVE CYCLE. TYPICALLY, IT LASTS...

2-7 DAYS

THE AMOUNT OF BLOOD IS USUALLY BETWEEN 1 AND 6 TABLESPOONS EACH MONTH AND CAN BE MESSY.

ABDOMINAL CRAMPS, NAUSEA, DIARRHEA AND HEADACHES ARE COMMON BEFORE AND DURING A PERIOD.

WHY IT MATTERS?

- Girls who get blood on their clothes are often teased by teachers, boys or other girls.
- Social norms may lead women and girls to feel that menstruation is dirty, shameful or unhealthy.
- Without access to good menstrual materials and private toilets or washrooms for changing, girls and women may not want to go far from home. Teachers may miss school, health workers may miss work, and girls and women may not attend school, go to the market or wait in line for supplies.

Menstruation is very personal. Women and girls often do not want others to know they are menstruating – even other women and girls.

WHAT IS MENARCHE?

- Menarche is the onset of menstruation. Girls generally get their first period between 11–15, although some can be younger or older.
- The first period is generally a surprise! Sometimes girls are scared or worried they are sick. They may not know who to ask for advice.
- Information about menstruation is frequently passed on from mothers, friends, sisters or aunts, and is often a mixture of cultural beliefs, superstition and practical information that is sometimes helpful and sometimes not.
- In many cultures mothers may feel uncomfortable to talk to their daughters about periods because it is linked to sexuality.

WHAT DO THEY NEED?

- A range of materials can be used to catch the blood, including a sanitary pad (disposable or reusable), a tampon, or a piece of cloth in their underwear.
- Menstrual periods are irregular and can catch girls and women by surprise. This causes anxiety about finding a bathroom and materials quickly!
- Menstruation can be messy! Women and girls need a private space with water and soap to clean themselves and soiled materials.
- Even when using good menstrual materials, women and girls may be worried about blood stains on their clothes.
- Women and girls need access to a private, clean space (toilet or washroom) to change materials throughout the day and night and to hygienically dispose of menstrual waste.

Figure 5 provides the basic facts to understand menstruation



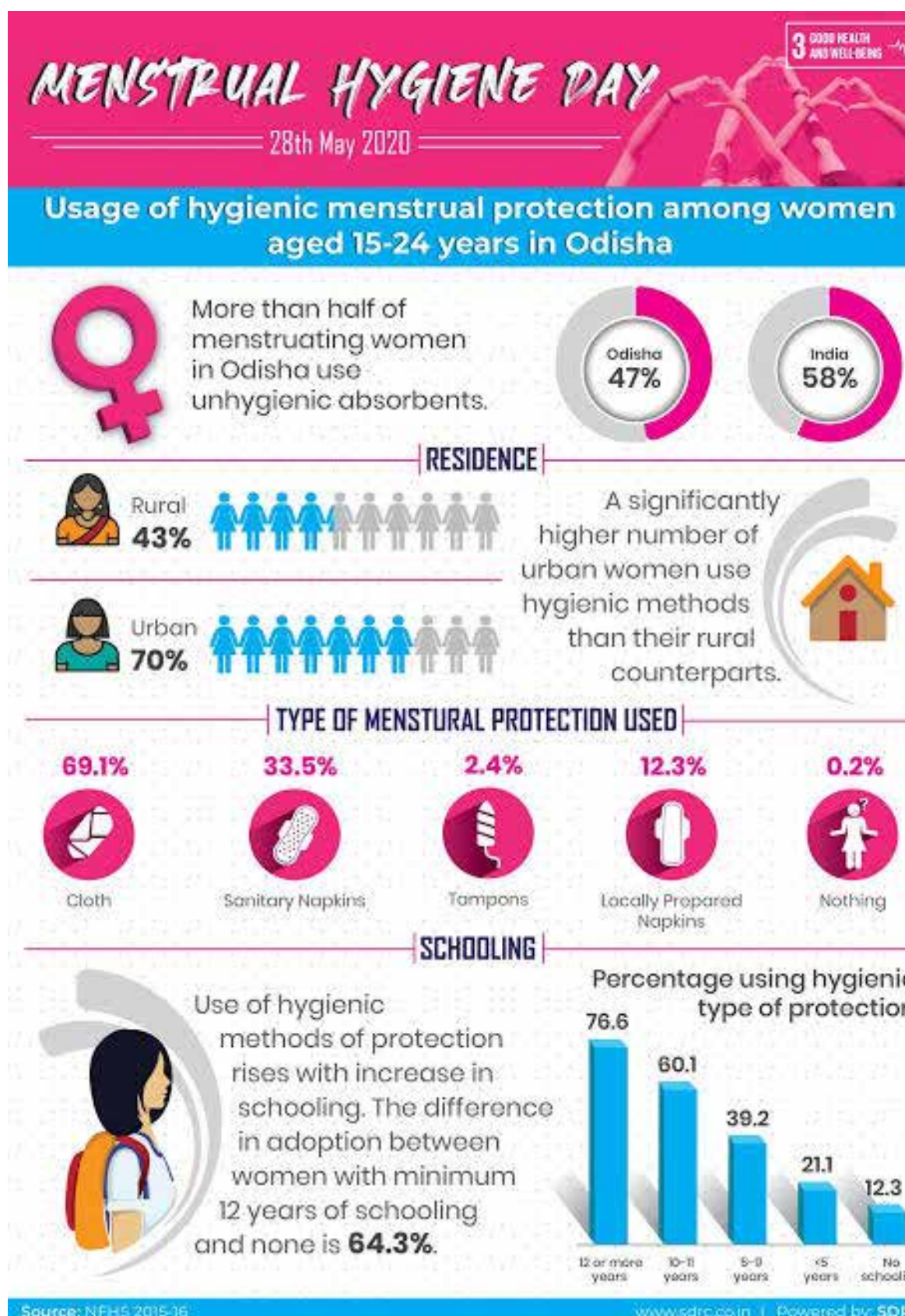


Figure 6 provides basic information on how to manage menstruation and materials to use during menstruation.



We have done the trainings, we have distributed pads and we have empowered our targeted beneficiaries and we hope that they will continue training their peers and thereby empowering more peers to learn more about sex education, and how to manage menstruation days. Here is a pictorial of our community outreaches.



Girls at Pearl Vocational are learning how to make reusable sanitary towels







We also involve men in trainings

CALL FOR SUPPORT

Support us, donate to HALEA today:

HALEA is a charity organization started in 2007 and got fully registered in February 2008.

All our activities are done through membership contributions and donations.

All our staff are dedicated volunteers and it's your contributions that keep us going.

We have several activities centered around youth empowerment and we rely on your continued support.

To enable us continue doing this work, please consider donating to us through the following bank account:

NAME: HALEA LTD, P.O. Box 8664 ,Plot 41, Makerere Hill Road, Kampala.

BANK: STANBIC BANK LTD, Crested Towers,
Plot 17, Hannington Road, Kampala Uganda

ACCOUNT NUMBER (IBAN): 90 3000 564 2565

BANK IDENTIFIER CODE: SBICUGKXXXX

Thank you

For your continued support





CONTACTS US:

Find out more by Visiting HALEA Offices at Plot 41, Makerere
Hill Road, Enterprise House, Room L3 Or Send us an
Email: haleauganda@gmail.com