

## Action Through Enterprise Support for Girls Workshops Report – June 2019



Funded by generous donation from the Austin Bailey Foundation

## Support for Girls Workshops – Phase Two

### Background

An ATE evaluation of the EducATE (access to education) programme in May 2017 corroborated earlier findings from both the Population Housing Census 2010<sup>1</sup> and UN Human Development Report 2010<sup>2</sup> - that although girls in Lawra Municipal enrol in higher numbers and maintain better attendance than their male counterparts during primary and the early years of junior high school, they are less likely to remain in school to complete their basic education. Similarly, a WaterAid report from 2012 found that 95% of girls in Ghana sometimes miss school due to menses, 90% of girls in rural areas of Ghana felt ashamed during their period, and 95% of girls in rural areas in Ghana experienced embarrassment during their last period.<sup>3</sup>

### The Workshops and their Purpose

The Workshops for Girls are a set of 3-4 sessions run through one week with girls in Class 2 and 3 at ATE-supported Junior High Schools. The girls in these classes would usually be aged 13-15 years old, though in poorer areas of Ghana may be older if they started late, had gaps or repeated years of schooling. The purpose of the workshops is to explore key issues causing absenteeism and drop-out of school girls in Lawra, Upper West Ghana, in order to tackle these issues through tailored support. The workshop themes tackle the taboo of periods and building up the future planning skills and confidence of these young women. (See Workshop Outline below).

### Preparations

Learning from the pilot phase of the Girls' Workshops, delivered at Girls Model School in November 2018, ATE made several changes to the programme for its running at Gombile Junior High School (JHS) and Biro JHS:

- A whole session was dedicated to sanitary pad making, as an optional Saturday morning slot rather than fitting the activity in with the other sessions. This ensured the girls had time to complete all activities.
- Each questionnaire would be explained as a class to ensure all the participants were clear with the wording.
- Ernestina Gan, ATE SNAP Playscheme Coordinator, accompanied workshop staff in the running of all sessions, presenting/translating, and Janet (a local, Dagaare speaking ATE consultant and nurse), also attended the practical session.
- More interactive activities and response methods were used, to ensure participation.

### Delivery

In June 2019, girls from JHS 2 and 3 of both Biro and Gombile JHS took part in three workshops over the course of a week, and an optional practical workshop centred on making re-useable sanitary pads on the Saturday. Each workshop in the week was two hours, with the Saturday practical lasting the whole morning, and bringing together classes from both schools. At the end of the Friday workshop the girls received a 'hygiene pack', made up of one zip-lock bag, two pairs of underwear, one re-useable sanitary towel and two interchangeable liners.

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<sup>1</sup> Ghana Statistical Service - 2010 Population Housing Census, Lawra District Analytical Report (edited 2014)

<sup>2</sup> UNDP – Human Development Report 2010; Resource Endowment, Investment Opportunities, and the Attainment of the MDGs (2010)

<sup>3</sup> House, S., Mahon, T. and Cavill, S. (2012) Menstrual Hygiene Matters , p.31

Thanks to the generous donation of funds from the Austin Bailey Foundation and donations of packs of underwear from our supporters, we were able to deliver workshops on menstruation and hygiene and distribute 33 Hygiene Packs to young girls living in the most rural communities of Lawra Municipal.

## **Workshop Outline**

### **Workshop 1: Introduction and Confidence**

- Introduction – to ATE, participating staff, workshop and support for girls.
- Energiser – ride the donkey.
- Hand model activity – each girl has a piece of card, pencil and shares crayons a scissors with neighbours. They draw around their hand, write their name and age on the palm and the five things they love most about themselves on the fingers. They can then cut these out and present them to the class.
- Questionnaire.

### **Workshop 2: Future planning**

- Energiser – Simon Says (led by Ernestina)
- Talk from Ernestina- alternative career paths, her journey to her current role
- Thinking about careers – Students to create a mind map of their ideal job, the reasons why they want to do it, and the way to get there (after an example from ATE staff member on the board)
- Path to profession – students pick a profession out of the bag, explain or act it to the class and we discuss what steps are taken to get there.
- Menstruation questionnaire.

### **Workshop 3: Menstruation**

- Energiser – Simon says
- Explanation of what menstruation is biologically.
- Label the Uterus – Each girl is given a diagram of a female sex organ to label. Volunteers are then invited to write in their answers on the board.
- Expose the misconceptions – a true/false game. A statement is read out and the girls move from one side of the room to the other based on whether they believe the statement to be true. Each statement is then debunked.
- Future planning/ evaluation questionnaire.
- Distribution of hygiene packs – A thank you for their participation in the workshops. Each containing one zip-lock bag, two pairs of underwear, one re-useable sanitary towel and two interchangeable liners.

### **Practical Workshop**

- Re-useable sanitary towel making – Explanation of what a re-useable sanitary towel is and how to use it (e.g. hygienic washing). With girls in groups of 4 or 5, each group was given a yard of cloth, needle and thread, chalk and a pamphlet of instructions on how to create a re-useable sanitary towel with two interchangeable liners.



## Reflections

### Observations from the workshops

- Throughout the sessions, it seemed that self-expression was difficult for the girls. The teaching style at many of the schools in Lawra Municipal is centred around direct instruction from the teacher, rather than an interactive teaching style where the pupil is encouraged to think for themselves. This meant that activities such as 'Label the Uterus' proved an easy task for the girls as they memorised the diagram and labels, whereas the mind map exercises or hand model activity – focusing on self-expression and the girls own opinions - seemed more challenging for both groups. This could also be due to traditional gender roles and beliefs about the status of women and girls in society. Work should be done in future sessions to develop self-expression further and encourage the girls that their opinions, feelings and emotions are important, worthy and of value.
- Participation was difficult to encourage, particularly at the beginning. The girls at Gombile and Biro were notably more shy to participate than the girls in the pilot programme at Lawra Model Girls School. This meant that we had to be flexible in our delivery of the activities, allowing for different methods of interaction and response methods (e.g. discuss in groups and then feedback, vote by moving to one side of the room etc). Flexibility in the sessions is definitely advised, as different schools have different dynamics and therefore a 'one size fits all' approach is not sufficient.
- Girls responded very well to the session on menstruation – this session seemed to be the one that both groups enjoyed the most. The majority of girls had a limited understanding of the biological process, but at the end of the session when ATE staff opened up the workshop to questions from the class, the girls asked some more personal, atypical, detailed questions regarding menstruation. This demonstrates that the need is there and the sessions are important, particularly for the girls from more rural communities such as Biro and Gombile.
- Language barrier for UK trainer – the girls struggled at times to understand the two UK trainers accents or the language used, meaning that Ernestina would then usually repeat what was said afterwards for the girls to understand. The girls' understanding of UK trainers did get better over the week, but it did cause delays on activities and wasted some time. This, among other reasons, is a good argument for Ghanaian female trainers to lead the sessions, as opposed to UK staff.
- The reusable sanitary pad session was very successful, as demonstrated by the attendance on an optional session on a Saturday. The girls seemed to enjoy the nature of the session, where they exercised teamwork, following instructions, problem solving, and creativity. The girls' enjoyment of the session suggests a 'girls club' of some sorts, as run by some other organisations, could work well.
- Ernestina was a great asset to the sessions and a great role model for the girls, particularly due to the limited age gap between her and the participants. The more women from Lawra in the sessions the better, as the girls found her career story interesting and inspiring, and seemed very engaged in it, as a real life and practical example.

## Data from Questionnaires

### Girls' background information

- 94% of Biro and 100% of Gombile's students' parents are farmers.
- 50% of girls at Biro, and 67% of girls at Gombile said that lack of, or difficulty in purchasing, uniform and learning materials makes it difficult to come to school.
- 22% of girls at Biro and 27% of girls at Gombile said distance makes it difficult to attend school.

### Menstruation

- Less than half of the girls at Biro could give a correct explanation of menstruation, despite the fact that 78% of them had started menstruating
- 75% of girls at Gombile said they absented themselves from school when they menstruate.
- 42% of girls at Biro, and 19% at Gombile said that during their period they could not cook. 25% of girls at Gombile said you can't attend school when you are menstruating.

### Future planning and evaluation

- 75% of girls at Biro, and 88% of girls at Gombile enjoyed the session on menstruation the most; 64% of girls at Biro and 81% at Gombile said that they learnt the most about menstruation
- In the feedback questionnaires, 78% at Biro and 92% at Gombile stated that they would like to educate their colleagues/ friends about menstruation.
- The most popular future career for girls at Biro and Gombile was teacher (50% and 46% respectively), with doctor and nurse the next choices.
- In future sessions 69% of girls at Gombile noted that they would like to learn more about menstruation in future sessions.
- When asked why some girls drop out of school the girls answered as followed:
  - Biro JHS - Uniform/ learning materials 28%, Pregnancy 19%, menstruation and no pads 14%, orphaned/ absent parents 8%, boyfriends 3%
  - Gombile JHS - Menstruation and no pads 27%, Orphaned/ absent parents 23%, uniform/ learning materials 23%, pregnancy 15%

### Recommendations for future workshops

- **Local role models to run the sessions** - It would be more effective and sustainable if local women were trained to run the programme. It would save time on translation/repetition by a Ghanaian trainer, empower local women, give the girls more relatable role models/ trainers, allow for more frequent sessions and increase sustainability.
- **Research and plan next phase of the project** - 78% at Biro and 92% at Gombile stated that they would like to educate their colleagues or friends about menstruation in the feedback questionnaire – this could take the form of an afterschool girls club, a programme which is used commonly by other organisations doing similar work (for example Action Aid). Research should be done into this and it should be considered as an option for ATE's Support for Girls, with the local context in mind.
- **Consider options for sanitary support materials** - Future considerations should be made on what form of support ATE could give to the girls regarding menstrual hygiene/ products. Although the workshop making reusable sanitary pads was a success and very enjoyable for the girls, many of the girls noted that if they could buy them they would use bought pads, as a couple of girls reported afterwards they found the reusable items slightly



uncomfortable. A more detailed analysis should be carried out into the best sanitary support to provide for girls, as cost to ATE, waste disposal, modesty, and cultural opinion are all important factors to be considered.

- **Wider topics** - Other topics should be explored in future sessions, such as sexual health and education, teenage pregnancy, girls' rights and traditional values. These are important but often controversial topics, which should be tackled but with a balance of cultural understanding, advocacy, and information.
- **Include younger girls** - Younger girls should be included as the majority in the classes had started menstruation already, due to the differences in age in JHS 2 and 3.

## Next Steps

Thanks to the funding from the Austin Bailey Foundation and donations from our supporters, we were able to deliver this round of workshops for girls which has taken us beyond the pilot at Girls Model School in Lawra town, to Gombile JHS and Biro JHS; two of our supported schools in far more rural locations, where poverty is high and traditional beliefs on gender roles run deep.

Our next steps will be to raise support to deliver the workshops for girls at our remaining ATE-supported junior high schools in Lawra; Karbo JHS and Bagri Junction JHS in May 2020. We will use the learning from this round to bring improvements to the next and final round of the workshops in terms of planning and delivery. We will then evaluate the overall learning from the process, from the questionnaire, and review how to extend and deepen our support to girls through the recommendations above – potentially identifying and training local role models, setting up Girls Clubs of peer educators, and broadening both our reach, and the topics to include more focus and information on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health rights.

Support for girls is vital for development in Lawra. We will continue to develop support for girls within our EducATE programme to support all children to complete their basic education and to play our part to achieve SDG 5; to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



