Girls Mental and Physical Health Grant Progress Report

In the third quarter of the Embassy Girls Mental and Physical Health Grant, we have focused almost exclusively on setting up our kit-sewing center and beginning production of Days for Girls reusable, sustainable menstrual hygiene kits. Sewing these kits in Sierra Leone will exponentially increase the accessibility of these kits to women and girls across Sierra Leone.

Kit-making enterprise progress:

At the very end of March, our barrel of supplies from the US arrived in Freetown. The barrel included PUL waterproof fabric for the pad shields, liner and bag fabric, rotary cutters, fabric scissors, plastic bags for washing the kits, and more essential supplies that are difficult or impossible to find in Sierra Leone.

Juliet has also been establishing relationships with vendors in Freetown to solidify supply chains for fabric and other raw materials we will need to replenish often as production increases.
Since the barrel arrived, Juliet has been working extremely hard to finalize all the necessary components of the kit-making program and setting up the sewing area. Our team hired two tailors, whom Juliet trained on how to make the kits according to the specifications and quality standards of the Days for Girls, Schools for Salone, and Programme for Children team.

The first two weeks of sewing were weeks of learning, and now the tailors have mastered the process. The menstrual kit sewing is going well and our product has met the required quality standards. Our team has completed over 100 kits, and we have already received orders for kits from other nonprofit groups in Sierra Leone.

Since kit production has been going so well, we have been purchasing large quantities of raw materials for kits. At the end of June, Cindy and Natalie will be bringing PUL, plastic snaps, and other materials not readily available in Sierra Leone so our team will be equipped to produce more menstruation kits.
Impact Spotlight:
We will be holding an opening ceremony for our sewing program in Freetown on June 30 to officially launch this exciting new component of our effort to support the health and wellbeing of women and girls in Sierra Leone.

Health education and kit distribution progress:
The total number of students reached in our schools with the sexual reproductive health education and DfG kits distribution is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of Boys</th>
<th>Number of Girls</th>
<th>Number of Kits Distributed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Area</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of student reached with sexual reproductive health education: 1,273

FGM/C education progress:
In April, Juliet attended the FGM/C Convening in Dakar, Senegal, sponsored by Voices Against Violence: The GBV Global Initiate and implemented in partnership with Safe Hands for Girls, Boston Population Council and The Guardian. This experience allowed Juliet to network with others working on this issue in West Africa and learn ideas and practices for our efforts in Sierra Leone. Many thanks to the US Embassy Freetown for making this possible!
Impact Spotlight:
“The conference in Dakar was an eye opener on the deeper issues of FGM/C and as a survivor it is important to be part of the solution to end FGM/C has it has no positive impact in our communities. The convening was very, very meaningful to me because:

- It deepened my understanding of FGM/C, its health and human rights consequences.
- It enabled me to dispel common myths and misperceptions about FGM/C while engaging with others.
- It allowed me to exchange information with others about best practices and strategies to bring about social change surrounding FGM/C
- It empowered me to identify and apply best practices and lessons learned in advocating for change in social norms around FGM/C
- It empowered me establish a network where I can begin to build or mobilize a movement to end FGM/C
- It gave me tools and skills (such as use of social media and action planning) to organize and mobilize my efforts to press for change in social norms surrounding FGM/C”

*Juliet’s response to her experience at the FGM/C conference*

“The conference in Dakar confirmed our thought that we can only be successful in discouraging teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and infections like HIV and successful in empowering girls to stay in school and make good, healthy choices that align with their values and goals if we continue giving education on Reproductive Health education with an emphasis on FGM/C. Educating parents and getting parental support is an essential piece for successfully minimizing the practice of FGM/C thus, restoring the dignity of girls and women.

When half the population of the world is held back, we all SUFFER, but when people are better able to achieve their goals and live happy lives, everyone WINS” – Juliet Rhoman, Social Worker, Programme for Children