

GIRLS' HYGIENE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM



IMPACT REPORT

MARCH 2020



2020

Report Submitted by:

Vian Ahmed, Regional Program Manager

Photography by:

Diana Ibrahim, Storytelling Sisters, Rwanga Camp

Jesse Parks, Rwanga Camp

March 31, 2020

The Lotus Flower would like to thank the Presbyterian Church USA and Operation Hope Australia. Because of their incredible support, we have been able to continue our mission and vision to provide necessary programs, like the Girls' Hygiene Educational Program, to women and girls living in displacement.



Thank you for your support!



BACKGROUND

A 2015 UNICEF / WHO assessment reported that 500 million girls lacked adequate facilities for managing their periods.¹ Menstrual health is a topic that affects women and girls in all corners of the globe; it has a long-term impact on education, economics, public health and societal norms. However, social taboos, inadequate facilities, poverty, and limited health education combine to reduce available resources in this area. It is even harder for women and girls who are fleeing violent conflict and currently live in IDP or refugee camps.



Rwanga Camp, an IDP camp in Duhok Governorate, is home to over 14,000 individuals mostly from the Sinjar area who fled to Kurdistan in 2014. When we conducted our initial needs assessment, most of the girls are from conservative areas where discussion of a girl's menstrual cycle and reproductive health is considered taboo. Because of this, some of the girls were surprised when they had their first period in their early teens and because they were never informed about their bodies, they do not have the understanding or the resources to manage this change and are ashamed to ask.

¹ [http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water 2015 Update .pdf](http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress_on_Sanitation_and_Drinking_Water_2015_Update_.pdf)

Prior to displacement, the majority of women and girls did not have access to any female hygiene products so they had to use pieces of fabric to manage their menstrual cycle. After arriving in the camp in 2014, many NGOs provided disposable sanitary pads but as the initial humanitarian crisis evolves into protracted displacement, the same organizations are either no longer working in the camps or do not have the resources to provide these products. As a result, women and girls have returned to using old fabric as many cannot afford to purchase sanitary pads from the local market or are too ashamed to purchase them as most shops are run by men.

Women and girls miss out on educational and economic opportunities when they do not have the resources they need on a monthly basis. During our assessment, we discovered that the girls miss 1 week of school per month while they have their periods; on average, they will miss 10 weeks of education in one year. Effective hygiene solutions empower women and girls to thrive in society by restoring dignity and enabling mobility and opportunity.



PROJECT SUMMARY

In response to the above problems, the Lotus Flower launched a pilot project, in partnership with the Presbyterian Church, in 2018 and received an overwhelmingly positive response from all the girls. At the time of the pilot, there were 769 girls between 12-16 years old living in the Rwanga camp, a camp for internally displaced people, mostly from Sinjar, in the Duhok Governorate. Within this demographic, 64% of the girls responded that they were attending school without adequate menstrual health supplies.

Our workshop curriculum is based on a model designed by Days for Girls (DfG), an international NGO that is committed to providing girls with sustainable menstrual care solutions and health education. Our Regional Manager participated in their Ambassador of Women's Health program, an intensive study that provided her with the necessary information and tools to conduct trainings and distribute the DfG hygiene kit.

By the end of the pilot, 70 girls received extensive female-specific health education and re-usable hygiene kit.

The Lotus Flower, in collaboration with the Presbyterian Church and Operation Hope Australia, is expanding this necessary program to benefit 900 girls between the ages of 12-16 in the Rwanga camp. Our hope is that all girls living in displacement will receive the health education they need about their own bodies and the resources to effectively manage to periods in order to continue their education.

Outcomes

Timeframe:	2 Months
Total Workshops:	31
Total DfG Kits Distributed:	921
Total Direct Beneficiaries:	921

Timeline

Over the course of 2 months, the Lotus Flower conducted the following activities:

- **December 7th, 2019:** our Regional Manager conducted a Training of Trainers (ToT) session for 4 young women who had been hired from the Rwanga camp community to deliver training to young girls in the camp. The trainers all hold Bachelor's degree and two of the women are nurses. The ToT session lasted for two days and followed the curriculum from the DfG online course for "Women and Girls Health Ambassadors."
- **December 21st, 2019:** the trainers coordinated with the local school and distributed invitation cards to 30 female students between the ages of 10-16. The team conducted the first workshop the following day.
- **December 12th, 2019 – February 9th, 2020:** The Lotus Flower held 31 workshops for 921 girls at the Lotus Flower Women's Center. Each workshop had 25-30 girls in attendance and received their own DfG hygiene kit upon completion.

Due to the limited space in the center, the participants were divided into two shifts – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. All of the participants received an informational pamphlet about the project and instructions on menstrual health.

- The Lotus Flower coordinated with the Rwanga camp management team, the primary and secondary Kurdish and Arabic schools, and the health centers in the camp to ensure effective collaboration with key stakeholders throughout program implementation.

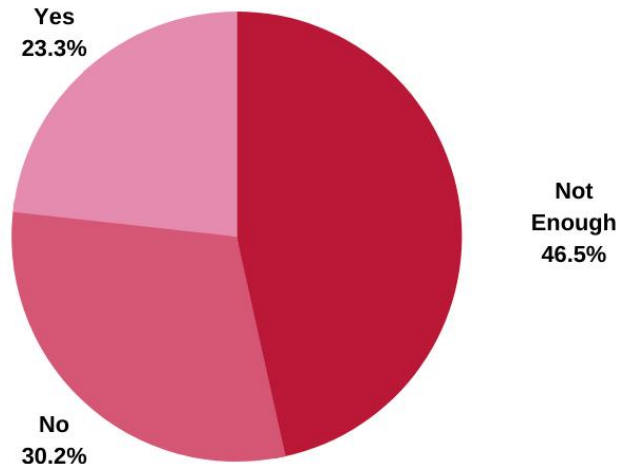
PROGRAM EVALUATION

In March 2020, the Lotus Flower conducted a 2-week evaluation process to determine the impact and level of success of the program.

We conducted individual interviews with 43 girls who completed the workshops and received a DfG hygiene kit.

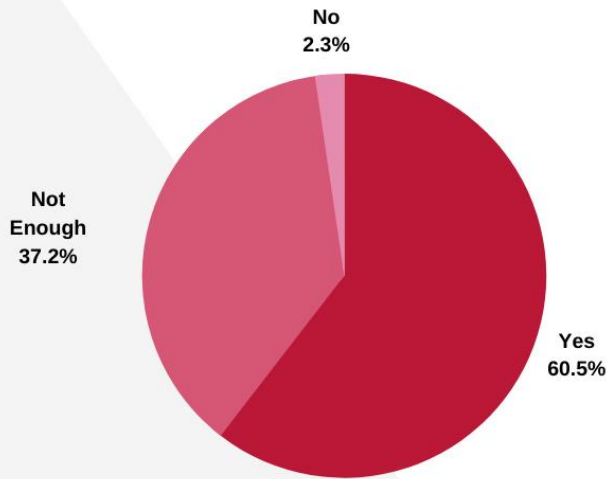
The participants were asked about the following topics:

- Level of knowledge about a woman's menstrual cycle before and after the workshops
- Level of knowledge about the reproductive health system before and after the workshops
- Quality of the workshops
- Usability of the DfG kits

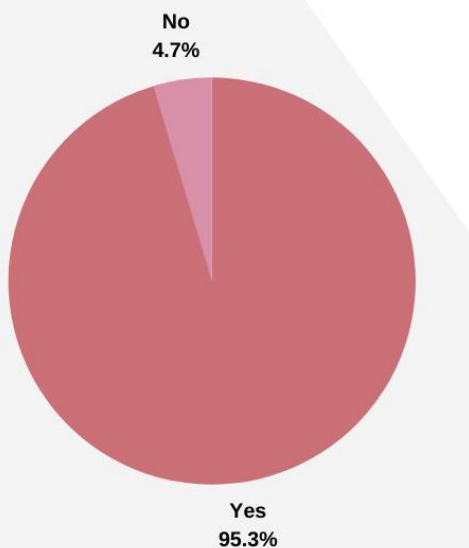


When asked if they were informed about what a menstrual cycle is and how it affects one's body prior to attending the workshops, the majority did not have enough or any information.





The participants were asked whether the topics of the workshop were relevant. 60% of participants said the topics were relevant, and 37% said they were relevant but they wanted more topics.



Participants were also asked if the workshop environment provided enough privacy so they could ask sensitive questions without feeling any discomfort. 95% of the participants said that yes, the environment offered confidentiality. They felt they could ask their questions openly because "the trainers were women and nurses."



"I think everyone should get this information: our sisters, our mothers, our friends. They all need this because we have not been taught at school or at home."

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

In addition to quantitative data, the Lotus Flower sought beneficiary feedback throughout the program. This information allows our team to ensure that the program is on track and revise any aspect of the program going forward.

All of the participants expressed the importance of these workshops and the need to expand to more girls living in the camp, particularly those who are 20 years of age and older. They've observed that this age group is lacking key information on how to manage their periods and need sustainable hygiene kits to mitigate health issues caused by disposable pads.

PROGRAM IMPORTANCE

The majority of the participants indicated that interventions like this one are necessary as there is a lack of information on menstruation and ways to manage one's period.

Prior to attending the workshop, many of the girls could not attend school while they had their period, and they thought there was something wrong with their body. After the workshops, the girls now have ways to manage their period so they do not have to miss school.

SUSTAINABILITY

All participants agreed that this kit will benefit them for a long time as it's more sustainable and affordable than disposable pads. They will be able to take the hygiene kits with them to Sinjar, where it is very difficult to find hygiene products.



60%

Of the respondents have shared the workshop information with female friends and family members.