

COMMUNITY HEALTH AFRICA/MPALA COMMUNITY TRUST
RE-USABLE SANITARY TOWEL PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT FOR 3
MONTHS AUGUST 08 – NOV 08

OBJECTIVE:

To improve girl child school attendance and performance, by innovating production and distribution of re-usable sanitary towels to schoolgirls of a reproductive health age.

Activities implementation process

- **Production of prototypes**

CHAT/MCT initially identified a **Person Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)** and a member of a Nanyuki based PLWHA Support Groups initiated with CHAT/MCT's support; the PLWHA member also had her own sewing machine (community contribution)

To achieve the above objective, CHAT/MCT, by utilizing The Funding Network (Toronto) funding, purchased initial materials to produce the reusable sanitary towels prototypes, purchasing in the materials for a the contracted individual from MIMI NA WEWE support group, (PLWHA group based in Nanyuki; Rex Taylor met this member when he was last out in Kenya)

30 Prototypes were distributed through CHAT/MCT's community based structures, the Community Based Family Planning Distributors (CBD FP) counselors for testing in the field. The CBD FP counselors collected the views on the practicalities of the ST from the beneficiaries (school going girls & community women of reproductive ages) where various adjustment were proposed and worked on thus, the size, texture, durability.

- **Development of a MOU with an individual from MIMI NA WEWE support group**

CHAT/MCT staff drew a MOU with one of the individuals from the said PLWHA support group based in Nanyuki, included was the initial agreement for a mass production of reusable ST's to be sold initially for a unprofitable rate to ensure initial understanding and education at the poorest level of society, Included in the MOU will be for the above contracted individual to also assist with training other PLWHA Support Group individuals from other communities.

It is hoped that a minimum of 3 other identified individuals from 3 other PLWHA support groups will initially be engaged in learning to produce reusable STs within the next 3 months

(See attached Workplan for other activities)

Achievements

With an initial subsidized mass production of 1300 ST pads as indicated in the MOU, 354 school going girls will benefit for a minimum of six months before ST's are worn out. (This time frame is still too early to be confirmed; CHAT/MCT is expecting them to last for longer – but this may depend on the individual user).

Challenges

- Replication of the same IGA activity without the donors initial support will be a challenge to many of the PLWHA support groups willing to engage into such a business
- Logistics to local good market places to enable purchasing materials to produce the STs will challenge remoter support groups and may not be practical for them to engage in this particular IGA
- The cost of the reusable STs production, CHAT/MCT feels may still be a little expensive for the poorest of the communities to afford – subsidized production costs for some of the communities may be necessary
- Accessing good quality, affordable materials from the local market places for the production
- Expectation handouts from the beneficiaries, and retailing the product at an will be a challenge
- Demand from other un targeted areas for the product.
- CHAT/MCT has not embarked on an IGA activity before, and chosen an environment where there are no, or very few, other IGA providers – CHAT/MCT is, as usual challenged to find their 'own way forward'
- The 'learning' process is taking more time than anticipated due to many factors; one being that initial member is relying on CHAT/MCTs guidance rather than initiating her own way forward, this is expected at this time, but with the other trainees we expect the project to move at a quicker pace, having experienced 'lessons already learnt'

Lessons Learnt

- Use of school teachers, especially women, for marketing of the product has proved to be more successful than male teachers
- Utilizing an individual from the support group, rather than 'doing business' with the group as a whole, is more efficient when implementing IGAs.
- The uptake of the project by beneficiaries has proved to be very acceptable in schools and communities...it is a product that is desperately required.

Way-forward & Recommendations

Some patience is required while some ways forward are still being researched.

A retired businessman from the UK is kindly returning to volunteer again in early January for 3 months – we are hoping he will have some input on marketing and other aspects of the ST production.

CHAT/MCT would like take this opportunity in thanking The Funding Network-Toronto, the donors and all others that have been involved in making this project possible – “Asante sana” on behalf of hundreds of poor otherwise ‘forgotten’ women and girls

Report compiled by Rose Kimanzi (Field Coordinator) and Shanni Wreford-Smith (Programme Coordinator)