

Rotary
District 9214



Rotaract
District 9214



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CHANGE LIVES**

EMPOWERING GIRLS INITIATIVE



A REPORT ON EMPOWERING GIRLS INITIATIVE IN D9214 (UGANDA) AT THE VISIT OF THE RIP SHEKHAR MEHTA - SEPTEMBER 2021.

Rotary International President Shekhar Mehta introduced initiatives for the Rotary year 2021 – 2022. One of these initiatives is **Empowering Girls**. This initiative is aimed at empowering girls to make their lives better.

In D9214, District Governor Young Kimaro has taken on Empowering of Girls which is focusing on club level projects to create change in the lives of our girls. It is aimed at helping girls 18 years and below to have access to education, better health care, more employment opportunities and equality.

PROBLEM

Only two thirds (68%) of girls in Uganda complete primary school. Less than half (46.6%) enroll in secondary school.

At national level, over a third (35%) of the girls who drop out of school do so because of early marriages and a quarter (23%) because of pregnancy (Uganda Bureau of statistics, 2012)

Teenagers from the poorest households have rates of pregnancy (34%) that are more than double the rates for their counterparts in the wealthiest households (16%) (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2012)

Over a fifth of the girls aged 15 – 19 in Uganda have been married (Amin et al, 2013) while over a third (39%) of women aged 20 – 49 had given birth by the age 18 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2012)

Over a quarter of young women (29.1%) have reported experiencing physical and sexual violence (UNICEF, 2013)

IMPLEMENTATION

Empowering of Girls initiative is to be implemented through both Rotary and Rotaract clubs which are going to carryout projects in all the seven areas of focus that empower girls in order to solve the so many problems that the girls are currently faced with .

Each Club was requested to nominate an Empowering Girls officer to coordinate project activities and names are submitted to the Empowering Girls team. These officers are already being engaged.

Mobilization of the vulnerable girls is to be done by members of the community led by the Youth Leaders who are at the Local Council level of every village.

Each club has to ensure that each project is sustainable in order to carry this initiative on even after the year end
Something is being done in all the seven areas of focus and below are a few examples to demonstrate this:

1. Economic and Community Development

The Rotary Club of Kajjansi set up St. Padre Pio Rotary Institute in Buikwe. The \$ 250,000 project is skilling young girls who become pregnant and drop out of school. Skills being taught include tailoring, hair dressing, baking and other life skills. This year, 400 girls graduated and all were provided with starter packs. This has created a lot of impact because more and more girls in the community are being skilled and able to start work immediately given the skills and the starter packs.



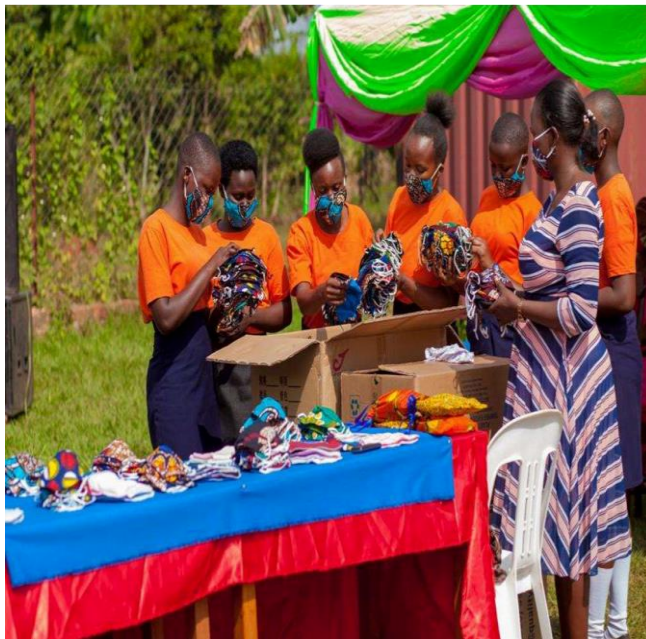
2. Water, Sanitation and hygiene

RC Kampala Nsambya has set up a reusable sanitary pads project in Nakasajja Mukono. It is a two year program 2020 – 2022. This project is;

- Training girls on how to make reusable environmentally friendly pads
- Training the girls in basic selling techniques to enable them sell to the members of the community
- Training the girls to train others too.
- A source of production of reusable sanitary pads which are distributed in the area and also in Kampala in Kabalagala and Kibuli areas by RC Kampala Nsambya.

So far, this project has yielded the following results:

- School enrollment of the girls has gone up,
- The girls are earning an income and able to look after their families.
- The environment is protected especially when these environmentally friendly pads are disposed off because they are biodegradable.



3. Maternal and Child health

RC Munyonyo has an ongoing skilling project in Agago district for the young mothers whereby:

- Maama kits are provided
- The young mothers are skilled
- Young girls are given reusable sanitary pads
- Communities are sensitized on how to engage the teenage mothers

As a result:

- These young mothers are provided for at the time of delivery with the essential items they would have otherwise not been able to afford.
- The girls are skilled enough to be able to work and look after their young families.
- The girls in the community are able to access reusable sanitary pads which they are able to use for some time.
- The communities through sensitization are able to help the very young mothers, work with them and talk to the young girls who are still in school in order to have them stay there to complete their education.



PARTNERS

In pursuance of the objectives of this initiative, there are partners that have provided support and have committed to continue doing so because of the importance attached to helping girls at an early age. These include:

1. Rotary Fellowship for Empowering of Women (RFEW)
Born in D9211 out of the Rotary Roses Program 2020/2021 with a Vision of creating a future where girls and women thrive and lead, RFEW is very passionate about the girls. This year, the main focus for girls is going to be Economic Empowerment. This will go a long way in empowering the girls especially those who are out of school and yet have responsibilities like looking after their young families or even parents.
2. Rotaract Ladies Initiative (ROLI)
All our Rotaract clubs collaborate with Rotaract Ladies Initiative in empowering girls. Each club has a ROLI officer who coordinates activities and this is the officer who is also charged with coordinating empowering girls' activities in these clubs. Planning for Empowering of Girls has already began and each club will be able to do something.
3. Rotary Vijana Poa
The Vijana POA Program was started in D9211 in 2015/2016 as an initiative to support the young people (Vijana). It is set out to provide attitude/mindset that will help the youth to get employed or develop their entrepreneurial skills to earn a living. These youth include the young girls below 18 years of age who are going to be focused on by the clubs during the implementation of the Rotary Vijana Projects. At the end of it all, the girls will be able to look at issues positively, enroll in schools/institutions and be able to work in order to earn a living.

PLANNED PROJECTS

The Rotary and Rotaract Clubs that have not started on the Empowering Girls projects have a wide range of planned projects to be undertaken in all the seven areas of focus and these include:

- Improving medical facilities to focus on girls in areas of medical care, guiding, counselling and reproductive health
- Improving school facilities to help girls stay comfortably in school
- A lot more focus is going to be given to Menstrual Hygiene Management which is much required in our communities today.
- Saving the environment

IMPACT

It is expected that at the end of the initial period of one year, there will be positive change in our communities as regards the girls and among which will be the following:

- A lot more girls will be able to enroll and stay in school
- Girls will be better educated and skilled in different areas

- There will be change of perception towards girls. The communities in which they are will be able to parent them and help them to become independent.
- Parents will be engaged and will therefore be able to look after the girls better.
- The communities will appreciate the girls better and be able to work with them.
- The economies of our nations will be better with the girls contributing to the income of the nation.

CHALLENGES

- The need is great. All over the world, the problems concerning the girls are many and on the increase. Uganda is not an exception.
- Limited resources. The interventions require funds in order to be able to reach out to all the girls however, Rotary and its partners can only do so much.
- Partners on board still limited. Given the extent of the problem, a lot more partners are required so that we can put together more of the required resources in order to achieve our goal of Empowering Girls.
- Some cultures and communities are still rigid and so do not want to expose their girls for better. This creates resistance to change and makes the work of empowering these girls very difficult and in some cases impossible.

A CALL TO ALL

- All leaders need to embrace this initiative and begin empowering girls in all their various capacities and communities.
- Let us look beyond one year to ensure that this initiative is sustained. A lot more impact will be created and this will brighten the future of these girls.
- Let us convince other organisations outside Rotary to empower girls. When we have more interventions, a lot more will be achieved.
- We need more partners on board and out of Rotary to commit more resources to this initiative so that our contribution as Rotary will be bigger and better.

APPRECIATION goes to:

- RIP Shekhar Mehta for coming up with a good initiative just in time when the girls are having a lot of problems caused by especially the covid pandemic which had the girls out of school, abused, losing parents and getting pregnant among other issues.
- Rotary family for embracing Empowering of girls' initiative. Each Club is ready to have a project or more so that we can create impact.
- Our partners for the support. The partners already on board are willing to see to it that we work and are able to help the girls.

- The community for the cooperation, mobilization and taking ownership of the Rotary Projects.

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