

Water and Pads for School-Girls –Empowerment for Life

A Project of the International Alliance of Women initiated at the IAW Triennial Congress in Cyprus 2017

PROPOSAL (August 2017)

Goals of the IAW Project

-dismantling

- all barriers which prevent girls from attending school during their menstrual cycle in the African, Asian and South-American region, with special regard to IAW-member countries

-promoting

- provision of washable and reusable sanitary pads, if possible produced in a local project,
- health education, particularly addressing the taboo aspects,
- self-confidence of girls about womanhood and the knowledge about equality of men and women,
- knowledge about the full sexual and reproductive health rights of girls in particular in rural areas,
- alertness about the precarious situation at the local, national and international level.

Facts

according to UNICEF¹ and UNESCO² about one in 10 girls in developing countries either skip school during menstruation to avoid accidents or have to drop out of school because they don't have sanitary pads. Rural girls are generally hardest hit because of poor infrastructure.

Menstruation is often one of the strongest taboos and is intertwined with myths.

Girls are missing classes up to 5 days per month due to

- the lack of sanitary pads, often aggravated by a lack of suitable underwear to fix them or keep in place substitutes like blood-absorbent rags from old clothes,
- generally unhygienic conditions, particularly no privacy due to the lack of separate toilets for girls and boys on the school area.
- the use of inappropriate unhygienic material like leaves, dry grass and rags or old cloth to catch the blood often causes infections in the genital area.
- the lack of privacy aggravated by a lack of soap or other disinfectant in the toilet, are additional handicaps.
- moreover the girls risk harassment and even sexual assault.
- the attention required for successful studies both at school and at home is diverted by fear and apprehension of what might happen.

The consequences are detrimental resulting for the girl students in an increased risk of dropping out of school due to the recurrent absences.

Tasks of the IAW Project

- promoting the dissemination of the full sexual and reproductive rights of girls and women through all its media channels on the national and international level,
- addressing in particular the education and the management of menstruation hygiene of schoolgirls,
- sensitizing students against unwanted pregnancies,
- strengthening networking on the national and international level by a strong advocacy which addresses communities, governments, and also the private and public sector.

Description

IAW builds on the solidarity among women around the globe and is therefore very much concerned about the intolerably bad life-situation of many girls in the countries of some IAW member organizations. Therefore IAW can rely very much on specific fact-finding of IAW-representatives in their respective countries.

Moreover by its privileged status as an ECOSOC member of the United Nations and its worldwide network, IAW has many channels for a successful advocacy. IAW is also very visible thanks to its excellent means of communication (website, IAW-journal, face-book, newsletter etc.).-Right now all these assets are more than ever important considering that Mr. Trump has reestablished e.g. the cruel Gag-Rule. For many countries this means a radical stop of funding of health-centers, reducing access to family planning, etc.

Other institutions e.g. school are suffering from these drastic financial cuts because the education of many girls is seriously hampered.

Here the IAW project “Water and Pads” wants to step in by bringing this precarious situation to an increased worldwide attention and by strengthening the respective national women’s organizations in their efforts for equality of boys and girls in education and in sexual and reproductive health matters.

Participation in the IAW project:

IAW project actor group PAG

- IAW organizations in the field,
- IAW commission of Health,
- IAW members of the board and extended board,
- women with specific expertise,
- evt. additional parties such as counselors in the local communities or government agencies etc.

IAW Project Steering Group PSG

Three or four persons closely connected with this IAW project coordinate and monitor the progress of the project. They report regularly to the IAW presidency. The PSG elaborates the high level plan, fixes the milestones and works out the detailed steps.

Fundraising

In the course of the IAW project financial support will be needed, see below.

Timeline of the IAW project

October 2017

- IAW Congress adopts the preliminary IAW resolution “Water and Pads for Schoolgirls”
- IAW Congress confirms the launching of the IAW project
- IAW Congress establishes the project actor-group PAG
- IAW Congress establishes the project steering group (3-4 persons) PSG

Winter 2017/2018

- PSG contacts the IAW member organizations interested to join the project, providing all information in English and French.
- PAG and PSG collect detailed information about the current situation in their respective countries,
- PSG and PAG perhaps together with the IAW presidency contact with other interested organizations or official agencies.

Spring 2018

- PSG and PAG present their first findings to the IAW Board (electronically)
- PSG and PAG “shape” the IAW project in its definitive form – it can go public!
- IAW Communication Unit presents the IAW project on its channels
- PSG and IAW Board start an internal IAW- fundraising-campaign
- Possibly a fundraising group is needed

Autumn 2018

IAW Board Meeting (much exchange with PAG and PSG is done electronically)

- PSG and PAG delegates are updating the IAW members about the actual development of the project,
- IAW Board makes its inputs,
- IAW member organizations of Africa, Asia etc. involved in the projects, voice their demands,
- Possibly available funds are given to the respective IAW member organizations,
- IAW with its representatives at UN prepares for a UN CSW-parallel-event in 2019.

Spring 2019

- CSW 63 in New York: the IAW parallel-event is a chance for more networking!

Autumn 2019

IAW International Meeting:

- Evaluation: IAW Project will be continued or stopped

Gudrun Haupter and Ursula Nakamura 31.08.2017

1 UNICEF http://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/MHM_vConf_2014.pdf

2 UNESCO <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002267/226792e.pdf>