

YOUTH WITH A FOCUS TESO

(YWAFT)



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

www.ywaft.org



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FORWARD

Every year is important to YWAFT and to our core mission: “And the vision to transform communities by inspiring youth throughout the Teso sub-region and Uganda ***to support the community’s access to quality education equitably to end illiteracy, hunger, poverty, live Healthy and conserve environment and stimulate development***” as a whole to drive a new era that fosters development, growth, employment creation and productivity. But 2021 was unique in some exceptional ways. It was the year in which we marked YWAFT’s 9th anniversary, looking back to celebrate and reflect on what we have learned and looking ahead to apply those lessons to meet the challenges we face to support the youth and the needy community. 2021 was also the first full year of working in very stressful situation perpetrated by COVID-19 pandemic negative impacts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Agenda 2030 sets ambitious targets to eliminate extreme poverty and hunger, provide quality education for all, protect the planet and promote peaceful, inclusive societies and to do so in a way that leaves no one behind. By definition, this means we must reach the most disadvantaged, vulnerable and excluded youth, every boy and every girl including vulnerable persons, in every society. In fact, there is no other way to do it. Investing in reaching the farthest behind youth will not only save lives but it will also save the future and spur development. By providing today’s youth with the services and support they need to make the most of their own lives, we give them the tools to help them fulfil their potential of breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and deprivation, and building a more equal nation.

In 2021, YWAFT and our partners focused relentlessly on delivering results that address rural girl children challenges that affect their lives and future – helping deliver proven, focused interventions to the girls, parents, teachers and community leaders who need to be supported most. As the pages of this report show, the message from the Executive Director meant helping rural girls with access to education, menstrual sanitation and hygiene management for poor rural school girls, livelihood and access to employment opportunities.

This report tells the stories of some of those girls. Stories like that of school girl children who are now able to attend school without absenteeism because of the support from YWAFT and partners.

By helping change the lives of these girls – and so many others – for the better, we are showing that progress is possible. That every life of the girl has an immeasurable value. And that, ultimately, the better, more equal nation envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goals is not a naive hope, but a reachable and realistic hope.

Apolot Mary

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

YWAFT

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INTRODUCTION

The year 2021 will be remembered for COVID-19 pandemic impacts, program disruptions, uncertainty, unprecedented death and pain it caused world-over. Everybody became vulnerable, while children seemed to be less vulnerable to the virus directly, school closures, increased vulnerability to abuse of girls, forced teenage marriage, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies of young school girls, the mental health strains of parents and families, distance from friends, and loss of access to vital health care and protection services hurt everyone deeply.

The pandemic exposed deep inequalities that have existed for too long, with the worst impact on the poorest countries and communities and, those already disadvantaged by discrimination, social exclusion, fragility and conflicts.

This report details the accomplishments by YWAFT for and with youth of Teso in 2021. It covers the organization's program work, implemented projects, partnerships and advocacy efforts in strategic sectors, with emphasis on reaching every youth and accelerating progress for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged girls and boys. The report also highlights YWAFT's innovations, its efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness of operations.

Within its mandate and mission to support the community's access to quality education equitably to end illiteracy, hunger, poverty, and conserve environment. And the vision to transform communities by inspiring youth throughout the Teso region and Uganda as a whole to drive a new era that fosters development, growth, employment creation and productivity. YWAFT is driven by the need to see the youth meet their basic needs, attain human dignity and live a healthy life that promotes development of girl-children and boy's education equitably, increased income generation activities, attain food security, and increased access to adequate safe and clean drinking water.

Highlights of achievements in 2021

01	Providing reusable sanitary pads and knickers to rural school girls from extremely poverty stricken families to enable girls stay at school resulting to 250 kits of reusable sanitary pads and 500 knickers distributed to rural girls selected from the poorest families in five schools.
02	Providing capacity building support on menstrual sanitation and hygiene management (MSHM), sexual and reproductive health. 610 rural girls trained in menstrual sanitation and hygiene management, life and reproductive health, able to make hand-made reusable sanitary pads and girls health clubs to providing peer-to-peer counselling and reproductive health information established.
03	Reducing the prevalence of risks caused by girl-child school drop-out, teenage marriage, illegal abortions, and unwanted pregnancies through providing technical support to senior women teachers and head teachers, religious and clan leaders, Lcs, parents and VHTs to know their roles to prevent girl-child school drop-outs, reduce forced child marriages and teenage pregnancies and how to respond to post illegal abortions. 50 senior women teachers and head teachers, religious and clan leaders, Lcs, parents and VHTs trained and know their roles.
04	Creating awareness in the community and public leaders of the effects of girl-child school drop-outs, forced child marriage, illegal abortion, and unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 community awareness raising radio talk-shows conducted and benefited audience from Teso sub-region, Bugisu, Lango, Karamoja and Kapchorwa. • 5 public campaigns on menstrual sanitation and hygiene, prevention of domestic violence and effects of girl-child school drop-outs, forced child marriage, illegal abortion, and unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. • 1,000 copies of IEC materials on sexual and reproductive health distributed in schools, places of worship, health clubs and markets.
05	Sensitization of the community on the SOPs and the prevention of COVID-19 further spread resulting to the distribution of 1,000 brochures and 1,000 copies of posters from the Ministry of Health and WHO to the community.
06	Conserving environment and improving household income generation through tree planting. Coffee tree seedlings nursery established for raising coffee tree seedlings for distribution to the schools, public institutions and interested farmers.
07	Ensuring availability of pre-intervention baseline data and statistics regarding the magnitude and the scale of the problems related to rural school girls. The baseline survey was conducted, report and supporting statistical data produced and disseminated to the stakeholders for planning, programming and making informed decisions.

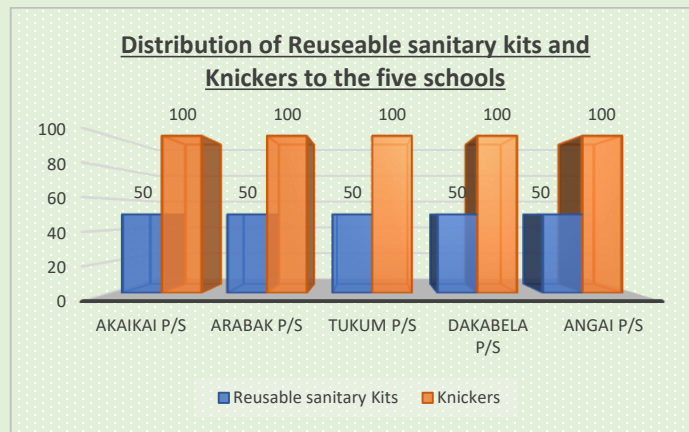
EDUCATION, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

YWAFT continues to lobby for support from donors and charity partners to assist change lives of rural school's girls. The approach and the strategy of this intervention is to mitigate the challenges that school girls encounter at school during menstrual periods, especially absenteeism and eventual school drop-out that exposes girls to early marriages, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies, sexual exploitation, HIV/AIDS infections and unsafe illegal abortions including mortality in extreme circumstances.

Through this collaboration and net-work, YWAFT and Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) pooled resources together that enabled the implementation of the project entitled (Improving Rural Girl's Menstrual Sanitation and Hygiene). The project provided technical and material assistance to 250 girls from extremely poor families with reusable sanitary pads and knickers in five schools (Angai, Dakabela, Tukum, Arabaka, and Akaikai). This was timely support for vulnerable girls and a big relief to poverty-stricken parents because it enabled the girls to stay at school to continue with education. Photographs of distribution are shown below:



Photo © 2021 YWAFT –Rural School girls supported by YWAFT with Sanitary materials.



Items procured and distributed	Akaikai P/S	Arabaka P/S	Tukum P/S	Dakabela P/S	Angai P/S	Total
Reusable sanitary Kits	50	50	50	50	50	250
Knickers	100	100	100	100	100	500

A total of 250 kits of reusable sanitary pads and 500 knickers were procured and distributed to 250 girls identified from extremely poor families as depicted from the chart and table above. The support enabled the girls to access and utilize sanitary pads and accelerated the reduction of absenteeism of girls from school during their menstrual periods.



Photo © 2021 YWAFT -School girls from Arabaka Primary school supported by YWAFT with Sanitary materials.

CAPACITY BUILDING:

Through capacity building program, YWAFT trained 600 girls in menstrual sanitation and hygiene management (MSHM), sexual and reproductive health. In addition, YWAFT enhanced the capacity of 600 school girls on how to hand-make reusable sanitary pads. Besides, YWAFT procured start-up fabric materials for making pads and knickers and conducted five training sessions in five schools (Angai, Dakabela, Tukum, Arabaka and Akaikai). To-date, however, the trained girls are able to make hand-made reusable sanitary pads themselves which makes the intervention sustainable.



Photo © 2021 YWAFT-Team training girls how to make reusable sanitary pads in Arabaka Primary School

Furthermore, YWAFT supported the five schools to reactivate 5 role-model girl's health clubs and movements to provide peer-to-peer counselling and reproductive health information in the schools. Also, YWAFT supported five schools with Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials and equipped them with skills and knowledge in respect to menstrual sanitation and hygiene management (MSHM), sexual and reproductive health.

In regards to reduction on the prevalence of the risks caused by girl-child school drop-outs, teenage marriages, illegal abortions, and unwanted pregnancies. YWAFT trained 50 senior women teachers and head teachers, religious and clan leaders, LCs, selected parents and VHTs to understand their roles to prevent girl-child school drop-outs, forced child marriage and teenage pregnancies and how to respond to post abortion incidences as leaders.



Photo © 2021 YWAFT-Team and partners train leaders on their roles and responsibilities to protect girl children.

YWAFT in its efforts to have pre-intervention baseline data regarding the magnitude and the scale of the problems affecting rural school girls. YWAFT conducted a baseline survey which produced the baseline report and supporting data that formed benchmarks against which YWAFT and stakeholder's determined focused interventions to ensure that they were appropriate, coherent and targeted. But most importantly, the report availed the district authorities and partners' data and statistics for planning, programming and making informed decisions.

The consultant was hired and provided a comprehensive analysis of the situation using a balanced range of qualitative and quantitative methods, desk review of available secondary data, data collection from the field, document the observations of the situation, supervision and cleaning up of raw data including writing and presentation of findings and recommendations of the baseline report.

ADVOCACY:

Advocacy being the key component of YWAFT program, and based on the findings and the recommendations outlined in the baseline survey report in relation to rural Girls School drop-out, domestic and gender-based violence in the community, forced teenage marriages of girls including teenage pregnancies and illegal abortions in the community. YWAFT stepped up awareness raising campaigns in 2021 through radio talk-shows, distribution of IEC materials and conducting public address rallies in the communities, places of worship, schools and markets on the best practices of menstrual sanitation and hygiene and reproductive health. And as well as the rights of girls to access and use sanitary kits during menstrual flow unconditionally and in friendly sanitary facilities and environment in schools.



Photo © 2021 YWAFT-Team distributing IEC materials in Amukaru market during public campaigns.

The campaigns also raised awareness on the causes and effects of girl-child dropout from school, highlighted the need for the community to understand the effects and the causes of Gender Based Violence (GBV). The campaigns were to enhance the knowledge and skills of the community leaders, religious and clan leaders on their roles and responsibilities so as to prevent domestic violence incidences in their communities because the impact of (GBV) directly affects the education and welfare of the girls.



Photo © 2021 YWAFT-Team during public awareness campaigns.

In addition, YWAFT Conducted follow-up and monitoring visits in the schools and target community around schools to ensure that the skills and knowledge attained through training were put into practice.

AWARENESS CREATION:

To raise awareness in the community and leaders on effects of girl-child school drop-outs, forced child-marriage, illegal abortions, unwanted pregnancies and how to prevent the further spread of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic in the community. YWAFT conducted three radio-talk shows successfully.

It is worthwhile highlighting here that the panellists who participated in the radio talk-shows were strategically identified technocrats from the district. They included the Senior District Health Educator, District Inspector of Schools, the Police Officer in-charge family affairs and Executive Director of YWAFT. Each handled topics of their specialization. For instance, the Senior District Health Educator dealt with menstrual sanitation and hygiene management (MSHM), sexual and reproductive health and how to prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in the community including making the roles of VHTs to protect and support the girl-child known and practised.

The District Inspector of Schools handled the topics on responsibilities of teachers to support and protect girls while at School which responsibilities included;

- To support girls during their menstrual periods.
- Encourage girls to stay at school during menstrual periods.
- Provide emergency assistance to girls during menstrual periods.
- Help both girls and boys to understand about puberty and menstruation.
- Ensure that education about menstruation reduces stigma and discrimination.
- Make other teachers understand that menstrual hygiene is a right not a privilege.

On the other note, the Police Officer in-charge family affairs handled the responsibilities of both parents to support and protect their daughters during menstrual flow and those responsibilities of parents involved the following;

- Ensuring that their daughters access menstrual management items such sanitary towels, knickers, soap etc. during their periods.
- Counselling the daughters during their menstrual periods.
- Providing correct information about puberty, body changes and menstruation.
- Answering questions correctly to clear the doubts and reassure their daughters of menstrual flow management and hygiene.
- Stop sacrificing a girl's esteem at the altar of menstrual myths.
- Understanding that girl's menstrual hygiene is a right not a privilege.
- Understanding that providing sanitary towels to girls to control menstrual flow will reduce absenteeism in schools and will improve academic performance.
- Ensuring that a responsible father shouldn't push a daughter away to the mother because she is on her periods but just support her to manage it effectively.

In addition, the Police Officer in-charge family affairs also handled the topics on the roles of the religious and clan leaders, LCs, to prevent girl-child school drop-outs, forced child marriage and teenage pregnancies and how to respond to post illegal abortion incidences.

Overall, YWAFT achieved the targeted results. The talk-show program listeners from Teso Sub-region and the neighboring areas of Karamoja, Pallisa, Lango, Kapchorwa and Mbale benefited from the program.

ENVIROMENTAL CONSERVATION

YWAFT has established coffee tree-seeding nursery for raising coffee tree seedlings for distribution to association members, schools and interested farmers. The approach is to promote and encourage farmers to plant trees to combat climate change, create economic opportunities because coffee, fruits harvested from orchards are sold to generate income besides timber and firewood harvested from trees.



Photo © 2021 YWAFT-Coffee tree –seedlings in the nursery beds.

LIVELIHOOD:

Regardless of daunting challenges impacted by COVID-19 pandemic. YWAFT mobilized its members to contribute resources that were used to implement the project entitled **(Improving Rural Girl's Menstrual Sanitation and Hygiene)** in Arapai Sub-County.

Overall, the livelihood sector suffered drastic set-backs due to COVID-19 impact as well as natural disaster caused by draught. Food insecurity and poor nutrition due to poor harvest affected many households resulting to malnutrition among children and breastfeeding mothers including people living with HIV/AIDS whereby some abandoned taking medication for lack of food because drugs are strong to be taken in empty stomachs.

But amidst those challenges, the coffee and fruit trees project continued to perform moderately as depicted in the photo below.



CONSTRAINTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

YWAFT is still challenged by inadequate funding that has hampered its strategic development plan to construct girl's toilets with bathrooms separate from boys and teachers, hand-washing sanitation facilities and distribution of menstrual sanitation materials for rural school girls from poor families. The construction of classrooms, teacher's houses, institutional water facilities including (expansion of Biogas and energy saving stoves technology), environmental conservation, food security and livelihood program activities are not implemented on schedule as planned.

The impact of COVID-19 in Uganda and globally affected YWAFT programs due to restriction of movement, affected projects that were in the pipeline including funding, delayed implementation of programs. It turned the organization operations upside down. Staff had to operate remotely from homes with restricted movements.

There is need to strengthen and diversify the funding to cover planned program activities and to motivate volunteers. YWAFT still needs to get long-term funders to support its strategic development plan to fulfill its long-term planned strategies and expanding programs to leverage the contribution from the members. Thus, YWAFT is striving to strengthen fund-raising program both locally and internationally to secure resources to sustainably manage planned program activities.

CONCLUSION

YWAFT humanitarian intervention has to some extent brought on board some positive change in the mindsets of the youth and community in Teso. At least awareness has been created on the effects of climate change and mitigation measures. Most members and farmers are now demanding for tree seedlings to plant, and construction of Bio-gas plants and energy saving stoves is increasingly on demand.

Program Partners	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. YWAFT members2. AFRIpads Uganda Limited. (WWW.afripads.com)3. Community and well-wishers.4. Soroti District Administration,5. Biogas Uganda Solutions.6. MS/ Tracy Pepper-Pendo-Project7. Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW).
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