

SUMMARY OF THE ROTARY/WASRAG MESSAGE ON MHM TO THE UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN.

1. Importance of MHM in WASH and Why MHM is part of WASRAG Mandate/Agenda:

- Menstruation is, in my view, a “**Special Gift from God**” and yet it remains a formidable challenge to women in Uganda and elsewhere in developing world.
- Much as it is a usual/simple bathroom activity in the developed world, it remains a monster/big challenge to “**Women Empowerment**” which many rather not talk about. Therefore women Empowerment cannot have the same meaning in the two worlds.
- Research in Uganda indicates that about 60% of the girls miss school – about 3 months in a year, equally the women annually loose same time of their productive life.
- Therefore we must “**Break the Silence**” and let everyone know and talk about this.

2. How MHM Connects to WASH:

- Rotary’s WASH agenda focuses on addressing the “**Poverty Cycle**” in communities.
- Good WASH practice and behavior reduce the disease burden of a community by 70 – 75%. Disease is a burden to women, they look after all the sick in the family/community.
- WASRAG’s advocacy and advisory services help Rotarian worldwide to implement impactful and sustainable projects with special focus on “**Girls’ Education and Gender Equity**”
- Reduced disease burden translates into reduced medical bills, more time available for production, more funds available for other family use, time for children to go to school, etc.
- MHM is that special WASH component that addresses and removes that constant challenge and empowers women.
- **Aside from MHM, women connect to WASH in 3 other important ways, leading to transformation of life and livelihood in communities:**
 - Early childhood instruction and mentorship
 - Sourcing and management of household water supply
 - Food supply chain management at household level

3. MHM = Women’s Empowerment:

- In my view, women are the CEOs of households and communities in my part of the world. Therefore decent and sustainable MHM liberates, dignifies and empowers women to effectively and efficiently execute their important roles for urgently needed social transformation of their communities.
- Therefore access to MHM services and facilities ought to be a basic RIGHT.
- Days for Girls International (DfGI) MHM solution stands in its own category, because:
 - It is “**Cost-Effective**” – at a cost of a reusable kit of about USD. 2.00 – 3.00, which lasts for about 3 years as opposed to disposable pads which cost about USD. 1.00 – 2.00, used once and probably not enough to last a full day.
 - It has a “**Multiplier Effect**” – girls are taught to make their kits and more to sell to other girls as a business. This “**Self-Help**” model is spreading like fire into many communities.
 - Therefore, the DfGI solution/model is a “**Sustainable**” initiative which should be supported.