

Girls of Tomorrow Annual Newsletter

2023 Visual Overview



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A Year in Review

Thank you for your support of the Girls of Tomorrow (GOT) Foundation!

We believe that with effective resources, education and support, every girl can become a leader and innovator in her community.

In 2023, we completed our 11 month research project supported by Global Affairs Canada, and saw fantastic results. We worked with five schools and one community centre to train male and female students to create permaculture gardens where every plant was connected to menstrual health and female wellness. By the end of the project, results showed an increased support for girls' menstrual health and hygiene, a boost in female participants' self-esteem, and an increase in girls' school attendance.

We also continued our main programming, including offering educational sessions in computer skills and tailoring, and supporting girls' school education through our scholarship program. None of this would be possible without people like you who have supported our mission!

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a brief visual overview of our year. For more in depth information about our projects and programming, check out our website girlsoftomorrow.ca or contact us at info@girlsoftomorrow.ca.

We thank you again for helping us make an impact!



Menstrual Permaculture Gardens: *A FIT funded research project*

In Uganda, menstrual stigma is a pervasive issue affecting the lives of countless women and girls. **A recent national study revealed that over 60% of Ugandan girls face exclusion, shame, and ridicule due to their menstrual cycles.** Cultural norms, inadequate access to menstrual hygiene resources, and limited education on the subject contribute to the perpetuation of this stigma.

Often, complex social problems require unique solutions. In 2022, we were awarded a grant from Global Affairs Canada's Fund for Innovation and Transformation to combat menstrual stigma in a new & innovative way.

Over several months, boys and girls from five schools **learned how to create permaculture gardens at their schools, and how every plant was connected to female health, physiology and well-being.** For example, students learned the millet could be consumed by menstruating girls to raise their iron levels. They also learned how to use banana fibres to make reusable menstrual pads.

The gardens not only provided a sustainable source of nourishment but fostered an environment of open dialogue surrounding menstrual health, eroding the walls of stigma and misinformation.

RESULTS & IMPACT

- Menstrual stigma was reduced significantly. At baseline, 82% of girls reported experiencing menstrual stigma in school which decreased to just 20% at endline.
- There was a decrease in school absenteeism with 66% of girls reporting missing school because of their period at baseline and only 18% at endline.
- Parents reported providing more emotional support by endline increasing rates from 34% to 63% for mothers and 66% to 77% for fathers.
- There was a 25% increase of female student leaders around the issue of menstrual health and hygiene in their schools by endline.
- The percentage of girls experiencing bullying related to menstruation dropped from 20% to just 0.8% by endline.

GOT's Menstrual Garden Project Video









“We grew up using a banana stalk at home for mulching our garden and sometimes they just threw it away. I never knew that it could be of help to me during my menstruation...They taught us how to use a banana fiber to make menstrual pads and I was surprised because the pads are comfortable, washable and dry very fast. I shared this knowledge with my parents who later asked me to make a sample for them. They were also surprised at such an innovation.”

—Female Student



“We learned about different plants and their benefits, including the green heart tree which is used by the local herbalists to help with the balancing of hormones in the female. We also learned about lavender and how it can be used to calm the nervous system and emotions. That evening when I went home passed this knowledge to my mother and my sister. I gave my sister a lavender sack I had made to help relax her next time she has her periods. I felt good knowing I can help”

—Male Student





Entrepreneur Program

GOT's Entrepreneur Program is an ongoing training and mentorship program for girls in the Rakai District. The program teaches leadership, finance and life skills, as well as offers practical training in computer programs and sewing on a weekly basis.

The computer training taught essential skills in programs including Microsoft Word, Powerpoint and Excel. The sewing training offered lessons on how to tailor clothing and other functional products like menstrual pads.

This year, a total of 30 girls completed our programming.



Scholarship Program



This year we continued sponsoring our scholarship recipients' formal education. Through our program, we cover girl's full tuition, boarding expenses, and school supplies, as well as receive mentorship & emotional support from our team on the ground.

Community Centre

GOT Centre has become an important learning hub and safe space for girls and women to develop skills. Key activities we host at the centre:

- **Permaculture Workshops**—Techniques for growing resilient plants in a small area of land
- **Menstrual Pad Making**—Materials provided for girls to create their own menstrual pads
- **Physical Wellness Days**—Yoga and body exercises, teaching self-care and mental wellness
- **Computer and Tailoring**—Drop in hours to use sewing machines and computers seven days a week
- **Artisan Shop**—Two days a week women sell baskets from a small store in the centre
- **Women's Savings Groups & Financial Literacy Training**—Collective saving and investing





GOT Community Centre



Computer Training



Tailoring Training



Permaculture Workshops



Women's Saving Groups

Ottawa Fund for Innovation and Transformation Conference

In September we attended a FIT sponsored conference in Ottawa to network, learn and collaborate with other Canadian non-profit organizations testing innovations in the global south.

For organizations working to change the world for the better, scaling impact is a common goal. The conference featured expert John Gargani who argued that a more creative and critical approach to scaling is both possible and essential. His workshops taught actionable principles to help GOT design, manage, and evaluate our scaling strategies.



What's Next?



This upcoming year, we have a lot of plans in store. Here are some of the goals we're hoping to accomplish in 2024:

- Water Well at GOT Centre
 - Better access to water will lead to improved garden conditions, less crop loss, and food security
- Menstrual Permaculture Gardens (new classes)
 - Work with 1-2 new classes to run our 8 month program
- Banana Fibre Pad Testing
 - Completing further testing of the viability of banana fibre menstrual pads
- Hiring another local support staff/mentor for GOT community centre
- Improving the mental health component of our Entrepreneur Program

And more!

You make our programs possible.

Thank you for
your support!

