

GIRLS' ADVOCACY CLUBS PROJECT

Omoro District, Northern Uganda

January - December 2025



Investing in
Education

IMPACTS:



600

girls supported



40+

reusable sanitary pad kits
handsewn at each school

78%

drop in reports of lacking
sanitary resources

54%

drop in reports of teasing
by boys about
menstruation

100%

of Girls' Advocacy Clubs
continue to meet
independently since their
formation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Girls' Advocacy Clubs project aims to establish supportive and empowering girls' clubs in primary schools across Northern Uganda. Led by senior female teachers, these clubs create safe spaces for girls to build confidence, share experiences, and develop essential life skills. To address barriers such as menstrual stigma, limited access to sanitary products and low community support, the project adopts a holistic approach; combining peer support, practical training, and community engagement – to empower girls to stay in school, complete their education and thrive.

In 2025, African Revival established girls' advocacy clubs at 20 primary schools in Omoro District, Northern Uganda; directly supporting 600 upper primary girls (P5-P7). Key interventions included assertiveness training, one-day WASH and Menstrual Health Management (MHM) workshops, hands-on reusable pad-making sessions, and exchange visits between project schools. Educational resources such as MHM comic books and training manuals were also distributed. Importantly, the project actively engaged boys, parents, and teachers to foster a more supportive environment for girls.

Monitoring results show that girls are now more confident in voicing their needs, have improved knowledge of menstrual health, and are better equipped to manage their menstruation with dignity. Clubs continue to meet regularly, providing ongoing peer support. The project has also strengthened community understanding and support for girls' education; helping to build lasting change in Omoro District.

PREPARED BY

Justin Ogen - ARU
Girls' Education Officer

December 2025

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About African Revival

Our vision is an Africa where every child has equal access to quality education, as we believe education is the key to overcoming poverty. Since 2005, we have worked with **over 300 primary and nursery schools** in Uganda, South Sudan and (until recently) Zambia, to allow **over 120,000 children** to fulfil their potential. We don't just provide infrastructure; we empower whole communities – pupils, teachers, and parents – to transform schools into thriving learning environments that build brighter, better futures.

Why Girls' Clubs?

A 2019 report by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative reported that more than 700,000 girls in Uganda between the ages of six and 12 have never attended school and four in five girls do not attend high school. Around half of girls between the ages of 15 and 24 are illiterate. Reasons include poverty, child marriage and teenage pregnancy – currently, teenage pregnancies account for one fifth of all births in Uganda. Feelings of shame around menstruation, and limited access to sanitary pads, water and private areas to change also make attending school during menstruation difficult and lead to many girls staying at home.

In Uganda, we work with school communities in the Acholi sub-region in the North, which is still recovering from decades of brutal war. Education for children, particularly primary and nursery ages and especially girls, was further impacted by the enforced closure of schools for two academic years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many girls became pregnant or married during lockdown and did not return to school afterwards. African Revival is committed to helping keep girls in school; ensuring they have the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

Project Background

Since 2012, African Revival has developed gender-based programmes to address barriers to girls' education. Our early initiatives introduced girls' changing rooms, sanitary pad distribution and training workshops as part of our menstrual health management (MHM) approach.

In 2018, we launched a five-year Girls & Sanitation (G&S) project at 43 schools in Uganda and Zambia, providing MHM and WASH training, reusable sanitary pads and improved sanitation infrastructure.

Building on this foundation, we ran a three-month pilot project in January 2022 called Menstrual Health Advocates (MHAs), in partnership with Irise International, to establish 10 girls' clubs to empower girls and challenge menstruation stigma. Following the success of this pilot, we expanded Girls' Advocacy Clubs (GACs) to 53 more schools across two districts and included reusable sanitary pad-making workshops into our model, for sustainability.

Today, we continue to expand GACs across Northern Uganda, using them as hubs for activities; including debates, training workshops, and information sharing.



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Over the course of 2025, African Revival established 20 more GACs (bringing the total number across Northern Uganda to 83) — each with 30 members — at primary schools across Omoro District. These clubs were led by two elected peer leaders and supported by senior female teachers; creating safe spaces for girls to build confidence, share experiences, and develop life skills.

Project Objectives



- Create forums for girls to discuss challenges and support one another.
- Deliver one-day WASH and MHM workshops at each project school, engaging pupils, staff and community members, including parents.
- Implement a reusable sanitary pad-making workshop at each school, to equip girls with practical skills and sustainable solutions.
- Challenge the stigma surrounding menstruation through club-led debates and advocacy activities involving boys, parents, and the wider community.

By embedding these objectives within the school and community context, the project sought to reduce absenteeism, improve girls' wellbeing, and foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment at school.

School Selection

The primary schools selected jointly by African Revival and the Omoro District Education Office to benefit from this project were:

Abuga, Abwoch, Tochi, Bwobomanam, Koch Koo, Koch Ongako, Koch Lii, Laminlawino, Opuk Omony, Opaya, Bobi, Bobi Foundation, Adyedda, Labworomor, Kulu Otit, Patek Bar, Minakulu, Tekulu, Okwir & Angaba Primary Schools

We thank all project schools for their collaboration.

"I am delighted to endorse this project, which has arrived at a critical moment. As the Education Officer responsible for Guidance and Counselling, I firmly believe this initiative will significantly enhance our schools' capacity to manage menstrual health, school sanitation, and hygiene. Given my expertise in this area, I am eager to provide ongoing support to ensure the project's success. I strongly encourage all schools to seize this opportunity and work collaboratively to achieve its objectives."

Mr Acura Fred, Omoro District Inspector

"This is just an answered prayer for us, we are really in dire need of support for our girls because there is high rate of absenteeism related to menstrual issues, and I know through the support from African Revival and the Girls' Advocacy Clubs Project, our girls will not miss school again due to menstrual issues."

Mr Olobo Moses, Headteacher, Labworomor Primary

Baseline Findings

At the outset of the project, we conducted a baseline survey across the 20 project schools. The survey captured the experiences and perspectives of over 300 randomly selected respondents – mainly girls, but also boys, teachers, PTA/School Management Committee (SMC) members, and local leaders – on MHM knowledge, school facilities, resources and psychosocial support. Analysis of 13 core indicators revealed a landscape marked by significant gaps and challenges.

- **Menstrual Health Knowledge:** “Poor” **(1.66/5)**: Most girls lacked basic information about menstruation and how to manage it safely.
- **Resources and Products:** Scores for access to MHM resources **(1.52/5)** and products **(1.63/5)** were both “Poor”, with many girls reporting they could not afford or access sanitary pads.
- **School Pad Provision & Facilities:** Provision of pads at school **(1.7/5)** and facilities for changing **(1.81/5)** were rated “Poor.” Only a handful of schools had private, safe spaces for girls to change or manage their periods.
- **Support in School & Community:** Support from teachers **(1.92/5)** and the wider community **(1.79/5)** was limited, with many girls feeling isolated or stigmatised.
- **Parental Support:** “Poor” **(1.85/5)**. Many parents were unaware of their daughters’ needs or unable to provide support due to poverty.
- **Girls’ Meetings:** Regular girls’ meetings were rare **(1.58/5)**, limiting opportunities for peer support and open discussion.
- **Facilities Satisfaction:** The lowest average score **(1.48/5)** reflected widespread dissatisfaction with insufficient school infrastructure.

Most Urgent Challenges:

Based on the number of mentions:

Lack of changing rooms (119); Lack of sanitary pads (166); Poverty (87); Fear and shyness (92); Teasing/stigma from boys (37); Unsupportive parents (18) & Lack of MHM training (9)

Baseline Insights:

- The results highlight a critical gap in both physical infrastructure and psychosocial support. The lack of safe, private, and equipped spaces, combined with limited opportunities for girls to share their experiences or seek guidance, creates an environment where menstrual health is poorly managed and often stigmatised.
- Girls scored low on most indicators, highlighting the large challenges they face in accessing information, essential supplies, and adequate facilities. Boys scored slightly higher, likely due to different experiences or levels of awareness, rather than better conditions, as they are less directly affected by the same issues.
- The majority of respondents were pupils, who scored low on most indicators – likely reflecting their direct experience of challenges. Teachers scored higher, with Deputy Heads most positive, and community groups showed mixed engagement – highlighting the need for deeper involvement to align with pupil realities.
- Despite some schools performing better in certain areas, consistently low scores reveal systemic issues and highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions – including infrastructure improvements, community sensitisation, and comprehensive MHM education.

Activities Delivered

Project Launch & Club Formation

The project was launched with the individual schools' administrations, to explain objectives, answer questions, and discuss collaboration for success. Girls' advocacy clubs were then established at all 20 schools – each club comprised 30 members, two of whom were chosen by their peers to serve as club leaders, who would oversee all club activities and act as spokespersons.

Local government officials from the Education Department embraced the initiative and pledged their support to ensuring the project was a success. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and SMC representatives at each school also welcomed the project with promises to offer support, including at community level.

The clubs started arranging their activities and quickly became vibrant spaces for dialogue, peer support and collective action.

Assertiveness Training

Recognising the need to build girls' confidence, we introduced assertiveness training across all clubs. Sessions explored what assertiveness means, why it matters, and how it differs from aggression and passivity. Through discussions, real-life examples and role-play, girls learned to communicate clearly, set healthy boundaries, and use "I" statements to express their needs without blame.

Activities reinforced confidence through positive self-talk, stepping out of comfort zones, and peer support. Training also promoted self-advocacy and decision-making via case studies and group exercises.

WASH and MHM Workshops

One-day workshops were held at each school, covering puberty, the science of menstruation, menstrual hygiene, and myth-busting around menstruation. Girls also learned how to use, wash, and care for reusable sanitary pads – equipping them with practical skills and the confidence to share this knowledge with peers across the school community.

To support girls' access to further information and care, a referral pathway to local health posts was established. Senior male and female teachers participated in the training and received a detailed MHM Training Manual, enabling them to replicate sessions for other students beyond the project's duration. Building on feedback from previous years, additional time was dedicated to ensuring teachers fully understood the manual and training content. MHM training was also extended to parents, PTA and SMC members to foster greater understanding of menstruation and strengthen community support for girls.



Baseline questionnaire, Bobi Foundation



Assertiveness training



WASH training, Patek Bar

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MHM comic books, Kulu Otit



Community meeting, Opuk

Reusable Pad-Making Workshops



Opuk Primary School



Okwir Primary School

Reusable Sanitary Pad-Making Workshops

In partnership with Lutino Adunu, a local enterprise led by activist and role model Ms. Shilla Adyero, all GAC members, as well as 15 invited boys per school, received hands-on training in making reusable sanitary pads. Over two days, participants learned to sew durable, comfortable pads and waterproof bags to store them, using locally sourced, quality materials and over-locking techniques, without the need for specialist equipment. Schools were provided with extra materials and guidance to continue production independently, and pads were distributed to girls, with some stored for emergencies at school. PTA and SMC representatives joined the workshops and praised the inclusion of boys, which helped foster empathy, reduce stigma, and create a more supportive learning environment for girls.

Printed Resources

800 copies of a fun and informative MHM comic book were distributed to the project schools. Designed with input from club leaders, the comic book is now used during club meetings and science lessons, helping to normalise menstruation and promote open discussion. Each school also received a copy of the MHM Training Manual to support ongoing education.

Community Engagement Meetings

Held at seven project schools, these meetings brought together parents, teachers and local leaders. Shifting sessions to coincide with saving group meetings increased participation, especially among men, whose involvement is crucial for supporting girls' education. Discussions focused on menstrual health, parental roles, and keeping children, especially girls, in school. Parents gained practical knowledge to dispel myths and support their daughters, while communities addressed barriers like financial constraints, early marriage, and teenage pregnancy. Concerns about school management and teacher engagement were raised, with recommendations for transparency and more parental involvement. These meetings strengthened community ownership and commitment to girls' education and retention.



Koch Ongako Primary School



Opuk Primary School



Koch Lii Primary School



Labworomor Primary

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Exchange Visits

Exchange visits brought girls from different project schools together – two girls from each club travelled to one of four host schools, where they observed how other clubs organise activities and shared ideas on leadership and advocacy. A key highlight was the involvement of female senior teachers and invited role models, who shared personal stories of overcoming poverty and barriers to education, to build successful careers. These testimonies sparked meaningful discussions; inspiring girls to challenge harmful norms and believe in their potential. Beyond learning, the visits fostered friendships and a sense of solidarity among participants, helping girls see themselves as part of a wider movement for change. Teachers reported that these interactions boosted motivation and reinforced commitment to sustaining advocacy efforts beyond the project period.



Exchange visit at Abuga Primary School

Monitoring and Evaluation

In November, we conducted joint monitoring visits to six project schools: Patek Bar, Minakulu, Kulu Otit, Laminlawino, Labworomor and Koch Ongako – selected to represent both high- and low-performing schools across the district. The monitoring team included AR project staff, Omoro District officials, and community development officers, who engaged with club members, teachers, parents, and school leaders to assess the project's progress and impact.

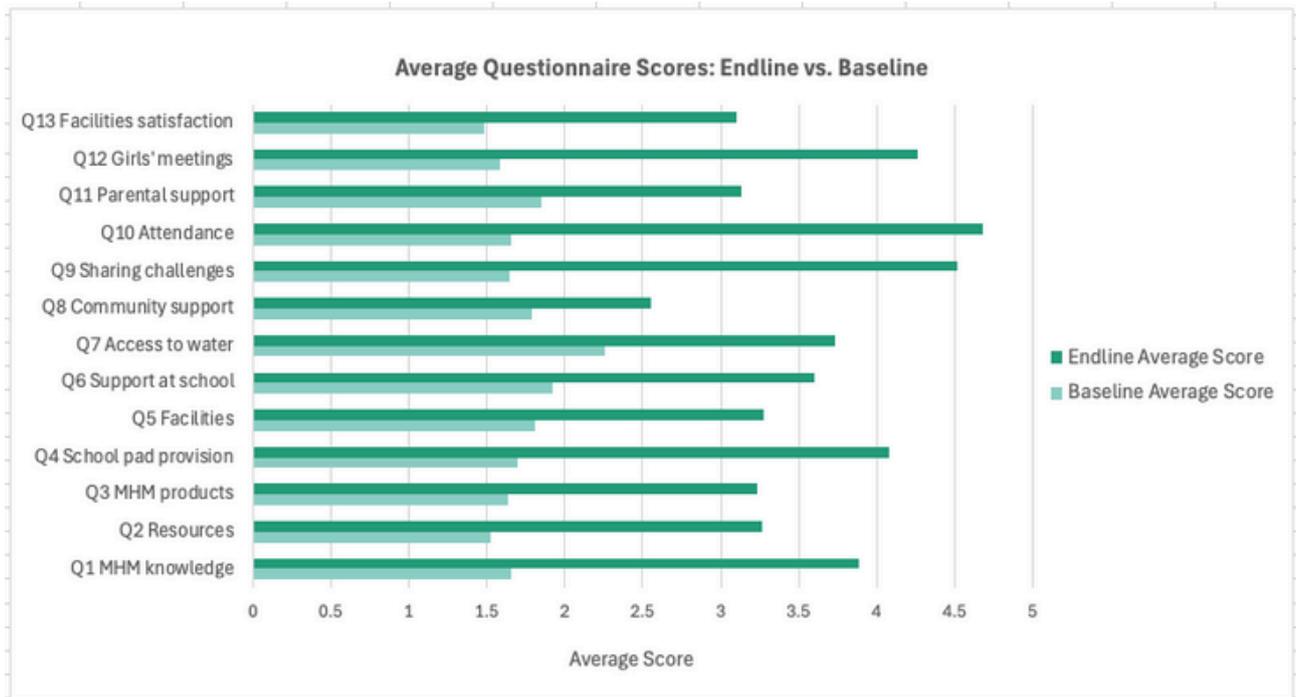
Joint Monitoring Insights:

Senior female teachers have played a pivotal role in creating supportive environments, where girls now speak openly and confidently about menstrual health and other challenges. Even girls who are new to menstruation are supported by their peers, and records show that pads are being distributed as needed. At Kulu Otit Primary School, girls and boys held debates on menstruation, which helped boys become advocates and reduced stigma. Boys are now actively supporting girls, not only in pad-making but also in classwork.

All monitored clubs are functional, with girls demonstrating increased self-esteem and assertiveness. Improved access to menstrual resources has led to better school attendance, and many club members have taken on leadership roles; organising activities such as "Keep the School Clean" campaigns and sensitising peers on issues like early pregnancy and hygiene. All six schools have allocated budget lines to procure more menstrual materials, and parents are increasingly interested in learning pad-making skills. However, some parents still prioritise boys' education or keep girls home for farm work, highlighting the need for continued community sensitisation. Encouragingly, clubs are planning new activities for the coming year, such as vegetable farming, to keep members engaged and ensure sustainability.

Endline Assessment

As the project concluded, we compared endline questionnaire results with the baseline, to assess the impact of GACs across Omoro District. The findings below highlight how the project has addressed the most critical barriers to girls' education and wellbeing, and where further progress is still needed.



The chart above shows significant improvements across all key indicators from baseline to endline. Every area measured improved substantially, with the most notable average score increases in **attendance during menstruation (1.65 → 4.68)**, comfort **sharing MHM challenges (1.65 → 4.52)**, and the **regularity of girls' meetings (1.58 → 4.26)**. Access-related scores also rose sharply: **school pad provision (1.70 → 4.08)**, **MHM knowledge (1.66 → 3.89)**, **access to resources (1.52 → 3.26)**, and **satisfaction with facilities (1.47 → 3.10)**.

Several schools demonstrated exceptional progress, with Abwoch, Minakulu, Bobi, Adyedda, and Abuga Primary Schools showing the largest improvements in overall scores. At endline, Abwoch, Okwir, Bobi and Abuga Primary Schools recorded the highest overall scores (**out of 5 - 3.92, 3.81, 3.78 and 3.77, respectively**) reflecting both the effectiveness of the interventions and the strong engagement of these school communities.

“Project schools report that boys have requested materials so they can make their sisters (who attend other schools) reusable sanitary pads.”

Justin Ogen, AR Project Officer

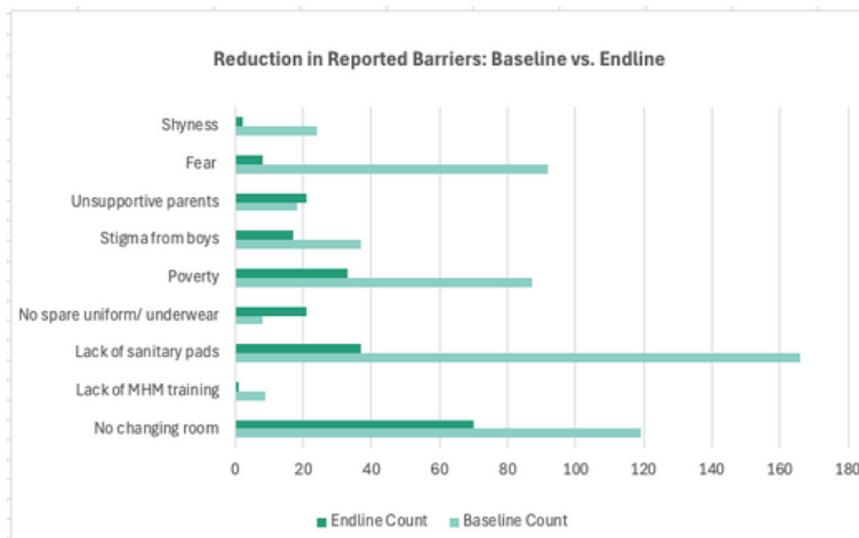
These outcomes align directly with the project’s activities — assertiveness training, one-day WASH/MHM workshops, hands-on reusable pad-making, exchange visits, and community engagement — and with our monitoring observations of increased girls’ confidence, boys’ advocacy, and teacher support.

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The chart to the left shows dramatic reduction in the most pressing challenges girls reported at the start of the project; issues such as lack of sanitary pads, poverty, fear, shyness, and stigma were widespread. By endline, mentions of these acute barriers had fallen sharply – most notably, reports of lacking sanitary pads dropped by over three-quarters, and references to fear and shyness became rare. Improvement in school infrastructure is still needed to ensure all girls can manage their menstruation with dignity.

Endline Insights:

At baseline, the data revealed critical gaps in both physical infrastructure and psychosocial support for girls in Omoro District. Endline results show these gaps have been substantially narrowed following completion of the project.

- **Physical Infrastructure:** While satisfaction with facilities and access to pads improved significantly – reflected in higher survey scores and fewer reports of lacking pads – there were no actual upgrades to infrastructure, such as addition of changing rooms, during the project period. This suggests perceived improvements may be due to better support and resource management, or changing expectations, rather than new facilities, and highlights the ongoing need for investment in school infrastructure.
- **Psychosocial Support:** The most significant gains were in girls' comfort sharing challenges and the regularity of girls' meetings. The girls' clubs have become safe spaces for open discussion, peer support, and guidance – directly addressing the isolation and stigma highlighted at baseline.
- **Gendered Impact:** Girls' scores, which started lower than boys' at baseline, have risen most sharply, closing the gap and confirming that interventions reached those most in need.
- **Role Alignment:** Pupils' scores have caught up with those of teachers and community members, indicating that improvements are now being felt directly by those most affected.
- **Systemic Change:** Progress is evident across all schools and respondent groups, resulting from targeted interventions in resourcing, training, and community engagement.

In summary, the project has not only improved physical conditions but also transformed the psychosocial environment; empowering girls to manage menstruation with dignity and participate fully in school life. Challenges remain outside the classroom, particularly in household economics and parental support, pointing to the next frontier for sustainability and community engagement.

Project Impacts



Outputs

- **20 Girls' Advocacy Clubs** established in Omoro District, each with 30 P5-P7 girls, supported by senior female teachers and meeting independently.
- **20 safe forums** created for girls to discuss challenges, support each other, and develop solutions.
- **One-day WASH/MHM workshops** delivered to pupils, teachers and community members at all project schools.
- **Educational resources distributed** – each school received one MHM Training Manual and 40 MHM comic books, with additional copies planned for wider distribution in Northern Uganda.
- **Two-day reusable sanitary pad-making workshops** held at every school, involving club members, invited boys, parents, and senior teachers.
- **40+ reusable sanitary pad kits** hand-sewn at each school, with additional materials provided for ongoing production and a stock of pads kept for emergencies.
- **Four exchange meetings** organised for club leaders to meet, be inspired and share ideas.
- **Open forums** established for discussing menstruation and barriers to girls' education; engaging schools and the wider community.

Outcomes

- **Empowered Girls:** Clubs have become vibrant, sustainable forums where girls support one another, and work together to overcome challenges affecting their education.
- **Increased Confidence and Advocacy:** Girls now speak confidently about their needs and challenges, demonstrating greater assertiveness and self-advocacy. Many now discuss not only menstruation, but also peer pressure and lack of home support.
- **Improved Knowledge and Reduced Stigma:** Both girls and teachers show stronger understanding of menstrual health, with significant knowledge gains and reduced stigma. Boys and community members are more supportive, and educational materials have equipped both students and teachers to share accurate information.
- **Sustained School Attendance:** Girls report feeling able to attend school during menstruation, owing to improved access to reusable pads and more supportive environments. Headteachers confirm a positive trend in girls' attendance, attributing this to confidence and practical support from the clubs.
- **Community Engagement:** Clubs have become platforms for engaging boys, parents, and community members; fostering a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere for girls' education.
- **Sustainability:** Clubs are committed to ongoing activities, with plans to accept new members each term and continued support from senior female teachers, ensuring the benefits of the project will last beyond its formal end. Girls are now able to produce their own reusable sanitary pads, and can share these skills with female relations and other members of the community.

Challenges

Despite progress, the majority of school-aged girls still lack private spaces to change and wash their sanitary pads, highlighting a clear need for improved WASH infrastructure to enable girls to manage menstruation effectively – both at school and at home.

Throughout both the baseline and endline surveys, most respondents reported only moderate levels of community action to protect children's rights and promote girls' education, with some noting that very little effort is made in their communities. Many also indicated that parents provide insufficient support for girls' menstrual and educational needs, often due to limited resources and prevailing attitudes that prioritise boys over girls.

In response to these challenges, the project engaged seven parent groups to address the issue of low parental support for girls. While this engagement marked an important step forward, it is clear that further efforts will be needed in future projects to develop durable, community-driven solutions that can sustainably support girls' education and wellbeing.

Conclusions

The Girls' Advocacy Clubs project in Omoro District has reinforced a sustainable model for empowering girls and transforming school communities. With a total of 83 clubs now operating independently in Northern Uganda, girls have gained the skills, confidence, and the support needed to stay in school and advocate for their needs. Senior teachers are equipped to continue menstrual health education, and the clubs provide ongoing forums for peer support, open discussion, and practical learning.

Project Testimonials

"I'm happy to be part of the girls' club. Previously, I would miss school for at least three days every month because my grandmother couldn't afford to buy me pads. But now, with the pads we've sewn, I believe I'll no longer have to miss school. Thank you, African Revival, for bringing this life-changing training to our school and empowering girls like me to stay in school with dignity."

Gifty L, P6 pupil, Labworomor PS

"Through this project, I have had a unique experience with my girls this year. The girls' club has empowered my girls through trainings and workshops. During the girls' meetings, the club members are the ones teaching their fellow girls about menstruation and other cross-cutting issues; my job is to supplement and provide clarifications on areas they did not adequately explain."

Irene, senior teacher, Kulu Otit PS

"I am impressed at how the project has developed. The entire package of activities is fantastic and crucial for our girls' wellbeing in the community and at school. I think that menstrual problems are no longer an obstacle to our girls' education because of their self-assurance and assertiveness in the project schools. They talk with such courage and dignity. This initiative should, if at all possible, be implemented in all of the remaining schools in Omoro District."

Fred Acura, District Inspector of Schools for Omoro District

Conclusions (continued)

This year's progress – seen in improved attendance, reduced stigma, and increased knowledge – demonstrates the effectiveness of holistic, community-driven approaches. While challenges remain, particularly around WASH infrastructure and parental engagement, the foundation is strong for lasting change. With continued commitment from teachers, parents, and local leaders, these clubs are well positioned to benefit even more girls and communities in the years ahead, and to inspire the expansion of girls' clubs across Northern Uganda.

Budget

The cost of the Girls' Advocacy Clubs, Omoro project in 2025 was approximately **£20,000**. This was an underspend compared to the original budget, with savings due to our Project Officer being based at home in nearby Gulu, rather than needing field accommodation, savings on the cost of WASH/MHM and pad-making workshops, and over-budgeting for motorbike fuel. There were exchange rate fluctuations over the year, but these were not extreme. This project was funded by underspends from the previous GAC project (in Nwoya District), as well as grants from the **Coles-Medlock Foundation** and **Souter Charitable Trust**, along with some funds allocated from the **AR Ball 2024**. The small overall underspend will be used to help fund the establishment of 20 more Girls' Advocacy Clubs in Kitgum District.



Thank you from the girls of Omoro District for supporting this project!