



PATHWAYS
MUNICIPALITY OF BRISBANE COUNCIL

Better Boys 2.0



PublicPathways



PRELUDE

Pathways Policy institute, in partnership with The Leo Project are together running a boys' school outreach program targeting adolescent boys in Laikipia County. These sessions are aimed at engaging the boys in conversations about their Sexual Reproductive needs, menstrual hygiene management (MHM), boy-girl relationships and career development.



The topics tackled in the program include Menstruation, Menstrual products, menstrual cycles, myths and misconceptions about menstruation, Boy/girl relationships and STIs and HIV/AIDS. Boys' knowledge on MHM issues is Key to a holistic approach on Sexuality Education in Menstrual hygiene management (MHM)

We, through this project are equipping young men/boys with information that will allow them to support and influence women and girls in managing menstruation in their households, schools, work places and the community through their many roles as husbands, fathers, brothers, classmates, teachers, colleagues, leaders, and policy makers.

On a tranquil afternoon, under the hot Kenyan sun, after a heavy lunch as is culture in most boys' high schools, a battle with sleep is to be expected. This however was not the case for the 75 young men and boys of Muramati Secondary, Muramati Primary and Naibor secondary aged between 12 and 17, who had a break in their monotonous daily routine when on the 26th and the 27th of October, 2021 a team of people came to visit them at their schools.

Soon after the excitement of seeing new faces died down there was a brief introduction session explaining that this was a team from Pathways Policy institute alongside its Partner organisation The Leo Project and that the main aim of their visit was to talk to them about menstruation and menstrual health and hygiene? This statement was met with puzzled looks that meant to communicate to the team that those were boys' schools and those topics were out of place. The facilitator on noticing this response explained to the young men that menstruation was a natural process and the boys should allow themselves to be a little curious on the issue since they have sisters, mothers, nieces, girlfriends and cousins of the female gender, who may need their assistance and will at a point need their understanding and empathy.





once all the boys' attention was captured, the team took them through the different sanitary products girls use to manage their period. Most of the boys proudly said they knew and had seen a pad at one point in their lives but they admitted that they had never gotten the chance to touch one or look at it keenly. Samples of both disposable and reusable sanitary towels were passed around and the boys got the chance to touch and examine them, fascination was plastered all over their faces when they saw that both types of pads have wings. This led to a brief demonstration from one of the facilitators on how to correctly use and dispose of a sanitary towel. She emphasized on the importance of maintaining high levels of hygiene by the girls when handling these sanitary products.

One of the boys was so impressed by the reusable sanitary towels he said it was a good business venture; one could get the right fabric and make affordable sanitary products for girls from less privileged backgrounds ensuring accessibility of these important commodities for all girls.

The next item on the list of products was the tampon and the menstrual cup, which are inserted into the body, there was a burst of giggling and a sudden cloud of shyness in all the three schools when it was mentioned that the girls insert these products into their bodies, the boys laughed saying it was impossible and inconveniencing since that meant they would not use the bathroom while on their period since the tampon and menstrual cup would hinder bodily functions like urinating, this led to a brief explanation on the anatomy of the vagina. .

The boys were in awe of the information that girls have different openings. They were given tampons and water to observe how tampons absorb liquid and many could not hold back the 'woahs' that escaped their lips during the demonstration session.

After a brief question and answer session tackling questions like how long should a girl have a pad on and does period blood smell, which were answered comprehensively, facilitators from Pathways took centre stage to explain the different cycles that girls have and what ovulation is, in the process explaining why some girls period durations vary.

The boys soaked in all this information and one could tell that they had finally gotten comfortable with the discussion. The giggling was gone and warmer but serious faces punctuated the classrooms. As the session was winding up, one young man from Muramati secondary expressed gratitude for having been accorded the chance to participate in the talk. He explained that for the longest time such discussions were considered women's issues. He expressed gratitude and said that he felt confident that he would be a better friend, a better brother, and a better man altogether who would provide a conducive and safe environment for women and girls and talk freely about menstrual health and hygiene to ensure it stops being a shameful topic.

