

## INFORMATION BRIEF

# Menstrual hygiene kits: Supporting girls' participation in school



Girls at the Islamic Call Society SSS, Mattru Jong, Bonthe District

In Sierra Leone, adolescent girls miss up to the 20% of their school year because of their period and being unable to afford sanitary products. This has significant consequences on their learning and participation in school.

To support girls' retention in school, Leh Wi Lan has distributed individual menstrual hygiene kits containing re-usable pads and provided orientation on menstrual health and hygiene to 300,000 girls across more than 2,650 junior and senior secondary schools nationwide.

### Key results

- Over 30% reduction in girls' absenteeism when they have their period.
- Increased girls' confidence, which improves their motivation and ability to participate in school.
- Safer personal hygiene because the reusable pads are more sanitary than products they were using before, such as cotton cloth, wool and toilet paper.
- Increased savings so that girls and their families can use money previously spent on sanitary products for other purposes, with monthly savings equivalent to the cost of lunch.

**"I can't express how happy I am for the Leh Wi Lan pads. In fact, I am a repeater. Anytime I am on my period I do not sit to test and even exams. I lost so many test but now I am going to be promoted to a new class."**



**300,000**  
girls benefitting

### Recommendations

In line with Sierra Leone's National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, girls should receive one menstrual hygiene kit each school year, which includes a reusable pad that can last for 12 months.

Orientation and discussion of menstrual health and hygiene should take place in school so that girls have access to quality information and the space to ask questions and learn. This will also contribute to addressing harmful social norms around menstruation.

Improvements to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools should complement menstrual hygiene campaigns. Many girls do not have adequate access to water, especially in rural areas, which makes it more challenging for them to manage their periods when in school.

Views reflect partners' findings and recommendations and are not the official position of the British High Commission in Sierra Leone. This briefing refers to data included in Leh Wi Lan report "Analysis of the impact of the distribution of menstrual hygiene kits to girls July 2019 – March 2021".

Leh Wi Lan/Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme (SSEIP) is a five-year (2016–2021) UKaid-funded programme aimed at improving English and mathematics learning achievement in all secondary schools of Sierra Leone, especially for girls. This study was designed and implemented by Leh Wi Lan's monitoring, evidence, and research workstream in close collaboration with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE). Any views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of UK Department for International Development (DFID) or MBSSE.