



India



Water Sanitation Hygiene & Girls' Education Project

Health Education Environment and Livelihood Society (HEEALS)   

HEEALS implements behavior change communication and education about menstruation to girls and women in rural India.

Launched in 2012, Not-for-profit , Menstrual Hygiene Management , Cross-sector , Cross-sector: Education , Women's Empowerment , South Asia: India

Partners: WASH United

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Problem Addressed

The lack of WASH facilities in schools are affecting young girls in terms of their education and overall health in schools, orphanages, refugee camps, rural & urban slums and marginalized communities. It has given rise to children, especially girls, dropping out of school, as well as threats to community safety such as many cases of sexual assault. There is also a lack of availability of soap, sanitary pads, and other hygiene-related essential items due to cost. Water filtration is similarly lacking, thus negatively impacting health.

Innovative Approach

In order to bring change to the girls HEEALS work with, much of the challenge is related to changing the behavior of the community. HEEALS employs a number of tools to do this in a locally-contextualized manner through Informal Education Communication (IEC) methods, such as participatory workshops and documentary film-making. Prior to using these techniques, HEEALS also undergoes significant communication outreach to understand the needs and gaps in the communities they serve.

Program Solution

HEEALS follows a model of Research, Awareness, and Facilitation (RAF) in its work. This includes behavior change communication (BCC) and health camps in schools and communities reaching remote areas of Indian states; the production of WASH resources and short documentary films such as "The Curse," a film about the taboos and myths related to menstruation in India; and other awareness-raising activities such as a dramatization to communicate important messages in a fun, imaginative, and expressive way, in an effort to foster students' understanding of the importance of WASH in their lives. This method was reflected to be inclusive and not limited by language barriers. HEEALS has seen not only a reduced drop out rate for girls in schools with which they have worked, but also an increase in girl enrollment. There is additionally a demand generated from girls in such schools for soap and sanitary pads, a portion of which HEEALS is able to provide.