The MoonCatcher project in Meghalaya (West and East Jaintia Hills District) Report 1 - April 2021

Since 2011 The MoonCatcher Project has been making reusable, washable menstrual management kits - “MoonCatcher Kits”- for distribution to girls around the world. Their activities and efforts range from sewing bees - "MoonBees" - in the US to on-the-ground education and MoonCatcher Kit production and/or distribution in Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Honduras, Haiti, and many other countries. With partners in India, they offer classes on menstruation management and reproductive health to schoolgirls entering puberty. The MoonCatcher Project has partnered with the Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust of Delhi, India to launch a sewing center in Delhi. Five full-time employees are working hard to produce about 2,000 kits every month. As of the end of March 2021 they have produced over 25,000 reusable kits and reached over 20,000 girls - providing a free, eco-friendly solution to menstruation management along with the menstrual and reproductive health curriculum. Their partner, Ruchika Jaggi has worked tirelessly to bring the MoonCatcher Project to India. She has already trained over 100 government teachers to deliver the curriculum.1 They have worked in Manipur, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Patiala, Dehradun, Nashik, and West Bengal in collaboration with various partners2. The pads and programs provide a way for girls to stay in school while menstruating, giving them a greater chance of completing their education.

In Meghalaya, West and East Jaintia Hills District the Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust is working with the Health and Beyond Foundation, Delhi3 through their public health consultant for Meghalaya, Dr. D.E. Laloo, to ensure the transportation of the MoonCatcher kits to the districts. Dr Laloo has requested the support of the office of the District Medical and Health Officer, Government of Meghalaya, in both districts for health talks on menstruation and distribution of the kits to schoolgirls from Classes VI to X in government funded or aided school (under the SSA program) in rural areas and through adolescent health clinics.

The DEIC Managers of East Jaintia, Dr. Handaka Suting, and West Jaintia, Mr. Kyrmen Suchiang and Mr. Augustine Yano, Coordinator of the RKSH program, have agreed to distribute the kits to schoolgirls as part of their ongoing school health program4 and attendees of adolescent health clinics. School health programs are being carried out throughout the year for children ages 6 -18 years for Government and Government-Aided Schools by the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) and adolescent health clinics through the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKS) teams under National Health Mission (NHM). As part of their health lessons, they will deliver the talk on menstrual hygiene and distribute the MoonCatcher kits to schoolgirls and to girls who have dropped out of schools at

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1 http://www.mooncatcher.org/
2 https://www.shashikirantrust.org/stories
3 https://healthandbeyond.org.in/
4 https://mdmsmeghalaya.gov.in/school-health-programme
Anganwadi centers encouraging girls to stay in school and remove barriers related to menstruation.

As in previous years, school visits happened about 4 times a week and the team, visits about 20-30 schools in a month speaking to approximately 400 - 500 schoolgirls depending on the number of schools visited. In the previous year January to March 2020 before the lockdown, a total of 34 schools with 1258 female students were given health talks. West Jaintia Hills has requested an amount of 12,000 kits and East Jaintia Hills 6,000 kits to be distributed over a period of one financial year April 2021 to March 2022. There are 151 rural SSA schools in West Jaintia Hills and half that amount in East Jaintia Hills. In both districts the distribution will also be conducted through Adolescent Friendly Health clinics as part of the RKS program formerly known as Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health programs\(^5\) with the help of Mr. Augustine Iano and Dr. Handaka Suting. A follow up visit to schools will also be conducted to gather feedback from the schoolgirls on the use of the MoonCatcher kits and how it has helped them.

The RBSK and RKS teams had begun the school health screening programs and adolescent health clinics in April 2021 but have been put on hold up to the 10th of May 2021 as a few major cities have closed in confinement due to the second wave of the COVID-19 spread. In addition, the health departments have diverted most staff to the preparation of the covid vaccination camps for above 18 years as directed by the government of India.

**Progress April 2021:**
The total number of 18,000 MoonCatcher kits were requested from the Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust (SKCT) for use in both districts of Jaintia Hills. However, it was discussed and decided to pilot 5000 kits in both districts to see if they will be accepted and used by the girls.
The kits will be distributed as per school health work plan in each district. A follow-up visit to the same schools will be conducted to gather feedback on use of the MoonCatcher kits. The 5000 kits were dispatched by SKCT by train to Guwahati railway station and received by Dr. D.E. Laloo and are currently in storage waiting distribution which will be done as soon as lockdown eases in the State of Meghalaya. The transport fee for the kits included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pick up by agent from warehouse in Noida &amp; loading onto the train (receipt attached)</td>
<td>Rs 1,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Train cost of 84 bags each containing 60 kits (840kgs x 35) (receipt attached)</td>
<td>Rs 29,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unloading and loading cost at GHY</td>
<td>Rs 3,000</td>
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\(^5\) [http://nhmmeghalaya.nic.in/programmes/arsh/arsh.html](http://nhmmeghalaya.nic.in/programmes/arsh/arsh.html)
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<tr>
<th>Road transport from GHY to Jowai</th>
<th>Rs 5,700</th>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL cost</td>
<td>Rs 39,900/-</td>
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A first training and distribution of the kits was planned at Mihmyntdu RecEve Secondary School, Mihmyntdu for 160 schoolgirls Classes VI to X, from both the morning and day section by Health and Beyond Foundation on the 29th of April 2021 at 8.30 AM but had to be postponed as a day prior all schools in the district were requested to be shut down for classes VIII and below, due to the spread of the Covid 19 pandemic.

However on the 30th April 2021, Dr. D.E. Laloo, HABF did a health talk on menstruation and menstrual hygiene for the Class IX and X students of Little Angels Secondary School, Jowai using a video https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TQiTME-umEbObZ0_-d66Cxfn-_-S7WhwU/view?usp=drive_web shared by Shashi Kiran Charitable Trust along with recommended curricula.

A curriculum for boys was also used to speak to schoolboys of Classes IX and X, Little Angels Secondary School on a separate session on that same day.

Meghalaya has gone into a total lockdown from the 1st of May to the 10th of May 2021. When things are open, we will hand over the kits to the District Medical & Health Officer’s Offices in both districts with copies of the work plan of school visits in the coming months collected. We hope the school visits will happen once schools reopen in the districts. HABF through Dr. D.E. Laloo will be present in a few of the health education/talks and distribution of the MoonCatcher kits in each
district. Follow up visits to schools that have received the kits will be made to gather feedback on the use of the kits.