

Helpless. It is reported that most girls have no access to reusable pads, while others use rags which are weak in absorbing blood during menstruation.

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Girls still miss school due to lack of pads, say leaders

JINJA. Although many NGOs have trained several girls on menstrual hygiene management and making of reusable pads, most of these girls are still missing classes while others eventually run out of school at the onset of their menstrual period.

This is because the girls either do not have access to sanitary pads, lack money for buying them, lack decent changing washrooms or cannot endure bullying from peers while at school, according to head teachers.

This has prompted them to use rags, papers, socks and dry leaves to try and soak up the blood in emergency situations.

Anita (not real name), a 16-year-old Primary Seven pupil of Nabitende Primary School in Iganga District, said she has been using rags since she started menstruating but sometimes misses school because of pain, fear of blood leakage and shame.

Priscilla (not real name), another student in Senior One at Kaluuba College in Mayuge District, said she is more comfortable staying home during her menstrual period than being at school where she is being bullied.

Risky means

Ms Teddy Ndagire Namale, a midwife at Bukatuube Health Centre III, Bukatuube Sub-county in Mayuge District, on Saturday said it is too risky for the girls to use pieces of cloths as it becomes difficult to remove all the blood by washing compared to sanitary pads which are disposable. She adds that most of such pieces are weak to absorb all the blood, unlike pads which have polythene that prevents blood from leaking on the dress.

Ms Lydia Kiwala, a senior woman teacher at Buvule Parents' Primary School in Iganga District, said absenteeism is rampant

Donation. Speaker Rebecca Kadaga distributes sanitary pads to school girls at Pangira Primary School in Lamwo District in January. FILE PHOTO

mainly because the school lacks a basin and private room to cater for girls in such situations.

The director of Kamuli Christian Centre for the Deaf [KCCD], Ms Elizabeth Babirye, added: "Some girls are from very poor families where parents can't even afford to buy them knickers and soap to wash those pieces of cloths; what they do is to dry them without washing them and re-use them which is very risky to their lives."

But the Jinja Woman Member of Parliament, Ms Roy Katali, said she is to start up a reusable sanitary pads project in a bid to reduce on the number of children who drop out of school due to menstrual periods.

The executive director of Women Rights Initiative (Wori), Ms Rose Kigere, said they are pro-

viding reusable sanitary towels and menstruation education to different schools within Busoga Sub-region in a bid to reduce on the number of children who stay away from school during menstruation.

“ I cannot concentrate in class when I am in my periods because I keep wondering whether there is a (blood) leakage on my dress because the rags I use are weak,” VICTIM

Ms Kigere said: "We train boys and girls on how to manage menstrual hygiene and make of reusable pads to replace them with sanitary pads which are quite expensive for some parents."

Ms Sandra Naigaga, a resident of Bugembe Town Council in Jinja

District, said government should scrap taxes on sanitary products to make them more affordable.

"If many families can't afford to eat two meals a day, it is difficult for them to buy pads for the adolescent girls," she said.

While campaigning in Lang Sub-region in 2015, President Museveni promised that upon re-election, his government would give sanitary pads to adolescent girls in schools starting in the 2017/2018 Financial Year budget.

However, last year while appearing before the Parliament Education Committee, Ms Janet Museveni, the Education Minister, revealed that it was not possible to implement that pledge because her ministry lacked money, triggering criticism from Opposition politicians and civil rights activists.

