

GIRLS HAVE TO RETURN HOME TO CHANGE PADS, WHILE SOME OPT TO QUIT SCHOOL

Refugee pupils lack where to change, throw pads

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By Robert Ariaka

School girls of Ocea Primary School in the Rhino Camp settlement in Arua district, are forced to change their sanitary pads from the bush, due to absence of washrooms.

Samira Muhamad, a Primary Seven pupil of Ocea Primary School, said they also have no place to throw away used pads.

"Most girls lack sanitary pads, but there are those whose parents can afford to buy them. The challenge is; at school, they have no place to throw away the used pads or where to change from," she said.

Samira is appealing to the school administration and parents to join hands and construct a washroom for girls, to allow them remain in school.

"My mother buys for me pads. She also taught me how to make them. Now, all we need are washrooms and latrines," she said.

She encouraged fellow girls to share their challenges with their teachers and friends so they can get help.

Samira says her mother started teaching her about menstruation at the age of 10.

Stella Favour, another pupil of Ocea Primary School, said the school procures just a few pads, which are not enough for all the girls.



Oxfam gender officer Immaculate (right) addressing schoolgirls living in Rhino Camp settlement, after training them on how to make pads. Photo by Robert Ariaka

"We have forwarded the matter of lack of pads to the senior woman teacher, so she can lobby humanitarian bodies to help us," she said.

"Due to the lack of washrooms, many girls go back home to change and wash, before returning to school. This makes pupils miss a lot in class, since they are delayed at home," she added.

Favour appealed to the Government to support schools with sanitary pads and construct washrooms. She said

Jackson Friday advises parents to support their daughters during menstruation and teach them how to wear pads properly

boys bully girls when they soil their uniforms, which makes them drop out of school.

Jackson Friday, also from

of Ocea Primary School, said many times when girls start menstruation, they are insulted by boys, which stigmatises the

girls, forcing them to drop out of school.

He advised parents to support their daughters by providing pads and teaching them how to wear them properly, to avoid such challenges.

Jerisa Roba Alison, one of the refugee women who Oxfam trained to make the pads, said they are not provided with sanitary pads.

The women are advised to wash the pads and dry them under the sun before re-using.