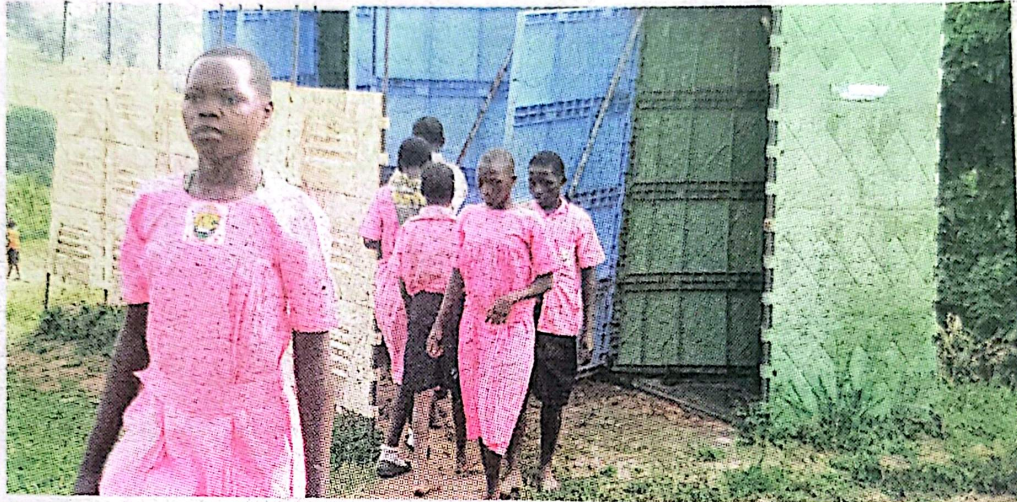


Girls abandon school over sharing latrine with boys



Inconvenience. Pupils of Lulongo Primary School in Mubende District. PHOTO BY JOSEPHINE NNABBALE

Sanitation crisis. The school with 400 pupils has only one pit-latrine that is shared with teachers.

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MUBENDE. Several girls at Lulongo Primary School in Mubende District have abandoned classes for lack of separate pit-latrines.

Christine Nakisekka, 12, who was in Primary Six until the first week of September, left the school because she felt embarrassed whenever she shared the pit-latrine with boys.

"It had become unbearable for me until I decided to stay home. At first, my mother quarrelled with me and forced me to go back, but she later understood my situation and agreed to find me another school next year," Nakisekka told *Daily Monitor* recently.

The school senior woman teacher, Ms Ruth Sanyu, said 14 other girls dropped out of

school in the past months over similar concerns.

The school has a population of 400 pupils. Teachers also use the same pit-latrine. Currently, the pupils are on holiday.

Ms Sanyu said many girls, who started experiencing their monthly periods, feel embarrassed to use the school's pit-latrine because it has no privacy.

"Sometimes boys laugh at them when they see menstrual blood leaking and staining the girls' uniforms," RUTH SANYU, SENIOR WOMAN TEACHER

"Some used to share their predicament with me, but I had no solution other than urging them to bear with it," she said.

Ms Sanyu also said by the end of third term, more than 40 girls were missing classes every week.

Mr Eugene Kigongo, the head teacher, said plans to

erect another facility have been delayed by lack of funds.

According to Mr Kigongo, the school receives Shs1.2m from government as capitation grants every quarter which is not enough to meet all school needs.

"The existing pit-latrine was a donation from Unicef [United Nations Children's Fund], but it is also in a poor condition, its doors lack locks and there is no privacy," he said.

Mr Daniel Kazibwe, the district secretary for education, said they no longer construct pit-latrines in schools because funds meant for such projects were transferred to the sub-county.

"Leaders at the sub-county level are supposed to scrutinise schools with poor pit-latrines and construct new ones where they are needed," Mr Kazibwe said.

He said there are 299 government-aided schools in the district.