

Poor latrine habits costing govt sh600m annually, says Opendi

KOLE

By Patrick Okino
and Hudson Apunyo

The state minister for health (general duties), Sarah Opendi, has criticised people for not washing their hands after visiting toilets, saying such poor hygiene practices cost the Government more than sh600m annually.

Addressing hundreds at Omuge Primary School in Bala sub-county, Kole district during the commemoration of National Sanitation Week on Friday, Opendi said 95,000 people die yearly due to sicknesses related to poor sanitation.

The theme for this year's commemoration is *Good Sanitation, how is your leader?*

But Opendi said no district in Lango and Acholi sub-region has been declared open defecation free (ODF) and leaders should mobilise the communities to construct latrines and other sanitary facilities.

Opendi said latrine or toilet coverage in Uganda still stands at 80%. However, only 26% Ugandans wash their hands after visiting the toilet.

"Being poor does not mean you should not wash your hands because we need everyone to be healthy," she said.

Opendi said the decision to choose



Opendi (second-right) inspecting a stall at Omuge P/S in Kole last week. Photo by Patrick Okino

Kole to host the commemoration was reached because of its good performance in sanitation. She challenged Kole to lead by example.

The director Global Forum for Development, Morish Chris Ongom,

said several major actions should be taken to ensure an aggressive approach to improving sanitation in homes and institutions.

He said constant monitoring of local government to enforce sanitation,

continued lobbying to increase water sector financing and refocusing on preventive intervention, especially community mobilisation, could improve sanitation. S advised girls to keep away from 'sex predators'.