

Schools start sanitary pads project

Invention. The re-usable sanitary pads are made from pieces of cotton linen fitted with wool and polythene papers.

BY MARTINS E. SSEKWEYAMA
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

MASAKA. Two primary schools in Masaka District have embarked on a project to locally produce sanitary towels for adolescent school girls.

Teachers at Butale Mixed Primary School and Kyamuyimbwa Primary School, both located in Kabonera Sub-county, towards the end of last year embarked on a project to teach pupils how to make their own sanitary pads.

The re-usable sanitary pads are made from pieces of cotton linen fitted with wool and polythene papers which are manually sewn to give real shapes of factory-made pads that have the capacity to ensure hygiene and comfort for pupils.

Ms Hellen Nalubwama, the head teacher of Kyamuyimbwa Primary School said the project is helping them impart practical survival skills to enable pupils manage their menstruation days without missing classes.

"The two schools are already realising the positive results. This is a programme we are going to popularise throughout Masaka for the empowerment of our learners."

MR FRANCIS SSEMATIMBA, HEAD TEACHER OF BUTALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

According to Ms Nalubwama, being in rural areas where many parents cannot afford to provide their children with basic scholastic materials, the programme is relieving the children from using unhygienic materials during their menses.

Although President Museveni during his 2016 campaign promised that government would provide free sanitary pads to school girls,



Practical. Pupils of Butale Primary School in Masaka District learn how to make sanitary towels. PHOTO BY MARTINS E. SSEKWEYAMA

Ms Nalubwama is worried that the pledge may not be fulfilled soon, advising the Ministry of Education to reimburse some money to schools to enable them teach girls how to make their own pads.

"We may wait for ages to see that pledge fulfilled. Let our line ministry strengthen the capacities to schools to enable them make sanitary pads themselves," she said.

Ms Josephine Nabukeera, a teacher at Butale Primary School, said they integrated the programme in their co-curricular activities to provide inclusive education to learners.

She observed that they hatched the idea after suffering negative

effects of poor menstrual management, which include absenteeism of the girls.

Mr Francis Ssematimba, the head teacher Butale Primary School and chairperson Uganda National Teachers Union-(Unatu) Masaka branch, said they are considering rolling out the project to neighbouring schools such that pupils' retention is improved.

"The two schools are already realising the positive results. This is a programme we are going to popularise throughout Masaka for the empowerment of our learners," he said.

Recently, Mr Robison Nsumba-Lyazi, the director basic and sec-

ondary education, revealed that government considered a decision to increase UPE capitation grants by Shs2,000 per child to cater for sanitary towels.

However, while releasing the 2016 PLE results, Education minister Janet Museveni observed that her ministry had not obtained the required funds to implement the programme.

Managing menstrual hygiene has remained a big challenge to many adolescent girls in rural schools and a considerable number drop out of school when they start menstruation. It is reported that 30 per cent of girls drop out of school over failure to manage their menses.