



NDIRU MIXED SECONDARY SCHOOL

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A REPORT FROM GUIDANCE AND COUSSELLING DEPARTMENT OF NDIRU MIXED SECONDARY SCHOOL ON THE IMPACT OF DISTRIBUTION OF SANITARY TOWELS TO THE GIRLS

The school wishes to extend its gratitude to **RILEY ORTON FOUNDATION** for the continued support in ensuring that approximately 200 girls are equipped with sanitary towels. During this year's menstrual hygiene month, we wish to share our stories on how helpful the sanitary towels have been to the girls.

Most learners at Ndiru Mixed Secondary School come from families of low income who cannot afford to buy their daughters sanitary towels. Prior to these distributions, the girls had a myriad challenges that were attributed to menstruation, some of which included:

- ❖ Absenteeism
- ❖ Low self esteem
- ❖ Poor performance
- ❖ Risky sexual behaviours
- ❖ High stress levels
- ❖ Period shame from leakages and uniform stains
- ❖ Lack of confidence

The donations of the sanitary towels, in a huge way, has helped reduce, if not totally eradicate some of these challenges as discussed below.

Firstly, the donations of the sanitary towels have helped in **curbing truancy** among the girls. Some girls, during their days, opted to stay away from school because they were unable to afford the sanitary towels. They felt safer staying at home rather than come to school and be the centre of ridicule due to period shame. The girls are now able to attend school regularly and one may not even know when they are on their dayst. A form three day scholar said, "...the sanitary towels have kept me in school all the time because now since I have them there is no any other reason for me being at home due to inadequate pad use..."

Secondly, the sanitary towels have **boosted confidence** among the girls. A confident girl is a girl ready to take on daily tasks with the right attitude. They are able to interact freely with their peers and learn a lot from each other. They are also able to express themselves and even follow teachers to the staffroom for after class consultation unlike before when they would keep to themselves. A form one girl said, "... I am very grateful for the pads. They have helped me a lot. I have been able to be confident while with my classmates or others, I have been able to continue well with my learning activities without any shame."

In addition, the sanitary towels have helped in **curbing risky sexual behaviour**. Some girls, have in the past, asked young men from the villages to buy them sanitary towels which the men give in exchange for sex leading to teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. This has reduced greatly since the girls now have sanitary towels that they can use even when schools are closed. The head of Guidance and Counselling reiterates the same and she say, "Access to sanitary towels is a challenge for many of our girls especially from low income families. The donations have empowered them to avoid unnecessary relationships with young men who give false promise of buying the sanitary towels..."

Also, the girls' hygiene has greatly improved and objectionable odour from girls during their menses is a thing of the past. The donations have ensured that they have enough pieces which they change regularly unlike before when one would use a single piece of pad for a whole day until it accumulates the objectionable odour. A form three girl said, "... the pads made me courageous by preventing bad smell..."

Further, the sanitary towels have alleviated period shame that arose from stained skirts and objectionable odour. The girls are now able to gracefully go through menstruation without shame. Period shame is very demotivating to girls and can make them stay away from school. Being a mixed school, further awareness should be created especially among boys so that they are aware of the effects of period shame among the girls. A form two girl said, "... the sanitary towels prevent the shame of attending on my clothes. Since my aunt didn't have money to buy for me a pad. It made me courageous by preventing smell..."

Moreover, reduced stress levels related to menstruation among the girls have been noted. When the students receive donations of sanitary towel, they feel loved, cared for and comfortable. Some of the learners in form one going through their menses for the first time are able to go through it in comfort. A form two girl said, "... truly receiving sanitary towels have made my days great. Sometimes I would lack pads when my parents could not afford, but when I ran to you for help, you always made sure that I feel comfortable and safe..."

Besides, there is reduced financial burden of parents of low income. They are now able to focus on meeting other financial need of the girls. A form four girl said, "...my mother has a lot of school things she is required to buy for me but she has no enough money. The sanitary towels have helped me to maintain cleanliness. It has also saved my mother from buying them since nowadays they are very expensive..."

Consequently, the girls have been involved actively in learning activities and co-curricular activities leading the overall well-being of the girls and improved performance among the girls and also as a school. A form one girl said, "...the sanitary towels were good and they made me comfortable while in class and even when playing at the pitch..."

In Conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the sanitary towels have even made our work easier as teachers when handling the girls. We appreciate the partnership and suppose such donations are available, I hereby put forward a plea on behalf of the school that you consider us.

Thank you.

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