

THE IMPACT OF MENSTRAUTION ON GIRL CHILD EDUCATION: A CASE
STUDY OF ALENDU PRIMARY SCHOOL, KISUMU-KENYA.

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DECLARATION

I, Millicent B. Sagero, declare that this research project is my original work and has never been submitted for any academic award. Where the works of others have been cited acknowledgment has been made.

Signature.....

Millicent B. Sagero

Date.....

APPROVAL

I certify that the work submitted by this candidate was under my supervision. Her work is ready for submission, to be evaluated for the award of a Bachelor of Education in Arts.

Supervisor.....

Ssekajugo Derrick

Date.....22/05/20

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my dear husband and son Joseph for the financial assistance and the moral support and encouragement they gave me during the study. May God bless you all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

. Due acknowledgement goes to my supervisor Mr. Ssekajugo Derrick for the time devoted and the assistance given to me this research study. On the same note, I extend my sincere thanks, appreciation and gratitude to all those who have contributed towards the completion of this project work. My family members, my colleagues the teachers who supported me during the exercise, I'm so grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The number of primary schools in Kenya has increased steadily from 14,864 in 1990 to 19,129 in 2003 representing 35.7 per cent. Enrolment in absolute terms also went up from 5,392,319 to 7,208,100, being 17.6 per cent rise over the same period. The percentage of girls enrolled in primary schools, compared to boys, has on the whole held steady (48.7 per cent in 1990 and 48.6 per cent in 2003) at near parity in the same period. However, in absolute terms, the gender gap in favour of boys remained at more than 100,000. From the national figures, in 2000 girls were 49.5 percent of the total enrolment. In 2001 and 2002 the percentage of girls enrolled was 49.4 per cent and 48.7 per cent respectively. In 2003, it stood at 48.6 per cent despite the overall increase in enrolment due to free primary education policy. However, it should be noted that the participation of girls in primary education has been below that of boys for the last five years.

In spite of the rising number of pupils enrolled in primary schools, the GER had declined from 101.8 per cent in 1990 to stand at 91.9 per cent in 2001 (boys from 104.0 to 91.6 per cent and girls from 99.6 to 91.2 per cent). The drop in the GER(Gross Enrolment Ratio) was most pronounced between 1993 and 1998. However, in 1999, 2000 and 2001, the girls' GER was slightly higher than that of the boys standing at 93.5, 91.7 and 91.2 per cent respectively against 92.6, 91.1 and 90.6 per cent respectively. On the other hand, there were very serious

regional disparities in the GERs. For example, while Nairobi, Nyanza, and Central had a GER of 105.0 per cent (108.1 per cent boys & 102.2 per cent girls), 101.7 per cent (103.1 per cent boys & 100.2 per cent girls) and 101.2 per cent (100.2 per cent boys & 102.3 per cent girls) respectively, Western and Eastern had GERs of 98.4 per cent (98.0 per cent boys & 98.8 per cent girls) and 97.2 per cent (95.7 per cent boys & 98.8 per cent girls) respectively. However, North Eastern province recorded an absolutely unacceptable GER of 17.4 per cent (boys 21.9 per cent and girls 12.1 per cent).

Primary school dropout rates between 1993 and 1999 improved marginally from 5.4 per cent in 1993 to 4.9 per cent in 1999 with boys recording 5.0 per cent and girls 4.8 per cent. However, it should be pointed out from the outset that dropout and repetition figures are generally difficult to obtain from schools. Regionally, Eastern Province registered the highest dropout rate of 6.1 per cent followed closely by North Eastern province with 6.0 per cent. Nairobi had the lowest dropout rate of 1.5 per cent followed by Central province with 2.9 per cent. More boys than girls were reported to be dropping out of school in all the provinces except North Eastern and Nyanza provinces where more girls than boys were reported as dropping out of school.

This trend is worrying and therefore investigation as to why the girl child is not performing well is necessary to reduce gender disparity. One of the areas of concern is the provision of sanitary pads which is the responsibility of the parents or guardians. The level of awareness on the necessity, provision and reliability for pads in schools emerges as an issue of concern for primary schools especially in rural areas.

1.1.1 Background to the study

Alendu primary school was started in 1940s and registered by the Ministry of Education thereabout. The school is found in Nyamware sub-location, Kochieng Location, Kadibo division in Kisumu East District. The division is one of the poorest in the district and has the highest poverty level of about 69 %. Although the surrounding community sits on potential agricultural soils, the unpredictable weather conditions seriously affect farming and therefore lead to poor production. Nyamware sub-location has a total of 5,004 persons as per the National population census of 1999.

The school prior to (FPE) Free Primary Education (2002) program had a student population of 469 pupils and currently it is composed of 639 pupils. The staffs are 12 TSC whereby there are 11 female ladies and 1 male teacher who is the also the Head teacher. Three teachers are volunteers who assist students in the school.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The development of the girl child from teenage to adulthood for most of the primary school going age in rural schools poses a challenge especially in accessing sanitary towels. This makes their behaviour uneasy since they do not have control of menstrual

periods. Furthermore, parents and the significant others have ignored their role to counsel young girls on what to do during menstruation. Poverty also at their households especially the child headed homes makes it difficult for them to obtain sanitary pads. Alendu primary school in Kisumu East district, Kenya is one of the schools targeted in this research to investigate the relationship between provision of sanitary pads and school attendance.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1. To establish the rate of access to and sources of sanitary pads for primary school girls from the household level.
2. To determine the percentage of girls absenting themselves from school and dropping out of school due to menstrual periods.
3. To suggest the appropriate interventions, processes and activities that can enhance effective school attendance of the girl child.

1.4 Research questions

1. What is the rate of access to sanitary pads and how frequent are they obtained?

2. How many girls per class levels miss classes due to menstrual challenges per week, or month?
3. Which interventions ought to be put in place to address the challenges facing girl child?

1.5. Scope of the study

The study was conducted in Alendu primary school which is located in Kisumu and it targeted girls of ages 10-15 years who are basically attending school in primary (levels 4-8). The reason for targeting those levels and age brackets is because it is the most vulnerable group affected and experiencing menstrual challenges. Due to inadequate resources, the researcher will sample girls from one primary school (Alendu) with a population of about 200 school girls out of 500 pupils.

1.6 Significance of the study

The girl child in most developing countries is marginalized in education and other social benefits where for instance, they are not allowed to inherit property. Education as the key to development can provide the girl child with favorable opportunities to further her education and be independent thus contributing to national development. This study is expected to contribute knowledge for scholarly work and community gender mainstreaming in educational institutions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Increasing female education is an important policy priority in many developing countries. Girls lag behind boys in schooling attainment, and female schooling is thought to be important for a variety of development outcomes (Behrman and Rosenzweig 2002; Wolfe and Behrman 1987). A number of researchers and policy-makers have argued for the importance of menstruation in limiting school attendance and attainment (World Bank, 2005; Sommer, 2009). The World Bank has put concrete numbers on the menstruation problem: if a girl misses 4 days of school every 4 weeks due to her period, she will miss 10 to 20 percent of her school days (World Bank 2005; Tjon a Ten 2007). The possible role for menstruation in limiting school attendance has received significant attention in popular media, nearly all of which argues that menstruation is likely to be significant factor in schooling (e.g. Kristof and WuDunn, 2009; Kayiggwa, 2007; Mawathe, 2006; BBC, 2010). For example, Kristof (2009) writes: "education experts increasingly believe that a cost-effective way to keep high school girls from dropping out in poor countries is to help provide them with sanitary products." These arguments are based largely on anecdotal evidence: girls report missing school during their period and report limited access to modern sanitary products. In response, a number of NGOs and sanitary product manufacturers have begun campaigns to increase availability of sanitary products, with a stated goal of improving school attendance (Deutsch 2007, Callister 2008, Cooke, 2006).

As part of a multi-country study of sexual maturation financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, the Forum of African Women Educationalists, Uganda (FAWE U) conducted extensive research with girls and their families in rural communities of

Uganda (FAWE U 2004). They found that along with lack of knowledge and understanding about menstruation amongst girls themselves, other members of the community, including the male members of their families, were completely uninformed as well. Fathers, uncles, brothers and male cousins appear to have very little factual information on menstruation. They understand it as a mysterious weakness of women rather than a biological and normal recurring experience of life for post-pubescent girls and women. Girls explain that menstruation is a taboo subject even within their own families, describing a 'culture of silence' with regard to their menstruation. They feel unable to discuss menstrual issues with their mothers and certainly not with their fathers. Not being able to talk about their experience and having limited information means that menstruation becomes something shameful and something to hide, and is consequently ignored in families, schools and Communities (FAWE U 2003).

A part from the above mentioned factor girls are also disadvantaged in terms of school performance due to gender differentials. Wealth gaps in enrolment greatly exceed gender gaps in enrolment. The allocation of scarce household resources affects girls more than boys (Boadu, 2000). Early domestic responsibilities, especially among young girls, conflict with the pursuit of education. Retrogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriages prevent the advancement of girls in education. The willingness of parents to educate girls is reduced by socio-economic and cultural effects such as their expected change of allegiance after marriage to the husbands' family. Distribution of female teachers has an important impact on school

quality for female pupils. Female teachers are important in providing girls with role models and in providing counseling, especially on issues related to puppetry.

Cultural practices, such as the existence of gendered division of labour within the household can probably lead to higher opportunity costs being associated with the schooling of girls relative to boys. Factors related to cultural norms, traditional beliefs and practices have a strong influence on girls' enrolment, persistence and performance in school. In some societies, initiation ceremonies are performed when children reach the age of puppetry, which is considered to be the onset of adulthood. During the ceremony, knowledge and values concerning procreation, morals, sexual skills, birth control and pregnancy are passed on to the girls concerned. Boys undergo similar rituals preparing them for manhood. Unlike boys, it is considered shameful for girls to return to school after undergoing such rituals (Boadu, 2000).

In general, negative attitudes towards girls' schooling relative to that of boys remain. On the other hand, children who do not attend primary school despite the Free Primary Education Policy in Kenya are overwhelming from poor households. The majority of such non-attendants are girls. Two main reasons exist as to why poorer households may choose not to send their children to school. (KIPPRA(P/NO/56, 2006). First, the direct costs may be too high even with the universal free primary education. Parents incur expenditures for school uniforms, text and exercise books, construction or upkeep of school buildings, and other inputs in cash or in kind. Second, poorer households may depend, more so than richer household income directly, on the farm or indirectly.

Gender roles in society change the balance of incentives for girls and boys to attend school. Leadership, male domination, menstruation periods and early girl marriages give less incentive to girls to perform well in school (Figure 1).

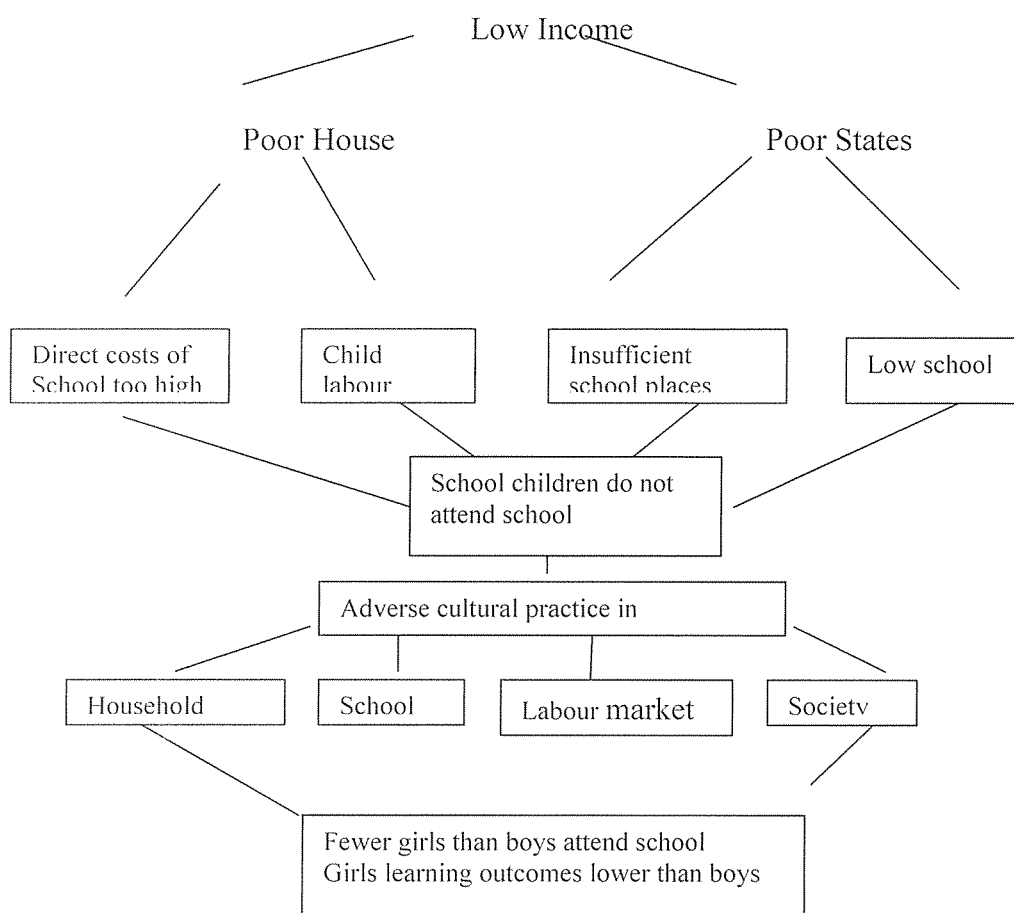


Figure 1: Interactive effects of gender differentials in schooling

Source: (Rose and Tembon, undated)

2.2 Menstruation and Education

As mentioned above, in contexts where cultural taboos restrict the activities of menstruating women and girls, and where the lack of adequate sanitary protection makes movement away from home physically impossible, the onset of menses will inevitably have an impact on girls' access to education. For girls who are able to continue attending and participating in school, the widespread reality of poor sanitary facilities, ignorance about menstruating girls' needs and experiences, can mean that the schooling experience is far from a positive one.

The onset of menstruation signals an end to girlhood – and therefore frequently also to education - as parents in many cultures begin to consider marital prospects for their daughters. Parents may believe that it is no longer necessary or appropriate for a daughter to continue to attend school past puberty. They may prioritize knowledge that is not taught in school, such as how to maintain a household. For girls who missed opportunities for schooling when they were young and are not yet enrolled in school at the age of puberty, menarche may serve as an additional barrier to initiating their education. Parents may regard schooling as even less important for post-pubescent girls due to a belief that they should be preparing themselves for marriage and motherhood.

In sub-Saharan Africa, adolescent girls' participation in school is generally very poor (UNICEF 2006). Even in contexts where gender parity is achieved in the early grades, by late primary school (Grades 4 or 5) the numbers of girls in school has dropped

significantly. In reviewing education data, enrollment rates are important. Yet retention and successful completion rates provide a stronger test of Education for All (EFA) achievements and more particularly of achievement of the Millennium Development Goal Number 21. In an International Rescue Committee (Rhodes, Walker and Martor1998) study of primary schools in Guinea, although girls represented almost 50% of students in early grades, they made up only 34% of those who complete the cycle at Grade six. Similarly, as found by UNICEF/AET (2002) in southern Sudan, enrolment rates of girls in Grade 1 are already very low (an average of only 26% of total enrollment) with a drop to 21% at Grade 8 (an absolute drop of more than 20,000 girls). And in the reconstruction and development of the Somali educational system, gender related disparities are a key concern; only 35 % of the students enrolled in Grade 1 are girls, and this proportion declines with girls making up only 29% of Grade 8 pupils (UNICEF/AET2002). Such drops in girls' participation can be attributed to multiple factors, including the lack of female teachers, (and therefore successful role models), curriculum content that is irrelevant to girls' lives, and the poor quality of schools, both the facilities and the instruction. Another under-explored factor, and hence the subject of this article, are the linkages between the onset of menarche, girls' response to sexual maturation, and the subsequent impacts on their educational access and experience. Anecdotal evidence from a number of countries suggests that a main reason the onset of menses disrupts schooling are familial expectations that a post-pubescent girl will marry and move to her new husband's home, thereby removing her from her school. UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO (2003) report that parental fears about sexual abuse can mean that for

unmarried girls movement is often restricted after menarche; a reality which can also interfere with schooling. In some societies, 'menarche' may be seen as shameful if occurring in unmarried girls due to beliefs that its onset is somehow linked to sexual intercourse. Therefore girls in some parts of the world are married off even younger to assure there will be no family loss of honor at girls' believed unchaste behavior. Finally, early marriage is often cited as a reason for girls' dropping out of school (for example UNICEF 2001), as household responsibilities or expectations from their new husbands prevents further school attendance. In conflict-affected contexts, there may be economic and security imperatives for girls to be married as soon as they reach puberty. An example is in southern Sudan where girls are often married off by their families at a young age in order to bring wealth (e.g. cattle or other goods) into otherwise poverty-stricken¹ Millennium Development Goal 2 states: "Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling".

Girls have long been seen as a source of wealth to a family and to a community, but in times of crisis, this resource has to be 'cashed in' earlier than usual. Hence reports suggest that girls are forced into ever earlier marriages. In locales where there are few eligible men, girls are also forced into compromising arrangements with, for example, far older men, and/or with men who already have several wives. Girls who enter into such arrangements are vulnerable not only to sexual exploitation, risk of HIV/AIDS and domestic violence from their husbands, but also exploitation and abuse from other wives

(Fitzgerald 2002). The onset of menses may be the trigger that removes them from school prematurely and places them in such inopportune circumstances.

From a very practical perspective, girls who lack adequate sanitary materials may miss school each month during their period. If girls attend schools which – as many do – lack adequate latrines and water supplies for girls to comfortably change sanitary pads and wash themselves in privacy, they may be unable to remain comfortably in class during their menstrual cycle (Kirk 2005). In southern Sudan, for example, the lack of sanitary protection during menstruation is often mentioned as a barrier to girls' regular attendance in school. There is very limited availability of commercial sanitary products and those that exist are financially out of reach for most women and girls. In many poor families, providing adequate clothing for the whole family can be a challenge. Hence finding used fabric rags from which to make home-made sanitary pads can be very difficult.

Insufficient or inadequate sanitary protection can be very embarrassing for a girl attending school during her monthly period. This is made worse if her school clothing is flimsy, worn and/or too small for her. Soiled uniforms can provoke ridicule from boys as well as from other girls, putting her at great risk of experiencing stigma and discrimination. For girls who cannot afford to buy washing soap, regular cleaning of her uniform or school clothes may not be easy. This situation means that for many girls and young women it is preferable to stay at home during menstruation and not to attend school at all. At home they do not have to worry as much about sanitary protection, nor

about having adequately concealing clothing. Few of the girls' mothers attended school and so they do not have experience to share with their daughters as to how to manage menstruation away from home. Regular absence from school for several days a month can – even in the short term - have a negative impact on a girl's learning and therefore on her academic performance in school. Various internal Sudan Basic Education Project reports refer to comments made by girls, mothers, women teachers and other community members that interrupted attendance, insufficient learning and therefore poor results in the long term can contribute to eventual drop out.

Studies funded by the Rockefeller Foundation in Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe highlight the challenges to physical management of menstruation in low-income settings. In particular the reports speak to the prevalence of overcrowded and overflowing toilet cubicles currently existing in far too many sub-Saharan African schools. 'Beyond being health hazards, they [unsanitary conditions] are symbolic of the failure of the education system to provide essential facilities to ensure that children, especially girls are not excluded from full participation in the system because of their maturing bodies'(Rockefeller/ QUEST n.d.). There are rarely separate cubicles for boys and girls and the cubicles that do exist provide little privacy. Although all three countries have an official guideline of 1 toilet per 30 students, researchers found that this figure was exceeded many times over, with some schools having a ratio of 200 students to 1 toilet. And although schools may have toilets, many are lacking in water and therefore do not meet the basic health and hygiene requirements for educational institutions.

While dirty and insufficient toilet facilities are a serious issue, in many cases there are no toilets at all. According to the School Baseline Assessment of 2002, almost half of existing schools in southern Sudan do not have access to water and only 30% have latrines (UNICEF/AET 2002). When asked what they do when they need the toilet, girls in school replied, 'You just have to wait until you go home.' Similarly, in a study conducted in Ethiopia, fewer than half the schools had latrines and only one school had a separate latrine for boys and girls; while in Ghana, only a third of schools had latrines and in many cases these were unfit for use (studies quoted in UNESCO 2003). While such poor facilities contribute to creating unfriendly school environments for all children, they are particularly so for menstruating girls. Even if girls are able to buy commercially-produced sanitary pads or make adequate pads from rags or other materials, the absence of clean and private sanitation facilities that allow for menstrual hygiene may discourage girls from attending school when they menstruate (World Bank 2005). No systematic or rigorous research has been conducted on the relationship between the lack of appropriate sanitary facilities and the drop-out rate of adolescent girls. UNICEF (2005) estimates that about 1 in 10 school-age African girls do not attend school during menstruation, or drop out at puberty because of the lack of clean and private sanitation facilities in schools. Few schools have any emergency sanitary supplies for girls, and communal toilet facilities are generally very unsuitable for changing sanitary pads given a lack of water, and of sanitary material disposal systems.

The experience of the girl child education in Kisumu East District, like other parts of the country indicates that the girl child is marginalized. The daily responsibilities including household chores, cleaning and collecting firewood after school all contribute to low performance. However the aspect of menstruation becomes critical since few or none of the girls get adequate counsel on how to handle menstruation period when they are due. In those schools that had no usable latrines girls also have to drop out because it is too difficult to manage menstruation.(Snel, 2004).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design

The study adopted a descriptive design. Quantitative and qualitative techniques were applied in the study to make it more meaningful. Simple random sampling was used by preparing a list of all respondents and selecting 20% of the names.

3.2 Population

Alendu primary school comprises an estimated population of 500 pupils. The subjects of the study were girls of between age 10 and above, drawn from standard four to standard eight. The age brackets are within early maturing reproductive age and active menstruation flow.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

A sample 60 girls out of 200 from classes (4, 5, 6, 7 and 8) were selected using interviewed using a questionnaire. The interviewer designed a friendly atmosphere which created confidence and openness in the respondent. Teachers of the respective classes were also interviewed for relevant information on the study. Female enumerators were used to enhance disclosure.

3.4 Data collection

The study employed the following methodologies to meet the objectives of the study.

1. **Questionnaire:** Questionnaires designed to target the girls were self administered to avoid ambiguity. Research assistants used the language which was simple and friendly.
2. **Schedules** targeting the head teacher and other members of staff were designed and used to gather information regarding the attitude, perception and knowledge of staff towards girls with regard to the subject of study.
3. **Observation** was used by the researcher to note down key issues.

3.5 Data analysis

Questionnaires were coded after cleaning so that all the variables in the questionnaire were followed by end coding. This was pre-tested by entering 10 questionnaires. After this validation of data entry was done by technicians. Data analysis was done using SPSS version-12 statistical soft ware package, for testing association and other statistical computations. Frequencies, proportion, measure of central tendencies and variation were determined.

3.6 Ethical consideration

The study considered ethical clearance by requesting local education office for an official letter since Kampala International University had not issued an official letter for the study. However the college identity card was used for identification. Schools' Head teacher and the deputy were briefed on the objectives of the study. Verbal informed consent was obtained from the participants. Confidentiality was maintained by omitting their names and addresses on the questionnaires. Students were informed of their full right to skip or ignore any questions or terminate their participation at any stage.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter combined the results and discussions in this research. Based on the objectives of the study, information from primary school girls was obtained and presented in form of tables and graphs.

4.1.1 Demographic characteristics of household

Data on age in table 1 shows that 77% of the respondents were aged between 11-15 years while the rest (23%) were aged 16 years and above. Most of the respondents were teenagers who require counseling. The data confirms that the population of those below puppetry and adolescence can be very challenging times for the girls in school.

Table 1: Age of the respondent

Age in years	No of respondents	Percentage
11-15	46	77
16-20	14	23
Total	60	100.0

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.1.2 Educational levels

Education plays a key role in physical and moral development. It also dictates the behavior of people in certain circumstances such as girls undergoing menstruation while schooling. In the study, as indicated in table two, majority of those who responded (were in class 7 and class 8.) Table 2 show the class level for the targeted respondents. Class seven and eight compose the majority of the respondents with 33% and 47% respectively. Class 4 had the least with 2%. Most of the girls started their menstruation late at age 13 and above.

Table 2: Class level of pupils

Class	No of respondents	Percentage
STD 4	1	2
STD 5	2	4
STD 6	8	14
STD 7	21	33
STD 8	28	47
TOTAL	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.1.3 Religion

The study revealed that 57% of the respondents were of protestant church origin while 30 % were Catholics. Only 13% of the pupils were of other religions (Table 3).

Table 3: Religion of respondents

Religion	No of respondents	Percentage
Catholic	18	30
Protestant	34	57
Other	8	13
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.1.4 Educational level of parents or guardians

Education is not only a welfare indicator; it is also a key determinant of earnings and therefore an important exit route from poverty. As a result, improvement in understanding environmental issues such as health, hygiene and sanitation is increased with improved literacy levels. The results indicate that majority (50%) of the respondents have their mother's educational level at standard 8, while 28% of them have their mother's educational level at form four (Table 4). In the study, 10% of the respondents said their mothers never went to school while 12% were of college level.

Table 4: Mother's educational level

Item	No of respondents	Percentage
Never went to school	6	10
Standard 8	30	50
Form Four	17	28
College/University	7	12
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.1.5 Parents' and guardians' occupation.

Occupation or a job provides a source of income to the family. Where parents or guardians don't do any work that can help earn a livelihood the children miss basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Provision of pads for instance may be challenging if parents do not have any activity that earns them income. In the study, 28% of the parents do not do anything to earn them income at all while 20% of the respondents said only their father works as 25% said their mothers had jobs (Table 5). Only 5% and 10% said their mothers and fathers earned pension respectively. The community's basic livelihood occupation was subsistence farming. The drainage of the soils in this area is poor when it rains there is lot of flooding. The level of poverty in this division is about 67% according to the geographical dimension report (GoK, 2005). Poverty limits the family to obtain basic needs of life and thus low standards of living.

Table 5: Parents' job status

Item	No. of respondents	Percentage
Both Parents don't work	17	28
Only father works	12	20
Only mother works	15	25
Both parents work away from home	7	12
Mother is on pension	3	5
Father is on pension	6	10
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.1.6 Living Rooms

Table 6 shows the percentage of respondents and the number of living rooms in their houses. The table indicates that 72% of the respondents lived in (2-3) roomed housing while 15 % lived in 4 roomed houses. Only 3% lived in 1 bed roomed houses. Housing or shelter is very important for protection against cold or any harmful factors. A spacious house also provides young girls privacy during menstruation when they need to change clothes or house. Given that the majority lived in 2 and 3 roomed houses, the space seem adequate for changing and even for sleep.

Table 6: No of living rooms at residence

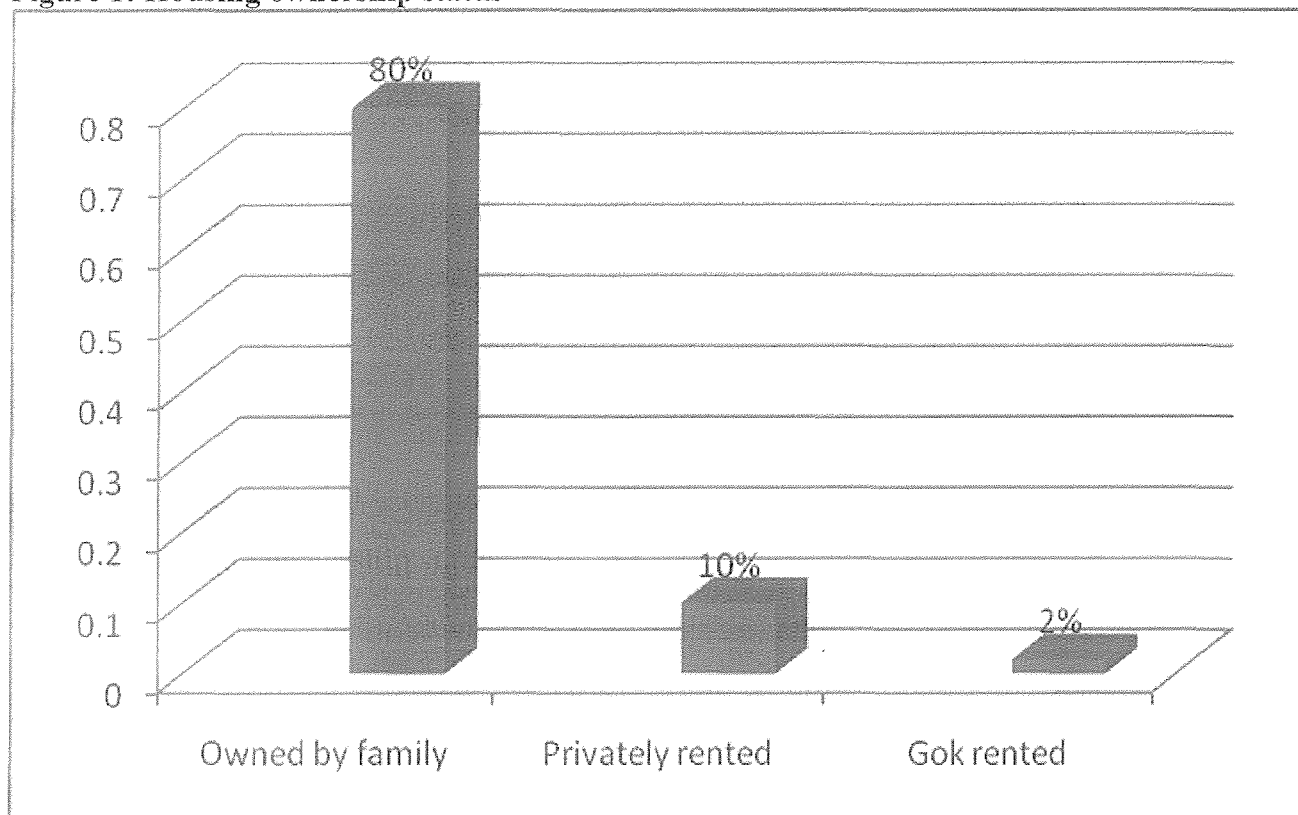
No of rooms	No of respondents	Percentage
(1)	2	3
(2-3)	43	72
(4)	9	15
(5)	5	8
(6)	1	2
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.1.7 Ownership status in housing

Figure1 shows housing status in terms of ownership. Results indicate that 88% of the respondents admitted that the houses they were living in were family owned, 10% rented housing while only 2% lived in a government owned house. The results indicate that majority (80%) were operating from their indigenous homes thus reducing the cost of renting houses (Figure 2). However the distance to school and the high poverty level of the area is a challenge for the girl child education. If the girl starts to menstruate suddenly in school the distance between school and home means her clothes will be soiled and this makes the girl worried before she arrives home to change. Low income also inhibits the community in Alendu from affording reasonable homes with adequate rooms.

Figure 1: Housing ownership status



4.1.8 Ownership of media (Television set and LCD)

Influence of media in terms of exposure about reproductive health and education is important in the family. Negative influence may expose the child to early sex and affect her sexual life negatively or positively. In the study 68% agreed that their family owned a TV set while 32 % did not own TV set.

4.2 Source of water

Water quality is determined among others by the source of water. Poor sources provide an opportunity for water related diseases. In the study, majority of respondents (85%) confirmed that they get water from boreholes while 7% used pond and streams respectively. Water as a detergent and for body wash is important when young girls undergo menstruation because they have to keep themselves clean. Without proper bath the girls become uneasy in class and sometimes the boys and classmates ridicule them. However the quality of borehole water within Kadibo division is low and unsafe for drinking unless subjected to treatment. Practically, girls who lack adequate sanitary materials end up using old cloth to prevent the flow of blood. In rural areas some of them wash the same cloth so as to use the same a second time.

Table 7: Sources of water

Source of water	Percentage
Stream	7
Borehole	85
Pond	7
Piped	1
Total	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.3 Where you wash your body

Girls are usually sensitive with their body and where they wash. This aspect makes their choices to be varied but must be in appropriate site. In the research 96% used a basin in a bathroom to wash their bodies while only 2% took a bath in the house (Table 8). None used a shower which suggests that most households lack piped water. Since girls prefer good hygiene, there is need to assist them both at home and in school by ensuring water and washrooms is available. Kirk, (2005) says that for girls who cannot afford to buy washing soap, regular cleaning of their uniform or school clothes may not be easy. This situation means that for many girls and young women it is preferable to stay home during menstruation and not to attend school at all. At home they do not worry about sanitary protection, or about having adequate concealing clothing. Proper sanitation therefore is important for the respondents.

Table 8: Place of body wash

Nature of body wash	No of respondents	Percentage
In the house using shower	0	0
In the house using bath	1	2
Bathroom using bucket	58	96
By the pond using bucket	1	2
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.4 Age at Menstruation

Adolescence fertility in Kenya occupies a prime place in the desire and implementation of reproductive health strategies, policies and programmes. In an attempt to address the reproductive health needs and reduce teenage challenges including menstruation, the government, through the ministry of health and national council for population and development, has put in place an adolescence reproductive health policy to help meet the needs of this group (KDHS, 2003). Despite the policy, there is still a challenge of implementation as it was realized by the study that teachers at Alendu primary school are not aware of this policy nor were they involved in the formulation. Menstruation which is a natural and normal reproductive and biological process is normally experienced in a monthly basis by the girl child. The age when menstruation occurs is not specific since different girls mature at different ages thus experiencing it at different age brackets. Nutrition wise it also depends on the type of foods taken by the respondents. Table 9 shows the age in years of the respondents when they first experienced menstruation. Above 84% experienced first menarche at the age bracket of (12-14).

Table 9: Age during first menstruation

Age in Years	No of respondents	Percentage
10	1	2
12	14	23
13	16	27
14	19	32
15	7	11
16	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

4.5 Knowledge about menstruation

The results indicate that 52% had prior knowledge about menstruation while 48% did not have any information concerning the subject. Inadequate knowledge about menarche is contributed by the way people perceive it. In a research by FAWE U 2004, in rural communities of Uganda it was realized that with lack of knowledge and understanding about menstruation among girls themselves, other members of the community, including the male members of their families, were completely uninformed as well. FAWE U, 2003 expresses that a series of myths and mysterious language have been adopted to hide this lack of knowledge and understanding; for example, the phrase “going to the moon” is commonly used to refer to the menstrual period and yet it was discovered that few men and boys had any idea of what this actually was. The head teacher also expressed concern

that most girls lacked reproductive health knowledge due to the low literacy level in the area.

4.6 Source of advice on menstruation and communication

One of the challenges girls experience in their teenage is lack of access to comprehensive information on sexuality. It is also evident that information on menstruation is not discussed openly by the parents or relatives to enlighten the teenagers. In the study, 27% of the respondents obtained advice from their mothers while 23% received counsel from their friends. Table 10 also shows that 17%, 15% and 10% received advice through reading, from the father and brother respectively. Only 6% received counsel from their teachers. This concludes that there is a lot of guidance and counseling expected from the mothers.

Table 10: Advice on menstruation

Source of advice	No of respondents	Percentage
Mother	16	27
Father	9	15
Brother	6	10
Friends	14	23
Teachers	4	6
Reading	10	17
Grandmother	1	2

Others	0	0
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

In terms communication with parents, the study assessed the level of communication with both parents. Most respondents (55%) found it easy to discuss with their mother about menstruation compared with the father (4%). Consequently, table 11 shows that 53% found it very difficult to talk to their fathers about menstruation. It is important also to note that 25% of the respondents were not free to discuss menstruation issues with their mothers. The reason for this was that they feared their mothers or guardians. Some of the respondents who were orphans depended on friends or grandmothers for information.

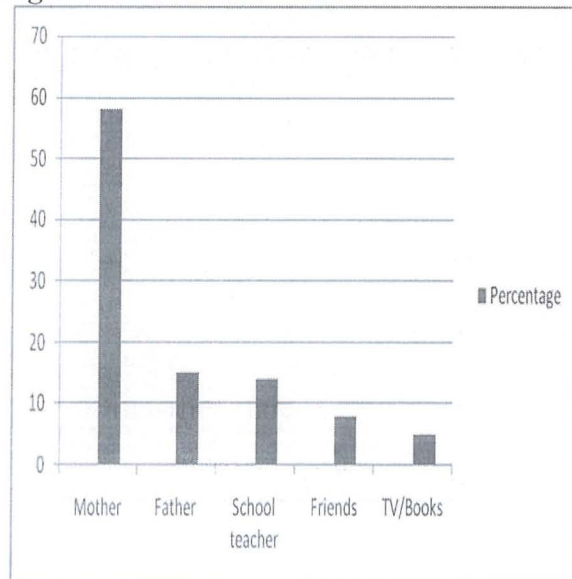
Table 11: Level of communication with parents

Level	Percentage	Percentage
	Father	Mother
Very easy	2	33
Easy	2	22
Average	7	7
Difficult	53	25
Very difficult	18	6
Don't see him	18	2
Not applicable	0	5
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

The study also assessed five sources of information to determine where the respondents wished to obtain most information as shown in Figure 3. Results showed that 58% preferred their mother as source while 15% and 14% preferred their father and school teachers respectively. It was realized that mothers are recognized as the most preferred and reliable source of information. However their unavailability to share knowledge makes it difficult mothers for the teenagers due to different engagements that help them vend for their livelihood and income.

Figure 2: Preferred sources of information



Sources of information

4.7 Menstruation Experience

To find out whether the girls were prepared for the menstruation periods, respondents were interviewed. Table 12 shows that 93% of the respondents were not prepared while 7% said they were aware about it. These results indicate that there is low awareness of sexual education which would help in increased knowledge.

Noting that this study was done in a rural division, the respondents face a number of challenges. Among these are lack of pads, walking for long distances to school and inadequate sanitation facilities. Examining the result on what respondents used to stop the bleeding, 40% of the respondents confirmed that they basically used a piece of cloth to stop bleeding during menstruation. 48% used pads while 2% each used tissue paper and cotton wool respectively. 7% used nothing at all to prevent the flow of blood. When those who use the piece of cloth and those using nothing are combined, it makes 47% which is a serious concern. Indeed the situation for the girls requires stakeholders to identify ways of helping the girls to get pads which will motivate their learning since they are comfortable in them.

Table 12: Means of stopping bleeding during menstruation

Item name	No of respondents	Percentage
Piece of cloth	24	40
Tissue paper	1	2
Cotton wool	1	2
Pads	29	48
Nothing	4	7
Any other	1	1
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

It is important to recognize that provision of pads and sanitary protection is essential for consistent girl child education. In addition puppetry education and counseling enhances learning of the girl child (Powell, 2003). Table 13 shows that 37% of the respondents received pads from their mothers while 30% obtained no pads at all. 17% obtained pads from NGO/CBOs who are giving support within the school or from other unspecified stakeholders.

Table 13 Provision of Pads

Provider	No of respondents	Percentage
Mother	22	37
Father	4	6
Sister	2	3
Friend	1	2
Brother	3	5
CBO/NGO	10	17
School	0	0
None	18	30
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

The results indicate that the frequency of distribution of pads for those who receive them is erratic. Those who receive the pads after every 3 months and those who do not receive at all total to 32%. This is worrying as they lack adequate hygiene during the menstruation to keep them in school. Discomfort and uneasiness makes them unstable in their day to day's life. The few who get them weekly may be from able families that can afford the pads. On average, 74% of the respondents experienced menstruation between 3-4 days while cumulatively, 20% took between 5-7 days in their periods. Only 6% took between 1-2 days.

4.8 Absenteeism

According to the head teacher of Alendu primary, girls do not miss school days as much as boys do. However there is a percentage that misses classes during their menstruation periods. Class teachers take roll calls to ensure they account for their absence.

"It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to support the girl child education by ensuring they are comfortable in class when learning. These include, parents or guardians, community based organizations, teachers and the community" Said the Head teacher.

One teacher expressed that girls have many challenges in the rural areas including, inadequate pads supply, lack of hygiene skills including use of torn underpants, and poor toilets at home. In school, inadequate toilets, shortage of clean water and lack of wash rooms is experienced. Use of old rags and toilet papers are as a result of poverty which makes affordability of pads difficult.

Table 14 shows that 68% of the respondents never missed school because of menstruation periods. 27% of the respondents missed school for a period of between 1 day and 1 week. Any lessons missed per week or month in school counts in the school performance for the girls. In a research by Powell, 2003 concerning sanitary protection for girls in developing countries, the results indicated that poor girls often have no access to sanitary products and as a result of feared embarrassment, attend irregularly, perform

poorly, and then drop out. In that research on average the rate of absenteeism was cut by slightly more than half, from 21% of school days to about 9% of school days.

Table 13: Absenteeism from school due to menstruation

Duration	No of respondents	Percentage
None	41	68
1 day	10	17
3 days	6	10
1 week	2	3
2 weeks	1	2
Total	60	100

Source: Primary data (2010)

The study endeavored to find out if students informed their teachers when absent from school. The results indicate that, 30% of the girls who absented themselves did inform their teachers while 30% never told the teacher due to fear or skepticism about the issue. 40 % did not absent themselves from school due to the menstruation issue (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Absence from school on permission

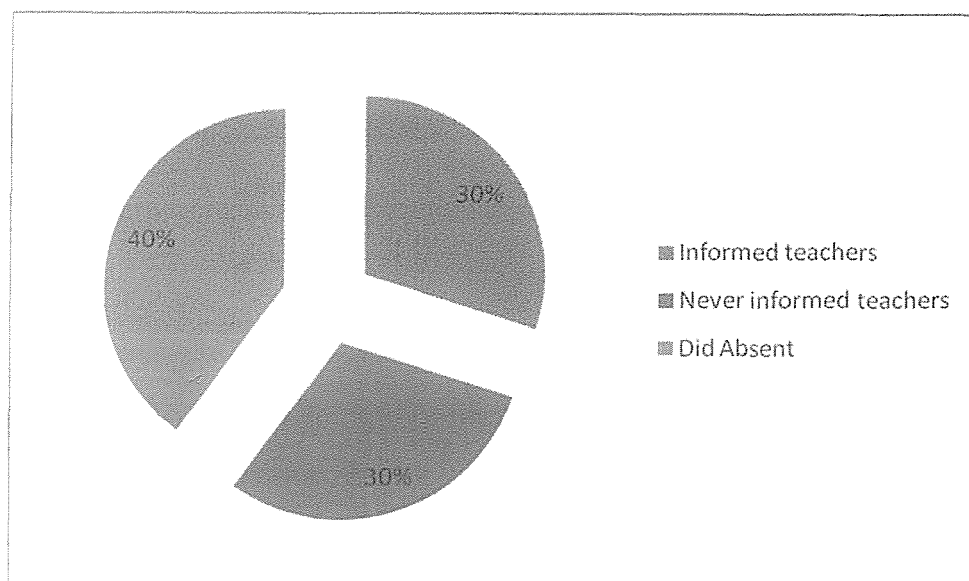
Source: Primary data (2010)

4.9 Sanitation and hygiene

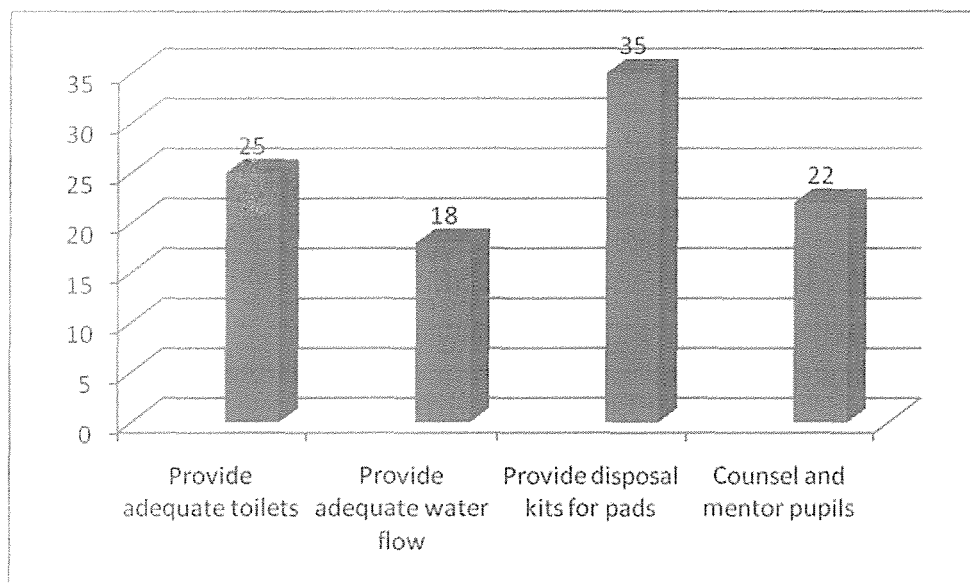
It is interesting that even the discussions of water and sanitation projects in schools frequently fail to make explicit the issue of menstruation. At Alendu the school has tried to put in place toilets for girls and boys. However through observation and the responses, the school lacked the washrooms that include bathrooms where the girls can change sanitary pads. From the results, 90% of the respondents said there were no washrooms in school while 8% said there are. Some confused toilets for washrooms. When asked about the conditions of the washroom, they could not respond since there were no washrooms or bathrooms in the school. In the study, respondents indicated that 68% said toilets were not adequate while 32% said they were adequate.

Figure 5 below shows the proposed recommendations by the respondents on what should be done to improve their welfare in and out of school. Provision of sanitary pads for the girls is a priority with 35% while on sanitation adequate toilets and washrooms indicate 25%. Girls also value counseling and mentorship at 22%. Giving the respondent a chance to say what they need.

Figure 3: Priority recommendations by respondents in percentages



Source: Primary data (2010)



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSION

There are several challenges that teenage girls go through in school and out of school. In most cultures in Africa girls explain that menstruation is a taboo subject even within their own families, describing a culture of silence with regard to their menstruation. They feel unable to discuss menstrual issues with their mothers and certainly not with their fathers. Not being able to talk about their experience and having limited information means that menstruation becomes something shameful and something to hide, and is consequently ignored in families, schools and communities (FAWE U, 2003).

It was the feelings of the respondents that provision of adequate clean water at home and in school is a necessity for their hygiene purpose. Guidance and counseling from immediate guardians and school teachers will also add value to reproductive health knowledge. Supply of sanitary pads is of priority for improved hygiene, school performance and school attendance.

Where girls are able or determined to attend school throughout menstruation, the insufficient facilities and sanitary protection may nevertheless create discomfort for girls in the classroom and an inability to participate. For example menstruating girls may hesitate to go up to the front of the class to write on the board, or stand due to fear of

having an “accident” and staining their uniform. Teachers in the school reiterated that sometimes for girls who get their menstruation for the first time, they get shocked until they go home and take some days before resuming classes.

The above challenges can be addressed by combined efforts of the school parents and local community groups in the area.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Dear respondent,

You are requested to assist the researcher Millicent Sagero in carrying out her study within your area. The information that you will provide will be treated with confidentiality. On the same note, for purposes of confidentiality, your name may not be needed. Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Section 1: Background characteristics (Socio-demographic)

lo	Questions	Coding categories	Code
01	In what month and year were you born?	Month.....Year.....	
02	Grade/class?	STD.....	
03	Religion	1.Catholic 2. Protestant 3. Others specify.....	
04	Whom do you live with at present?	1.My Mother and Father 3. Mother only 4. Father only 5. Step father and step mother 6. Relatives 7. Friends	

No	Questions	Coding categories	Code
		8. Others specify.....	
105	How many people live together in your family/household?	1. Three 2. Four 3. Five 4. Six 5. Seven 6. Eight 7. Other specify.....	
106	What is your father's educational level?	1. Can't read and write 2. Read and write 3. Last grade completed.....	
07	What is your mother's educational level?	1. Can't read and write 2. Read and write 3. Last grade completed.....	
08	Parents job status?	1. Both don't work 2. only my father works 3. only my mother works 4. Both my parents work outside of home 5. mother is on pension 6. father is on pension	

No	Questions	Coding categories	Code
109	How many living rooms does the house you live in have?	
110	Is the house you live in.....	1.Owned by your family 2. Rented from the government 3. Rented from private owners 4. Other specify,.....	
111	Does your family have a TV set/LCD?	1.Yes 2. No	
112	How do you go to school?	1. Walk 2. Bicycle 3. Motor cycle	
113	Source of drinking water?	1.Stream 2. Borehole 3. Pond 4. piped 5. Others specify.....	
114	How do you wash your body?	1.In the house using shower 2.In the house using bath 3. Bathroom using bucket 4.By the pond using bath	

Section 2: During and after the onset of menstruation

No	Questions	Coding categories	Code
201	How old were you when started menstruating?	years.....	
202	What were your physical symptoms when the first time you had menstruation?	1. Abdominal and back pain 2. Sleepless 3. Weakness 4. Heavy bleeding 5. Others specify.....	
203	Did you know about menstruation before you started menstruating?	1. Yes 2. No	
204	Who told (advised) you about menstruating? (More than one answer is possible)	1. Mother 2. Father 3. Sister 4. Brother 5. Friends 6. Teachers 7. Reading 8. Grandmother 9. Others, specify.....	
205	If you live with your mother, how do you find to communicate with her about menstruation?	1. Very easy 2. Easy	

No	Questions	Coding categories	Code
		3.Average 4.Difficult 5.Very difficult 5.Very difficult 6.Dont see him	
206	If you live with your father, how do you find to communicate with her about menstruation?	1.Very easy 2.Easy 3.Average 4.Difficult 5.Very difficult 5.Very difficult 6.Dont see him	
207	Were you expecting the menstruation when it first occurred?	1.Yes 2. No	
208	What did you use to stop the bleeding?	1.piece of cloth 2.Tissue paper 3.Cotton wool 4.Pads 5.Nothing 6. Any other specify	
209	If Pads, who provided them to you?	1.Mother	

No	Questions	Coding categories	Code
		2. Father 3.Sister 4. Friend 5. Brother 6. CBO/NGO 7. School 8. Other, specify....	
2010	How frequent do you access sanitary pads?	1.once a week 2.once a month 3.once a term 4.other specify	
2011	What is the average duration of your menstruation flow?	-----days	
2012	From whom, or where from would you prefer to have received more information on menstruation?	1.Mother 2. Father 3. School teacher 4. Friends 5. TV/Books	

Section3.Absence from school

No	Questions	Coding categories	Code
301	How frequent do you miss class/school because of menstruation period?	1.None 2.1day 3.3days 4.1week 5.2weeks 6.Other, specify	
302	Do you make the teacher aware of your absence?	1. Yes 2. 2.No	
303	How does your teacher react when you inform her/him of the issue?	1.Annoyed 2.emphatic 3.Promises punishment 4. Nothing 5. Any other, specify	
304	Does your school have washrooms for changing pads?	1.Yes 2. No	
305	What condition are the washrooms?	1. Very good 2. Good 3. Poor 4. Very poor 5. Satisfactory	
306	Are there adequate toilet facilities in your school?	1.Yes 2. No	

No	Questions	Coding categories	Code
307	What action do you propose the school can take to improve the situation?	1. Provide adequate toilets 2. provide regular water flow 3. Provide disposal kits for pads 4. Counsel and mentor children while young.	
308	What can be done to improve school attendance for girls?	1. Adequate supply of pads 2. Advise parents to offer adequate guidance for adolescents. 3. Parents and guardians to regularly promote group discussions 4. Visit the families affected and advise	

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CLASS TEACHERS

1. What in your observation concerning menstruation of girls in your class?
2. What percentage of girls (10-15yrs) absent themselves from class weekly due to menstruation? 1. 1% 2. 2% 3. 3% 4. 5% 5. 10%
3. Do you get time to educate girls within your class about menstruation?
1. YES 2. NO
4. If No, what do you do when pupils undergo menstruation in your class?
1. Seek female teacher's assistance. 2. Give child note for parents to act 3.
Other, specify.....
5. What innovative facilities are within your reach to assist the girls?.....
.....

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE HEAD TEACHER

1. How long have you been in this school?.....
2. Have you ever experienced challenges with girls menstruation in the school?
3. What measures has your school administration taken to help the girls through such experiences?
4. Do you have any records of absenteeism of girls of age 12-15 years at various levels/classess?.....
5. If yes, what percentage or numbers per class?.....
6. Who are involved in meaningful assistance for girls in your school in one way or the other?
 1. Parents
 2. Female teachers
 3. Male teachers
 4. Donors/NGOs
 5. Other, specify.....
7. In your opinion whose responsibility is to ensure that girls of age are comfortable during menstruation period?
8. What is the role of the school on the same issue?
9. How many toilets/washrooms are available in your school?

10. What solutions are proposed for absenteeism of the girl
child?.....

.....