

Students ask for contraceptives

Basis. The students say they want to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

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A section of female students have called upon the Education ministry to allow them access to contraceptives.

Gladys Namaweje, a Senior Five student of Kawaala High School in Kawempe, reasoned that once they use contraceptives, they will avoid unwanted pregnancies.

"Some female students are very sexually active, so my appeal to the ministry is to give them contraceptives and condoms to avoid getting pregnant and remain in school," Ms Namaweje pleaded on Saturday during a dialogue to mark the international youth day at Makerere University.

Ms Namaweje alongside her colleague, Ms Jane Peace Kaayi from Alliance Secondary School in Kibuku, outlined some of the challenges that they face at school as female students.

Some of the challenges included lack of pads, water shortage, defilement and other forms of sexual harassment.

Support

Mr Derrick Alter Ndahiro, the president for School of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University, told the Education ministry officials at the dialogue to listen to the plea of the female students and avail them with contraceptives.

Mr Henry Semakula, the senior education officer, guidance and counselling/ assistant coordinator health- HIV unit, however, said the ministry's policy cannot allow students to use contraceptives.

"The ministry can't allow that. We are fond of doing the right things, at the right time, place and for the right people. What you are asking is much under the Ministry of Health," Mr Semakula said during the dialogue.

He added: "The ministry of Education is working to have the



STATISTICS

Teenage pregnancies.

Uganda has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa with more than 25 per cent pregnancies among teenagers registered every year.

The 2014 Uganda population census faults this on the immense sexual reproductive health problems.

Child pregnancies increased to 25 per cent as reflected in the 2016 Uganda Demographic Health Survey report. The report states that 24 per cent of female teenagers are either pregnant or have given birth.

Education. A medical staff demonstrates to school girls the use of female condom at a Health camp in Masaka District in 2015. FILE PHOTO

remaining processes of finalising the policy as fast as possible and it's believed that it will be a remedy to the numerous health challenges that young people face in school today.

"Majority of them are founded by the Church and Muslim community; so don't just introduce anything much as it might be beneficial, it might be out of context."

Mr Semakula said the pending school health policy if passed, will solve majority of reproductive health issues that the students grapple with.

Ms Annah Kukundakweh, a programme associate at Center for Health, Human Rights and Development, called upon government to invest in sexual reproductive health and rights of the youth as the country celebrates the International Youth Day.

"Investing in sexual reproductive health and rights of young people is the only sure way of transforming the education sector and harness the demographic dividend," Ms Kukundakweh said.

The newly crowned Miss Uganda, Ms Oliver Nakakande, who was one of the panelists, expressed dissatisfaction with Parliament and other leaders who promise the girl-child sanitary pads and other treats but do not fulfill their promises.

The chair of Parliamentary Health Committee, Mr Micheal Bukenya, one of the panelists, promised to ensure that the school health policy is passed by the House.

Youth celebrations

The United Nations international youth day is celebrated on August 12 every year to recognise efforts of the world's youth in enhancing global society.

This year's theme is "Transforming education" with highlights on different efforts to make education more inclusive and accessible for all the youth.

About 68 per cent of Uganda's population comprises young people below the age of 30 years.