

Keeping Girls in School: Kirinyaga County's Sanitary Pads Drive

In Kirinyaga County, period poverty has been a significant challenge affecting school-going girls from economically disadvantaged households. Many girls aged between 10 and 16 years lack access to sanitary towels and other menstrual hygiene products, forcing them to miss school during their menstrual periods. This has resulted in frequent absenteeism, disrupted learning, and reduced confidence due to the stigma and embarrassment often associated with menstruation.



Director Gender, Doreen Nyaguthii Mwangi offloads Sanitary towels at one of the 20 beneficiary schools in Kirinyaga.

To address this challenge, the Kirinyaga County Department of Gender and Youth implemented a Sanitary Pads Drive targeting schools located in poverty pockets across the County. The programme began with a mapping exercise to identify vulnerable communities where girls were most affected by lack of menstrual hygiene products. Based on the findings, the department coordinated the procurement and distribution of sanitary towels directly to the identified schools. The initiative also included sensitization sessions to promote menstrual hygiene awareness and dignity among students.



Sheila Nyawira Mwangi, Chief Officer Gender and Youth, County Government Kirinyaga issues sanitary towels to one of the beneficiary schools

The programme was implemented across 20 schools in the County, reaching a total of 3,173 beneficiaries. The Department of Gender and Youth spearheaded the initiative, overseeing the planning, procurement, and distribution processes. An allocation of KES 800,000 supported implementation, covering the procurement and distribution of sanitary towels as well as related programme activities



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Following implementation, an assessment conducted in participating schools showed that school absenteeism among girls during menstrual periods had reduced significantly. Delivering sanitary towels directly through schools proved highly effective, as it ensured the intended beneficiaries received the products while minimizing stigma and logistical challenges associated with other distribution channels.

To sustain the initiative, the County Government plans to allocate annual budgetary provisions for sanitary pads distribution and introduce dignity packs for boys to promote inclusivity and increase awareness of menstrual health.

Kirinyaga County recommends that Counties seeking to replicate the initiative conduct proper mapping exercises to identify areas experiencing period poverty, as this helps inform accurate budgeting, resource allocation, and planning for sanitary towel distribution.

Further reading:

1. https://www.citizen.digital/article/kirinyaga-governor-launches-countywide-sanitary-pads-drive-for-schoolgirls-n376847?preview=true&user_id=738
2. https://youtu.be/fLbAgzlutk8?si=jp_zKZZGKFPqfu0_
3. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/central/2026-02-04-central-page-story-2-keeping-girls-in-school-kirinyaga-launches-menstrual-health-initiative-1>
4. <https://youtu.be/E3iZdnG8Zyo?si=pXHpr91s5-OjBoIQ>
5. <https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2026/02/waiguru-rolls-out-sanitary-pads-drive-for-schoolgirls/>

What initiative has your County taken to address period poverty and improve school attendance among girls from economically disadvantaged households? We would love to hear your story.

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