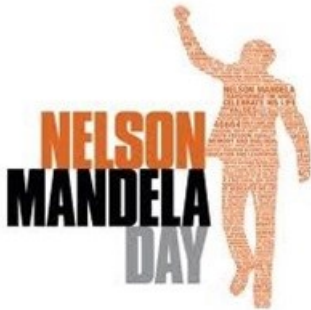


# Campaign to restore dignity to girl learners

PRETORIA: The Dignity Dreams Nelson Mandela Day Campaign is a non-profit organisation which has set an ambitious goal to raise funds to distribute 18,000 dignity dream packs to young girls by 18 July 2015...



Launching the campaign on Wednesday, Deputy Minister in the Presidency, Buti Manamela, said girls who cannot afford sanitary pads miss approximately five days of school a month, which amounts to 60 missed school days a year.

He said sometimes cultural stereotypes and failure of life skills education deprives girls, especially those who come from impoverished families in rural areas, of the support they need when they start their menstrual cycles.

"The lack of affordable sanitary products for girls and young women keeps them at a disadvantage in terms of education when they are young, and prevents their mobility and productivity as young women.

"Without sanitary products, girls are excluded from their right to an education as stipulated by the Constitution of South Africa," said deputy minister Manamela.

The deputy minister said most families of these girls do not have means to afford pads every month. The girls are also shy to speak to their teachers [whom are male in some instances] about their challenges, and this also results in girl learners dropping out of school.

"Limited options for menstrual hygiene make it difficult for these students - like female students worldwide - to participate in school during their periods, despite the proven benefits an education can have for the health and development of girls, their families, and society," said the deputy minister.

He said every girl in South Africa deserves access to safe and hygienic sanitary products.

"Our goal is to help girls and young women reclaim the dignity that poverty denies them and enable them to make a lasting and positive impact on the communities they live in and society as a whole.

"They will complete high school, [and] will be less likely to get HIV/AIDS or fall pregnant before 18 and will likely earn higher wages and successfully educate their own children," he said.

The deputy minister has pleaded to the corporate world, civil society and individuals to get involved in supporting the campaign.

"Let's put our heads, hands and hearts together by supporting Dignity Dreams in their Nelson Mandela Campaign to raise funds to distribute 18,000 dignity dream packs by 18 July 2015. Your support is needed. Every bit helps."

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