

Handing over of Sanitary Towels by Liberty Life

Dr EP Lekhela High School

Monday, 28 August 2017

Representatives from Liberty Life;

Principal;

Teachers and Educators;

Members of the School Governing Body;

Parents present;

Ladies and Gentleman;

Most importantly, our learners

For many girls from impoverished backgrounds, the onset of puberty marks a sharp decline in school attendance and could even lead to their dropping out of school completely. One of the reasons for this high drop-out rate is the lack of sanitary protection and lack of knowledge around puberty.

Because they are unable to afford sanitary protection and they don't understand what is happening to their bodies, what should be a celebration of womanhood becomes a time of shame, embarrassment and stigmatisation with dire consequences for the girls education and consequently their futures.

According to research, lack of access to sanitary towels often results in young women from poorer backgrounds being absent from school or experiencing the loss of human dignity because of having no choice but to use old newspapers or cloths. Young women in Africa have been reported as being absent from school for a period of at least four days per month; this number can total up to approximately 24 weeks out of 144 weeks in a four year period of high school. In some instances, these young women suffer from stress and depression as a result of fear of staining their clothes.

It is for this reason that I have initiated a Sanitary Towel Campaign, where our employees of the Department are kindly requested to donate sanitary towels voluntarily on monthly basis.

This Campaign has gained momentum over the year and saw a number private companies and institutions from the private sector joining this initiative.

We wish to thanks Liberty life for this initiative and support towards this campaign to donate sanitary towels to rural schools across the Province. We further call upon the rest of the private sector to follow, who wish to partner with us in making a difference, to do so.

Collectively, this is our responsibility as Government and the private sector, to join hands and fulfil in the need of all our learners, especially the girl child.

Education is a societal matter and our Government needs the support of the private sector to ensure the quality of public education. I also want to encourage all our school communities at large to support and participate actively against the violence of women and children that exist in our communities. Each one of us, have a responsibility to act against abuse and to report it immediately. Let us work together to ensure and establish safer communities, safer homes, safer schools and a safer Northern Cape for all of us.

In conclusion, this Sanitary Towel Campaign is not just about supplying sanitary towels to young women, it is about making significant life-changing differences. The sanitary towels do not only enable girls to attend class regularly, the effect is greater in the sense that this improves on the government's goal of making access to education simpler and eventually ensuring better economic exposure for young women.

Lastly, with the final examinations around the corner, I would like to wish all learners everything of the best, especially to the Class of 2017. Our message to our learners is: you can succeed despite difficult circumstances, poor backgrounds and humble beginnings. Through sheer hard work, commitment and determination, **nothing** can prevent you from achieving your full potential and your dreams. Visualise your dreams and be willing to put in time, energy and sacrifices to realise your goals. We are confident that you will do the Northern Cape proud.

I thank you!