

# Samira Urges Menstrual Hygiene Awareness

BY Ebenezer K. Amponsah

**SECOND LADY** Samira Bawumia yesterday commemorated World Menstrual Hygiene Day in the Greater Accra Region with a call on girls to prioritise menstrual hygiene management.

The event, held at the Odorgonno Senior High School in the Ga Central Municipality, brought together over 1,000 students from 19 basic schools in the municipality.

Menstrual Hygiene Day is celebrated across the world to highlight the importance of menstrual care aimed at raising awareness on social issues and challenges faced by women during menstruation, including access to sanitary products.

Participating schools included Odorgonno Senior High School, Odorgonno Model 1 and 2, Salvation Army School and Awoshie Community Islamic School.

Others are St. Justice Basic

School, Holy Child Basic School, Awoshie Anglican Basic School among several others.

The Second Lady said the day served as a reminder for all Ghanaians not only to prioritise menstrual hygiene management but to also dispel myths, and promote education on menstrual health.

She said issues about menstrual health demands accurate information as well as access to affordable and sustainable menstrual products.

"For many women and girls, access to safe water and sanitation as well as menstrual products remains a challenge. A situation widely referred to as period poverty," she stated.

According to her, 'period poverty' leads to negative impacts including missing school days, increased health risks such as urinary tract infections, a cause of cervical cancer, and social exclusion that will ultimately

diminish economic opportunities.

She further mentioned that menstruating girls and women face stigma and discrimination globally while others are seen as unclean, thereby restricting their movement and access to spaces in addition to certain cultural norms that also forbid women menstruating from touching certain foods with the belief that they would go bad.

She, therefore, called for collaborative efforts across the education, health, water, and sanitation sectors with the support of NGOs, faith-based organisations and academia to create sustainable solutions.

"Our advocacy must translate into policy change. From schools to workplaces, from rural villages to urban centres, let us create an enabling environment.

"Access to affordable and sustainable menstrual products will ensure that girls and women adopt healthy and hygienic men-

strual practices," she added.

The Second Lady, who also donated 5,000 packs of sanitary pads to the female students in the Ga Central Municipal Education Directorate, encouraged the students to seek knowledge beyond the classroom and never give up in pursuit of their dreams in life.

Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Dakoa Newman, for her part said given the varied challenges that girls face with respect to their sexual and reproductive health, they require proper menstrual health management to safeguard their dignity and integrity.

Such support, she indicated, would improve their performance in school and reduce dropout rates as well as prevent reproductive tract infections and poor genital hygiene, which negatively affect adolescent's health.

The minister, who also doubles as the Member of Parliament for Okaikwei South, fur-

ther assured the public that the ministry will continue to promote sexual and reproductive health rights of girls to increase their retention in school and completion to enable them achieve their full potential, and meaningfully contribute to national development.

She further encouraged parents to teach their wards any changes in their bodies as they grow into adolescents to complement the efforts of teachers.

Also present at the commemoration were the Deputy Director General of the Ghana Education Service, Dr. Kwabena Bempah Tandoh; Deputy Country Representative of UNFPA; Regional Director of Health, Ghana Health Service; Directors of Education, Municipal Director of Education; New Patriotic Party (NPP) parliamentary candidate for Anyaa Sowutuom Constituency and other dignitaries.