REPUBLIC OF KENYA

COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF LAIKIPIA

THE HANSARD

Tuesday, 11th April, 2023

The House met at the Assembly Chambers at 2.30 p.m.

[Deputy Speaker (Hon. Anthony Theuri) in the Chair]

PRAYERS

PAPER LAID

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORTS

Hon. Catherine Kihika: Mr. Speaker, I would wish to lay the following papers on behalf of the Majority leader;

a) Report of the Auditor-General on Laikipia County Executive State and Public Officers Car Loan and Mortgage Scheme Fund for the Year ended 30th June 2022.

b) Report of the Auditor-General on Laikipia County Revenue Board for the Year ended 30th June 2022.

c) Report of the Auditor-General on Laikipia County Emergency Fund for the Year ended 30th June 2022.

d) Report of the Auditor-General on Laikipia County Enterprises Fund for the Year ended 30th June 2022.

MOTION

PROVISION OF FREE SANITARY TOWELS

Hon. Catherine Umija: Honourable Speaker, I beg to move the following motion;

THAT, AWARE THAT limited access to safe affordable, convenient and culturally appropriate methods for dealing with menstruation has far reaching implications for rights and physical, social and mental well-being of many women and adolescent girls in Kenya;

FURTHER AWARE that in rural Kenya, 2 out of 3 pad users receive pads from sexual partners and 65 percent of women and girls can't afford sanitary pads, forcing them to use alternative materials like tissue paper, cotton wool and old pieces of clothes which lack adequate absorbent qualities resulting in frequent leakage and unhygienic issues;

CONCERNED THAT data from the Ministry of Education indicates that a girl that is absent from school for four days a month loses 13 learning days, equivalent to two weeks of learning in every school term, translating to 39 learning days or six weeks of learning time in a term and up to 18 of 108 weeks in primary and 24 weeks of 144 weeks of learning in secondary school;

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FURTHER CONCERNED THAT this has greatly affected the girl-child education and transition to higher levels of education;

This House URGES the County Government to partner with Government Agencies and other stakeholders to;

i. Facilitate provision of feminine hygiene products and pants in all public schools priority to be given to primary and secondary day schools;

ii. Ensure that all schools that don't have bathrooms that facilitate privacy, cleanliness or proper disposal of hygiene products are properly equipped;

iii. Create awareness and take advocacy measures on reproductive health issues related to period poverty; and

iv. Ensure that sanitary products will be obtainable timely, consistently, and in a way that respects the dignity of concerned persons.

Mr. Speaker, I know that basic education is a right for every child and especially girl child. The issue of pads has been discussed again and again. Section 39 of the Basic Education Act says;

"It is the duty of the Cabinet secretary to provide free and quality sufficient sanitary towels to every girl child registered and enrolled in a public basic education institution who has reached puberty and provide a safe environment, sound mechanism of disposal of the sanitary pads."

I know the government has taken this initiative of ensuring that sanitary pads are being provided. The government has put a budget for the provision of the same. When I see the budget I see the reduction of the budget from Kshs. 470 million to 260 million. Our population is increasing. That means our budget was slashed in to half. Most of the girls will not be given free sanitary pads from the government.

The County Government should also take up this initiative and ensure provision of sanitary pads. Let them liaise with other agency and ensure these girls get sanitary pads on time. The government has a long procurement process. By the time it's done the biological clock of every girls or woman is on a monthly period. If the government is taking a whole six months what happens to girl-child?

That is why the girl child will use tissue paper, will result to uncouth tattered clothes, will be ashamed while sited down in class or fail to go back to school. Some will go and look for sexual favours from men to get sanitary pads. This is serious.

I would like to urge our men counter parts to support this. I do not want to be vulgar because we enjoy the other aspects of the girl. So why should we not support the girl child to ensure that they get sanitary pads for free. I hope that men because if we are not involving them in this issue, they are the ones who are taking advantage of the girls.

I am urging the County Government to support this initiative and ensure that the girl child is sustained in school. Now that we are taking the function of the National Government of providing sanitary pads, we are telling the County Government that these are our girls and we need to support them. Remember right now the economic cost has risen up. A standard sanitary pads costs Kshs. 50 and right now a pack costs Kshs. 80 to Kshs. 120 for ten pieces.

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Ten pieces of pads are not enough. A girl child needs a 20 pack during her periods every month. The Government having slashed from Kshs.470 to Kshs.260 means that every girl gets 12 pieces per month, which is not enough. In average, we require 24 packets per month when we are putting hygiene level to the standard that is supposed to be.

Mr. Speaker, I would love to give facts to a research that was done by AMREF health Africa that gives us the statistics that 65% of women and girls cannot afford sanitary pads which is alarming. When we are saying 65% of women, means that every ten women that sits, six of them cannot afford sanitary pads. That was the statistics that was pulled in last year. Remember when the Covid pandemic hits, it meant that the economic situation within our country failed. That means our economy went down and the girls became more vulnerable.

Another statistic reveals that 2 out of 3 girls in rural Kenya receive their sanitary pads from their sexual partners which is known as transactional sex. Can you imagine you are doing transactional sex to get our basic human rights? Mr. Speaker, sanitary towels is a basic human right just as health. Let us ensure that sanitary towels is provided free the water is provided for and the way health is being prioritised.

So, provision of sanitary pads should be free. Mr. Speaker, we call both the County Government and the National Government to eliminate period poverty and the stigma that surrounds menstruation. Let it be part of CSR especially for other NGOs and other organisations that let us ensure that we incline this in our laws so that every person and every organisation makes it a necessity to provide for the sanitary pads for the girls.

I want to stand with Hon. Senator Gloria Orwoba in the Senate. She made this very clear and I know it was in the National news when our Senator came inside the Parliament. By accident she was on her menses and she did not know. All the male counterparts were there to shame her and they told her to get out of the parliament to clean herself. That is putting shame on her and this is a biological thing.

Men counterparts, let us not do transactional sex for our girls. Let us provide free sanitary pads for our girls and the women. It is affordable and I know the County Government and the National Government can do this. When I am saying I standing with Gloria Orwoba, I am saying that all women and girls should be given the basic human rights and bring an art that will help in clear registration of period poverty. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask Hon. Moile to support the motion.

Hon. Eunice Salaten: Asante sana, Bwana Spika. Naunga mkono mswada huu ambao umeletwa na dada yangu Mheshimiwa Umija. Naunga mkono kwa sababu wasichana wengi wanakataa shule kwa sababu ya hiyo shida. Naomba wanaume waunge mkono kwa sababu mnajua hiyo ni shida kubwa sana. Hata kama ni jukumu la Serikali Kuu, pia Serikali ya Kaunti waweze kununulia wasichana ili waweze kuwa shuleni kwa hizo siku nne. Naunga ailimia mia kwa mia Mheshimiwa Umija.

(Question proposed)

Deputy Speaker: Secondly, ensure that all schools that do not have bathrooms that facilitates privacy, cleanliness and proper dispose of hygienic are properly equipped. Thirdly, Create awareness and take advocacy measures on reproductive health issues related to period

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poverty and ensure sanitary products will be obtained timely, consistently in a way that respects the dignity of concerned person. Hon. Members, the floor is open for debate.

Hon. Simon Kanyutu: Thank you, Hon. Speaker. I stand to support the motion by the Hon. Member, representing the minority in the House. It is a great concern and I am sure there is a great trauma that even mostly touches on the ground during those periods. There is no way we can hold that even an elected Senator, can come to the floor of the House, and stand claiming that it is the issue pertaining to the Sanitary towels. That one, I cannot support on that basis. We know we have our young girls who cannot afford this. We should try and ensure even some of us who are capable. Though even for us men, if you start supplying those sanitary towels, even the Members of the public will wonder which concerns you have.

We have elected people and ladies in this House, this should set an example by providing a few to those who are missing. Even if they seek for our financial support but we cannot also go to the shops and buy the sanitary pads and start distributing to our people. It is unfortunate because there is a claim that, the sanitary pads are used for sexual favours. I have not done that research well. I can remember when I was in primary school, there was a girl who had that unfortunate issue. It was unfortunate because she spent the whole day sited, she could not even move out because of the whole trauma.

The idea is good, but it should not be blown out of proportion. If we set an example for those who are capable, and we supply to those who do not have, that is someway with everything. I am sure even if we call all ladies who are in this Assembly to provide five packets and we support the unfortunate people that is very possible. Even for us men, we can try and support few ladies so that you can offer on the same issue. The motion is good, but it should be portrayed as though as it is a calamity.

If we join hands, we can assist in a way but not portraying as though. At least each man should not be seen by the time we are providing we are seeking for any favours. That one should not be an issue, but on our part, we can assist where we are. On issues of having good facilities whereby they can have proper changing areas, that is a noble idea. When we are doing our projects in our local schools, we need to improve on the same. We are the fathers of these girls. When we get them in problems, we are the ones who are concerned. I already have a mature girl and at the end of the day when she has trauma being the father, I should provide support. There is no way we can keep the parents away, they should also take the obligation of the parent and support where they can.

We had better support those who cannot afford, but not each and every person to sit down and claim because she is a lady that needs to be provided with the sanitary towels. I also own a car, when the pads are off, I must replace. It is unfortunate, I was concerned when she was saying the Senator, had the issue. Does it mean it happens irregularly? They know everything and they have a program on how it comes. When you get somebody on the same, maybe she is not following her program well. I support the motion, but we should not follow the trends of a leader who wants to portray it as a calamity.

Hon. Catherine Umija: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know I brought the motion to the House and Hon. Kanyutu, is not a woman. He will never be a woman, so he will never understand the biological events that we undergo through as women. Assuming that our dear Hon. Gloria, had an accident that she did not know, Hon. Kanyutu…..

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Deputy Speaker: Hon. Kanyutu.

Hon. Simon Kanyutu: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of clarification. I may not understand, but can the Hon. Member, clarify if it can happen more than twice in a month. If it is possible, I would wish to understand on the same. Maybe I am in the dark.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. Kanyutu, I think you are being tough on Hon. Catherine Umija. Hon. Umija, I know you are tough you can reply on the same.

Hon. Catherine Umija: Thank you, Hon. Speaker. I want to do a little education to Hon. Kanyutu. I know that you have gone through your biological class. A womans cycle is on every month, depending on your body. Some women do menstruate even a whole month, other women menstruate for a day, others one week, depending on your body. Sometimes it is regular or irregular. When our dear Senator, Hon. Gloria, accidentally had her periods, maybe her periods were not regular and she could not pin point when it will come. We cannot tell. It flows and some people do not have any signs when menstruation comes and others have.

Depending on your biology the way God created you, it means that women require sanitary pads. That is the small biological lesson that I am giving to Hon. Kanyutu. I think he can get more biology classes. He has just said he has a daughter and I think the daughter can even explain further. I believe he also has a wife, then the wife can explain further. Depending on the wife and the daughter, if he compares the notes, then you will see they are not equal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Joseph Gitahi: Thank you, Hon. Speaker for according me this opportunity. I want to comment on Hon. Kanyutu's, contributions. I will first stand to support the motion tabled by Hon. Umija, supported by Hon. Eunice Moile. On the account that menstrual health, we should not discriminate people based on their social-economic status. In the past we have had other similar cases. Just to bring myself to the motion tabled by Hon. Umija, there was voluntary Male Circumcision that was done in some regions, and it was supported by the government. We were doing this and it was supported by all stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, we were doing these things to ensure that nobody should have a health liability based on how they were created, whether male or female. I therefore seek to request this House to support the motion. So that these girls and our women are provided with these sanitary pads. For the sake of their convenience in schools and homes. Most importantly Mr. Speaker, for their human dignity. It will be so bad that even more than sixty years after independence that we have some of the shameful issues that have been reported around this menstrual health.

It is my plea to this House, all stakeholders and the public listening to us in Laikipia. Let us embrace this issue of supporting our girls and women on this issue of menstrual health. I support the motion Mr. Speaker, I would even ask that we follow up on such issues even to other organizations that are working. Just as the Honorable Member has alluded even in other organizations that are working on the soil of Laikipia County. I know we have said this time without numbers.

We cannot legislate morals. We cannot tell all of the organizations that from tomorrow support this number of kids. We can tell them that your moral obligations is to ensure that wherever you are working you support those that needs those service best. Mr. Speaker, having said that I want to support Kanyutu's sentiments, let us not make being male or female a disability. We cannot

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say that, because one is female if I got what Mr. Kanyutu is saying exaggeratedly. Let us not exaggerate some things.

I have watched Senator Gloria even before she was nominated. I think that was unnecessary drama. We as men remember we are also born by mothers, we have sisters, we have aunts, and girlfriends. We understand these things. We don't need anybody to catwalk with stained trousers for us to understand these things. That is why I rise on this floor to support but also to say the how is very important. Let us not bring this thing so dramatically. We understand even before everything else, we understand we are human. I support the motion by Hon. Catherine Umija. Thank you, Mr. Speaker sir.

Speaker: Hon. Daniel Mugweru.

Hon. Daniel Mugweru: Thank you, Hon. Speaker. For the opportunity you have given to me to make my contributions. Firstly, I would say it is a very important motion. It is very clear to all of us that we need to give dignity to our girls and women in this County and the Country in large. Having said that it is an important motion, it is important to ask ourselves the direction we are taking whether we will be able to manage the journey to the end Hon Speaker.

We don't just pass things here only to find that we are not able to implement. It will be so shameful for us. Hon. Speaker, it is true these things happens but we as the Hon. Members as Hon. Kanyutu has just said, the Hon. Ladies can start something and call upon we as males to support the initiative. You should even start by the school you went to for primary or secondary, whichever you went you start with that. Tell us to support you then the initiative carries on.

Hon. Speaker, about the whole thing we should not dramatize. The issue of that Senator, you cannot paint your clothes. That one was immoral. We should not support such things in this country. Hon. Catherine Umija, is telling us to support the needy kids. Now you find a whole Senator who is supposed to help others misbehaving, dramatizing something that should not be dramatized.

That day, instead of painting her trouser she was supposed to carry packets on her hands telling us that this is what we are talking about. She was supposed to come with at least a container having the same sanitary piles and tell the male counterparts that this is what I am talking about. Now, the direction she took was just an embarrassment, disgrace to the Senate and the leaders of this country.

We want to help the needy, what do you think the needy felt seeing a whole senator behaving that way. That was so bad because today if Hon. Catherine Umija does the same and goes to a certain school, they expect her to help them, then she comes crying. You are their hope of those kids, you are the hope of those needy women, then you come crying more than them, then there is no leadership in you.

Hon. Speaker, the Senator really misbehaved. Secondly, there is something I have seen about ensuring that all schools that do not have bathrooms. In the Ward that I represent there are more schools that do not even have an ablution block. We are suggesting that we can do further, and the same schools we can go to places like some parts of Laikipia North. You find that in class seven and eight or class four and five are in one room, they still need more classes.

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Let us not just put ourselves into a journey that we cannot complete. We need to say something that we can practice, now and in future. As a government, and as Hon. Members, as individuals, we should also stand to support those girls. Instead of saying that the County government budgets we will do the same. There are so many other gaps that are not filled as at now. We must weigh, what we are to implement, what we are able to do and what we are not able to do.

All schools in Laikipia, if we wake up today and say that we are supplying unless we forget everything else and do that work of supply. Hon. Speaker, it is a good motion, it is also nice for Hon. Umija to have thought of those girls. If possible, I would feel good if it is implemented. My fear is it might not be practical thank you.

Speaker: Hon. Samuel Gatati.

Hon. Samuel Gatati: Asante Sana, Bwana Spika kwa kunipatia hii nafasi nisimame na kuunga mkono mjadala huu muhimu sana. Mjadala ambao hauongelewi sana katika jamii yetu kwa sababu ya maneno ambayo ninasikia watu wakisema ya kwamba, maneno ya hedhi ilikuwa ni kama laana kitambo. Lakini nimefurahi sana kusikia Mheshimiwa Umija, ameleta huu mjadala na mimi Namuunga mkono nikijua watoto wengi masikini wako na shida mingi sana. Wengine wanakosa kuenda shuleni, na ningependa kwa huo mjadala wafahamishwe kwamba, kuwa na hedhi na kuwa na afya. Biolojia ambayo ninayo kidogo inamaanisha kwamba mwanamke anayepata hedhi ni mwanamke ambaye anaweza pata mimba

Ningependa pia kwa huo mjadala pia wafahamishwe ya kwamba kuwa na hedhi ni kuwa na afya kwa sababu ile biolojia kidogo ambayo niko nayo ni kumaanisha ya kwamba yule mwanamke ambaye ana uwezo wa kupata hedhi ni mwanamke ambaye anaweza kupata mimba. Kwa hivyo ni kitu tu cha kuleta katika jamii zetu na shule zetu na ninajua ya kwamba Mheshimiwa UImija ukiendelea kufuatilia katika bajeti zetu ili waweze kuwekewa, hili ni jambo ambalo linawezekana. Watoto wetu huwa wanapotelea katika shule za msingi na upili kwa sababu labda mtoto amepata hedhi na labda hana habari ni nini ambalo mwili wake unapitia.

Kwa hivyo, naunga mkono Mheshimiwa, uangalie katika bajeti zetu na pia tukienda katika mikutano zingine ambapo tuko na viongozi wengine na wafadhili wengine uwe ukiongea kuhusu hayo maneno na inaweza kusaidia watoto wawili. Kuna kitu kwa jamii ambapo huwa tunasema ya kwamba hata ukisaidia mtu mmoja na mimi nisaidie mmoja, ni kitu ambacho zote kwa jumla tunastahili kuwa tunasaidia. Sio wanawake pekee ambao wanafaa kusaidia wanawake bali ni kila mtu yeyote aliye katika hii dunia aweze kusaidia mmoja. Asante sana.

Hon. Salim Edung: Bwana Spika, nashukuru kwa nafasi hii ambayo umenipatia niweze kuunga mkono huu mjadala ambao umeletwa na Mheshimiwa Umija. Ninajua ya kwamba yale ambayo Mheshimiwa Umija ameongea katika hili Bunge ni mambo ambavyo yako katika jamii na ninaunga 80% kwa sababu ni mswada ambao unaonyesha ya kwamba kuna watu ambao tunaangalia. Ukiangalia katika sehemu zingine katika eneo ambapo hizi sodo hazifiki, Mheshimiwa ametaja ya kwamba hao huwa wanatumia nguo ambazo zimechakaa ili wajisitiri tu kwa upande wa hedhi.

Ninaunga mkono nikisema ya kwamba ni vizuri sisi tuangalie kwa makini sana ya kwamba binadamu ni binadamu. Sisi tukiwa binadamu tunafaa kujali mwingine kwa njia moja au nyingine. Sisi tusilete mswada mwingine kama kwa mfano ukisoma kitabu cha George Orwel cha shamba

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la wanyama kusema ya kwamba kuna wanyama zaidi kuliko wengine. Hapa tunaangalia afya ya binadamu na ukipata mtoto wa kike au mwanamke ambaye hajapitia kwa hiyo njia, labda kuna kasoro lakini ni maumbile.

Sisi tunaunga mkono huu mswada tukisema ya kwamba wakati bajeti itakapotengenezwa, pia inahitaji tujumuishe hili jambo ndani ili wale wanafunzi ambao wako katika shule na jamii kwa jumla wasaidike. Ukiangalia eneo za Segera, kuna shirika ambazo zinajiita *410 bridge* na huwa baada ya miezi miwili wanapatiana sodo. Ningeomba ya kwamba tunaposhikana mikono tujaribu tuungane pamoja na hawa ili wasaidie shule zetu ambazo ziko katika hii Laikipia. Nimeunga mkono nikisema ya kwamba Wabunge wenzangu pia waunge mkono. Asante.

Deputy Speaker: I now call upon the mover to reply.

Hon. Catherine Umija: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the male counter parts Hon. Members for really giving out their opinions in regards to provision of sanitary towels to girls and women. I want to thank you because I know that you understand that this is biological and also nature and there is nothing we as women cannot do to help each other and ensure that we do not have period shame.

I just want to say that I know that Hon. Gloria having gone through her menses, it looked shameful but let me tell you that it happens to every woman. Sometimes we know how to disguise it but sometimes it is not disguised. It is unfortunate that it happened to Gloria but the first people to point their hands were the male counter parts saying that it is shameful. Let us ensure that we do not do what we call period shame.

This should not be a shameful process but a process where I would love to see that when Senator Gloria stood up there with her stained cloth, that one of the male would have taken a *leso* and covered her up. That would have been great because it would mean that the person took the responsibility of ensuring that our Senator is not shamed. I want to thank our male counterparts and I know as the women representative of this County Assembly of Laikipia, we will ensure that our women are getting sanitary pads through lobbying from the County Government or any other stakeholder and I know that our girls will not have period shame. I want to thank every Hon. Member for their contribution.

(Question put and agreed to)

ADJOURNMENT

Deputy Speaker: The sittings of this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow Wednesday, 12th April, 2023 at 9.00 a.m.

The House rose at 3.16 p.m.

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