

EducationGuide

Teacher absenteeism hurts learning - report

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The vacuum created by teacher absenteeism is hurting the learning process in schools and contributing to low grades of pupils, a new report has revealed.

The report by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) Uganda Chapter was released and presented to parliament last week.

The study, conducted in 30 schools under the free primary education programme in Iganga district undertook to measure the extent and reasons why teachers absent themselves from school.

Mr Anslem Wandega, the programme coordinator in charge of research, information and policy advocacy at (ANPPCAN) said the problem of teacher absenteeism is so serious that some teachers miss twice a week.

According to findings of the report, average teacher absenteeism was at 43.6 per-

cent, with percentages higher among female teachers at 51 per cent compared to 49 per cent among their male counterparts.

The absenteeism rate of head teachers was at 19.7 per cent.

The study also found that most of the teachers were absent on Mondays and Fridays. Most of the absentee teachers, the report found, usually take advantage of the absence of head teachers to abscond from class.

"Sickness, active teacher involvement in other income generating activities, inadequacies in inspection, weak monitoring mechanisms at schools level, lack of teachers' houses and low pay were correlated with absenteeism," the report reveals.

Some teachers interviewed said at times they miss school because they don't have transport, with 27.9 per cent of them saying they live more than 5kms away from the school.

But it adds that some schools have now introduced

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school registers to curb the vice.

The report comes on the heels of another report by the social services committee of parliament which has recommended a review of the free education programme.

Ms Rosemary Sseninde, the chairperson of the committee which oversees the activities of the Ministry of Education, said while the free schooling programme has helped many children who would otherwise be out of school to access education, some key prerequisites needed to deliver a good education are still

lacking.

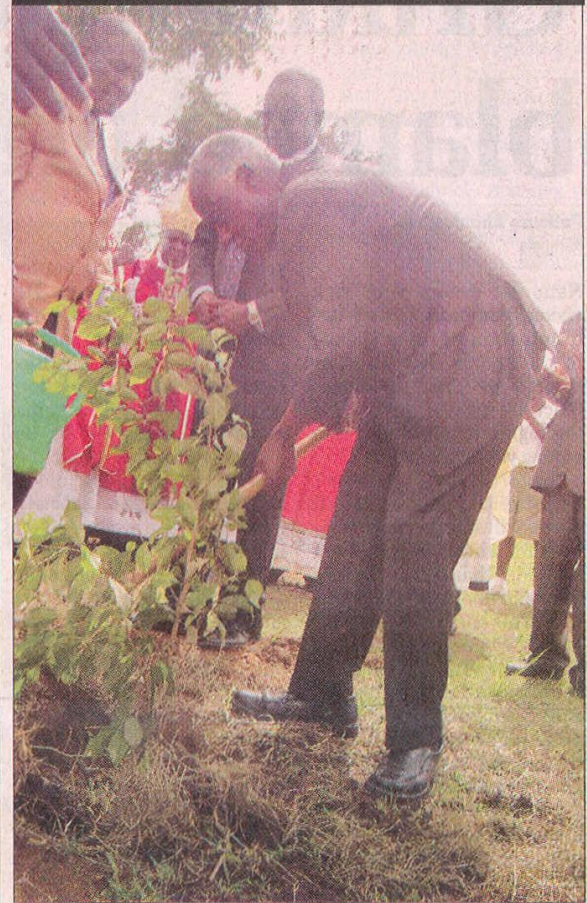
"Government needs to focus on infrastructure development and motivating the teachers," she says. "The high absenteeism of teachers is because many of them are not paid well enough to spend-time in school."

Education experts say contact time between teachers and students is one of the key factors that can ensure quality in education, but teacher absenteeism rates continue to soar, undermining the long-term prospects for the free education programme despite the huge investment in the programme by government.

The report faults the government for not carrying out adequate inspection of schools to ensure teachers spend more time with pupils.

A total of 620 people, including education officials and experts at national and district levels, head teachers, teachers, pupils, parents, community members were interviewed.

New school to be constructed



Thailand Consulate General and businessman Mr James Mulwana plants a symbolic tree at a fundraising drive to raise money for the construction of St Henry's Lukumbi SS PHOTO BY MARTIN SSEBUYIRA