

THE NUMBER OF PUPILS INCREASED FROM 60,000 IN 2016, TO 70,000 LAST YEAR

HOIMA

By Lawrence Mulondo

At Kabaale and Nyamasoga primary schools in Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district, five pupils share a desk meant for three.

The desks are only at the back of the class room as pupils that seat at the front huddle on the floor and struggle to look at the blackboard in the small class rooms.

"The situation is hard, but we have no choice because we love studying. So, we must bear with the conditions," one of the pupils said.

The Hoima district education officer, Godfrey Sserwanja, said the number of pupils has increased and they have to share the few education facilities and materials in the schools.

Sserwanja attributed the increase in the number of pupils to the discovery of oil and the Hoima airport project.

He said as a result of the two projects, many people are coming into the district with their children.

"At the moment, the pupil-to-desk ratio stands at five pupils per desk, yet the education ministry standards recommend a ratio of three pupils per desk," he added.

In 2012, before the influx, Hoima had about 60,000 pupils at primary level. However, by last year, they had increased to 70,000.

Sserwanja said, this year, they have 35,000 pupils occupying 97 Universal Primary Education schools and 200 private primary schools in Hoima district.

"The district is now facing a challenge of fee classrooms, scholastic materials and pit-latrines, among others, which stresses pupils thus affecting their academic performance," he added.

Sserwanja said the district education department has a budget of sh1b this

Hoima district in critical need of scholastic materials



Kisembo (centre), SBC staff and the Buseruka sub-county netball team at Kabaale Public Primary School, Hoima. In the foreground is the sports equipment and furniture donated by SBC. Photo by Lawrence Mulondo

financial year and sh843m will be invested in seed schools. However, he said, the remaining sh157m is not enough to cater for other educational needs in the district.

He also noted that parents in the district still have a negative attitude towards helping schools, as they claim government-aided schools are well funded.

The Kabaale Primary School headteacher, Dan Busobozi, said there has been an increase in the enrolment of pupils in his school.

He said, in 2012, there were 500 pupils, but that has gone up to 1,200 pupils today. He

said this has forced some of the pupils to sit on the floor.

"It is hard to improve one's handwriting when the exercise books are on their thighs," Busobozi said.

Help from developers

To help with the situation, SBC Uganda, a company that was contracted to construct the Hoima Airport, donated more than 50 desks, 10 office tables and 10 office chairs to the school.

The Hoima Resident District Commissioner Samuel Kisembo lauded the organisation for the gesture and called on other partners to join them in ensuring quality

learning for pupils.

He also urged residents to support the projects that are being implemented in the district, adding that it is they to benefit from them.

"There are many cases of vandalism in areas where the projects are being implemented. People are stealing chain links, fuel and other materials at the building sites of the projects, which has financial implications for the Government," he said.

Kisembo asked area leaders to create village registers, so as to know people in their areas, so that they can easily track criminals that may come into the district as a result of the

projects.

The SBC Uganda environmental and social action manager, Anurag Kalvanguta, said: "As a company, we believe that development should be sustainable which means it should not leave the people in the community behind," he said.

The company also constructed two four-stance public pit-latrines for two communities, including Nyamasoga and Kabaale, in Buseruka sub-county.

They also donated sports equipment to the male and female teams of Buseruka sub-county.

NEWS GO ROUND

Wakiso MPs ask for special status

Members of Parliament (MPs) from Wakiso district have resolved to ask the Government to grant the district a special status. They believe Wakiso district should also get more funds, especially for roads, compared to other districts. Busiro East MP Medard Lubega Sseggoni said many prominent people in the country reside in Wakiso district and they cause traffic jams as they enter the city. Makindye-Ssabagabo MP Emmanuel Ssempala Kigozi called on all district leaders to put aside their political differences and work for the development of the district. Peter Sematimba, the MP for Busiro South, said the district contributes a lot of money to the national treasury and that it should, therefore, get a bigger share from the Government.

Govt launches debate campaign

The Government, through the National Debate Council (NDC), has started a new initiative to revitalise debates in schools. Gasta Kakaire, the executive director of NDC, said the move will help improve students' knowledge of international affairs and instil confidence and creativity in them. In line with the campaign, students from more 20 schools in the Rwenzori region, including Kabarole, Bunyangabu, Kasese, Kyenjojo, Kamwenge, Bundibugyo, Ntoroko and Kyegegwa participated in a debating competition organised by NDC. Doreen Kanyiginya, a student of Kyebambe Girls' Secondary School, who was awarded the best speaker's prize, said they had done research on a wide range of topics in preparation for the competition. Asaph Mugume, a retired secondary school teacher, said there was need to encourage the students to join debating clubs, because it is through debating that students come up with solutions to some of the issues that affect them, and the society.

Woman arrested over stealing from hospital

MUKONO

By Henry Nsubuga

Police in Mukono district are holding a woman who allegedly stormed Mukono Church of Uganda Hospital and stole property belonging to nurses and patients in the private wing.

Patrick Onyango, the Kampala Metropolitan Police spokesperson, identified the suspect as Maria Flair alias Liz.

Onyango said Liz is a habitual thief, who operates mostly in Kampala and has no permanent home.

Godfrey Bulega, the hospital administrator, said the incident happened on June 5.

Bulega said Liz was in the company of another

unidentified man, who played as her lookout as she stole from the rooms.

"The CCTV cameras also showed that Liz has been stealing from the hospital for sometime. And, whenever they would meet people in a room, they would ask for something they were sure was not available," he said.

Bulega said Liz's arrest came after footage of her stealing was aired on Bukedde TV's Agataliiko Nfuufu news and viewers helped them to identify her.

Sarah Rachael Nsubuga, the officer in charge of the private ward, said she lost a handbag containing her smartphone, sh500,000, a national identity card, an ATM card and a cheque book, among others.



Maria Flair

Patience Nalwadda, another staff member, said her wallet containing sh200,000 was also stolen from her handbag.

The hospital superintendent, Dr Simon Peter Nsingo, said they were forced to install the CCTV camera system

HABITUAL THIEF

Patrick Onyango, the Kampala Metropolitan Police spokesperson, said Liz has been arrested many times in Kampala, taken to court and sentenced several times, but returns to her old ways after serving her sentence.

Many people have come up claiming to have cases against Liz at different Police stations, including obtaining money by false pretence and theft. She is also believed to have escaped from Police custody on several occasions.

after rampant thefts and vandalism of the hospital property.

Onyango said Liz is being held on charges of theft and being in possession of narcotics.

"Upon her arrest, she injected herself with a certain drug which forced her to vomit so she could claim that she was sick. We took blood sample from her to help with that investigation," he said.

She was taken to Mukono Health Centre IV for treatment, under Police surveillance.

Elizabeth Mirembe, the nurse in charge of the female ward at the hospital, said Liz would not allow anybody to attend to her by choosing to be rude.