

Govt slashes education budget

Reason. The Finance ministry says the cuts are due to the demand to have civil servants' salaries increased.

BY FRANKLIN OBAKU
fobaku@ug.monitor.co.ug

KAMPALA The government has slashed the education budget for 2018/19 financial year from Shs24 trillion to Shs21.7 trillion. The proposed ministry budget for 2018/19 has seen a cut of up to Shs15.07 billion, down from the one for the current financial year ending June 2018.

The cuts are contained in the draft National Budget Framework Paper (NBFP) submitted to Parliament.

For years, though the education sector has been receiving increasing funding for its activities, the increments have been marginal.

Programmes

On account of the budget cuts, the planned roll out of a three-year government strategic plan by the Education ministry may not see the light of day.

The ministry rolled out a number of programmes aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools and improving the conditions for the staff.

Ms Rosemary Seninde, the State minister for Primary Education, said the impact of the budget cuts will be big.

"It's clear with the change in national priorities we are affected. Our three years strategic plan will be affected by these cuts," she said.

The ministry had planned to kick start a phased implementation of the policy of having a government primary school per parish, a government secondary school in every sub-county, and a technical and vocational insti-

tution in every district.

The ministry also wanted to strengthen the current inspection system by increasing the frequency of inspection of schools and institutions, developing a basic competence and skills profile for each Level in line with national aspirations.

Shs32b

Reduction. The amount of money that has been cut from the education sector budget

Improving teacher and instructor competencies and practices at all levels with special focus on early grade numeracy and literacy in the primary school curriculum was also one of the issues they intended to roll out.

Public universities have not also been spared by the cuts. The ministry had planned to operationalise Soroti University in the coming financial year after years of postponement, improve facilities in other public universities such as Muni and open up

constituent colleges and secure Gulu University land.

All these and many more others may not succeed if the planned cuts are implemented.

Ms Seninde said all the programmes the ministry had planned for the next three years will be hit if the decision to cut the funding is implemented.

"To implement all these policies we need money, if you don't have enough money, then you can't do much," she said.

She, however, said they will continue to implement the programmes even with the limited resources.

Staffing

According to the minister, the ministry has staffing gap of up to 22,000 teachers in primary schools and about 5,000 in secondary and also "a huge gap" in public universities.

Ms Connie Galiwango, the chairperson of the Parliament's Education Committee, called the decision by the ministry of Finance to cut the budget "unfortunate".

She said the budget cuts come

at a time when the government is trying to improve quality of education in the country.

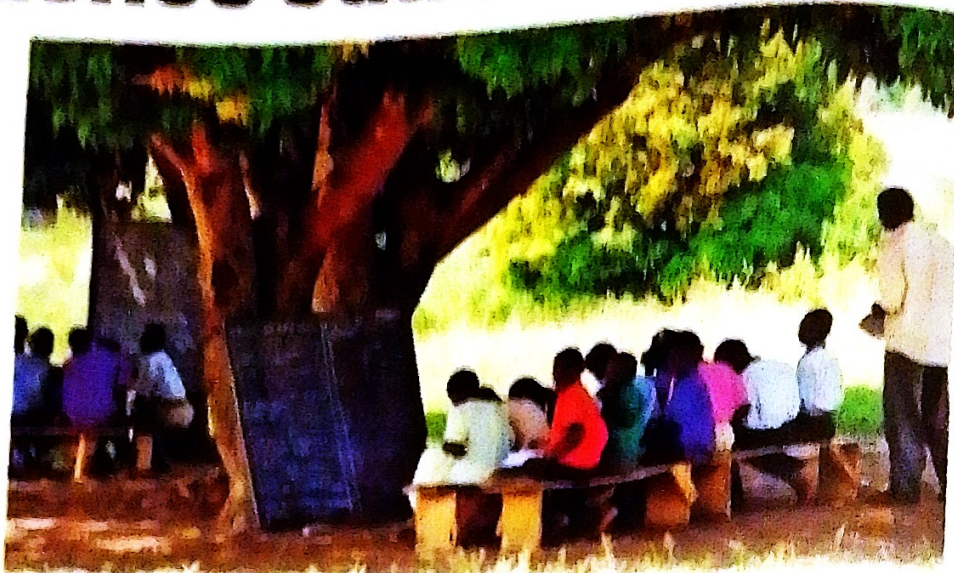
The MPs expected more funds to the sector on account of unfulfilled presidential pledges.

"If there are cuts, it means we have a lot of gaps, we shall not achieve all what we had planned to do. I am not impressed by the information," the MP said.

Mr James Tweheyo, the former general secretary Uganda National Teachers' Union, who has always been critical of the ministry, says instead of thinking of reducing the budget, the Education ministry should stand up and demand for more.

The minister of Finance, Mr Matia Kasaija, however, explained that the cuts were justified.

He, however, admitted that the education ministry has had substantial cuts in its 2018/19 budget. He explained that following the recent demands by the civil servants to have their salaries increased, they have cut budgets for all the ministries.



Affected Pupils in rural areas of Namutumba District attend class under a tree. The government has slashed the education budget for 2018/19 financial year.