



Mrs. Janet Museveni (sixth-right) with the members of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda after their meeting at State House Nakasero on Wednesday. PPU photo

# Package on sexuality education drafted

By Vision Reporter

Top religious leaders in Uganda have unanimously supported the draft National Sexuality Education Framework that will guide any work in the area of promoting sexuality education for in-school young people in the country.

This was during a meeting convened by the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Janet Museveni, for the Council Presidents under the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) to discuss the draft National Sexuality Education Framework and also to gather their views on its content.

According to a statement released from State House, the meeting was held last Wednesday at State House, Nakasero.

Mrs Museveni said the Ministry of Education and Sports has spearheaded development of a Sexuality Education Framework to ensure that the country comes up with a sexuality education package that is acceptable, culturally sensitive and age-appropriate for the young people in Uganda.

"As a sector, I found it important to guide this effort to ensure that Uganda's Sexuality Education Framework is based

on cultures, customs, religious beliefs and aspirations of the Uganda people," she said.

She observed that there is a gap in ensuring appropriate standards for providing sexuality education in Uganda and consequently materials developed outside Uganda are filling this gap. She emphasised the need for a homegrown framework by our own people that provides guidance on sexuality education to all our young people.

Mrs Museveni pointed out the importance of protecting the morals of young people in the nation, so that they can in turn drive the nation's social and economic development appropriately.

She also expressed concern over the fact that the youth today are exposed to media which feeds them with inappropriate information.

"This causes an increase in deviant behaviour and pre-disposes them to sexual immorality, leading them to several risks such as HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies," she said.

"We all must be custodians of morals and values. We must do our part, otherwise the vacuum will be filled with wrong information," she said and urged the religious leaders to harness this opportunity

and guide the young people well in a value-based manner.

Representing the chairman of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, the Rt. Rev. Stanley Ntagali, thanked the First Lady for the opportunity to discuss the Sexuality Education Framework and for providing direction on this very sensitive issue.

## BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The leaders requested that the relationship between the Inter-Religious Council and the Ministry of Education be institutionalised.

He explained that the Inter-Religious Council appreciates the efforts put in place to develop the framework, noting that the youth face numerous challenges in their transition to adulthood, including the fact that many adolescents live in poverty and lack skills to enable them protect themselves appropriately.

He raised concern over the fact that inappropriate information is shared with children at a tender age and that some organizations have been known to provide controversial guidelines that promote homosexuality and

unbecoming behaviour. He cited one such organisation as the School Net that disguised themselves as school computer suppliers, while disseminating this information.

He also pointed out that most of the teachers in schools misguide children because they are not trained and have vague ideas about sexuality education themselves, yet the young people at this stage in their lives have impressionable minds.

In his presentation, Dr Larry Adupa, the National Sexuality Framework consultant, explained that the framework is based on the nation's prescribed values and principles and it also emphasises the need for parental involvement in sexuality education and the centrality of the family as a basic unit in society.

He talked about the current context of a dynamic society the young people are growing up in as opposed to the past.

"There are a lot of sources of information available to young people and the globalisation of the world introduces many challenges that must be responded to," he said.

## What religious leaders have proposed

Some of the recommendations

proposed by the religious leaders for accommodation in the Sexuality Education Framework include accreditation of NGOs that interact with schools to always be done in consultation with IRCU to ensure oversight of materials disseminated.

They also called on Government to establish a modality to safeguard the cultural values and morality against foreign information that infiltrates the nation and incorporation of zero tolerance to same sex relationships.

The religious leaders requested that the relationship between the Inter-Religious Council and the education ministry be institutionalised and entrenched for continuous consultations on all decisions on the framework.

They expressed their need to get in touch with the gender ministry so that they can support the family-centered approach to the development of children.

It was also recommended that the Government should have a strategy to handle social media and the involvement of the ICT ministry to control information flow in the media, including social media.

The members of the Inter-Religious Council at the

meeting included Archbishop Ntagali, Monsignor Charles Kasibante from the Catholic Church, Seventh Day Adventists' Dr Matte Daniel, Sheikh Muhammed Ali Waiswa from the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council, Bishop Joshua Lwera, the General Overseer of the National Fellowship of Born-Again Pentecostal Churches and Apostle Dr. Joseph Serwadda, the President of Born-Again Faith in Uganda.

Drafting of the National Sexuality Education Framework for the in-school children, which is in its final stages now, started when the First Lady tasked her ministry together with a team of experts with developing the framework for Schools after the Parliament of Uganda had recommended in August, 2016 to ban Comprehensive Sexuality Education, because it was promoting practices and behaviour that are against Ugandan customs and national values.

Wide consultations have so far been made with various stakeholders including, government ministries and Agencies, civil society and faith-based organisations, development partners and a benchmarking visit also made to Zambia.