

THE FIRST LADY SAID THEY ARE IN A CAMPAIGN TO REMIND PARENTS WHO HAVE IGNORED THEIR ROLE

By Vision Reporter

The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, has said the issue of parents not packing food for their school-going children is a mindset problem which requires intensified community sensitisation by all leaders at different levels.

She said the attitude arose out of a misconception of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy by some parents who believed that the Government was supposed to do everything.

"We are, however, reminding them that the Government has its role, which it is fulfilling and the parents also have their roles, which they are not playing and need to do.

The First Lady was on Monday interacting with the people of the West Nile region during a talk show moderated by Noel Ayikobua on Radio Pacis in Arua municipality.

She said she decided to launch a countrywide nutrition and school feeding campaign to mobilise the parents and remind them about their cardinal responsibility of feeding their children, a role they had forgotten or ignored or perhaps did not know about.

"We chose to do this as a campaign to mobilise and remind the parents that they have ignored their role. They should not only look at the law because feeding children is not just at school alone, but also feeding them at home.

"However, when it goes out of hand, then we will go back to the law. We are working with the local government ministry to help us do their work as we do ours. They will work with the districts and lower level councils to enforce the law against those who will be adamant," she said.

She noted that a big number of children in the West Nile region and throughout the country stay at school without



First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports (centre) with political leaders from Kabale and education ministry officials after the talk show on Voice of Kigezi on Friday. PPU photo

Sensitise parents on school feeding, First Lady urges leaders

lunch and some of them even go to school without having breakfast and, therefore, spend the whole day at school on an empty stomach.

"I, therefore, appeal to all leaders including the local government and religious

leaders who have the opportunity to talk to the communities every week in their worship places; traditional leaders, Mothers Union, Catholic Women Associations, retired civil servants and teachers and

all those who have a stake in what is happening in their community and care to come up and help me to take this campaign to the communities," she said.

She also requested the media to support the campaign by

often reminding the parents of their responsibility and the LC1 chairpersons to report to higher authorities the families that refuse to feed their children while at school.

Mrs Museveni said children are the future of the country

but they are doing badly in education and yet people do not ask themselves what the problem really is.

She said parents have to ensure that their children have a home or shelter, food to eat and clothing. These are basic requirements that a parent need not be reminded of as they bring a child in the world.

"So, though this campaign is supposed to help me as the education minister, because it is my responsibility for the children to do well in school, I believe that it is, primarily, the responsibility of the parents to know that their children are healthy and that they are doing what they ought to do at school — search for an education," she emphasised.

She urged families to ensure a balanced diet for their children by including vegetables and fruits which grow in their backyards instead of feeding the children on only one type of food such as cassava or posho.

In response to whether the refugee children, who are so many in the West Nile Region, would also be expected to pack food to school, she said since the refugees are fed by World Food Programme, the children at school would be catered for by the same body.

When responding to a caller from the fishing community, who suggested that parents contribute raw fish to be prepared at school since what they pack for the children gets spoilt before lunch time, the minister said this would require parents paying the person to cook and advised them to buy affordable containers to keep the children's food safely.

In the studios together with the First Lady were state ministers for primary education Rosemary Seninde, Woman MP for Zombo district, Grace Kwiycwiny, internal affairs and Terego County East MP Obiga Kania and Arua district leaders.