

# Report blames poor grades on absenteeism

**Cause.** According to Uwezo report, habitual absenteeism of both teachers and pupils in many schools under UPE scheme is the core factor contributing to poor grades.

BY DAN WANDERA  
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

**LUWEERO.** The worrying absenteeism of both teachers and pupils in Luweero District, has greatly contributed to the low academic performance in the district, a 2015 report has indicated.

According to the report titled: 'Numeracy and Literacy Survey in Luweero Schools,' the current absenteeism rate stands at 20 per cent and 41 per cent respectively.

The report is an outcome of the continuous assessment undertaken by Uwezo, an organisation which conducts annual learning assessment reports for basic literacy and numeracy skills for primary school going children.

Uwezo in its report states that habitual absenteeism for both the teachers and pupils in many schools under the government's Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme is the core factor contributing to poor grades on grounds that the presence of both the learners and the teachers is an essential condition for effective learning to take place.

The report undertaken by Uwezo indicates that at the time of visiting the selected schools for the assessment, 41 out of 100 pupils were absent while 21 out of every 100 primary school teachers were absent from their duty stations.

The report was disseminated during a recent stakeholders meeting organised by the Community Development and Child Welfare Initiatives, a local NGO, in Luweero town.

"We have a big problem which may not be purely blamed on the teachers alone since pupil absenteeism is to be blamed on their parents and guardians," Ms Proscovia Namansa, a teacher and former Luweero District

speaker, told stakeholders during the release of the report recently.

"We need to address the leading cause of absenteeism. It is now evident that our children may not compete favourably with those of other districts and areas where the parents, school administrators and leaders have discovered and addressed the mitigating factors to boost children's performance," she said.

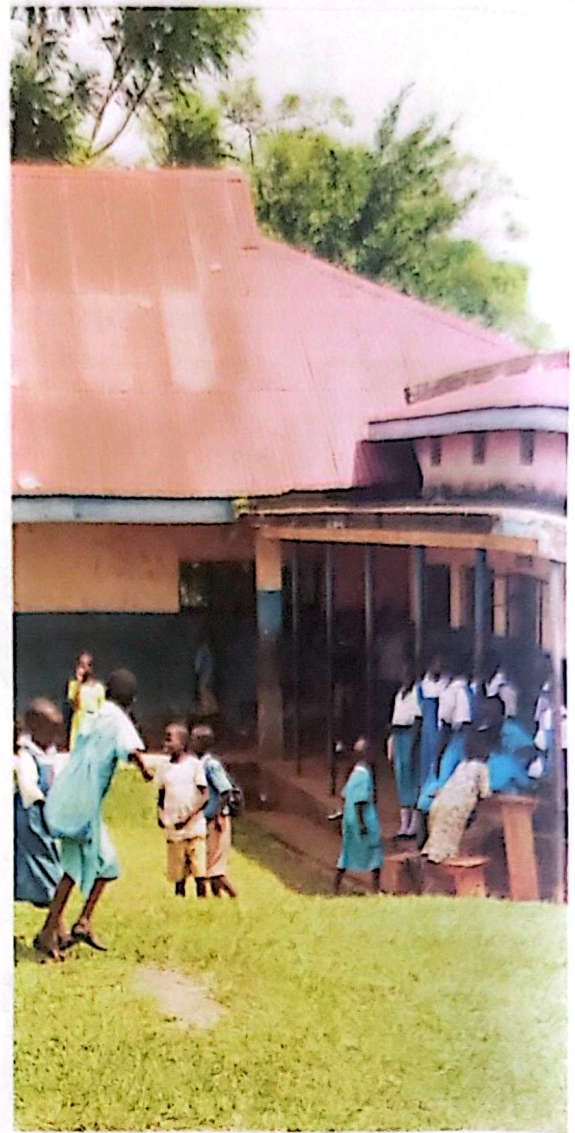
According to the report, pupils do not perform to required standards because they still fall below the expected learning outcomes as demonstrated by acquisition of skills and competencies which should be the yardstick by which education is measured.

"Very few children in Primary Three are able to do Primary Two work. By Primary Seven, which is the end of the primary school cycle, a significant minority of children is unable to do Primary Two reading and mathematics," Mr John Sseguja, the executive director of Community Development and Child Welfare Initiatives, said.

## 699

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS  
ACROSS THE COUNTRY THAT  
DID NOT REGISTER 100 PER  
CENT ATTENDANCE OF HEAD  
TEACHERS, CLASSROOM  
TEACHERS AND STUDENTS  
DURING THE MARCH- APRIL  
2014 SURVEY

He continued: "This is very true in Luweero where many of our parents have misinterpreted the UPE pro-



gramme and failed to provide most of the basics for their children learning including meals. It is a known fact that many children stay hungry at school because the parents are very reluctant to provide meals."

The stakeholders blamed the district education department for failing to scale up supervision of the teachers through regular inspection of schools, an omission that gives chance to teachers to keep absenting themselves from their respect duty station.

"We need to have a vibrant education inspectorate department with committed officials ready to execute their duty as school inspectors. We have inspectors who alert the school head teachers of their planned visits to their respective stations," Mr Mukalazi Kaddu, the spokesperson of Greater Luweero Elders Forum, said.

Luweero District education officer Florence Bbosa Ssekitoleko said her department is understaffed.

"We are scaling up our school inspection programmes now that the department has a vehicle recently acquired to facilitate the education department programmes," she said.

**Grades.** Learners play outside their classrooms at Bombo Common Primary School in Luweero District. The school is one of those under the UPE programme.

PHOTO BY DAN WANDERA