

Learning

Schools

Goals

Donors

Refugees

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After two days of meetings to review the education ministry's performance for the past year, stakeholders yesterday endorsed a long-list of action areas to improve the quality of education.

Ministers, development partners, MPs and officials from several agencies met at the sector review meeting to assess progress and hurdles and agree on priorities to transform the sector. The 2016/2017 Education and Sports Annual Performance Report unveiled on Monday shows growth in enrolment figures, in infrastructure and human resources, albeit with glaring challenges.

While enrolment at pre-primary, primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary levels has increased over the past year, the overall quality of education remained unsatisfactory, the report says.

In order to plug the loopholes and prepare for the country's long-term development goals, the ministry yesterday launched a new strategic plan to drive reforms in the country's education system.

The Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2020 will be the overall policy guide for improving education, identified as one of the critical components of Uganda's drive towards middle income status.

Under the plan, the Government and partners hope to improve access to quality education and create a critical mass of skilled Ugandans to drive economic development.

Speaking at the launch of the plan yesterday, the education minister and First Lady, Janet Museveni, said it would address inherent bottlenecks in Uganda's education system.

Education ministry lists priorities to reform sector



The First Lady shakes hands with the deputy chairperson of the Education Service Commission, Betty Gabona, during the workshop at the Office of the Prime Minister in Kampala yesterday. Second-left is the state minister for sports, Charles Bakkabulindi, and state minister for primary education Rosemary Seninde. Photo by Maria Wamala

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The Government will rehabilitate and equip classrooms, build teachers' houses and establish learning facilities for refugees and host communities.

"The plan will act as a compass to guide our planning and prioritisation over the next three years as we endeavour to provide education that will give our children a foundation for a quality life," she stated.

The plan is aligned to the second National Development Plan (2016-2020), the National

Resistance Movement (NRM) manifesto (2016-2021) and the global Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education.

The education minister appealed to stakeholders to follow the plan in their planning and budgeting process.

It will require about sh18

trillion to attain the goals outlined in the three-year strategic plan, of which only about sh7.7 trillion has been allocated, leaving a funding gap of about sh10.5 trillion.

The donors want focus to be put on learning and attainment of skills and preparing students for life beyond school and for

the world of work, instead of just passing exams.

In order to improve equitable access to education and training, the Government commits to set up a primary school at every parish, a secondary school per sub-county, a vocational institute in every constituency, establish new regional universities (Soroti and Gulu University campus in Karamoja).

The Government will also rehabilitate and equip classrooms, build teachers' houses and establish learning facilities for refugees and host communities.

New priorities unveiled

One of the key concerns raised at the two-day meeting was the high level of absenteeism in schools by teachers, headteachers and students, a habit found to be compromising the quality of education.

For the next year, supervision at schools will be increased and a rewards and sanctions regime instituted to plug the problem, Aggrey Kibenge, the ministry's undersecretary, said as he presented the resolutions.

Endless tests and exams given to learners are discouraged by the ministry, which instead favours a continuous assessment model that focuses on what learners can do, rather than what they can recall.

Exams for pre-primary school learners are outlawed and the ministry wants to instead focus on training care-givers on better methods of assessment for learners.

Yesterday, Mrs Museveni applauded the education sector's overall performance over the past year, but decried the teachers' poor work culture and the ministry's low absorption of project funds.