

Internet laboratories lie idle as schools fail to pay for services

Project. Government gave about 400 secondary schools computers fully connected with one year internet package. However, after using up the package, several schools in Kasese District have failed to re-subscribe

BY ENID NINSIIMA
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KASESE. Most schools in Kasese District that were connected to the internet by government have failed to pay for internet services, compelling the service providers to disconnect them.

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) established computer laboratories in several schools countrywide and connected them to the internet to enhance education.

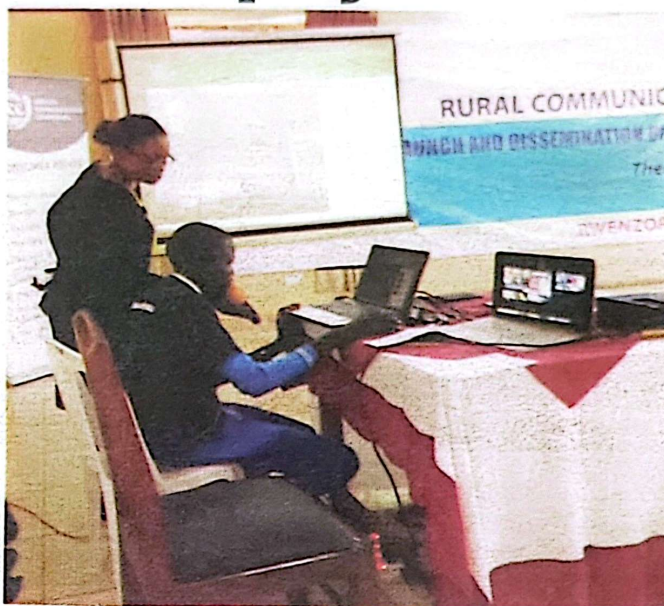
However, most of the schools have failed to subscribe for internet services and the laboratories are now used only to teach students how to use computers.

About 400 secondary schools were given computers fully connected with one year internet package.

"We connected 400 secondary schools countrywide but it is unfortunate that the majority of them abandoned the internet connectivity after using the data that was given to them for a year. And you wonder why a school should fail to put aside Shs3 million for the (internet) bundle," Mr Nyombi Thembo, the director of Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF), said on Tuesday while launching the RCDF operational guidelines in Kasese Town.

Mr Nyombi said the administrators of the affected schools were hindering government's efforts to teach Information and communication technology (ICT) in schools.

"We have engaged the ministry of Education and school management committees to budget for the inter-



Technology. Geoffrey Kalende, a student of Kilembe Secondary School in Kasese District demonstrates how one can learn biology online during the launch of RCDF project in Kasese District recently. BY ENID NINSIIMA

net services" he said, adding, "The logic of giving one year free internet means that the beneficiary schools must budget for the subsequent

"We have engaged the ministry of Education and school management committees to budget for the internet services. The logic of giving one year free internet means that the beneficiary schools must budget for the subsequent years."

NYOMBI THEMBO, DIRECTOR OF RURAL COMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND

years". He said using internet to teach is cheaper than stocking physical libraries with textbooks.

Mr Nyombi assured teachers that e-learning is complimenting their work but not phasing out physical teaching in classrooms by teachers as some think.

"Teachers should not get worried that they are going to be replaced by internet and even in advanced countries teachers still exist. But I want to assure you that those physical libraries will be erased with time," he said.

Mr Nyombi cautioned the stu-

dents against using the internet to gamble and access pornography.

He said: "UCC has no intentions of sieving the content on social media but people should use it responsibly bearing in mind the laws in place".

Mr Nyombi added that UCC has already encouraged the local governments to have a website portal so that the issue of access to information as provided for in the Access to Information Act is solved. He noted that the information that is not classified should be found on those websites.

Kasese mayor Godfrey Kabbyanga observed that the students of today should pass exams better than those of the past years due to the ICT age.

"I do not know why students have not performed well academically. We used to study biology from textbooks but now they can use internet to see the heart pumping from the laboratory online," Mr Kabbyanga said.

Kasese District chairman Geoffrey Sibendire Bigogo appealed to the community and students in particular to embrace ICT to ensure development.

He said 17 schools in Kasese District benefited from the internet project: Kasese Secondary School, Kilembe Secondary School, Karambi Secondary School, Karusandara Seed School, Mahango Seed School, Rwenzori High School, among others.

However, when contacted, the Kasese District education officer, Mr George Mayinja, a former teacher at Mahango Seed School, said internet at the school was unreliable.

He also said there were no clear guidelines from UCC on how the beneficiaries should proceed after the data service expiry.

"We were not involved as education department in order to know who was supposed to do what, where and when," he said.

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