

Govt to teach sex to 3-year-olds

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KAMPALA. The government has agreed to have children as young as three years to be taught sexuality education as long as they are in the school system.

The content, however, has been grouped into five categories to suit the age differences in the proposed sexuality education framework.

The messages, according to Mr Aggrey Kibenge, the Education Ministry undersecretary, have been developed to promote various skills and values, which a child is expected to learn and use while in and after school.

"There are a number of things that we don't pay adequate attention to but which to many people help differentiate between one who is educated and another who is not," Mr Kibenge said.

The first level will consider early childhood, which has been grouped between the ages of three and five. Here, the ministry expects a child to know their body parts, why boys and girls have unique 'private parts', unacceptable forms of body touch and importance of proper nutrition. The officials believe that a

child at this stage will develop awareness, refusal and communicative skills to be responsible citizens.

Primary One to Four pupils, who are between the age of six and nine, will be taught why some body parts are considered private, puberty, what pregnancy is and the dangers of teenage pregnancy, where and when to report unacceptable body touch.

In this case, the child should appreciate the importance of staying virgin and having self-control and be able to refuse negative influence of the media and peers on one's sexuality. They will learn about the types of love and be able to differentiate it from lust.

Furthermore, they should be able to understand that there is time to become a father or mother, what HIV/Aids is, what sexually transmitted diseases are and how one can get it.

The third stage is for young adolescents, who are in upper primary (P5 to P6). These 10 to 12-year olds should be able to define what one's purpose in life is, maintain personal hygiene during puberty, set boundaries to keep away from all forms of sexual activity, commit to sexual abstinence and recognise how bad influence can destroy

one's self esteem. Learn about the misconceptions and misinformation about virginity and sexual abstinence.

The messages are further developed to suit the next level of Senior One to Four students who are between 13 years of age and 16, while the last stage will cater for A-Level and tertiary institutions with students above 17 years.

“ Through this framework, we will develop skills that cut across whether you are an Anglican, Adventist or Muslim. We want to get a complete human being emerging from the school system,” AGGREY KIBENGE, THE EDUCATION MINISTRY UNDERSECRETARY

“Children are exposed to different forms, frequencies and levels of physical, emotional and sexual violence in their homes and at school. This includes young people at a tender age of less than five years. These young people at 3-5 years also engage in exploratory sexual play that may include gender roles and behaviours. At ages 6-9 there is a likelihood of more exposure to sexual gender based violence, ICT and media, especially cartoons in televi-

sion programmes that are not generally censured,” reads part of the report.

Mr Ismail Mulindwa, the commissioner-in-charge of private schools and the framework coordinator, said the National Curriculum Development Centre will use it to develop the curricula appropriate for the different groups.

Mr Michael Bukenya, the parliamentary health committee chair, warned that the framework gives teachers a lot of responsibilities, which some are likely to abuse.

— But Mr Kibenge said they needed something to guide them while handling sexuality education in schools.

“We are trusting the teachers too much because the matters they are going to deal with are matters of the heart and emotions. Look at a parent like me surrendering my 12-year-old girl to this teacher, who abuses his responsibility. Even the barber working on your daughter's hair could be an undesirable influence,” Mr Kibenge said.

He added: “The framework gives us a minimum position which we expect will inform engagement and inform a child with regard to the nature of trust that this child will have with people around them.”