

Parents arrested in 'back to school' operation

KAMULI

By Tom Gwebayanga

The authorities in Kamuli municipality on Monday arrested 20 parents and 36 children.

The parents were accused of abetting their children's absence from school by denying them school dues, while the children were held for absconding from school.

Organised by the municipality executive in conjunction with the Police and division leaders, the swoop, which started at 8:00am, caught parents off-guard while they were in the gardens, digging with their children.

They were bundled onto Police pick-ups amid pleas for mercy but in vain. The parents were locked up at

Kamuli Central Police Station while the children were taken to the Child & Home Protection Unit (CFPU).

"They claimed that the children had been sent to collect school fees the previous Friday. The number of roaming children has been overwhelming," Michael Kasadha, the Police spokesperson for Busoga North, said.

They were from Buwanume, Bunangwe, Buzibirira, Namisambya, Nakiwuulo, Nabwigulu, Bukolobbe, Budhuambula and Buyomba among other zones.

In the town centre, the children were found loitering around town, while others were doing petty businesses such as hawking tomatoes, pancakes and vegetables during school time.

The district Police commander,

Collins Kyasimire, said most of the children were picked from video halls and around drinking joints.

"Those above 13 years had become a public menace, engaging in petty crimes such as snatching women's bags and stealing household items," Kyasimire said.

Richard Kagoda, the district officer in charge of the CFPU, said the biggest

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The children were found roaming in the town centre while others were doing petty businesses such as hawking pancakes and vegetables during school time.



Some of the parents and their children at Kamuli Central Police Station on Monday. Photo by Tom Gwebayanga

number of the school absentees had been sent away over lunch fees, books and toilet paper.

Ahmed Bebbere, 55, a resident of Buwanume, said: "Mine was sent back on Friday over sh2,000 and that is why we had to provide labour with him in the neighbour's garden so as to get it."

The crackdown follows President Yoweri Museveni's directive while in

Buyende district recently, where he warned headteachers in Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education schools to stop forcing parents to pay school fees instead of letting them to study.

"We established UPE and USE schools for the poor, those who can afford paying money should switch to where they can afford," he said.

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