

Gov't to rehabilitate 52 collapsing UPE schools

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KAMPALA. The government has earmarked Shs10billion to rehabilitate at least 52 dilapidated Universal Primary Education (UPE) Schools which are at the verge of collapse.

Dr Tonny Mukasa Lusambu, ministry of Education assistant commissioner in charge of primary education, said most UPE schools have never received any facelift since free education was introduced 20-years ago and pose a risk to the lives of pupils.

The funding will cater for at least 52 out of the more than 500 UPE schools that are already in their databank.

Ministry of Education officials are optimistic that the five-year project

will be extended to other schools facing similar challenges.

There are 25,053 government-aided primary schools.

First priority will be extended to those schools whose head teachers submitted their applications for rehabilitation first.

"I have over 500 schools in my databank which are in bad state. Schools have been applying but we will consider on first come first serve basis. But in case a school's roof is blown away, we may have to ask you to wait and attend to an emergency," Dr Lusambu said.

According to Dr Lusambu, the Minister of Education, Ms Janet Museveni, advised them to ensure they equip a school to full capacity once they begin rehabilitating it before

they can start on another one.

"I have over 500 schools in my databank which are in bad state. Schools have been applying but we will consider on first come first serve basis." TONNY LUSAMBU, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

"In the past, when we would construct a school, we would not provide furniture, teaching materials or even teachers at once. This time round, the Minister wants us to fully equip the schools with all the requirements before leaving so that we don't leave learners with a structure but with-

out where to sit or teachers to teach them," he explained.

Mr Joseph Ssemenda's letter to the ministry about his Rakai School, Kirowooza Primary School indicates that the school's enrolment has since dropped from 1,000 to 515 because of the collapsing structure.

At Kireka Army Primary school, about five kilometres from the ministry's headquarters in Kampala, the teachers are temporarily using the police houses and the head teacher's office works at the same time as a library, which pupils don't easily access.

"We are heavily populated. We need more classrooms. The teachers don't have toilets. They share with the learners. The teachers are tentatively residing in the police staff quarters,"

Mr Charles Zziwa, Kireka Army PS head teacher said in an interview.

Dr Lusambu explained that when UPE started, they assumed that the parents and communities would be responsible for rehabilitating their schools which never happened.

As a result, many schools are in dire state and need urgent attention. To him, the ministry requires over Shs100billion to meet its current demand.

"Many schools are in a sorry state. If we are to rehabilitate schools to a standard acceptable, we would require over Shs100billion. For long, we have not had funds to rehabilitate these schools. Now that they have considered us, we hope the money will increase and benefit many," Dr Lusambu said.