

FIRST LADY CALLS FOR MORE STUDENTS IN TECHNICAL INSTITUTES

BY SUNDAY VISION REPORTER

The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs. Janet Museveni, has called on Ugandans to fully take advantage of and utilise the many technical institutes that the Government has constructed all over the country to enable them get the much-needed skills in the labour market.

"You must know that this is part of the struggle to make our country independent and self-sustaining," she said while visiting Buhimba Technical Institute in Hoima district, on Wednesday.

Mrs. Museveni informed the staff, students, Hoima district leaders and, the community that welcomed her at Buhimba that skills development is an area that the education sector and Uganda as a country is now focusing on, having realised that the education system had all along concentrated a lot on theoretical learning mainly for white collar jobs.

"The learning in our schools and universities was focusing on the head; training the brain to work and, perhaps, the heart a bit, but neglected the hand altogether and a country that is not trained to use their hands is at risk because it must always import those people from elsewhere to do the work that must be done using the hand and hands on people. This is a shame because the people we have, the equipment we can buy and the institutes we can build," she said.

Mrs. Museveni said Uganda has now woken up to that fact that it needs to skill the people in order to be self-reliant and, therefore, the people who train from the technical institutes must become experts in their own right. She urged the



The First Lady Janet Museveni (fourth-left) during her visit at Buhimba Technical Institute in Hoima district recently

people of Bunyoro, students and the principal to ensure that all those who study from Buhimba Technical Institute will be known across the country for their expertise in honour of the institute, which, according to President Museveni, was built in memory of what happened in the area during the struggle when the 19th battalion fought and defeated the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) soldiers.

"When people do a good job, the country gets known and that is what introduces them to the world, otherwise they remain unknown," she said.

She, for instance, pointed out that Bunyoro is an area

that can produce enough food to even feed other areas and Buhimba Institute can make its own funding from the sale of its agriculture by fully utilising the students who are trained in agriculture and the institute's equipment.

"These are things we must begin to think about, talk about and ensure that they happen, otherwise, you can have the big buildings standing empty and the equipment remaining unutilised for years," she added.

She also noted that Buhimba, which would have been full with youth coming to learn and going away to give those services that are really required all over the country, still has small numbers of students and

does not show a sign of what it ought to be. She urged the MPs, local government leaders and leaders of the institute to take interest in what is happening at the institute and ensure that it is beneficial to the young people because it is for the good of their children and the area.

"This is an institute that must work and produce skilled people that will speak for themselves and speak for Buhimba in this region and the country," she said.

The First Lady thanked the principal and the staff for the work they do at the institute and encouraged them to always inform the ministry about their challenges in time and also follow up. She also appreciated

World Vision Uganda, Belgian Development Agency (BTC), VSO, Q-Sourcing and others for partnering with Buhimba Technical Institute and supporting vocational training in the country.

Mrs. Museveni assured Ugandans that her ministry will try to establish SEED schools in those sub-counties that still lack a secondary school and also address the inadequate number of teachers.

The principal of Buhimba Technical Institute, Akoki Anyamo, said the Government institution that was established with financing from the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund for International Development (OFID) and

handed over to Hoima district in 2015, has a total of 129 students in formal setting. He said there is need to sensitise people to change their mindset about vocational training, if the skilling Uganda strategy is to succeed.

The state minister for Bunyoro Affairs, also the MP Hoima Municipality, Ernest Kiiza, appreciated the Government for the various policies implemented to ensure access to education and thanked Mrs. Museveni for trying to transform the education ministry. Kiiza, who enumerated the many development projects in the Bunyoro region, including the Karuma Hydropower plant, Hoima International Airport, Kigumba-Kyenjojo and Mubende-Kakumiro-Kagadi roads plus the many oil roads being constructed encouraged the local leaders to mobilise the people to tap into the development opportunities.

The MP for Buhaguzi, Daniel Muheirwe Mpamizo, requested the Government to include equipping the vocational students with a tool box in their respective field on completion of their training so as to inspire them to join the vocational schools. He also urged local leaders to inform the public that vocational education is not for failures, but rather a short cut for success.

Hoima LC5 chairperson Kadri Kirungi pointed out various challenges facing the education sector in his district including inadequate teaching and learning facilities, manpower, dormitories and the negative parental attitude and lack of their support towards education activities for instance some parents not providing lunch for their school-going children, among others.