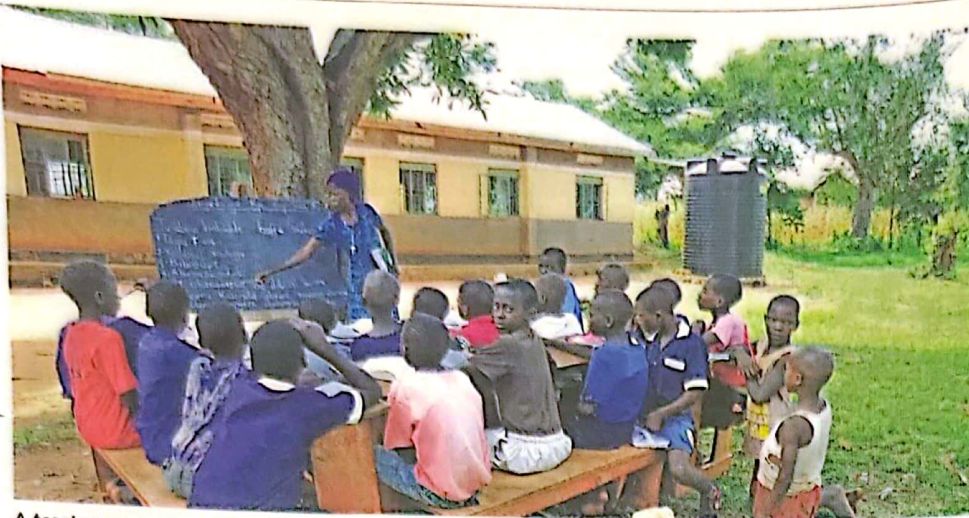




A teacher conducting a class under a tree shade at St. Jude Kiyiribwa Primary School. Photos by Henry Nsubuga

Mukono schools still teaching under trees

MUKONO

By Henry Nsubuga

The state of some Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in the rural sub-counties of Mukono district is shocking, considering that the district is barely 30kms from the city centre. Some schools lack enough classrooms, teachers and desks.

While in some schools pupils study under trees, in others, pupils of different classes share the same classroom.

Some pupils have jiggers and teachers say this is a result of the dusty classrooms.

One of such schools is St. Jude Kiyiribwa Roman Catholic Primary School in Kimenyedde sub-county, where three out of the seven classes study under trees.

Milly Nalunga, one of the teachers who was found conducting a class under a tree shade, said the weather dictates whether they have classes or not.

Nalunga said during the rainy

The school has got some pupils with jiggers, but Nabbengo says it is as a result of the dusty classrooms

season, pupils do not attend classes.

"In such situations, however much we try, we cannot complete the syllabus. Unfortunately, during the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), our candidates compete with the pupils who study in better environments," she said.

Nalunga adds that because the school is near the road and without a fence, it is hard for pupils who study under trees to pay full attention.

She says pupils' minds are always taken up by passers by.

Joachim Kidamba, who has been the school headteacher for two years, told *New Vision* that he has written several letters to the relevant offices at the sub-county and the district,

demanding for new structures, but all in vain.

According to Kidamba, the school does not have teachers' quarters and teachers have to move long distances to reach the school.

"During rainy seasons, teachers come late and some do not show up at all, giving rain as an excuse. Such factors have greatly affected the performance of the pupils," he said.

It is the same story at Namulaba Church of Uganda Primary School in Naggoye sub-county, a UPE school, which also has insufficient classrooms and teachers.

The deputy headteacher, Annet Nabbengo, said as a result, the nursery section and Primary One

share the same classroom and yet they are taught by the same teacher.

"Primary Five, Six and Seven share the same classroom. Though it is hard to deliver the content to those different classrooms in one room," she said.

Teachers reported that they had temporary structures which were catering for the extra classes, but they were demolished last December when Mukono district chairman Andrew Ssenyonga visited the school.

Ssenyonga ordered for the demolition of the wooden temporary structures as he had promised to replace them with five classroom blocks, which have not yet been built.

Ssenyonga said he had good intentions to have the school get better and enough structures, which he did not achieve.

Another school is Bwalala UMEA Primary School at Kawoomya village in Nabbaale sub-county, which only has two classrooms.

Kawoomya village chairperson Juma Luboyera said pupils are

studying under trees.

He adds that this situation has led to increase in school dropouts in the area.

Mukono district education officer Vincent Baraza said they are aware of the situation, but they have limited funds which cannot solve all the problems in different schools at once.

Baraza said because the district has just got a new service commission, very soon it will soon be recruiting over 50 teachers who will be posted to schools that need them most.

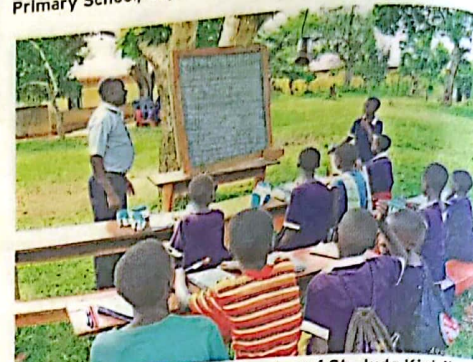
The Rev. Capt. Wilson Konde, the co-ordinator for Mukono Diocese children's ministry, asked parents to team up and start building schools.

"The Government is just helping our communities through the UPE and Universal Secondary Education programmes that they give us free of charge.

Parents must wake up and take on the mantle before it is too late. Our communities are ruined by the habit of always expecting free things, which is making us lag behind," he advised.



John Wairagala, a teacher at Namulaba Church of Uganda Primary School, says he is overwhelmed by the work



Joachim Kidamba, the headteacher of St. Jude Kiyiribwa Primary School teaching pupils under a tree