

THE DRIVE WAS IN RESPONSE TO THE JUNE 2015 DIRECTIVE BY PRESIDENT YOWERI MUSEVENI TO CABINET

By Vision Reporter

A campaign initiated by the Government last year to address teacher absenteeism is bearing fruit.

The programme, which started in July last year, was spearheaded by the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit, together with the ministries of education, public service and local government. The programme started with a focus on 20 districts, mostly from eastern Uganda. These were chosen on the basis of their perennial poor performance in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).

A mechanism for monitoring the presence of teachers and headteachers using a district data reporting tool has been established.

The chancellor of Makerere University who is also head of the Prime Minister Delivery Unit, Prof. Ezra Suruma, last Wednesday said teacher absenteeism rates had dropped from 7% in July 2017 to 4.9% by November 2017.

According to the office of the Prime Minister, PLE performance improved by 5% percent in the 20 focus districts last year, compared to 2015. Despite the observation, poor performance was still pointed out at the national level.

The districts where the campaign is being implemented are Bukwo, Kween, Bududa, Bulambuli, Serere, Sironko,

Campaign against teacher absenteeism bearing fruit



The Prime Minister, Dr Ruhakana Rugunda (centre), with stakeholders after the meeting on combating teacher absenteeism last Wednesday. Photo by Prime Minister Press Unit

Buyende, Namutumba, Buvuma, Bugiri, Mbale, Kaliro, Kayunga, Mayuge, Soroti, Tororo, Manafwa, Pallisa, Luuka and Kapchorwa.

Suruma said at the inception of the drive, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Local Government issued a circular to all chief Administrative officers to enforce sanctions for improved

"We need to work together to ensure better education for our children," Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda

teacher attendance, adding that evaluation of validated data by independent enumerators would commence in 2018.

The Prime Minister, Dr Ruhakana Rugunda, who chaired the meeting, urged the sectors to complement

each other through their mandates by coming up with national solutions to address national problems.

Rugunda said the drive was in response to the June 2015 directive by President Yoweri Museveni to Cabinet to improve service delivery in health and education 'decisively'.

Rosemary Seninde, the state minister for primary education,

said her ministry had allowed districts to procure vehicles using the School Facilities Grant (SFG) funds to step up the supervision of schools.

She said her sector has a staffing gap of 22,000 teachers.

"We need to mobilise communities and sensitise them on the quality of education and school feeding policy," Seninde said.

The Minister of State for Local Government, Jenipher Namuyangu, said her ministry issued a circular to all chief administrative officers to monitor and enforce sanctions and rewards to drive improve teacher attendance.

She said she discovered that teachers get salary loans from loan sharks and could not concentrate on their work.

"Some teachers resort to riding bodabodas to earn extra income. Others abandon teaching and hire quacks who teach on their behalf in connivance with headteachers," Namuyangu said.

Five ghost teachers have been removed from the payroll in Bugiri, seven other teachers deleted from the payroll while 184 warning letters have been issued in addition to demoting five headteachers, issuing 100 'thank you' letters as appreciation, while the names of 94 teachers and two headteachers have been submitted to district service commissions for disciplinary action.