

OUT OF 13,066 BOYS IN PRIMARY SIX AND SEVEN, A TOTAL OF 8,880 DROPOUTS WERE REGISTERED IN 2016

Delayed approval of Bill fuelling high school dropout in Tororo

TORORO

By Faustine Odeke

The delayed approval of Tororo Education Standards Improvement Bill, 2015 by the Solicitor General is considered the main challenge facing the curbing of increased school dropouts and child marriages in Tororo district.

The rising cases of girl-child marriages in the area are blamed on parents that see their daughters as a source of income.

Under the Bill, parents and guardians that fail to provide midday meals and scholastic materials will face a jail term of about two months.

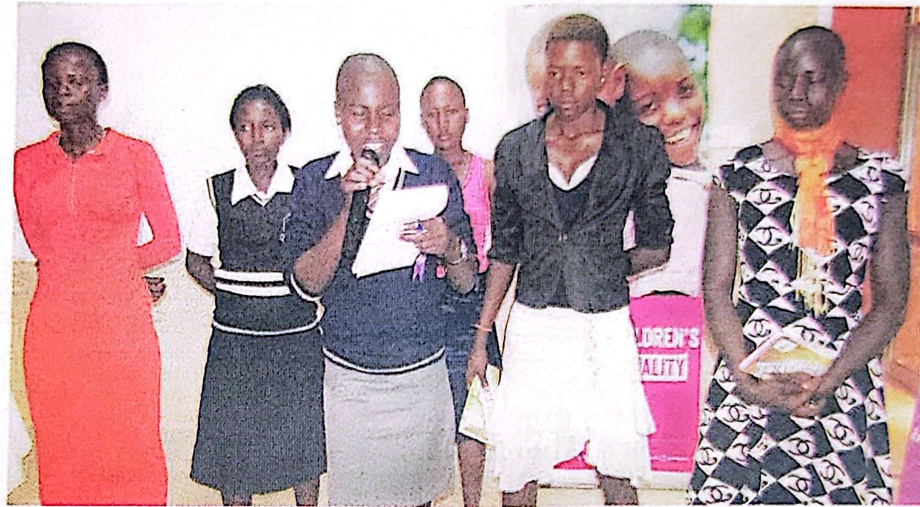
Individuals who prevent their children from attending school or those that allow learners into entertainment centres during class time will also face jail time under the proposed law.

If found guilty, the accused will also be subjected to the payment of a fine, community service, or both, depending on the offence committed.

Under the Bill, learners who fail to attend school will on first conviction be cautioned and on the subsequent conviction be subjected to confinement in a reformatory centre for a period not exceeding one month.

The Tororo district council passed the ordinances in April 2015, but no response has been given since it was submitted to the Solicitor General's office for approval.

At that time, the council noted with great concern the declining academic performance in the district, which was attributed to, among other things, lack of midday meals, scholastic materials, absenteeism of the learners and teachers as well as the large classes.



Children delivering their presentation during the stakeholders meeting in Tororo recently. Photo by Faustine Odeke

ON THE GROUND

■ Due to lack of commitment in education, schoolchildren have asked various stakeholders to stand with them in solidarity, as a sign of commitment to keeping adolescent girls free from violence and harmful practices.

The Bill was meant to enhance education standards through improved pupil attendance at school, improved arrival at school, reduction of early departure at school and improved commitment among pupils, teachers, headteachers, parents and guardians.

The district council also passed the End Child Marriages Ordinance Bill, 2015, which stipulates that any person or institution aiding, abetting or procuring child marriage commits an offence and is liable, on conviction, to a jail term not exceeding two months or community service.

Due to lack of commitment, schoolchildren have asked various stakeholders to stand with them in solidarity as a sign of commitment to keeping adolescent girls free from violence and harmful practices.

The children, in a

end gender-based violence in education.

They argued that girls that stay in school marry later and delay child bearing, often have healthier children and can earn better incomes.

The dialogue noted that children often drop out of school due to child marriages and violence against the children at school, which must be addressed.

The meeting was organised by Tororo District Youth Advocacy Network (TDYAN) in collaboration with World Vision.

Joseph Echidu, the World Vision Tororo manager, said despite having good laws and policies, implementation and enforcement have remained a challenge.

While presenting a report on child abuse cases, Echidu said every stakeholder should

get involved in efforts to end violence against children as prescribed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The district education officer, Yona Gamusi Doya, attributed the challenges faced by children to lack of commitment and responsibility by community members, parents and the children themselves.

The meeting urged security agencies to regulate the running of entertainment places, such as disco halls (clubs), which are one of the places where girls fall victim to violence and related vices.

Uganda ranks among the African countries with the highest number of child brides, with 46% of girls below 18 years of age being forced or lured into marriages, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

A WHO study indicates that

The figures

The report on child abuse cases, carried out between 2016 and 2017, indicated that defilement registered 152 cases, child labour 32 cases, gender-based violence 568, child neglect 144 and domestic violence 357 cases.

That brought the total number to 1,253 cases, of which only 51 cases were presented in court and five concluded with judgment.

On dropping out of school, out of 13,066 boys in Primary Six and Seven, a total of 8,880 dropouts were registered in 2016 while out of 12,901 girls in the same classes, 9,008 girls dropped out within the same period.

The assistant district health officer in charge of maternal health, Connie Bwire, appealed to community leaders to encourage victims of violence to immediately seek medical attention in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies and contracting HIV.

She said statistics show that in 2017, for girls aged from 10 to 19, 5,684 got pregnant. For females between and 19 and 25 years, 8,333 became pregnant while 10,074 pregnancies were registered for those aged 25 years and above.

the countries with most child marriages also have the highest maternal mortality ratio and highest adolescent fertility and constitute the greater majority of people living with HIV.

Child marriage and the resultant pregnancies are the biggest cause of deaths among 15-19-year-old girls, accounting for 20% of maternal deaths.