School fees. The PEIS trainings and skilling project has empowered 30 mothers to keep their children in school.

How PEIS keeps financially stricken slum kids in school

SAVING

BY ARTHUR ARNOLD WADERO & SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA



Mr Fredrick Kayiira, the executive director of Initiative for Mtoto wa Shule, orients parents in Kitintale, about PEIS model for education financing. PHOTO/SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA

The reopening of schools on February 10 exposed the usual struggle by parents to send their children back on time. This term appeared worse, with nearly 50 percent of learners across the country reportedly delaying to report due to lack of school requirements and tuition.

Educationists warn that this disrupts learning. Ms Angela Kisolo, head teacher of Nakasero Primary School, said late reporting delays syllabus coverage and affects learners' concentration in class.

Rose Nabatanzi, a former student of Kololo Secondary School, said she experienced repeated dismissals, especially in Senior One and Two, because of similar challenges.

"It was not good because I could finish a term when the school is still demanding some money and would not get my [end of term] report," Natabanzi, who sat her Senior Four national exams in 2025, told the *Daily Monitor*.

She further recounted that her "concentration was always affected because you are always worried that teachers would any time chase you for fees. The morale for learning also drops because you can easily hate the environment."

She added that once in such a state, then "you don't easily fit in among fellow students because they always remind you that you are going to be chased back home."

On many occasions, Nabatanzi would deliberately delay going back home after school dismissal by making several stopovers along the way so that she could arrive home in the evening like other children who had attended school for the full day.

Sometimes, she hid in her mother's humble shelter in the slums of Luyinja Zone, Mbuya in Nakawa Division.

This behaviour worried her mother, Ms Regina Nabukeera, who feared that her daughter might eventually drop out of school and become involved in harmful activities common in the slums, such as prostitution or early pregnancy, which would also set a bad example for her three younger siblings.

For more than three years, Ms [illegible] I finished my [Senior National] exams."

The same savings group based in Mbuya chaired by Ms Justine Nakanjako has through the PEIS trainings and skilling empowered 30 mothers to keep their children in school. The 30 mothers have a total of 47 children all together combined spread in both primary and secondary school levels.

How she joined?

"After Covid struck, we suffered a lot and formed our village saving association to help in tough times. Fees was one of the biggest challenges by all members in savings group," Ms Nakanjako recounted.

She added: "Our members would borrow and even later run to money lenders and they would force us to pay heavy fines plus high interest."

It was in late 2023 when Ms Nakanjako interfaced with officials at Mtoto wa Shule (IMS) who expressed interest in training her savings group on sustainable ways of having tuition and funds for scholastic materials for their children.

At first, Ms Nakanjako was hesitant but later after interfacing with colleagues [illegible] to fees demand in a crisis manner.

The PEIS model is run by the Initiative for Mtoto wa Shule (IMS) overseen by Mr Fredrick Kayiira, the executive director.

Mr Kayiira said the PEIS is a mechanism built to not only insulate parents against tuition deficiency shocks that force many to fetch loans at explosive interests but it is also tailored to guarantee learners' sustainable stay in school.

He added that the scheme is designed in a format that "supports a structured culture of planning, saving and parental responsibility around education financing."

The scheme is specifically built to enable parents or institutions that fund learners' costs to project required tuition costs by compressing expenditures on scholastic related needs plus fees and this is later subjected to a formula designed for each person within the scheme.

In so doing, builders of the scheme working with Mr Kayiira at IMS place focus on training persons or institutions that pay tuition on how to execute this model.

FUTURE PROJECTIONS...

Mr Kayiira said: "The long-term goal of PEIS is to contribute to reduced school dropout and improved retention in Uganda by strengthening household-level education financing."

This is because, he added, from organisations and entities devoted to tackling school dropouts and protecting children from exposure to HIV/Aids, illiteracy, child marriages and other dangers triggered by high school dropouts in Uganda.

In this process, the PEIS programs has drawn support from AIDSFONDET Denmark with funds from Erik Thunes Legat, Bygma and Civil Society in Development (CISU).

The IMS has also partnered with Lady Mermaid Empowerment Centre (LMEC) which is a feminist organization providing HIV prevention and Skilling services to vulnerable women and adolescents girls.

Mr Kayiira said these organisations, among other things, equip parents and their children with vital skills plus valuable lessons drawn from lived experiences from persons previously troubled by early marriages, HIV/Aids plus school dropouts.

Impacted families in slums

Headquartered at the edge of Mpererwe slums in Kawempe Division, the IMS has in the past four years focused on pushing the PEIS into poverty-stricken families in slums within Kampala Metropolitan Area whose families grapple with school dropouts and related effects like early pregnancies and child marriage.

"PEIS targets school-going children who are at risk of dropout due to financial instability at household level. In this angle, the focus is not on children who have already dropped out, but on prevention-supporting families early enough to keep learners consistently in school," Mr Kayiira said.

He added: "However, parents whose children already dropped out, or never enrolled can also [illegible]

Safeguards on fees saving

After the PEIS model was successfully introduced Kyotera, Rakai and Kampala, districts in the early months of 2022, the designers of the model installed safety measures to ensure that school fees savings collected are insulated against abuse and misappropriation.

How it works. All funds are fully managed by the PEIS group themselves which internally agree and open up [illegible]ing [bank] accounts and later designate selected leaders amongst themselves as signatories to the said account. This is also strengthened by strict internal controls that are designed to protect parents' contributions.

CamScanner