

THE FIRST LADY ECHOED HER CALL FOR PARENTS TO OFFER LUNCH TO THEIR SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN

By Conan Businge and
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"This is a new dawn in the education sector," remarked the First Lady and education minister on Wednesday, as she opened Birere Primary School in Isingiro district, in Western Uganda.

This was the initial phase for the launch of 138 other schools, which have been constructed by the Government at a cost of \$100m grant from the Global Partnership for Education I (GPE I).

Part of the funds were allocated to the purchase of textbooks, training of teachers and improving advisory, technical and capacity building activities in the selected primary schools.

The first phase of the launch of newly constructed and refurbished primary schools will cover 54 schools, whose construction was centrally procured by the education ministry. The next phase will take more 84 schools, which are still under construction and will be opened later in the year.

The newly constructed 138 schools are the first of the kind to be constructed by the Government in such a large number in the past two decades.

The First Lady noted that this was a new era in the education sector and there was need for the parents to support the Government's efforts.

"We see a better future in the education sector. We are going

First Lady opens first of 138 new primary schools



The First Lady (centre) with district leaders of Isingiro and pupils of Birere Mixed Primary School after commissioning the new buildings on Wednesday. Photo by Abdulkarim Ssengendo

to a better place," she noted.

The First Lady reiterated her call for the parents to offer lunch to their school-going children.

She told to the parents who had gathered at a nearby Anglican church that the school buildings would not be

enough to improve the quality of education.

"Parents must be prepared to feed their children. The great structures will be of value if only all stakeholders are ready to play their role," she said.

The First Lady noted that

a number of parents had completely abandoned the long held parenting values, which is regrettable.

"What kind of parents are we having who cannot feed their children?" she asked. She was flanked by

the state minister for primary education, Rosemary Seninde, area Member of Parliament Bright Rwamirama, district leaders and the commissioner for primary education, Dr Daniel Nkaada.

Birere Primary School, with

about 317 pupils, has never had any pupil pass in Division One for the last 10 years. Museveni asked the parents and teachers of the school to ensure the pupils' performance improves. She also noted that she objects to the notion of children starting up gardens to get food for their lunch meals. "You might easily turn pupils into workers on the farm. Gardening should only be done as a lesson and not as work at school," she said.

She also applauded the donors and the ministry for the success in implementing Early Grade Reading, which she said is a success in promoting the new thematic curriculum in the country.

About more 100 pupils joined Birere Primary School this year, when the construction started.

Rwamirama, who went through the same school years ago, noted that the new structures will also help the school's enrolment to grow.

The school now has a three classroom block, two more blocks with two classrooms, two five-stance latrines for pupils and a two-stance latrine for teachers. It also has a new administration block and a water tank. New buildings can be seen over the next hill enveloping the few old ones.

The First Lady, later in the evening, held a talkshow on Radio West and TV West as part of her campaign to encourage parents to pack food for their children.

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT