

Will the school feeding committee deliver?

School feeding has taken centre stage since the First Lady and education minister, Mrs Janet Museveni launched a countrywide campaign to sensitize parents on the importance of providing meals for their children. Subsequently, a committee has been appointed to find a solution to this challenge. Prisca Baike examines how the committee will deliver on its mandate

The committee chairperson, Dr Robinson Nsumba-Lyazi, is optimistic they will deliver on their mandate putting in place a parents-led model where school feeding programmes will be financed, planned and owned by parents. This depending on available resources, while the school and government play a monitoring role.

"Our motive is to re-engage parents and remind them that feeding their children while at school is their responsibility and not the role of government," Nsumba-Lyazi says.

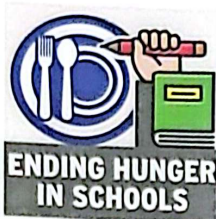
"This model of feeding is the most natural and sustainable one since it has worked for countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and India," he adds. Nsumba-Lyazi notes that the Education Act 2008 clearly explains the parents' responsibilities, which include feeding.

Nsumba-Lyazi says although parents had abandoned that responsibility, there is a concerted effort to ensure that children do not suffer from hunger at school. "We as a committee have given ourselves three years to end this problem," he explained. The National Planning Authority reveals that 66% of Uganda's pupils were starving at school.

George Apili Olila, the headteacher, Angwecibange Primary School, says feeding children has been a challenge because most parents, think it is the Government's role to do so.

Through the committee, Apili believes the message will sink in that it is, the parents responsibility to feed their children.

Nsumba-Lyazi says his team is committed to ending hunger



in schools by sensitising parents about the advantages of feeding their children.

Committee speaks out
Dr Yusuf Nsubuga, the former director Basic and Secondary Education, lauds the idea of developing a multi-sectoral committee.

"The education ministry cannot single-handedly address this issue. If the committee is well set up it will work," Nsubuga says.

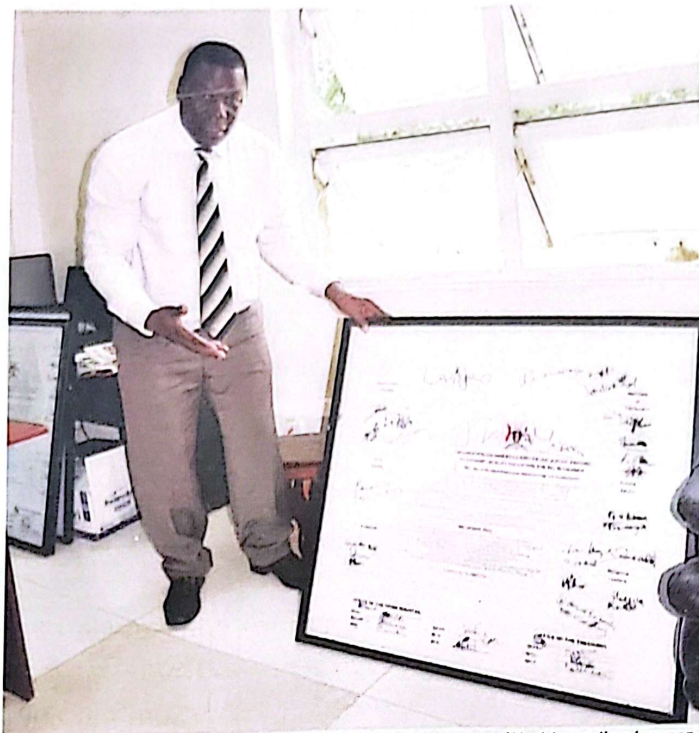
Cons Okabo Opio, the headteacher, Apili Primary School in Kole district believes the committee will make their work as teachers easier.

"It is hard to teach hungry children yet parents do not want to provide meals for them," he says.

Opio says their pleas to parents to feed their children while at school have fallen on deaf ears.

"Many parents are unwilling to feed their children. If government helps us to sensitise them, it will help," Olila says.

Fred Mwesigwa from the Forum for Education in Uganda says the committee will deliver because it is adopting a sustainable approach. "Most committees fail to deliver because of their unsustainable approaches. Urging parents to feed their children is a more sustainable



Nsumba-Lyazi displays a board signed by stakeholders committed to ending hunger in schools. Some parents still need sensitisation on importance of school feeding

approach than having government feed them," Mwesigwa explains.

Strategy
Nsumba-Lyazi says one of their strategies is supporting parents to improve food security at household level by producing more and selling the surplus for income.

"That is why we have ministries such as agriculture and trade on the committee," Nsumba-Lyazi says.

He adds that if all children are to eat, it is vital for food production to be high.

Nsumba-Lyazi explains that the agriculture ministry will be supporting communities with technical skills to foster high food production.

On the other hand, the trade ministry will sensitise parents

on financial matters. "The nutritionist will guide our communities and schools on how to feed the children in sufficient quantities," Nsumba-Lyazi says.

He notes that the parents who are unable to contribute can offer labour to the school in exchange of their children getting meals.

In some districts such as Gulu, which he says has the highest rate of successful parents-led school feeding, parents were identified and supported by the community.

School gardens, farms
Nsumba-Lyazi says institutions with large tracts of land will be encouraged to revive school gardens. "Many government schools have a lot of land yet they

cannot even grow food for pupils. Such land should be used productively to prevent children from starving," he says.

No budget
Nsumba-Lyazi says the committee has started its activities without any budget.

"We are now starting with some small activities as we look for funds," Nsumba-Lyazi says, adding that development partners have been supportive in financing most of their activities. However, Margaret Kyomuhangi, who sits on the budget committee of Parliament says the school feeding committee does not need a budget since the structures to carry out sensitisation are there up to the grassroots. "There is no need for a budget to sensitise parents on feeding their children," argues Kyomuhangi, who is also the Woman MP for Nakasongola district.

"Sensitisation is the work of all the leaders from the LCI to MPs. The issue should not be left to only the committee," she says.

As leaders, we have to support the committee if it

THE COMMITTEE

- Dr Robinson Nsumba-Lyazi; commissioner basic and secondary education
- Ketty Lamaro; undersecretary in charge of Karamoja programmes
- Susan Oketcho; assistant commissioner, education standards BVET
- Edward Ssebukyu; assistant commissioner private schools
- Mary Gunteese; Principal education officer, secondary schools
- Stephen Birlbonwa; Principal agricultural officerR.
- Robert Mpakibi; Ministry of Trade
- Musa Birungi; senior education officer, special needs
- Angella Nakafeero; senior education officer, gender unit
- Pamela Nzeyimana; senior education officer, special needs
- Mary Angella Naddamba; education officer, gender
- Emmanuel Wesonga; monitoring and evaluation officer
- Victor Lule; project assistant
- Hedwig Acham; senior lecturer, Makerere University
- Peter Milton Rukundo; lecturer, Kyambugo University
- Beatrice Okello; senior programmes manager, food and nutrition security
- Daphne Wendy Kasujja; Programme manager, IrishAid
- Harish Bhuptani; chairperson, Maama Care Foundation
- Frederick Kizito; the senior nutrition advisor, Netherlands Development Organisation
- Linda Asaba; Civil Society Association for Nutrition Uganda
- Ministry of Water and Environment representative
- Ministry of Local government representative
- National Planning Authority representative
- United States Agency for International Development representative
- United Nations Children's Fund representative

is to deliver its mandate," Kyomuhangi explains. She adds that a baseline survey is crucial and will help assess their progress, adding that the committee can be financially supported with that.

Effects of hunger

- Lowers child's concentration
- Affects attention and retention rate
- Hampers learning and affects cognitive abilities
- Affects physiological growth
- Impacts the child's social skills

Objectives

- Advocate for parent guardian-led school feeding.
- Monitor school feeding across Ugandan schools
- Co-ordinate school feeding initiatives in the education sector.
- Provide policy and technical guidance to government stakeholders and service providers on school feeding.