Why inmates posted better results in PLE

According to the Uganda Prisons Service, a total of 313 inmates registered for the 2025 PLE.

BY MONITOR TEAM

Prison-based schools across Uganda have posted improved results in the 2025 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), with dozens of inmates attaining high grades despite studying under restrictive conditions.

According to the Uganda Prisons Service (UPS), a total of 313 inmates were registered to sit the 2025 PLE. Of these, 280 candidates eventually sat the examinations, while 19 were absent after being released from custody before the exams.

The results show that 15 candidates obtained Division One, 159 passed in Division Two, 75 in Division Three and 31 in Division Four, while 19 were ungraded.

The performance marks a steady improvement compared to previous years.

At Mbarara Main Prison, which recorded one of the strongest performances, seven candidates passed in Division One, 15 in Division Two, 10 in Division Three and five in Division Four. Two candidates were ungraded, while one did not sit the examinations after being released before the examination period.

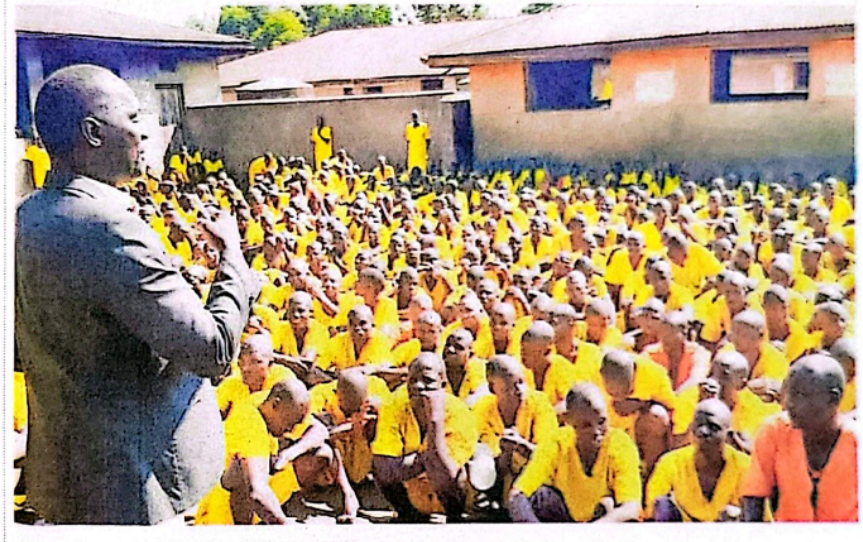
Ms Winnie Musanyana, the head teacher of Mbarara Main Prison School and a Principal Officer I, said the improved results were largely due to increased support from prison management.

"Previously, we struggled because we did not have enough teachers from outside the prison. With continued support from the Commissioner General of Prisons and the officer-in-charge of Mbarara Main Prison, we were able to hire competent teachers, who taught consistently," Ms Musanyana said.

She noted that the prison school, which started in 2008 and serves inmates from Mbarara Main and Kakiika prisons, as well as the women's section, had registered its best performance so far. In 2024, the school registered 37 candidates, of whom four obtained Division One. This year, 40 inmates were registered, with seven attaining Division One.

The top performers at Mbarara Main included two male inmates who scored aggregate 10. One of them, Ivan Mucunguzi, obtained a Distinction Two in English, Credit Three in Science, Credit Four in Social Studies and a Distinction One in Mathematics. Another inmate, Ivan Bakashaba, also scored Aggregate 10.

Speaking after the release of results, Mucunguzi said education remained meaningful even while incarcerated. "I thank God for this achievement. Even in prison, the gift of knowledge remains. I encourage fellow inmates to stay in school so that we leave here reformed," he said.



Then Mbarara Deputy RCC Robert Kanusu addresses inmates at Kakiika prisons in July 2022. PHOTO/FILE

In eastern Uganda, Soroti Main Prison also registered notable outcomes. One inmate, Rogers Kawuma, who sat his examinations at Demonstration Primary School, scored Aggregate 11. Nine inmates passed in Division Two, while two passed in Division Three.

Analysis

Ms Lillian Amuge, the director of studies at Demonstration Primary School, said performance could have been better but was affected by last year's industrial action by primary school teachers over salary concerns.

"The strike disrupted learning for many candidates, but given the circumstances, the results are encouraging," she said.

Kawuma, who scored Aggregate 11, said he hopes to pursue a career in law.

In Kabale District, six out of 10 inmates who sat their PLE at Ndorwa Prison, passed in Division Two, with the best candidate scoring Aggregate 15. Four others passed in Division Three, the officer-in-charge, Mr Julius Kisembo, said.

At Mbale Main Prison, all 23 male candidates who sat the examinations passed. Thirteen obtained Division Two, six passed in Division Three and two in Division Four.

The top performer, Bosco Oinyaga, scored Aggregate 14, followed by Nathan Elvis Onyunyu with Aggregate 16. Three candidates tied at Aggregate 18.

However, statistics from the Uganda Prison Service show that no inmates from the West Nile sub-region registered for the 2025 PLE.

BREAKDOWN OF RESULTS

- Total candidates registered: 313
- Candidates who sat: 280
- Division One: 15
- Division Two: 159
- Division Three: 75
- Division Four: 31
- Ungraded: 19

Mr Frank Baine, the Prisons spokesperson, said the results reflect a growing emphasis on education within correctional facilities.

"The results show strong performance overall, with many candidates improving their grades. This is evidence that education programmes in prisons are yielding results," Mr Baine said.

He added that candidates were registered from several facilities, including Upper Prison Luzira (61), Mbarara Main (40), Mbale Main (23), Soroti Main (23), Ndorwa (10), Masaka Main (9), Kitalya Mini Max (17), Nakasongola (7), Lira Main (6), Masindi Main (7), Kitalya Farm (8) and Gulu Main (7).

Despite the progress, challenges remain. Prison authorities and school administrators cited limited funding, inadequate infrastructure and staffing shortages as persistent constraints.

Most prison schools rely heavily on donations from non-governmental organisations and well-wishers to supplement government support.

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