

Leaders of Kaberamaido district and other stakeholders during the popularisation of the education ordinance in Kaberamaido recently. Photo by Michael Onyinge

Kaberamaido starts war on school dropouts

KABERAMAIDO

By Michael Onyinge

The district leadership of Kaberamaido has resolved to implement the education ordinance and take action against those who will be found contravening it.

In 2011, Kaberamaido district council passed an ordinance to promote Universal Primary Education (UPE) and particularly girlchild education, but it has not been effective.

The District Education Officer of Kaberamaido, Charles Bonny Maginot, said the ordinance has good is meant to support the Government's interest in education.

Maginot said UNICEF had funded and supported the popularisation of the education ordinance in all the 12 sub-counties.

The LC5 of Kaberamaido, Albert Anthony Ejoku, said they have embarked on popularising the ordinance following the poor Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) results.

Ejoku said the decline in number of pupils who passed in first grade from 90 in 2016 to 40 in 2017 has made many people on what could have gone wrong.

He said to have good results, there is need for concerted efforts from teachers, parents, pupils and all sectors of government.

He said each group needs to play its roles properly for a better academic performance to be realised in the district.

Ejoku said one of the challenges the district has been asking the Government to address is the low staffing. He said Kaberamaido district falls short of 560 primary and 115 secondary school teachers.

"I have written to the Minister of Education regarding the shortage of teachers in our district. I got a communication from the current minister stating that there is still no money. My hands are tied," Ejoku said.

The solution he thinks can help among others is to enforce the education ordinance as they keep on asking the Government to have more teachers.

The ordinance is against school dropouts, absenteeism, escape and use or sighting of alcohol in schools.

ON THE GROUND

The Kaberamaido LC3 chairperson, Francho Echolu, promised to implement the education ordinance in his sub-county, saying he would not wait for those who were hesitant.

The ordinance also compels parents to keep their children in school and complete primary school.

It also bars one brewing, taking, selling or buying alcoholic beverages near the school premises.

The LC3 chairperson of Kaberamaido, Francho Echolu, who has been at the forefront in the fight against absenteeism of children from schools, said he will continue to enforce the ordinance.

Echolu is known for tying the culprits with ropes and moving with them throughout the day during his operations.

Whereas Ejoku said the technical officers should enforce the ordinance after it has been popularised, Echolu said he will not wait for technical officers, but would have to act for the good of the children in his sub-county.

"I will continue arresting children I find outside school and also punish their parents for not taking education seriously. I will not wait because the blame of poor results is being heaped on all of us," Echolu said.

Kaberamaido sub-county that has four primary schools had only two pupils in division one.

The resident state attorney of Kaberamaido, Moses Atoe, interpreted the ordinance to the different stakeholders of the three sub-counties of Kaberamaido, Kaberamaido town council and Aperkira on the implications of contravening it.

The penalties include fining parents two currency points or an imprisonment of 12 months or both if found guilty.

Atoe told the participants during the popularisation of the ordinance that he will be ready to represent the Government during prosecution backed by proper investigations from the Police department.

Atoe urged the stakeholders to read the relevant laws of the country that support education like the Constitution, Children's Act and the Local Government Act.

However, the chairman of the school management committee of Kaberamaido Primary School, Moses Eyenyu, said there was a high dropout of children on the shores of Lake Kyoga.

Another parent from Acongwen Primary School, Charles Okello, said they had produced enough children and politicians should stop asking them to produce more again.

The Resident District Commissioner of Kaberamaido, Jimmy Ssegawa Ebil, said he was going to use the principle of the President of *'Hakuna mchezo'* on those who sabotage the progress of education.

Ssegawa threatened to punish children together with their parents who do not want to take education seriously.

"I have never caned people, but this time, I will use *fimbo* or *kiboko* for the purpose of promoting education," Ssegawa said.

He directed the Police to stop opting for negotiations in cases of defilement cases, but rather forward them to courts of law for prosecution.

