

**NTOROKO**

By Wilson Asiimwe

Leaders in Ntoroko district have decried the high cases of absenteeism and dropouts in primary schools.

The district education officer, Maureen Kusemererwa, made the remarks on Friday during a stakeholders meeting at Kanara landing site, Kanara town council in Ntoroko.

The meeting was organised by the Forum for African Women Educationists Uganda Chapter (FAWEU) to address challenges facing the education sector in Ntoroko district.

“Many parents are forcing their daughters into early marriages because they want to get cows and goats, thus denying them a chance to study. This has greatly affected the performance of girls in the district,” Kusemererwa said.

She said Ntoroko Primary School enrolled 700 pupils, but only half turned up for the first term.

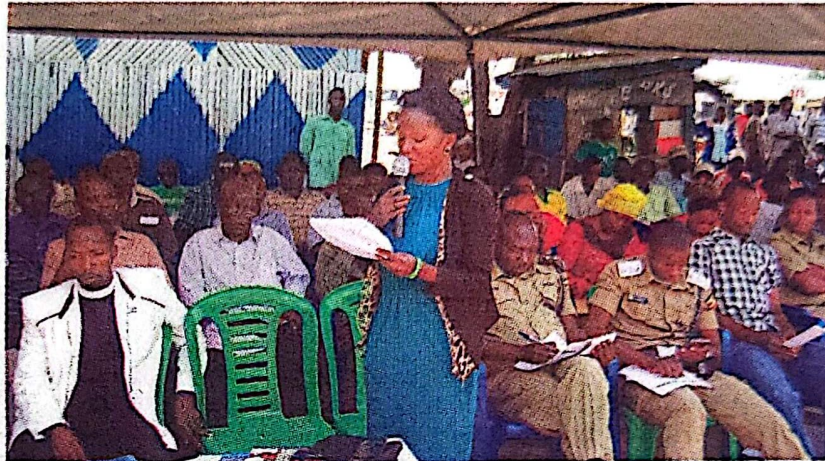
“As the district education department, we are worried about the rate at which pupils are dropping out of school, especially at the landing site,” Kusemererwa said.

She urged parents to stop forcing their children into early marriages if they were to develop their families and communities in future.

Edward Bwambale, the town clerk for Kanara, said the town council had enacted a bylaw to enable the arrest all parents and children who do not attend classes.

“Children will continue to drop out of school unless all stakeholders

# Ntoroko leaders decry high school drop outs



Kusemererwa addressing stakeholders at Kanara landing site on Friday. Photo by Wilson Asiimwe Wilson

*“Many parents are forcing their daughters into early marriages because they want to get cows and goats,”*

**District education officer**

ensure that quality education is provided. Parents have carelessly left their responsibilities to the Government as far as education is concerned,” Bwambale said.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Ntoroko district is among the poorest in the country. It lags behind in education and food production since most children

spend their time looking after cattle and fishing, which are the two major economic activities in the district.

Lynn Nakabugo, a programmes officer at FAWEU, said most homes do not pack food for their children, so they do not have anything to eat at lunchtime. Nakabugo said the problem is worsened by the fact that some parents allow their children to stay at home to provide domestic labour.

Charles Opira, the district Police commander for Ntoroko district, said the district council should enact bylaws to compel parents to send their children to school.

“There should be punishments for parents denying their children a chance to benefit from universal education and as Police, we are ready to enforce the bylaws,” Opira said.

According to this year’s district education department report; there are more than 37 primary schools, of which 10 are private. However, it is the government-aided schools that have been hit the most with the drop outs and poor performance.

Opira said the men have resorted to alcoholism which affects domestic income since they can no longer support their families.

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**MASINDI**

By Priscillar Nyar

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