

By Vision Reporter

The young people of Uganda have been advised to take charge of their lives and seriously say 'no' to sexual relationships, alcohol, drug abuse and living reckless lives.

The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, urged the young girls and boys to commit to keeping away from sexual relationships and messing up their lives at a tender age. She reminded them that "true love waits" and, therefore, anybody who truly loves them should be able to wait until they got married.

"This time is for you to study, get skills and prepare for your adult life. Avoid alcohol and drug addiction because when you are intoxicated, you cannot even remember who you slept with last night and what to do next," she counselled the youth.

Mrs Museveni was on Friday addressing the youth at the closure of the Fort Portal Catholic Diocese Youth Challenge Week Convention at St Peter's Primary School next to Virika Diocese headquarters in Fort Portal municipality.

The function was attended by the defence minister, also MP for Bunyangabu County, Adolf Mwesige, the state minister for gender and culture, Peace Mutuzo, Fort Portal Municipality MP Alex Ruhunda, Burahya County's Margaret Muhanga and Mwenge North County's Lawrence Akugizibwe plus Kabarole district chairperson, Richard Rwabuhinga among other dignitaries.

The Youth Challenge Week was organised by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Robert Muhirwa Akiiki to sharpen the spiritual and life skills of both in and out of school youth from the 24 parishes of Fort Portal Catholic Diocese.

Mrs Museveni advised the young people to fill their hearts with the knowledge of God in order to avoid leaving space for thinking about and engaging in such evils as alcoholism and promiscuity and end up losing direction.

She urged youth to dedicate themselves to hard work.

"If you really dedicate yourself to work, you cannot remain poor, but the problem

is that you waste a lot of time on pool tables and doing nothing productive," she said.

She requested parents to remember that they have a responsibility of giving guidance to the children they bring into the world. She pointed out that parents have neglected their roles and leave children to spend nights in clubs, which she said has contributed to the high teenage pregnancy rates in the country.

Mrs Museveni said it is absurd that children are being sexually abused by the same people supposed to protect them in the homes. So they are

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The First Lady urged the youth to dedicate their lives to God and denounce evils such as alcoholism and promiscuity.

vulnerable away from home, and even when at home!

She described those parents who refuse to give guidance to their children as being negligent and urged them to work together with the leaders to bring up righteous and wholesome children.

The First Lady said the Bible,

in the book of Proverbs, teaches that righteousness exalts a nation: "Therefore, we have to fight for righteousness and integrity and should not just pay lip service to the words."

While observing that Kabarole is a beautiful area in Uganda and a tourist area, Mrs Museveni said it is sad that the HIV/AIDS prevalence in the district is high. She called for concerted efforts from leaders, parents and the young people to address this situation.

She congratulated the district for excelling in last year's Primary Leaving Examination, while urging the leaders and parents to work together to

stop examination malpractices, during the examination process which she described as an unnecessary shame.

She hailed the Rt. Rev. Bishop Muhirwa for giving the youth the skills that will enable them live righteous lives and also commended Kabarole leaders and residents for choosing to safeguard peace in their area.

"Uganda is now an island of peace and all of us should strive to ensure that it remains so".

Mwesige told the youth that they are the primary beneficiaries of the peace and stability brought to the country by the NRM and have a bigger

stake because they have longer lives to live.

He urged them to make sure that they acquire skills to take advantage of the various opportunities and also safeguard their lives and the peace so that they live longer to exploit the resources that Uganda has in order to prosper and live to their full potential.

Bishop Muhirwa said the Kabarole youth week brought together 2,600 youth from different cultures, education levels and marital status for counsel and forging the way forward. He thanked Mrs Museveni for the support to the Youth Week programme.



First Lady (wearing hat) with some of the youth and leaders from Kabarole district soon after closing the Youth Challenge Week Convention at St. Peter's Primary School in Fort Portal municipality on Friday. PPU photo

First Lady implores youth to take charge of their lives