

Registration

Identification

Enrolment

One million children registered, parents blamed for slow pace

By Wilson Manishimwe

Only one million children have been registered out of the eight million enrolment forms distributed in schools countrywide since May 29, when the mass registration exercise for school children started.

Rosemary Seninde, the state minister for primary education and co-ordinator of the exercise, blamed the slow pace on parents' laxity, especially in presenting their national identification details to the enrolment officials.

She also said some parents have shunned their children's registration because some school headteachers were using the opportunity to track school fees defaulters.

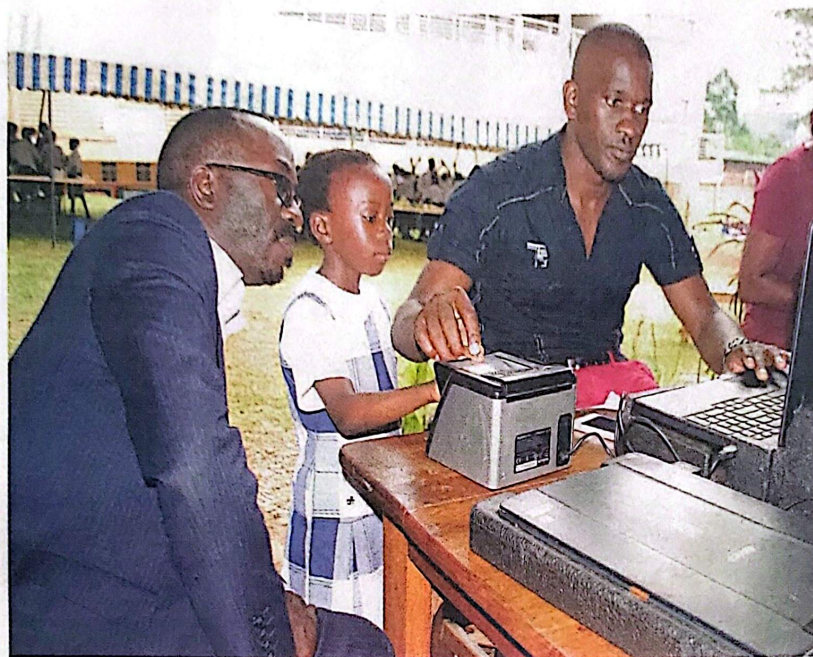
Speaking to journalists at the Uganda Media Centre in Kampala yesterday, Seninde said over 10 million school-going children, aged between five and 16 years, are expected to be registered. She said the exercise would stop on August 30, with no provision for extension.

"Registration has been going on in nursery, primary and post-primary schools in areas such as Kampala, Arua, Gulu and Kabarole. Some school heads have used the opportunity to send away children for school fees or stop defaulters from registering. This must stop," she said.

Limited sensitisation

"There have been some challenges such as parents not having national identification cards and limited sensitisation. District leaders such as resident district commissioners, chief administrative officers and local council chairpersons should mobilise people and ensure that the programme succeeds," she said.

The education ministry is implementing the nationwide registration exercise in conjunction with the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA). Seninde noted that the registration



Dr Andrew Ocero looking on as NIRA officer, Fahad Mbazira, takes a thumbprint of seven-year-old Michelle Ocero. This was during pupils' registration at Greenhill Academy recently. Photo by Lawrence Mulondo

According to Gilbert Kadilo, the NIRA head of communications, after registration, each child will get a National Identification Number (NIN) that will be the same number which they will carry for life. They will also use this number to apply for National IDs when they are 16 years old and above.

WHY REGISTER?

has not started in sub-regions such as Masaka, Luwero and districts such as Jinja and Mbale. She said mid-next week, NIRA will embark on those districts.

"We deployed over 12,000 enrolment officers and soon the remaining districts will be covered. The exercise aims at eliminating ghost school children," she said.

Registration free

Brig. Stephen Kwirigira, the director operations and registrations at NIRA, noted that some parents are unable to fill the enrollment forms, hence derailing the programme. He advised parents to always go along with their children and seek help from the enrolment officers.

"School-going children's registration is easier, unlike the 2014 citizens' enrollment exercise. At least now we know where to find the children. Necessary logistics and personnel for the programme have been provided," he stated. "Registration forms are free of



Seninde

charge, so nobody should be asked for any money to have their children registered. All that is required are enrollment forms and attached parents' national identification details."

Meanwhile, the NIRA executive director, Judy Obitre-Gama, said there is a special category of people in Kiryandongo district, identified as the Maragoli, who she said have been complaining that they were not registered for national identification cards.

She said the Maragoli are not indicated anywhere in the Constitution as an indigenous tribe in the country, hence cannot be given national identification cards. She also said they even petitioned the Speaker of Parliament to be recognised as indigenous people of the country, but their issues still swing in balance.

Why register?

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Kadilo said recently that registering students would help the education ministry to establish the exact number of pupils and students in schools and lead to budget savings through elimination of ghost students and schools respectively and enable Government plan well for the schools.

All parents are required to be registered and to carry a National ID ahead of the registration to facilitate the key requirement of linking every child to a parent. Continuous registration for adults is ongoing at all district NIRA offices countrywide.