

In Kabale District, cycling to school is emerging as a practical solution for girls seeking better education. At Kabale Primary School, learners say bicycles help them travel 2–4km daily, though rain and cold remain challenges.

BY ROBERT MUHEREZA

While pupils, especially girls, cycling from rural homes to major public primary schools is common in eastern and northern Uganda, it is a relatively new development in Kabale District, where learners are seeking better educational outcomes.

A recent social media post showing a primary school girl cycling in the rain to attend lessons in Kabale Town went viral, drawing both surprise and admiration for her determination.

Three girls enrolled at Kabale Primary School say that although they enjoy cycling from home each day, harsh weather—particularly during the rainy season—poses challenges.

Sixteen-year-old Pamela Asiimwe said her parents bought her a bicycle when she joined Primary Six at Kabale Primary School, about 3 km from their home, after transferring her from a nearby school due to concerns over academic standards. "Harsh weather conditions, especially the early morning cold and rain, are some of the challenges I face while riding to school," Asiimwe said.

Anitah Anyijukire, 14, in Primary Six, and Florence Owembabazi, 12, in Primary Seven, who also recently transferred from rural schools, regularly cycle to school. "The advantage of cycling is that it is a

The wheels powering girl child education in Kabale District



Girls arrive at a school on their bicycles in Kabale District. PHOTO/ROBERT MUHEREZA

reliable means of transport despite the weather," the girls said, noting that cold mornings make the journey difficult.

Mr Moses Muhekyi, a parent in Kabale District, said cycling is becoming increasingly common as families seek access to better urban schools.

"Using a bicycle helps children arrive on time for morning lessons and eases the financial burden on parents who cannot afford boarding fees," he said, adding that he bought a bicycle for his son in Primary

Five and plans to do the same for his daughter when she reaches that level.

Despite concerns about harsh weather, some parents and teachers believe cycling builds resilience. "Pupils who cycle to school learn the value of hard work," said Mr Gracious Mbonye, another parent.

He added that although bicycles cost between Shs200,000 and Shs450,000, they are a long-term investment compared to boarding fees of about Shs350,000 per

term. Pupils can continue using them in secondary school.

The headteacher of Kabale Primary School, Mr Nelson Byomuhangi, said pupils who cycle often perform better than those in boarding or those driven to school by parents.

"About 50 of our 1,253 pupils cycle to school daily. They are rarely late for lessons, which begin at 7:30 am, despite travelling 2 to 4 km," he said.

At Kigezi High School Lower Prima-

CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Kabale District Education Officer, Mr Moses Bwengye, said although the district has 113 primary schools, some parents bypass nearby schools in favour of established institutions due to their reputations and alumni influence.

ry, headteacher Mr Geoffrey Beinomugisha said about 15 female pupils cycle to school each day.

"Parents prioritising quality education invest in bicycles for children in upper classes to enable them to attend established schools," he said, adding that most pupils still walk due to financial constraints.

At Kabale Secondary School, deputy headteacher Mr Justus Tusasibwe said about 30 of the 300 students who cycle to school are girls, and many perform well academically. The school has a total enrolment of 1,593 students.

Dr Robert Mugarura, a senior lecturer in the Department of Surgery at Kabale University School of Medicine, said cycling benefits both mental and physical development. "It supports brain development, strengthens muscles and bones, and boosts self-esteem among girls," he said.

The Kabale District Education Officer, Mr Moses Bwengye, said although the district has 113 primary schools, some parents bypass nearby schools in favour of established institutions due to their reputations and alumni influence.