



INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

Factors contributing to poor performance in Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) in Kayonza sub-county, Kayunga District



Education Baraza Report

February 22, 2018

A. Introduction.

On February 22, 2018, the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) convened an Education *Baraza* (*community dialogue*) at Kayonza Sub-County Headquarters, Kayunga District. The convening of the *Baraza* was informed by the persistent poor performance of Kayunga District in Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Kayonza Sub County in particular has the highest number of schools in the Kayunga District. The Sub County has the highest number of Universal Primary Education (UPE) Schools, totaling 32 schools. However, it also registers the highest number of failure rate in Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). In the 2017 PLE results, Kayonza sub-county is the only sub county in the district that didn't register a single grade one out of the 301 first grades and had the highest failure rate of 34.24%, compared to Kitimbwa and Busana sub counties with 28.85% and 21.72% respectively .

The *Baraza* was attended by the community members from Kayonza Sub-County and a number of officials (both political and technical) from Kayunga District Local Government including: Ms. Rose Birungi - The Resident District Commissioner (RDC); Mr. Were Yahaya - Deputy RDC, Mr. Sserwanga Tom William- LC V Chairperson; Ms. Nakwendo Harriet - Secretary for Education; Mr. Lubega Amos - District Internal Security Officer; Mr. Olok Moses - District Inspector of Schools; Immaculate Ggalimuka - District Information Officer; Mr. Mpiima Moses - Chairperson LC III Kayonza Sub County; Mr. Tom Wangobi - Zonal Leader of teachers and head teachers from government primary schools in Kayonza Sub County.

ISER was represented by: Ms. Saphina Nakulima - Right to Education Program Manager; Joshua Kisawuzi - Community Outreach Officer; and Mugoya Musa - Program Officer, Right to Education. ISER Community Health Advocates (CHAs) from Kayunga District including Harriet Nakku, Kidde Mugalu, and Esther Nakato assisted with the mobilization of the community members.

The overall objective of the Education *Baraza* was to bridge the communication gap between the community members of Kayonza Sub County and the district leadership on factors leading to poor performance in PLE in Kayonza Sub County.

B. Issues raised by the community members

Mr. Sserwanga William Tom, the Chairperson LC V, Kayunga District Local Government presented his report on the state of the education sector in Kayunga District. The report highlighted that Kayunga falls under the 20 poorest performing districts in the country in the Eastern Uganda cluster (Eastern Uganda has over the years registered poorest grades in national examinations especially PLE). Some of the challenges highlighted in the report include;

Pupil and teacher absenteeism

There is high rate of pupil absenteeism especially in the first days of the school terms. The community attributed this on the sugar plantations in the district that hire children of school-going age to offer cheap labour on the plantations especially during the harvesting seasons and during the loading of sugar canes on trucks. The other factor contributing to pupil absenteeism

was the fact that some children prefer going to the River Nile and Lake Kyoga fishing instead of attending classes.

Teacher and head teacher absenteeism

The sub-county is also faced with teacher and head-teacher absenteeism. Both the community members and the district leadership acknowledged this challenge. This was attributed to accumulation of loans by the teachers and head teachers that makes it hard for them to concentrate at the center, poor remuneration and lack of accommodation. This leaves the pupils unattended to during class hours and as a result many are not in position to complete the syllabus- hence poor performance at PLE.

Inadequate monitoring and inspection of schools

The community members also pointed out there is inadequate and improper inspection of schools by the district inspectorate of schools and this is partly leading to staff absenteeism in many schools. They explained that sometimes the inspector of schools makes phone calls to the head teachers of the different schools before visiting the schools and in some cases the inspector of schools' camp in one school then direct all the other head teachers from other schools to find them at their comfort. This makes teachers to have a laissez faire approach to their work since they are not worried about inspection and supervision.

Poor School Management

The community cited poor school management as another challenge. This is worsened by non-functional School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) which have failed to play their oversight role. The community also added that in situations where some SMCs and PTA have tried to carry out their responsibilities, there are set back by political interference where politicians fight all decisions that are against their interests.

Poor infrastructure

The community further attributed poor performance in their sub-county to poor infrastructure like inadequate classrooms, toilets, and staff quarters among others. The inadequate latrines have for example greatly affected the girl child especially during their menstruation period and as a result many end up staying at home – hence missing out on school.

Limited parental support of their children in school

The community members raised the challenge of parents not offering adequate support to their children while in lower classes but waiting for the time when they get to upper classes to offer the support not knowing that the earlier foundation is very important. Parents do not attend meetings nor do they provide the required scholastic inputs, food and other basic necessities- this greatly affects their concentration in class hence leading to poor performance in PLE.

Substandard private schools

The community members also further stated that there are so many mushrooming private schools that lack the basic standards. This has led to the closure of such schools (sometimes in the middle of the school term) hence destabilizing the pupils and greatly contributing to poor performance especially at PLE.

C. Responses by the District officials.

The District Chairperson Mr. Sserwanga Tom explained that the district council is focusing on improving the school infrastructure although it's affected by the limited budget that makes it hard for the district to renovate existing infrastructure and put up new infrastructure. He appealed to SMCs and PTAs to mobilize the communities to offer support both in kind and monetary to the improvement of infrastructure of the schools in their localities.

The District Inspector of Schools explained that sometimes they do impromptu inspection visits and on the other hand, other times, they call and communicate the date and time they will be visiting the schools. The latter is informed by the kind of information the inspectorate is looking for at a particular time. For instance, when conducting annual education census, they have to inform the head teachers prior to be able to ensure that all pupils attend school on the stipulated dates because this has a bearing on the UPE capitation grants.

In the same vain, the inspector also pointed out that in some instances they conduct impromptu visits especially when monitoring teachers' and pupils' presence at the centers.

The inspector of schools also emphasized that they are unable to carry out the required inspections per term per school due to inadequate human resource to carry out the function. There are three (3) staff in the inspectorate department who are supposed to carry out inspection and support supervision in the 167 UPE primary schools alone- yet they also have to inspect private areas in the entire district. It against this background that he appealed to the sub county leadership like the Chairperson LC III, Sub County Chief, parish councilors and chiefs to also take on the responsibility of monitoring schools especially teacher absenteeism.

The inspector of schools also appealed to community members and the SMCs to desist mixing religious, and political wrangles in school management because this contributes to poor performance. To further illustrate this, he informed the *Baraza* that there are some schools in the sub-county in particular and the district at large were constituting SMCs has taken them close to six (6) months because of religious and political differences. This has also affected the posting of head teachers and teachers in such schools.

The Inspector of Schools highlighted that poor performance is also due to misuse and abuse of the capitation grants by the SMC. He cited 8 schools were SMCs have misused the funds and that this affects the smooth running of the schools hence leading to poor performance in PLE results.

Both the Resident District Commissioner and the Deputy Resident Commissioner explained that the mushrooming unlicensed private schools with inadequate infrastructure and unqualified teachers have greatly contributed to poor performance in Kayonza Sub-County specifically and Kayunga District at large. Pupils are enrolled in such schools and after acquiring poor quality education they are enrolled back to government schools in order to register for the PLE examinations - since the unlicensed private schools lack the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB) center numbers. This greatly contributes to poor performance in the sub-county.

The inspector of schools also further emphasized that there is lack of parental support especially the fathers. He explained that most men have abandoned PTA meetings to their wives yet they do not have the financial capacity to put into action what they agree on in these meetings. He added that currently most men who attend meetings are old ones who have the passion for education but don't even have children in schools.

The Deputy RDC called upon parents to always respond to calls to attend meetings in their schools; children and also ensure implementation of the resolutions agreed upon in meetings instead of raising complaints to the RDC.

The RDC also advised the community members that instead of enrolling their children in unlicensed private schools that will be closed by government for lack of Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS). They should instead take their children to government schools in which they are required only to provide food for their children compared to unlicensed schools that charge exorbitant tuition and non-tuition fees.

The RDC also urged parents to have a good working relationship with teachers as this helps in regular checks on the child's progress- and further discuss ways in which the weak children can be further assisted by the schools.

D. Recommendations.

The leaders proposed that ISER should support the District Education Directorate to train School Management Committees about their roles and responsibilities in order to improve performance in PLE results specifically but also in the management of the schools generally.

The Kayonza Sub County leadership pledged to work with the district leaders to monitor and supervise schools in Kayonza Sub County. This is aimed at supplementing on the inadequate staff in the District Inspectorate of schools.

The Participants requested the district council to come up with the by-laws that foster parents to provide food for their school going children.

The community members asked the district leadership to caution sugarcane companies against employing children of school going age during school time.

The community members and the district leadership agreed to keep the political and religious affairs away from the management of schools.

The community members also proposed that the process of transferring teachers and head teachers be conducted during holidays as opposed to waiting for the school term to begin because it creates disorganization among the teachers.

The Resident District Commissioner committed to continue closing private schools that do not meet BRMS and lack operating license from the Ministry of Education and Sports - and called upon the community members to desist from enrolling their children in such schools.

E. Conclusion.

ISER extended its appreciation to the sub county leadership for the preparations and mobilization of the community members that turned up in large numbers and on time. It further thanked the district leadership more so the responsible offices of the District Directorate of Inspection of schools, the Secretary for Education, the Chairperson LC V and the Resident District Commissioner. The high turn-up of both the political and technical leadership from the Sub County and district gave proper platform for interaction and engagements between the district leadership and the community. The district leadership also thanked ISER for organizing the event and choosing the right sub county. They committed to undertake a number of initiative to reverse the current poor performance of schools of the district. ISER will follow up on the issue of capacity building for SMCs as a critical governance structure. ISER under the business and human rights program will also follow –up on the issue of absenteeism of pupils attributed to child labour in the sugar plantations.