

## **Factors leading to poor performance of pupils in national examinations in Ngogwe Sub County in Buikwe District**



### **Education Baraza report February, 21, 2019**



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## **Introduction**

The Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) convened a *Baraza* on education at Nangunga Trading Centre in Ngogwe Sub County in Buikwe District on February, 21, 2019.

In spite of the fact that Buikwe is not among the districts with the lowest performing grades, Ngogwe Sub County is amongst worst in the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE).

The *Baraza* was attended by community members, local leaders, and government officials from both local and lower government, head teachers of government aided primary schools, members of the School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), and some civil servants like the District Principal Inspector of Schools, Community Development Officer(CDO), Sub County Chief, the Sub County Chairperson and various Parish Councilors. ISER Community Advocates (CAs) from Buikwe District namely; Harriet Rwabugahya, Dorothy Nabisere and Mutebi Karim also attended and helped support the handling of logistics and registration of participants.

ISER was represented by Joshua Kisawuzi – Community Outreach Officer and Nassozi Rehema Ssozi - Program Officer for Social Accountability and Citizen Participation.

The overall objective of the education *baraza* was to bridge the communication gap between the community members of Ngogwe Sub County and the district leadership as well as strengthen relationship between the community members and the district leadership on ways of improving the performance of learners in the sub county in PLE.

## **Issues raised by the communities**

### **I. Lack of cooperation amongst the school administrators**

The community members pointed out that the teachers and schools in Ngogwe Sub County have unnecessary competition that has made them view each other as opponents instead of partners in education. They said that the situation has affected the spirit of knowledge sharing through seminars, debates and inter- schools' interactions. The teachers' uncooperative attitude and desire to monopolize knowledge and skill in the teaching has affected the pupils and schools' performance. This concern was raised by Kayima Bob a resident of Ngogwe Sub County.

## **II. Insufficient supervision and inspection of schools**

The participants argued that unlike before where the school inspectors visited schools and sat in the different classes that were being taught, this is no longer being done. This has resulted in reluctance amongst teachers to make thorough schemes of work, commit to teaching and thus the increase in teacher/pupil absenteeism from schools. Participants reported that some schools can spend a year without being inspected despite their downward trend in performance.

## **III. Parental negligence of their children**

The teachers and other community members also reported that parents are not supporting their children with basic school necessities such as scholastic materials, uniforms, food and sanitary towels for girls among others. The participants noted that a number of parents/guardians have abandoned their responsibilities of providing the required necessities to their children while in school. They said that, majority of the parents do not avail all the scholastic requirements yet the school administrators are not backed by any regulation to send the learners back home if they do not have the necessary scholastic materials.

## **IV. Domestic chores lead to late reporting to school**

The teachers reported that most of the parents engage their children in domestic work first before allowing them to go to school. The children therefore end up reporting late to school which affects their learning pattern. They added that on the reporting date, classes have few pupils which makes majority miss the introductory session of the lessons and by the time they report to school, it's late for them to catch up.

## **V. Lack of resident head teachers**

The community reported that, most of the head teachers do not stay at the schools they are posted at which leads to poor monitoring of the teachers and activities at those schools. Furthermore, it was reported that some head teachers report to school two days a week thus not offering ample time to the school management. They added that this conduct promotes the vice of teacher/pupil absenteeism which causes incompleteness of the syllabus, hence poor performance in the national examinations.

## **VI. The poor education foundation**

The community members reported that, normally parents and teachers relax at the lower primary levels yet that is the stage that makes the foundation. The parents and teachers wake up and tend to pump their children with a lot of work at primary seven level and yet the period is short to cover what they missed at the lower levels. One

participant reported that it has become a habit to make primary seven pupils enroll for boarding so that they can have extra work and concentration. They said it is practically impossible to expect them to perform well because they are taught too much in such a short time.

## **Responses from the District officials**

The District Principal Inspector of Schools Ms. Nalubega Joyce said that, Buikwe District Education Directorate and other local leaders have endeavored to play their roles but they have been frustrated by the extreme parental negligence and lack of interest to keep their children in school. She said that while the most parents' mind set was to have more children, they do not think about their education.

On the issue of adequate supervision and inspection, Ms. Nalubega noted that the use of a "militaristic" approach in the inspection of schools is fallacy. She noted that, the school inspectors use a friendly approach through which mistakes in the teaching are identified mainly through the use of sampling. The teachers' scheme of work and lesson plans are looked at and mistakes identified and discussed before leaving the head teachers with the responsibility to follow up and supervise the teachers.

She further emphasized that the District inspectors' role is mainly to oversee, leaving the actual implementation of the findings to the other stakeholders. In so doing, this has resulted into improved learning and effective academic performance as good education standards are being implemented.

Ms Nalubega refuted the report that there is a general absenteeism of head teachers in Ngogwe Sub County and noted that it could be an individual issue which she may not be aware of and needs more details to deal with the matter. She requested the community to report the absentee culprits to face disciplinary actions. She however pointed out that teachers/ head teachers are entitled to leave as long as they leave behind someone to coordinated school activities in their absence.

She further noted that, Ngogwe Sub County is destined for better performance if the key stakeholders - parents, teachers and pupils play their role effectively. She said the gross negligence by parents to play their role has the greatest effect to the performance. Furthermore, it was pointed out that most parents are reluctant to provide food and scholastic requirement like books and pens. The teachers are always willing to play their role but they are frustrated by the parents' negative attitude and lack of commitment towards education of their children.

She outlined the following recommendations to the District Directorate of Education to improve education services delivery and academic performance;

- The school inspection should focus more on poor performing schools
- Encourage utilization of instructional materials.
- Reduce on pupils', teachers' and Head teachers' absenteeism.
- Increase the involvement of parents (SMC/PTA) in the education of their children.
- Reward good performers.
- Intensify school internal support supervision by the Head teachers.
- Encourage early reporting by pupils and teachers at the beginning of the term to avoid time wastage.
- Head teachers and teachers to be held more accountable for the performance of pupils.
- Intensify school feeding program in schools.
- No school should close before the official date set by the Ministry.
- End of term reports should be issued to pupils before they go home
- Teaching starts on the first day of each term regardless of the number of pupils who have turned up.
- Bench making visits to schools and districts with good performance.

The Buikwe District Community Development Officer, Mr. Ssewanyo Kiganda Sam, requested the community members to work for mutual respect at family level to eliminate conducts that may lead to disagreements which end up in family separation. He observed that, couple misunderstandings have a direct negative effect on the performance of their children. Fights have psychological repercussions on a pupil while at school. He further requested ISER to design an activity that addresses challenges at the domestic level.

The Sub County Chairperson, Mr. Mbalule, expressed disappointment in the increasing parental lack of interest in the education of their children. He noted that, several parents cannot cope with hunger for a short time but do not mind sending their children to school without any food.

Furthermore, he was skeptical about the image portrayed by the generalization on the improvement of performance in the district. He noted that in reality and after thorough analysis, the performance per school shows that Ngogwe Sub County is still lagging behind in performance.

### **Responses from Head teachers**

When given a chance to respond to the issues raised, the Head teachers noted that some of the academic activities like inter-schools debates and seminars have some financial implications that are not fully covered by the UPE funding and yet parents are not willing to incur extra charges to enable them carry out these academic

activities. They further noted that several parents cannot give scholastic materials to their children and that imposing an additional charge would only burden the parents further.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, a lot needs to be done in terms of training, sensitization and capacity building for the key stakeholders in education on their roles and responsibilities to ignite a better education and excellent academic performance for Ngogwe Sub County children. The empowering of parents, school managers and leaders with capacity building training will help reverse the challenges currently being faced.