

Kyabazinga moots plan to tackle dropouts, early pregnancies

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JINJA. The Kyabazinga of Busoga, William Gabula Nadiope IV, has urged Jinja City-based Hotel and Tourism Training College (HTTC) to begin offering short courses to single mothers, school dropouts and other vulnerable groups to help them become self-reliant and break the cycle of poverty.

This message was delivered on Friday by the kingdom's second deputy premier, Mr Noor Osman, during the College's 16th graduation ceremony.

"We pledge to continue supporting this college, but also appeal to its management to consider the kingdom's subjects—single mothers, school dropouts and other vulnerable youth—so they can gain skills, fight poverty and become ambassadors of Busoga's cul-

ture and heritage," the Kyabazinga said.

Busoga's presidential adviser on poverty alleviation Florence Mutyabule told this publication on the sidelines of the event that many single mothers lack employable skills, leaving them unable to compete for available jobs.

The HTTC Principal, Mr Richard Kawere, said 66 percent of the college's population is female, while 82 of the graduands completed the apprenticeship programme.

The programme is an initiative of the Ministry of Tourism under the reskilling project sponsored by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in partnership with the ministries of Education and Gender.

"Statistics show that 71 percent of students who graduate as apprentices from the HTTC transition into employment within the first three months,

and more follow within the next six months," Mr Kawere said.

"We have not recorded unemployment among students who complete the apprenticeship programme. Tourism and hospitality are at the centre of global employment trends. Out of every 100 jobs, 10 percent employ tourism and hospitality professionals," he

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A total of 366 students were awarded Diplomas and Certificates in Pastry and Bakery, Hotel Management, Tourism Management and other disciplines. Of the graduands, 81 (22 percent) were male and 285 (78 percent) were female.

added.

He also revealed that the college has partnered with the United States-based American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute, through which 22 members of staff have been certified as international hospitality educators.

Col (rtd) Tom Butime, the minister of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities, urged graduands to demonstrate the highest level of professionalism in the hospitality industry.

He commended HTTC for strengthening partnerships locally and internationally, and for contributing significantly to the growth of the tourism sector by producing skilled labour.

He described tourism and hospitality as "a strategic sector for national growth under the Ten-Point Strategic Plan 2040," which seeks to generate \$50 billion annually.