

'42,000 MORE TO BE ADMITTED INTO TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS' GOVT SECURES SH1.1 TRILLION TO EXPAND TRADITIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS



One of the classroom blocks at St Henry's College Kitovu. The Masaka school, along with many others, is set to benefit from a government-led expansion and rehabilitation programme

INFRASTRUCTURE OVERHAUL

The age-old secondary schools can now expect to absorb more learners. A communication from the Ministry of Education and Sports reveals a plan to expand existing government-aided schools, increase the number of seed secondary schools and bring education nearer to home, writes **Martin Kitubi**

St Henry's College Kitovu, a boys-only government-aided boarding secondary school, remains an academic fortress, seated on one of the key hills of Masaka city.

Founded in 1922 by the White Fathers, the school has stood the test of time, withstanding the bombings of the 1979 Tanzania-Uganda war that ousted former president Idi Amin.

Thanks to its great foundation and walls, the school recovered from the ruins and continued to train some of the best minds the country has ever had.

Over the years, little or no new infrastructure had been built, and the school continued operating with asbestos-roofed dormitories despite the health hazards associated with the substance.

However, all is not lost. Kitovu and 120 other traditional secondary schools will get a facelift under the new government intervention.

The intervention, which targets government secondary schools that have existed for more than 50

years, will see schools like Kitovu rehabilitated and expanded to accommodate at least 350 more learners each. This implies that at least 42,000 additional learners will be admitted into the traditional secondary schools. Plans to refurbish the 120 traditional secondary schools were announced in 2023. However, the works were put on hold due to a lack of funding.

As part of the plan, the traditional schools will get new classroom blocks, laboratories, dining halls, sanitation facilities and additional teachers to maintain quality.

The rehabilitation and expansion of traditional secondary schools will be executed under the Uganda Learning Acceleration Programme (ULEARN), whose implementation starts next year.

Speaking during a National Resistance Movement conference at Kololo Independence Grounds, Kampala, in August this year, President Yoweri Museveni said government-aided secondary schools

number over 14,000 compared to around 6,000 private ones.

"Children in secondary schools are 1.7 million, with those in government [aided secondary] schools numbering more than one million, although they [schools] are fewer in number. The ones [children] in private schools are around 600,000," he said.

MINISTRY SPEAKS OUT

The development was announced on Tuesday by Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo, the higher education state minister, at the official opening of two newly-constructed seed secondary schools in Luwero district.

The commissioned schools were St John's Seed Secondary School, Nalongo, and St Andrew Kaggwa Kasaala Seed Secondary School, both in Luwero's Butuntumula sub-county.

The commissioned seed secondary schools were built under the Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers (UgIFT), a World Bank-funded project. Under the UgIFT project, the Government is expected to construct 259 new secondary schools countrywide.

At the launch of the two seed secondary schools, Muyingo revealed that the Government had secured funding to the tune of \$324.8m (sh1.1 trillion) to rehabilitate and expand 121 traditional secondary schools.

As part of the ULEARN programme and funding, the Government will also expand the 66 special needs education institutions as well as the 23 teacher training institutions, which are currently under the Uganda National Institute for Teacher Education.

Muyingo said the ULEARN programme is part of government interventions aimed at not only expanding access to education, but also providing quality education to Ugandans.

COMMUNITY REACTION

John Bwami, a resident of Nalongo in Butuntumula sub-county, Luwero district, lauded the Government for building a secondary school in their area.

"We have about 10 primary schools in this area, but we do not have a single government secondary school. Our children were walking about 10km to access secondary education, and many of them would drop out. We are now happy that our children can access secondary education just a stone's throw away from home," Bwami said.

David Izizinga Bulega, a resident of Kakabala, said: "Having such a complete school in your area is a symbol for development. We want to thank the Government for this timely intervention."

The Rev. Can. Mephiosheth Musisi, the diocesan education co-ordinator at Luwero Anglican Diocese, said: "The children going to these secondary schools will increase, as well as the completion rates. This investment in education mirrors what the Anglican missionaries did when they came to Uganda in 1877. They would set up a school near each church they established. This contributed greatly to education in Uganda."

The minister said the expansion of traditional secondary schools will be implemented alongside the construction of seed secondary schools for sub-counties without public secondary schools.

"The Government has, over the years, made significant investments to expand access to education at all levels: primary, secondary, vocational and higher learning. The construction of seed secondary schools across the

country is a clear demonstration of this commitment," Muyingo said.

By ensuring that every sub-county has a government-aided secondary school, he said, the country will reduce distance barriers, lower education costs for families and guarantee that every child in rural and urban areas has the opportunity to learn.

Muyingo observed that quality education cannot be achieved without quality infrastructure, and this speaks to the ongoing government interventions.

"A conducive learning environment with safe classrooms, laboratories, libraries, staff quarters and sports facilities is essential for effective teaching and learning. This is why the Government continues to prioritise school infrastructure development by constructing new schools, expanding existing ones and improving facilities to promote excellence," he said.

ABOUT SEED SCHOOLS

A complete seed school has several facilities, including classroom blocks, laboratories, a library, and pit latrines.

According to the project manual, each seed school will get eight classrooms with a capacity of 60 students each, an administration block, a single-storey two-unit science laboratory, including one 10,000lts base tank and a tower with a 3,000lts tank. A complete school will also have one storey of an information and communication technology and library block. It will also have three single-storey two-unit teacher houses with a kitchen and latrines designed to accommodate at least six teachers at the school.

The school will also have one five-stance ventilated improved pit latrine for boys, another for girls, as well as a two-stance pit latrine for teachers.

Relatedly, the Government will build a 15kg per day waste incinerator, another 10,000lts water tank, a borehole or connection to piped safe water.

The school will also have a sports field, a single-storey multi-purpose hall connected to power or solar installation, instructional materials for learners, including teachers' guides, laboratory equipment and reagents, as well as 60 desktop computers.

Seed schools for sub-counties

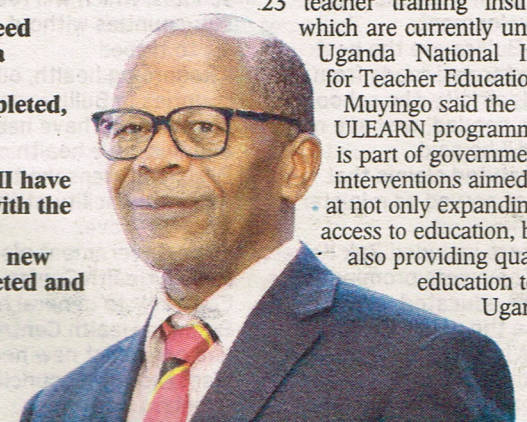
The Government is expected to build the 259 new seed secondary schools in three phases under the Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers (UgIFT) project.

Under the first phase, which is currently 98% completed, the Government built 117 schools. Of these, 115 are complete and operational.

In addition, 75 of 115 schools under UgIFT phase II have been completed and are ready for commissioning, with the remaining projects progressing steadily.

The last phase of the project will have a total of 27 new secondary schools, three of which have been completed and are set for commissioning.

Relatedly, the Government is currently building an additional 116 new secondary schools under the Uganda Secondary Education Expansion Project (USEEP), another World Bank-funded project. As part of USEEP, the Government will rehabilitate another 61 schools in refugee-hosting districts.



Dr Muyingo made the announcement recently