

Severe classroom deficit hits Butebo primary schools

BY MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA

BUTEBO. A Severe shortage of classrooms in several schools across Butebo District is threatening the quality of education and forcing hundreds of pupils to learn in overcrowded spaces, or even under trees.

Education officials said several schools recorded an increase in enrolment last year. However, the schools lack space to accommodate all their learners.

At several schools, pupil enrolment has doubled over the last couple of years, yet the number of permanent classrooms has remained unchanged.

The Butebo District Education Officer (DEO), Ms Josephine Kanyi, said Butebo

currently has 301 classrooms and yet there is a need for 886 classrooms.

Ms Kanyi said due to space constraints, learners are usually overcrowded in classrooms. Teachers also find it hard to move around classrooms as they conduct lessons and to reach out to individual learners to assess whether or not they are attentive and doing tasks as instructed.

She said the classroom pupil to teacher ratio, which is supposed to be 1:53 now stands at 1:150 and sometimes more in some schools. Butebo District has 31 govern-

ment-aided primary schools with an enrolment of 46,056 pupils.

"More than 150 pupils are squeezed into single classrooms designed for half that number. Teachers said that the congestion is disrupting lessons and making it difficult to maintain discipline or give individual attention to learners... When a class has over 100 pupils, teaching becomes crowd control," Ms Kanyi said.

She added that several schools have submitted requests for new classroom blocks but most remain pending due to budget constraints.

"The need is overwhelming. We have

schools that require at least three to five classrooms urgently," Ms Kanyi said.

With the new academic year slated to start in February next year, educators said the deficit should be handled before the learners report back to prevent further strain on teachers and learners.

Ms Kanyi said the district also faces teacher shortage. She said there are 554 teachers, leaving a deficit of 663 teachers. She also expressed concern over a shortage of desks in various primary school, forcing some learners to sit on floors. She said the desk to pupil ratio, which is supposed to be 1:3, is current at 1:6.



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