

GOVT PLEDGES FREE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR ALL

PHOTOS BY MPALANYI SSENTONGO

By Martin Kitubi

After 29 years of Universal Primary Education (UPE), which has benefited more than half of Uganda's population, the Government has committed to roll out the same at the technical vocational education and training (TVET) level.

The move, currently under discussion, will see the Government extend free TVET education to all interested Ugandans.

The development was announced on Friday by the First Lady and Minister for Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, while commissioning the Uganda Vocational and Technical Assessment Board (UVTAB) assessment centre headquarters in Kyambogo, Kampala.

Mrs Museveni said the Government led by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) is committed to realising the vision of free skills training for all who are interested.

"Part of making quality skills training affordable is by ensuring that TVET assessment does not become financially burdensome on the TVET institutions," she said.

The First Lady made the revelation while commending the achievements made under free skilling programmes offered by the 19 presidential skilling hubs spread across the country.

What the skilling sector needs to prepare itself for, Mrs Museveni said, is being relevant to the many young people joining skills training, especially through the presidential skilling hubs.

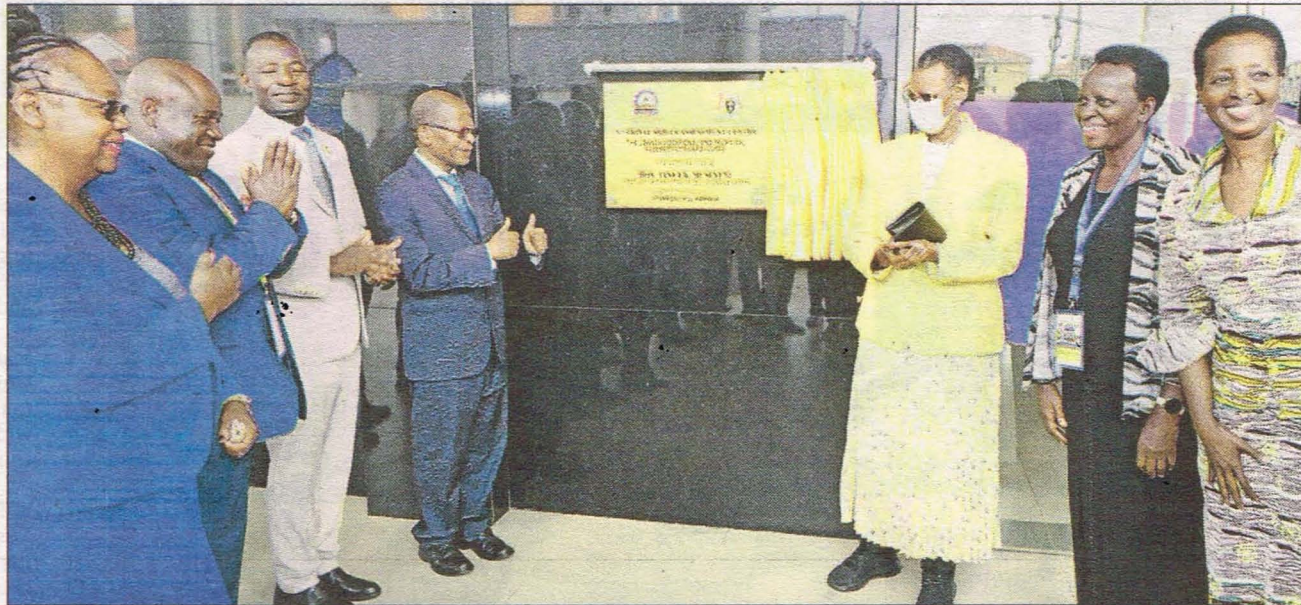
According to Mrs Museveni, more than 82,000 young people that have since graduated from the skilling hubs, are an indicator of the need to have skilling that is both accessible and affordable.

REBUILDING THE SECTOR

The education minister assured the country that the NRM Government will develop the TVET infrastructural facilities on top of basic, secondary and university education facilities.

It should be noted that the Government recently revamped six TVET colleges into centres of excellence for different vocational trades with internationally recognised certifications.

Uganda Technical College, Elgon is focusing on building and construction; Lira Technical College is for roads and construction;



First Lady Janet Museveni (third-right) with (from left): Okello, Oyesigye, James Kubeketerya, the chairperson of the education and sports committee in Parliament; Muyingo, Turyagyenda and Kagina after commissioning the UVTAB assessment centre on Kigobe Road, Kyambogo Hill in Kampala on Friday

Bushenyi Technical College for manufacturing; Bukalasa Agricultural College for agriculture; Kichwamba Technical College for construction, oil and gas materials; while Uganda Petroleum Institute, Kigumba is focusing on oil and gas.

MILESTONE

According to Mrs Museveni, the construction of the UVTAB assessment centre and headquarters in Kyambogo is a milestone worth celebrating as a government because there was a time when the State could not raise enough resources to fully fund the construction of permanent homes for its ministries, departments or agencies.

The minister also noted that it's her prayer that the UVTAB facility, which also houses the headquarters of the skills curriculum and assessment centre becomes grounded in purpose and not a mere infrastructure to be celebrated.

TVET REFORMS

During her speech, the First Lady also reflected on the recent reforms in the TVET sector which saw the merger of the curriculum development and assessment function into one institution, noting that it will improve the sector.

As the country celebrates the wins in the reform journey, Mrs Museveni urged the education sector not to lose sight of the bigger picture of achieving an employer-led and employer-informed TVET system delivered through industry-relevant curricula and measured using credible assessment methods.

The minister emphasised



The UVTAB assessment centre on Kigobe Road, Kyambogo Hill in Kampala

STAKEHOLDERS RESPOND

Dr John Chrysostom Muyingo, the Minister of State for Higher Education, said the ongoing investments and construction works within the education sector are one of the key strategies to improve education in Uganda. "These are the fruits of the investments we have had in the sector. The day Maama [Mrs Museveni] chose to come to the ministry, things started to work," he said.

Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda, the ministry's permanent secretary, praised the Government for the improvement of the education budget, but also asked TVET

trainees and schools to ensure that they follow the reforms.

Allen Kagina, the chairperson of the TVET Council, the sector regulator, lauded the First Lady for taking the lead in reforming the sector, including strengthening education institutions.

As guided by the First Lady, Eng. Assoc. Prof. Dorothy Okello, UVTAB's board chairperson, revealed that they were fast-tracking signing of memoranda of understanding with various industry stakeholders to improve curriculum development and assessment.

the need to strengthen the partnerships with professional bodies, industry associations, and TVET providers locally, within the East African Community and globally, to make the sector better.

The First Lady is optimistic that the industry's input will

ensure that curricula and training packages are not only relevant but also meet the highest global standards.

"This alignment is essential for producing employable artisans, technologists and other professionals

that can contribute to our industrialisation agenda," she said.

UVTAB'S NEW BUILDING

According to Onesmus Oyesigye, the UVTAB executive secretary, the headquarters, which is

designed to serve as a national skills assessment centre, was constructed in a record three years; from March 23, 2022, and completed on February 21, 2025. The building was fully funded by the Government of Uganda at a cost of sh25.6b, speaking to government efforts on eliminating wasteful expenditure.

Oyesigye said the facility will save the country sh189.8m annually in rental costs.

"Previously, we rented premises in Ntinda and that meant costs on the taxpayers. I want to tell the country that we will be saving all these resources since we now have a place we call home," he said.

The complex features a modern auditorium that can hold hundreds of people and two mega fully equipped boardrooms, several mini meeting rooms and two dedicated innovation and incubation hubs.

The building comprises an eight-storey main block alongside a three-storey short tower, jointly offering a total floor area of over 6,000 square metres and adequate space to accommodate the growing UVTAB staff and evolving institutional needs.

The complex has ample parking space with a capacity of up to 60 vehicles for staff and visitors.

The facility has been fitted with unique facilities, such as a mother's creche for breastfeeding staff on the ground floor, while the sixth floor will host wellness facilities including a gym for staff.

The complex is also fitted with ICT innovations, positioning it as a high-performance facility with integrated systems such as access control, lighting, reliable water and security systems, lifts, a standby generator, firefighting infrastructure, power backups and air-conditioning.

The building is also fitted with a public address system across all the floors to ensure safety, efficiency and uninterrupted operations.

Following the completion of the complex, UVTAB will turn its attention on the construction of the planned printery to be established at Namanve Industrial Park.

The facility in Namanve will also have a warehouse to store assessment materials.

The First Lady asked Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda, the education and sports ministry permanent secretary, to do a feasibility study of this proposed facility at Namanve and determine how it can be constructed in a phased manner.