

BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

Special needs learners register slight improvement

KAMPALA. The National Examination Board (Uneb) has registered a slight improvement in the performance for learners with special needs in the 2025 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE).

Results shared by the Uneb Executive Director, Mr Dan Odongo, yesterday, show that of the total 3,636 learners with special needs who were registered to sit for the exams, 3,170 passed.

Mr Odongo said that 194 candidates passed in Division One, 1,761 in Division Two, 779 in Division Three, while 436 were placed in Division Four.

However, 431 candidates were ungraded, and 35 did not turn up for the examinations.

Female candidates made up 48.3 percent of the total number of learners, while males accounted for 51.7 percent.

The special needs learners include the blind, deaf, physically impaired, and learners with dyslexia.

He added that there was an increase in the number of special needs learners registered for the exams compared to the 2024 cycle.

A total of 3,328 special needs learners sat the Primary Leaving Examinations in 2024, representing a 9.3 percent rise.

The increase was attributed to improved awareness efforts by Uneb and the Department of Special Needs under the Ministry of Education and Sports.

The Minister of Education and Sports, Ms Janet Kataha Museveni, while releasing the 2025 PLE results yesterday, attributed the improvement to the right learning environment provided to

learners with special needs.

"I am pleased that our children with various forms of special educational needs have been in school and were able to sit for PLE. As can be seen from the statistics that Uneb has provided, when the right environment is provided, these children perform as well as those without disabilities," Ms Museveni said.

She added: "Therefore, this shows that the government's policy on inclusive and equitable education is bearing good fruit."

However, the highest number of failures among learners with special needs came from those registered under the "others" category.

According to Uneb, this category in-

cludes learners with health conditions such as asthma, epilepsy, and sickle cell anaemia.

Out of the 1,361 learners in this category who sat for the examinations, 284 failed, accounting for the highest number of ungraded learners among candidates with special needs.

The programme officer at the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU), Ms Diana Seera, said an increase in the enrolment of learners with special needs is a result of increased awareness.

However, she stressed that the gap still remains in active participation, noting that as numbers increase, teachers don't have the capacity to handle since some of the learners join mainstream schools.

"As we increase enrolment, the teachers are not yet ready to support these learners. They have not yet received training on how to support learners with disabilities in mainstream schools," Ms Seera said.

She added that limited learning devices remain a challenge in some schools where there are not enough compared to the number of learners.

"You may get to a school where they have 20 blind learners, but we have one braille machine that they are all sharing. And unfortunately, in most of these schools, you find that the blind teacher is teaching the blind learner, and the blind teacher has no access to braille textbooks," Ms Seera said.