

By Juliet Kasirye

The Uganda National Association of the Blind (UNAB) has expressed concern over the declining performance of visually impaired students at all levels, saying Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) is still using standard English Braille, an outdated format, to set national exams.

With the innovations and developments in ICT, the executive director of UNAB, Dennis Tumwebaze, said, countries have shifted from using the standard English Braille to unified English Braille because it has a lot of advantages, including compatibility with the current software, such as computers and gadgets.

"The standard English Braille had limitations. Blind learners could not study science subjects, including mathematics, because they lacked signs and contractions.

# UNEB asked to phase out outdated standard English Braille

PHOTO BY JULIET KASIRYE

"However, many schools have changed from teaching learners using the standard English Braille to unified English Braille. When it comes to national exams, UNEB has continued to set exams using the old Braille," Tumwebaze explained.

To enable blind students to excel during the 2026 national examinations, Tumwebaze has requested the Government, through the education ministry, to revise the format in which exams for persons with visual impairment are set.

"We request the Government to build the capacity of teachers or provide refresher courses so that teachers understand the aspects in the new Braille, which is actually compatible," disclosed Tumwebaze.

According to the 2024 Census



L-R: Brenda Khasalamwa, UNAB programmes manager and Dennis Tumwebaze, UNAB executive director

Report, in Uganda, 13.2% (about six million) Ugandans have some form of disability.

He raised the concern during the press conference about the assent to the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights (Amendment) Act, 2026,

held at the Uganda National Association of the Blind head offices in Kireka on Thursday.

On April 29, President Yoweri Museveni assented to the Copyright and Neighbouring Rights (Amendment) Act, 2026. For many years, Tumwebaze

says, persons with visual impairments in Uganda have faced significant barriers in accessing books and printed materials, This law directly addresses this gap by aligning Uganda's legal framework with the Marrakesh Treaty, an international agreement that promotes access to published works for persons with print disabilities.

"The Act allows production of materials in braille, audio, large print and digital formats. Besides that, it also allows cross-border sharing of accessible materials and a balance between copyright protection and access rights," Tumwebaze stated.

According to the Braille programmes officer at UNAB, Brenda Khasalamwa, the standard English Braille has

limitations.

Speaking to *New Vision* on Monday, the public relations officer of Uganda National Examination Board, Jennifer Kalule Musamba, said it is not UNEB that determines the version of braille to be used in schools.

"It is an issue of policy transition and currently, most schools have not yet embraced the new unified English Braille. As UNEB, we are ready for the transition version. We have gone ahead to train our staff and we have the equipment," explained Kalule.

However, Kalule noted: "UNEB cannot start assessing learners using the New Unified English Braille version when teachers are teaching using the old version of standard English Braille."