

40% of secondary schools not ready for digital learning – report

BY JANE NAFULA

KAMPALA. A report on digital readiness conducted among 3,257 secondary schools across the country shows that 1,277 of them don't have the foundational infrastructure to support digital learning.

"Up to 39 percent of the schools are unplugged, meaning they do not have the foundational infrastructure to support digital learning. They do not have electricity, internet, and the devices," Ms Janet Akao, an education officer at Unicef Uganda, said during the release of the study findings in Kampala on Thursday last week.

The assessment, conducted between December 2025 and March 2026, was to establish the status of ICT infrastructure in secondary schools, their capacity, gaps, and the available support for

digital education.

The study was conducted under the Leaders in Teaching Uganda Programme with support from United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Association of Secondary School Headteachers.

The study reveals a higher proportion of unplugged schools are in rural areas, particularly in Northern and Eastern Uganda. Of the 1,277 unplugged schools, 517 (34 percent) are government-aided, 491 (47 percent) private community schools, while 187 (36 percent) are private faith-based schools.

The study also revealed that about 1,372 secondary schools assessed (41 percent), were semi-connected. That means they have electricity and some connectivity but are grappling with frequent disruptions that frustrate digital integration in the process of teaching

and learning, with only 671 (20 percent) ICT-ready and are in urban areas.

"These have reliable electricity and internet, and also have devices with a good proportion to the population of the students in the schools," Ms Akao said.

The study also found uneven supply of the infrastructure with some schools having one dusty computer in the computer room. Some schools with a population of 500 students had only 50 computers while others had 50 computers shared by more than 2,000 students.

In some schools, especially in Northern and Eastern Uganda, the device-to-student ratio stood at one device to 300 students. The report also said nearly 78 percent of the schools reported that the content was not sufficient.

The ICT-ready schools were more prevalent in urban areas of Central Uganda where access to and number of devices

were quite high.

Of the 671 ICT-ready schools, 260 are government aided, with 229 categorised under private community schools, and 132 faith-based schools.

Uganda has placed digital transformation at the centre of its national education transformation through its National Digital Agenda Strategy (DAS) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2024/25 to 2030/31 to leverage technology and improve education quality and prepare learners for an increasingly digital labour market.

The initiative strives to integrate ICT into teaching, learning, assessment and institutional management to expand educational learning and outcomes. However, infrastructural access to electricity, internet and devices in most schools remains a challenge.

Mr Joaquin Carceles, an education research specialist at UNICEF, said: "Unre-

liable power makes internet access volatile, and internet access without adequate devices limits its value for learners. Understanding them together is important for designing effective interventions."

He said the findings show that though Uganda has solid foundations to build on for its digitalisation agenda they are uneven.

"Learners across different schools have different experiences of digital learning depending on their schools' profile. One-size-fits-all approaches that disregard these differences are inefficient for ICT-ready schools or insufficient for unplugged schools, and may widen gaps across learners rather than closing them," the report states.

Ms Akao said every intervention should be informed by the existing need.