



National dialogue meeting on UPE study

John Paul II justice and peace centre (JPIIIPC), together with justice and peace commissions in North and North East Uganda are implementing a project of monitoring service delivery in the education sector specifically UPE (Universal Primary Education).

In relation to the mentioned project, a study entitled “A rapid assessment of the quality of Universal Primary Education in North and Eastern Uganda” was conducted in 2012 and covered in the districts of Soroti, Lira, Moroto and Gulu. The study established the quality of UPE in Northern Uganda based on the obligations of the government and parents in ensuring basic quality education for all children of school going age.

To this effect, JPIIIPC organised a dialogue meeting on 16th July 2013 at St. Augustine’s institute, Nsambya for partners at local and national level to share the findings of the report.

FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- ❖ Canon Joyce Niima (UJCC) noted that UPE is sometimes carried out as a political tool rather than an academic tool. Canon Joyce advised the group to always look at the history and the present situation of education so as to plan for the bright future.
- ❖ The report showed that UPE is short of increasing access, equity and quality despite the fact that it has been here for 15 years.
- ❖ Regarding UPE as free is a misconception and a cause for various setbacks. Though some parents are contributing to their children’s education, the majority are neglecting their duties as they perceive UPE as free.
- ❖ Generally, performance was rated as either poor or fair, except for VH public school in Lira. Urban schools performed better.
- ❖ Though Parents are not satisfied with their children’s school work, they still have negative attitude and lack commitment to their children’s education. Some still keep children home for field work during planting and harvesting seasons.
- ❖ Quality of UPE has been affected by inadequate and mismanagement of funds
- ❖ Inadequate infrastructure hinders the quality of UPE.
- ❖ Teachers paid by parents and those that have accommodation in schools are more committed. In some schools, teachers come late and are often absent due to the long distances between their homes and the schools.
- ❖ Some teachers believe that corporal punishment will solve poor performance among students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government

- ❖ Clarify on the roles of parents to dismantle the myth “free education”
- ❖ Ensure that UPE funds are consistent, regular and on time. Ensure that priority is given to the neediest schools.

- ❖ Strengthen monitoring and auditing structures in UPE schools
- ❖ Reconsider teachers, remuneration and introduce incentives for teachers in remote areas
- ❖ Make primary education compulsory
- ❖ Focus on national language for instruction all through primary school
- ❖ Ensure that local language is taught alongside other subjects
- ❖ Ensure special support for marginalised regions such as Karamoja

To the parents

- ❖ Fulfil their obligations towards the education of their children.
- ❖ Participate in the school PTA and management meetings.
- ❖ Support awareness campaigns directed at explaining to fellow parents the need and importance of education.

To the teachers & head teachers

- ❖ Familiarise themselves with their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the guidelines by MESA
- ❖ Set up internal monitoring structures on the amount of fund received and the expenditure
- ❖ Introduce structures to monitor the attendance and punctuality of staff

To the NGOs

- ❖ Organise awareness raising campaigns on the importance of education and responsibilities of all the partners
- ❖ Organise awareness raising campaigns on the importance of girl child education
- ❖ Coordinate, network and link up with others for effective advocacy to improve the standards of primary education in Uganda
- ❖ Consult school administration before constructing facilities so that there is coordinated work.

Suggestions from the meeting

- ❖ The meeting agreed that counselling and guidance is an important aspect in helping children stay in school thus should be included in the report as a recommendation.
- ❖ The meeting suggested that NGOs should always consult schools before constructing facilities.
- ❖ The meeting also suggested that recommendations should be made to H.E the President of Uganda since he has an upper hand in most decisions made.

Dr. Nzisadira Desire, the country director AGEH appreciated all those that came and informed the meeting that the dialogue was a kick start of a longer process. He informed the meeting that the final report will soon be released.