

WORLD LITERACY DAY

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Karimojong adult literacy education graduates receive a public address system at Lorengedwat, Nakapiripirit district in 2012. Today is World Literacy Day

Uganda marks World Literacy Day

Today is World Literacy Day. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is championing the celebrations under the theme: "Literacy and Skills Development".

The national celebrations will be held at Bwama sub-county headquarters in Mpigi district.

New campaign

An advocacy campaign for a new programme called Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation will also be launched to replace the old adult education programme.

Celebrants will wear T-shirts and caps with the new programme printed at the back to let people know about the phasing out of the old programme and introduction of the new programme, which experts say is more practical and engaging.

Everest Tumwesigye, a commissioner in the gender ministry, says the Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FAL) has not been

Objectives of FAL programme

- Reduce adult illiteracy rate from 35% to 18% by 2012;
- Equip learners with essential life skills for personal and community development;
- Build the capacity of the community for income generation and self-reliance;
- Enable beneficiaries and their families to attain improved living conditions and a better quality of life;
- To provide equitable and adequate access to literacy education to youth and adult women and men;
- Build a culture of lifelong learning among adult learners; and
- Empower marginalised and vulnerable groups in society to participate fully as partners in development.

active in the rural areas as it was in 1997 and 2010.

How literacy campaign started

The Government first launched a mass literacy campaign in 1964. This campaign was available in 22 languages, with a primary reader, and a text for further reading, available in each language. In 1966, under the guidance of the United Nations Educational,

Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the notion of functional literacy was first introduced to these programmes.

However, this change did not make a significant impression, since the necessary adaptations could not easily be grafted onto existing materials published in 1964. By the time former president Idi Amin's government was overthrown in 1979, Ugandan literacy programmes had

completely lost steam and there was very little government provision for adult education. This was to remain the case until the early 1990s.

In 1992, the Government launched the Integrated Non-formal Basic Education Pilot Project (INFOBEPP). This new initiative adopted the principles of functional literacy which UNESCO had attempted to install in 1966 and so literacy programmes were designed to link people's education to their everyday lives and their needs.

Early evaluations of this programme showed positive signs of enthusiasm from participants, with many classes beginning outside of the pilot area as a result of intense demand. In 1997 this pilot programme developed into the government's official Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) programme, which was to be implemented across the country.

Functional Adult Literacy

The Functional Adult Literacy programme, delivered by the Government with assistance from

various NGOs, was designed to be a literacy programme that would focus on linking literacy to people's livelihoods and needs.

The programme incorporates a great deal of skill-specific training, in addition to literacy and numeracy, and attempts to link the two to show learners how literacy is important and can be used for personal development in their everyday lives.

The target group for the programme is anyone over the age of 15, who had missed the opportunity of formal education during childhood. A large range of people are targeted, including men and women, older people and youths, and specific groups of marginalised people such as prison inmates, those who are disabled and ethnic minorities.

A significant aspect of the programme is the availability of micro-loans, to support the development and continuation of income generating activities after graduation from the literacy programme.

Adapted from UNESCO

By Norah Mutesi

With Uganda's illiteracy levels at 28% as per the 2014 population census, it was only right that a new programme be launched to scale down the grim statistics.

Everest Tumwesigye, the commissioner in charge of gender at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, says the Functional Adult Literacy programme has not been functional in the rural areas as it was between 1997 and 2010.

Tumwesigye says this is because of limited government funding.

He says in certain places, the programme failed because the beneficiaries thought the Government would provide everything to them.

Tumwesigye also says the programme failed because of the removal of the Graduated Tax and the increased number of districts, which compete for funds.

"The functional adult programme ceased to be a priority to the Government's investment plan since the 2014/2015 financial year," says Tumwesigye.

He says the programme used to be vibrant because the Government would get funding from the Poverty Action Fund to fund the adult education programme. He says such programmes are no longer in place.

Cesar Kyebakola, the chairman of the Adult Education Association, says the programme failed because illiterate people, especially men, feared to join classes, saying it embarrassed them and affected their self-esteem.

"In the classes, you would find that 70% of the learners were women and 30% men," Kyebakola says.

He says the programme faced several challenges such as incompetent and uncommitted facilitators, who were mostly volunteers from communities.

New programme

Tumwesigye says a new programme — Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation — is set to replace the old adult education programme.

He says the new programme is more hands-on, and motivates low household income-earners to save money.

According to Tumwesigye, the programme is being tested in four districts of Nwoya, Mpigi, Iganga and Namayingo, where it started in 2015.

He says the programme emphasises livelihood skills training and business development, encourages the use of local languages, development of village savings and loan associations, and encourages the use of the cheapest means of training.

He says a few people are trained and these are expected to train others.

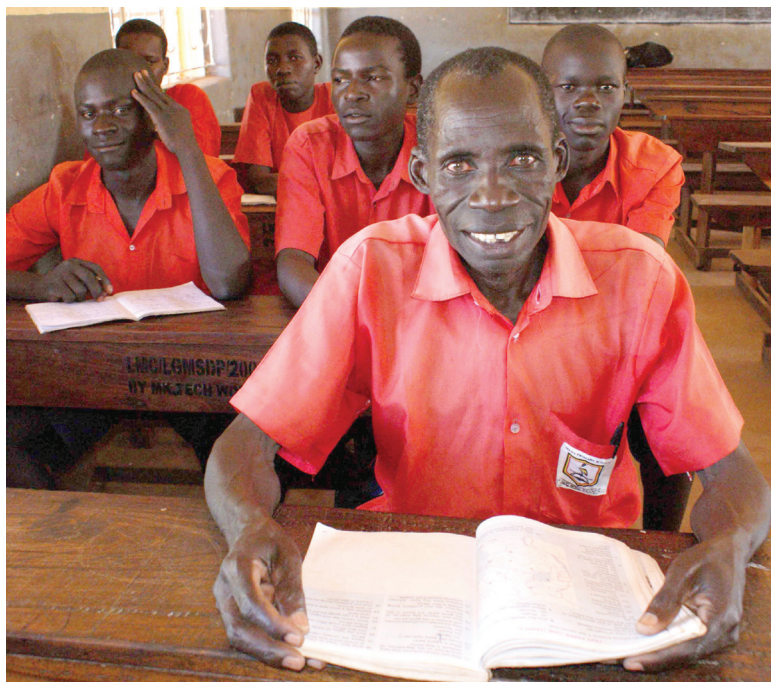
"If a module is on food and nutrition, it will be trained once and for all," says Tumwesigye.

He also says the programme is carried out at district and sub-county levels, so people will not need to walk long distances to



Demonstrators camp outside Parliament in Kampala as they advocate for adult literacy. Karamoja has the highest illiteracy levels

Govt to start new adult literacy programme



Michael Johnson Tyan, 63, a resident of Akia in Lira district in class. He had stopped in P5 in 1969, but returned to school

reach training grounds as it was with the old programme.

About the programme

The programme emphasises integration and linkages of development programmes. A number of skills will be taught, from which communities will benefit for a life-time.

"Once one is taught a skill, it is done once and for all. You do not have to repeatedly teach the same thing as it was for the theoretical adult education," Tumwesigye says.

Tumwesigye says the beneficiaries are required to contribute the materials to be used in the new programme. He says if, for instance, one is trained on how to run a successful business, they should buy a book in which to record the profits and expenditures of the business.

Unlike in the old programme, where the instructors did not receive any incentive and offered voluntary services, the facilitators of the integrated community learning

for wealth creation are to receive incentives for the services they offer to the community.

The north-eastern region of Uganda has the highest illiteracy levels, mainly Karamoja.

Tumwesigye says the country is likely to see illiteracy levels rising due to high school dropouts and closure of adult education centres in rural areas.

"We will only see those figures reducing if people learn to appreciate the free education provided by the Government. You cannot yield good returns from a programme whose beneficiaries expect to be given everything," Tumwesigye says.

He says people must appreciate that literacy is a means to enhance individual, community and national development if Vision 2040 is to be achieved.

Tumwesigye calls for the involvement of the Government, district and sub-county agencies if the new programme is to be sustained.



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY:
THEME: "Literacy and skills development"**



Education for Everyone. Worldwide. Lifelong.



H. E. YOWERI KAGUTA MUSEVENI
President of the Republic of Uganda



HON. JANAT B. MUKWAYA (HAJAT)
Minister of Gender, Labour & Social Development



HON. PEACE MUTUZO
Minister of State for Gender and Culture



PIUS BIGIRIMANA
Permanent Secretary Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development

Uganda marks Literacy Day

Each year September 8th marks UNESCO's International Literacy day, raising awareness globally on the issues surrounding adult and child literacy. First held in 1966 and now part of the UN's sustainable development goals program adopted in 2015, International Literacy day highlights the changes and improvements being made worldwide in literacy development.

International Literacy Day is a day to remind leaders, policy makers and the general public of the current status of adult literacy and learning.

In 2015 the UN adopted its Sustainable Development Goals to mobilize efforts to eradicate poverty and inequalities across the world, of which improving literacy rates is an integral element.

National Theme

The theme for this year is: **"Literacy and skills development"**.

The Government of Uganda believes that skilling the population is the way to go in combating the soaring high unemployment levels especially amongst the youth.

The theme provokes policy makers, practitioners, researchers and all stakeholders to dialogue on the contribution of skilling the people as a bridge to the literacy skills gap and inequalities.

The theme underscores the importance of skilling as a key tool in closing the literacy skills gaps and reducing inequalities as well as mechanisms in achieving human capital development.

Literacy is a priority area linked to SDG no.4 which is about ensuring inclusive and quality education for all young and old by 2030, 4.6-with special focus on the youth and adults. The theme further raises awareness



Community empowerment group literacy session in Namayingo district

on the link between literacy attainment and attainment of socio-economic growth. Unless all people acquire literacy skills and livelihood/vocational and technical skills, unemployment will persist and poverty will remain one of the challenges for Ugandans.

Importance of Literacy

There is evidence that a literate and skilled population is more productive and empowered to live meaningful lives thus enjoying improved livelihoods. Literacy enables people to make informed decisions and choices by equipping them with knowledge and skills, accessing appropriate information, empowerment of individuals, promotion of health, enhancement of production skills and participation in children's education.

Skills development is a primary means of enabling young people to make a smooth transition to work. A comprehensive approach is

required to integrate young women and men in the labour market, including relevant and quality skills training, labour market information, career guidance and employment services, recognition of prior learning, incorporating entrepreneurship with training and effective skills forecasting. Improved basic education and core work skills are important to enable youth to engage in lifelong learning as well as transition to the labour market.

Skills development can be viewed from a life-cycle perspective of building, maintaining and improving competencies and skills. A holistic approach to skills development encompasses the following features: access to good basic and non formal education; development of cognitive and core skills, including literacy, numeracy, communication, problem-solving and learning ability; and, availability of continuous training opportunities targeting

adult and older workers.

Government efforts

The government of Uganda through the ministry of gender labour and social development has embarked on different initiatives aimed at equipping youth and adults with the necessary literacy and livelihood/vocational skills. These include; Integrated Community Learning for Wealth Creation (ICOLEW) programme on pilot basis in 4 districts of Namayingo, Iganga, Mpigi and Nwoya, Youth Livelihood Programme and Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme both covering the whole country and Green Jobs Programme specifically targeting the youth. The Songai Model is another programme aimed at equipping the population with modern organic farming skills. Whereas the Jua Kali Programme is aimed at skilling and supporting the youth

groups with equipment mainly in urban areas. In all the above mentioned programmes, the government prioritises literacy as the core foundation for skills attainment and use.

Skills development is a primary means of enabling young people to make a smooth transition to work and the government of Uganda is cognizant of this fact. The above enumerated programmes and others are aimed at empowering young men and women in the labour market with relevant and quality skills training to enable them create jobs or compete favourably in the job market.

Improved non formal education and core work skills are important to enable youth to engage in lifelong learning as well as transition to labour market.

New intervention

The ministry with technical and financial support from DVV International designed and is implementing the Integrated

Community Learning for Wealth Creation (ICOLEW) programme on pilot basis in 4 districts of Namayingo, Iganga, Mpigi and Nwoya. This programme is intended to address the persistent challenges of FAL programme as well as the current needs of non literate population.

The programme is premised on five components namely; a) Literacy and numeracy enhancement; b) Promotion of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA); c) Livelihood Skills Training and Development; d) Business Skills Training and Development; and e) Community Development. All these will be delivered under Community Learning Center (CLC) model, which is a one stop center for adult education service delivery optimization.

Challenges

The ministry has implemented the FAL programme since 1992 across the entire country which has registered successes but also been hampered by different challenges as enumerated below;

Appeal

a) Consider, include and fund adult education under the public investment plan as a matter of priority in order to address the plight of the 10 million non literate Ugandans;

b) District Local Governments to urgently fill up vacant post of Community Development Officers and re-tool them for optimal adult education service delivery in the country

c) Development partners, civil society and the private sector to support adult education as a vehicle to attainment of vision 2040 and the sustainable development agenda 2030.