

YOUR PLATFORM

We should unite to improve free primary education

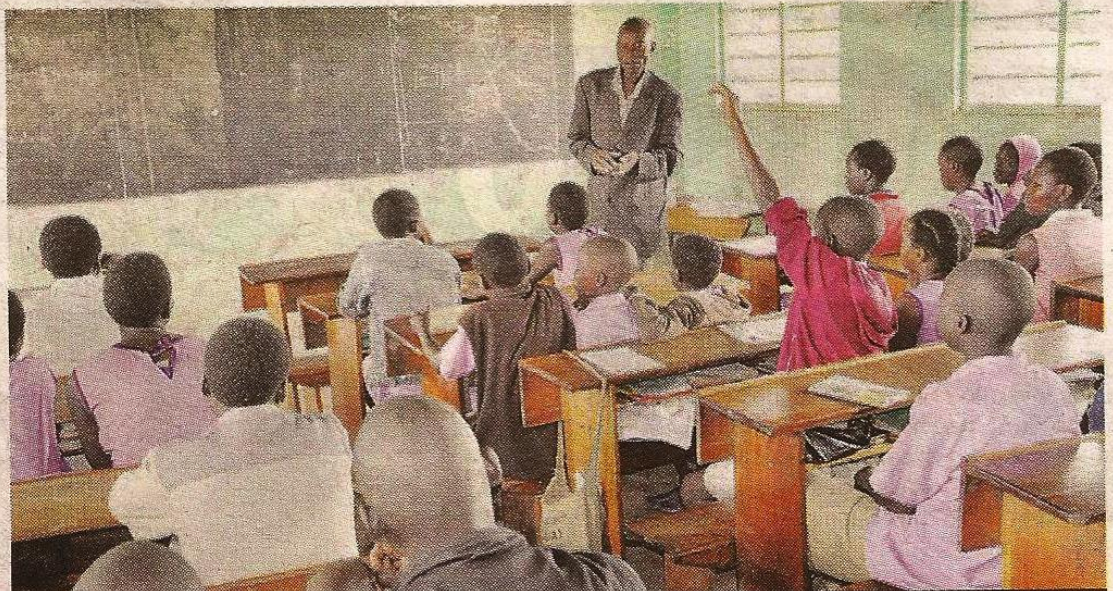
Uganda, just like many other countries in the world, is a signatory to numerous international agreements and treaties, specifically related to enhancing the quality of education.

Universal Primary Education (UPE) is one of the Government's main programmes aimed at poverty reduction and enhancing holistic human development.

Free primary education was introduced in January 1997, following a political commitment by President Yoweri Museveni that the Government would meet the cost of primary education of four children per family.

It should, however, be noted that the implementation of UPE in Uganda, and in particular the north and north-eastern Uganda, faces a big challenge.

The programme is far from realising its core objectives of increasing access, equity and quality of primary education as evidenced in a rapid case study conducted in March 2012 by John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre in the districts of Gulu, Lira, Soroti and Moroto.



For UPE to achieve its goals all stakeholders must play their role

Almost all the 12 schools that were selected for the study all reported problems associated with infrastructure, funding, staff welfare and instructional materials, necessary for attaining quality basic education.

Worst of all, some parents do not understand the UPE programme is not entirely as free as it is painted.

Since primary education is a basic need for the whole population, it is necessary to address these challenges.

The Government should play a leading role in raising awareness and



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disseminating information to the population about its roles and responsibilities with regard to UPE.

Parents too should

fulfil their obligations of providing food, uniforms and other scholastic materials. The organisations involved in the education sector should also equally collaborate with and ensure that support is channelled to those who need it most.

If nothing is done, this imbalance will gradually affect the entire education system, yet education is necessary for success.

The writer is the advocacy programmes manager, John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre