

Reopening of Education Institutions

In the past weeks and even months, I have seen many of you, my friends and children, asking me why we don't reopen schools. Therefore, today, I thought that perhaps it is time we discussed this subject instead of keeping silent about it.

The first question I would like to ask you is: Why do you think Government has chosen to keep schools closed? The teachers in the government schools continue to earn their salaries even as schools remain closed, so surely the government is not benefiting from school closure across the country. Yes, of course, teachers in private schools have suffered because their salaries are dependent on the learners' school fees; and as a result, private schools have suffered more in this period.

However, when you think about this whole time of lockdowns and especially school closures, has it occurred to you that the only reason Government has chosen to let schools remain closed could be simply to ensure that the lives of children remain safe from the danger that the COVID-19 Pandemic brings to human life or to a family?

Sometimes, I see the very rude insinuations you send to me in our dialogue, like, "just open schools" etc. Well, when you put a lot of thinking in this puzzle, if it is even a puzzle at all, you can see that opening schools is the easiest thing to do. After all, that is what many of you seem to really want and I can also understand your thinking. So, why then have we kept schools closed?

Let me attempt to give you our concerns and please believe me when I say that we have put a lot of time, thinking and planning in this one activity. As you know, the 15 million young school population hold the future of our country in their hands. If any-

thing were to go wrong with them, God forbid, Uganda would be shattered. If they, on the other hand, infect their parents, as most of them are day scholars, they would become orphans - just like HIV/AIDS did to many of the families. We were left with many child-headed families in Uganda at that time.

Therefore, these are some of the considerations we have been battling with. At the end of the day, we choose to be patient and continue to vaccinate our teachers, learners above 18 years of age and the vulnerable population so that we can be confident enough that we have given some protection to a critical mass of our population. These can provide a safety net to all our people as much as possible.

Therefore, if you would have a little faith in your government and trust that it cares about your well-being, you would know that Government has not left schools closed to punish you, but rather, to protect you from harm.

We are confident that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who is our God will bless the education sector in this unprecedented season. We have seen His miraculous blessing upon the PLE, UCE and UACE results of the 2020 academic year. Genesis chapter 26 testifies to the fact that with God no situation is insurmountable. Isaac sowed in a year of famine, but he reaped a hundredfold. I am confident that in this 'famine' our children's education will still flourish.

Therefore, as we pray and also vaccinate all those that can be vaccinated, I believe that we will go through this difficult season, for I am certain that God is on our side. Like all difficult seasons we will get some scars, but we shall be victorious at the end of it all.

Maama Janet K. Museveni