



The Republic of Uganda

**by First Lady, Hon. Janet K. Museveni,
Minister of Education and Sports**

**On the Occasion of Release of the Calendar for Re-
Opening of Schools**

At KOLOLO INDEPENDENCE GROUNDS

Wednesday, 15th December 2021

Honorable Ministers present,
Distinguished Guests,
Members of the Media fraternity,
Ladies and gentlemen.

Good afternoon to you all.

1. I thank you all who have joined us today as the Ministry responsible for Education and Sports, at this occasion when we are letting the country know when our learners in Basic and Secondary Education levels shall be reporting back to School.
2. As most of you know, since the first COVID-19 national lockdown of March 2020, over fifteen million learners have had their in-person attendance of School for learning interrupted in one way or another.
3. During the closure of institutions of learning, we did open for some cohorts of learners to return to school in a phased manner:

all in compliance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to combat the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

4. By the time the second COVID-19 national lockdown was pronounced by His Excellency the President on the 06th of June 2020, we had re-opened for some classes or cohorts of learners to return to Schools. However, most of our learners who happen to fall in the lower primary level of Primary One to Primary Three have never been to school since March 2020.
5. As such, learners in tertiary institutions as well as Basic Education levels from Primary Four up to Senior Six have had time to return to school in a phased manner. Admittedly, the time they were at school was shorter than the normal term and semesters.

6. As they returned home, the continuity of learning has been implemented through distribution of home-study materials, broadcast of lessons through radio and Television. For Higher Education, open distance and e-learning were strongly advised and promoted.
7. Nonetheless, we have had the lower levels such as Pre-Primary and Lower Primary Classes have not returned to school since March 2020. In addition, learners in Senior One and Senior Two have only had very little time to return to school for in-person classes even when opportunities for brief re-opening came.
8. On the other hand, since mid-August 2021, medical and health training institutions have been opened following the second COVID-19 national lockdown. And with effect from 01st November 2021, all tertiary institutions were allowed to re-open in a phased manner.

9. We do thank God that the status of the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to improve in the country since the measures for the second COVID-19 lockdown were lifted. The new cases of COVID-19 have remained low and so are hospital admissions of severe cases and fatalities.

COVID-19 Vaccination:

10. With the guidance of His Excellency the President, the Ministry of Health ramped up the main intervention of COVID-19 vaccination. The priority groups for vaccination included health workers, security personnel, teachers, the elderly, and persons with pre-existing medical conditions.

11. As a Sector together with the support of various arms of governments and other stakeholders, we have managed to mobilize our teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and learners who are aged 18 years and above in tertiary institutions to go for vaccination.

12. As we speak, at least 70 percent of teaching staff out of an estimated five-hundred and fifty thousand teaching staff have received at least one COVID-19 vaccination jab whereas more than 28 percent are fully vaccinated by receiving two shots.
13. Now that the country has obtained sufficient stocks of COVID-19 vaccines and earmarked more locations to carry out vaccination, we continue to urge all staff and learners aged 18 years and above in our Education Institutions at all levels to go and take their vaccination shots.
14. As previously communicated by His Excellency the President and emphasized at various times by the Ministry of Health, all staff that are not vaccinated should not be allowed back at campuses of Education institutions of learning.

The Role of the Head of Institution in Enforcing COVID-19 SOPs:

15. As the Ministry of Education and Sports, we have earmarked the Head of the Education Institution of learning – this could be the Head teacher, the principal, or Vice Chancellor, as the official who shall be held accountable for enforcing all COVID-19 SOPs in the Institution.
16. Right now, the first SOP that Heads of Institutions must enforce is that all staff unvaccinated must not be allowed in the premises of the Institution.
17. For staff in government institutions and receiving a salary from public funds, we cannot allow you to remain away from your job simply because you do not want to be vaccinated while at the same time you continue to receive a salary. At some point, staff must decide whether they want to keep their job or stay unvaccinated but not both.

18. And I want us to know that COVID-19 has not yet gone away from us. If COVID-19 is still with us, we must all be willing to listen to acceptable science and help each other protect one another from this disease.

Guidelines for Re-Opening of Schools:

19. As you are aware, all the levels of Education Institutions that have so far re-opened have done so under a set of Guidelines put together through a consultative process amongst the stakeholder Education institutions, the Ministry of Health, the various levels of Local Government, and the owners of these Education institutions.

20. There was a set of Guidelines that governed the re-opening of tertiary institutions. We also have completed the development of the set of Guidelines to inform the re-opening of the Basic and Secondary levels of the Education system.

21. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Sports shall be communicating these Guidelines to all concerned Education institutions through the formal channels and the media. These Guidelines address a wide range of issues that include COVID-19 SOPs.
22. Even though His Excellency the President announced full re-opening of the economy come January 2022, basic COVID-19 SOPs remain a necessity. Within our Education Institutions that are going to fully re-open, it is critical that vaccination of eligible age-groups and persons (that is staff and learners above the age of 18 years), consistent proper wearing of face masks, and regular washing of hands with soap or alcohol-based sanitizers are emphasized.
23. It is the responsibility of the Head of the Education Institution of learning to ensure that these COVID-19 SOPs amongst the School re-opening Guidelines are fully complied with.

Responsibility of Parents and Guardians:

24. Much as there is a role that the Education Institutions have to play in safe re-opening of schools, they cannot do it all alone.
25. We are therefore reminding parents that you have the most key role to play in re-opening. Firstly, it is within your hands to be the first counselor to your child – encouraging them and getting them ready to go back to school in January 2022.
26. Secondly, as a parent or guardian you are expected to prepare adequate supply of face masks for your child. It is okay to prepare washable and re-usable masks and for those than can afford there are also disposable masks.

27. Thirdly, we have situations where some of the young school-going girls became pregnant. As a Ministry, we have provided guidelines to ensure that if such learners want to return to school, they can do so as and when it is safe for the affected young person to do so.

But the responsibility is with the parent to encourage their daughter to not give up.

Support to Schools in Preparation for Re-Opening:

28. Government has made various provisions and interventions as a way of preparing our Education Institutions for re-opening. In circumstances where government has not been able to do so, we have engaged other players and stakeholders to offer any kind of support in the best way they know how.

29. For public or government-aided Education institutions, we have ensured that all our staff who were on payroll continue to receive their monthly salary even when teaching was not taking place in schools.

We are aware that this fortune has not been the same for private Education Institutions. Therefore, we do expect that all vaccinated staff in government-aided Education Institutions report for duty upon re-opening.

Since July 2021, under the current Financial Year, government has availed more than Uganda Shillings One hundred and seven billion in capitation grants to its institutions at all levels: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, and Special Needs Education Institutions. The above funds are already on the Bank Accounts of the beneficiary Education Institutions.

30. These funds are available to Schools to purchase basic amenities for observance of SOPs. For government-aided Primary and Secondary Schools, at least Uganda Shillings Sixty-two billion of the capitation grants has been earmarked for restoration of these schools by way of minor repairs and face-lifting.

31. The Ministry of Education and Sports shall closely coordinate this process together with the Ministry of Local Government and the Chief Administrative Officers (or Local Government Accounting Officers as applicable).
32. We also do know that there are some schools that may not be in position to receive a facelift because they are not plastered, or the existing structures need considerable amount of repair before face-lifting. We are working with Local Governments to see to those decisions.
33. We have agreed with the Ministry of Local Government that such schools shall be identified, and the School Facilities Grant of Financial Year 2022/2023 shall be prioritized by the respective Local Governments to improving such structures so that they can also receive a facelift once the major repairs have been undertaken.

34. It is my prayer and plea; on my own behalf and that of the entire Ministry of Education and Sports fraternity, that once the schools start the exercise of minor repairs and face-lifting, all leaders and the media fraternity jump on board to ensure that we monitor that the funds are doing that for which they are supposed to be used.
35. We are counting on the support of all Members of Parliament to be our eyes and ears because every Primary and Secondary School falls within a given Constituency.
36. Now, we also do understand that there are fifty-one Schools which were devastated by natural disasters. Some schools are going to be provided with temporary facilities to enable continuity of learning upon re-opening. However, some schools simply need permanent relocation and complete construction of new infrastructure.

37. Such arrangements for permanent solutions are out-of-scope for re-opening interventions by January 2022. Instead, we shall work with other Sectors of government to identify funds to and suitable places to relocate these Schools. In the meantime, parents are encouraged to take learners from these affected Schools to the nearest affordable School of their choice.

Support to Private Education Institutions:

38. As government and as a Sector, we do recognize and appreciate the invaluable contribution that private Education institutions contribute to the Education system. And we are aware of the unique burden that COVID-19 has imposed on these institutions. We have also been hearing and seeing some of the effects that these institutions suffered.

39. We have listened to the proposals that some have been making as to how they think government could assist these private Education institutions.
40. Much as government would have tried to help as many as have been affected by COVID-19; both individuals and institutions, we need to accept that that may not be always possible. However, where government may not offer direct support, we may extend indirect assistance.
41. As of today, government has not provided a specific financial resource exclusively to private education institutions the way that some have been requesting. However, we do encourage the private education institutions to take advantage of the opportunities availed through the other functions of government and the private Sector at large. Some of these include:

42. **Bank of Uganda:** - issued an extension of all COVID-19 relief measures to the Education and hospitality Sectors for one more year starting September 2021.
43. **UMEME:** - has agreed to give schools a grace period of twelve months which to pay any outstanding electricity bills.
44. **National Water and Sewerage Cooperation:** - is looking into waiving the non-V.A.T. fees for outstanding bills for Schools since March 2020 to time of re-opening.

In addition, they are looking at the possibility of discounting the cost of a jerry can of water to perhaps as low as Uganda Shillings Twenty-five only at public water points that serve Schools. Lastly, they have told us that they shall look into the possibility of connecting schools to the national water grid at no cost as long as the school is within the coverage area.

45. **Uganda Revenue Authority:** - informed us that they did waive all tax penalties and arrears up to June 2020 for all businesses (of which private Education institutions are a part of this category).

Also, U.R.A. mentioned that schools which have credit liabilities may approach the Agency and negotiate flexible repayments. U.R.A. has also waived the twelve percent excise duty on internet data for all Education and Health Institutions.

46. **Financial Institutions:** - we have been engaging with the private financial institutions too. And we have been made aware that some relief measures for schools have already been put in place. For example, Stanbic Bank has informed us that they have fully waived all accrued interest on loans to schools for the year 2021. They have also waived all penalties to schools and supporting businesses.

47. Lastly, Banks are willing to lend to private schools interventional working capital at reduced rates.

48. So, the responsibility now lies in the courts of private education institutions to approach the above institutions and agencies to receive more information on what packages they have on offer to schools.

But most of these institutions do require that private schools have good financial records. For example, the relief measures that U.R.A. is extending do require that private schools regularly file their returns with the tax body.

Preparation of Teachers:

49. We have so far trained eight hundred teachers (700 Primary school teachers and 100 Secondary school teachers) as national trainers to be able to train frontline teachers in Schools on use of the abridged Curriculum and psycho-social support to be given to

learners and teachers upon return to School. This training is for all teachers in private and public schools.

50. We are calling upon all Headteachers to call back all teachers at least two weeks prior to the reporting date of learners. In these two weeks, the teachers should plan and prepare how to receive learners back to school and enforcement of SOPs and preparation of your schemes of work to deliver learning in the classroom.

51. By 01st February 2021, we do ask that each District; through its respective Chief Administrative Officer, provides the Ministry of Education and Sports a report on the status of the number of teachers that have reported back vis-à-vis the expected for duty in each school (both public and private).

Crowding of the Transporting System:

52. Most of you did witness the crowding that unfolded in our bus parks and taxi parks following the closure of schools in June 2021.

This problem was mostly around Kampala and its metropolitan area districts of Mpigi, Wakiso, and Mukono. Such crowding is not only a health risk during this time of COVID-19 but also a security risk.

53. Therefore, we are asking that KCCA and the CAOs of Mpigi, Wakiso, and Mukono work closely together to ensure that there is coordinated and staggered re-opening and closing of their Boarding Education Institutions to minimize clogging the road traffic system around the Kampala metropolitan area.

As a Ministry, we shall expect the said districts and KCCA to share with us their specific re-opening and closing plan by Friday, 31st December 2021 in keeping with re-opening starting from January 10th, 2022.