

Involve communities in development efforts

OPINION

Research by the Economic Policy Research Centre and the Oxford University Centre for the Study of the African Economies has found that teachers in rural UPE schools in Uganda are motivated more by a good working environment than high salaries.

The two-year study which looked at different education evaluation schemes found that where parents, community members, teachers and pupils rather than education officials are allowed to set their own priorities and implement them, improved education quality.

The study also found that when communities joined with teachers and pupils to monitor and evaluate progress there was reduced teacher and pupil absenteeism and improved performance. Apart from teachers, professionals like doctors, police officers and civil servants have consistently called for adequate resources, equipment and better working environments to improve their performance.

Unfortunately, the predominant belief in our society is that government should be responsible for everything. Community contribution to these needs is hardly encouraged and where it is successful, it is rarely replicated.

There is also a tendency for leaders to interpret community efforts to contribute to traditionally government services as an attempt to expose government failure rather than a demonstration of patriotism. The reality is that there is hardly any government that can afford to provide everything for its citizens. Governments put in place the infrastructure and enabling environments for citizens to contribute to the development of their communities.

Citizen participation for development has successfully been used in developed countries to improve communities. The season of leaving everything for the Government is long gone.