

Budaka is among the districts that registered a high number of failures in the 2025 PLE results that were released on Friday.

BY MUDANGHA KOLYANGHA

For years, the release of national examination results has followed a familiar and troubling pattern in Budaka District.

Each season brings renewed anxiety, heated public debate and, ultimately, disappointment as hundreds of candidates fail to attain the required standards.

Budaka, located in eastern Uganda, is among the districts that registered a high number of failures in the 2025 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), whose results were released on Friday.

According to district education records, the area presented 5,454 candidates. Of these, 245 passed in Division One, 1,705 in Division Two, 1,496 in Division Three and 1,123 in Division Four. However, 758 candidates were graded Division U, while 46 fell in Division X.

Beyond the stark figures on the score sheets lies a deeper story of systemic challenges that continue to undermine learning outcomes in the district.

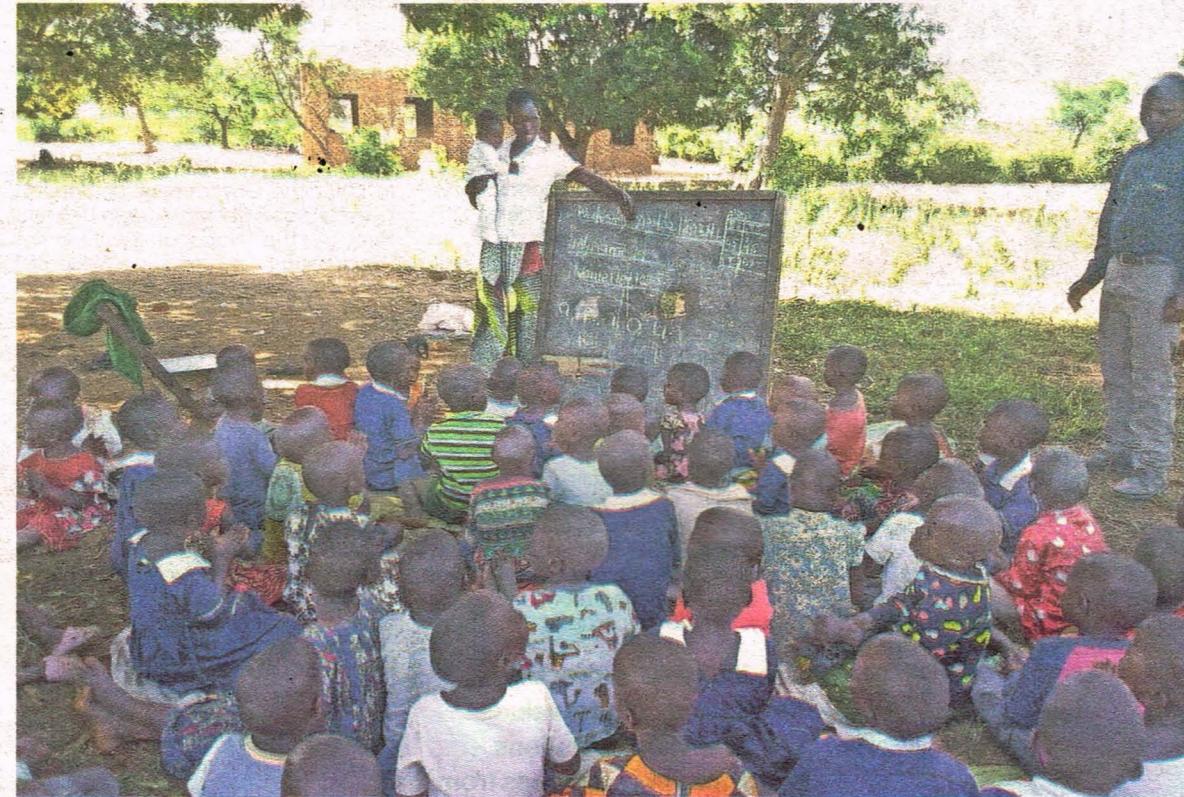
Education experts and local leaders point to limited access to quality learning resources as a key driver of Budaka's persistent poor performance. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, grapple with overcrowded classrooms, inadequate textbooks and severe teacher shortages, conditions that make effective teaching and independent learning extremely difficult.

Without basic instructional materials, even motivated learners struggle to keep pace with the syllabus, widening learning gaps long before they sit their final examinations.

Teacher shortages remain a major concern. Several schools operate with fewer teachers than required, forcing those available to manage large classes and teach multiple subjects.

"This limits individual attention for learners, especially those who fall behind at an early stage. Over time, these small gaps grow wider and eventually show up in poor examination results,"

PLE exposes systemic gaps in Budaka schools



A teacher attends to pupils under a tree at Irangholi Primary School in Budaka Town Council, Budaka District, in February 2024. PHOTO/FILE

said Mr James Mwigo, a parent in Budaka.

Irregular school attendance is another critical factor. Poverty continues to disrupt education in many households, with some learners missing classes to support their families through farming, casual labour or small-scale trading. Others temporarily drop out due to lack of scholastic materials or meals at school.

"When learners are frequently absent, continuity in learning is lost, making exam preparation extremely difficult," Mr Mwigo added.

Infrastructure challenges further compound the problem. Dilapidated classrooms, a shortage of desks and

long distances to school negatively affect learners' concentration, motivation and overall morale.

Despite the grim picture, education stakeholders in the district say there is room for optimism if targeted interventions are prioritised.

Local leaders and school administrators have called for increased teacher recruitment, establishment of school feeding programmes, improved access to learning materials and stronger community involvement in education.

Mr Michael Wairagala, a retired teacher, said early childhood education and remedial teaching for struggling learners are essential to reversing the trend.

"Budaka's high failure rates do not

reflect a lack of ability among learners. They are a result of systemic challenges that require coordinated action," he said.

The head teacher of Budaka Family Helper Project Primary School, Mr Eriya Poli, added that although there was a slight improvement in the latest PLE results, failure rates remain high.

"This is attributed to several factors, including parents failing to fulfil their responsibilities, lack of staff teachers, inadequate accommodation and the absence of school feeding," Mr Poli said. His school registered only six candidates in Division One.

Budaka Senior Education Officer Shania Mugala acknowledged the marginal improvement but expressed concern

DIVISION U FIGURES

Pallisa: 1,285

Tororo District: 1,017

Butaleja: 775

Budaka: 758

Kibuku: 741

Butebo: 743

Busia District: 382

Busia Municipality: 122

Tororo Municipality: 99

over the high number of ungraded candidates.

"The Division U figures are worrying. This has been attributed to teenage pregnancies, lack of feeding, teacher shortages, accommodation challenges and inadequate classrooms," Ms Mugala said.

She added that while the results were fairly assessed, multiple underlying factors continue to affect performance, including negative parental attitudes and limited political support for the education sector.

"Political leaders often discourage parents from contributing towards school needs such as feeding and assessment. Later, blame is shifted to teachers, yet without proper support, meaningful improvement is impossible," she said.

Ms Mugala also criticised the automatic promotion policy, adding that many learners progress without adequate assessment.

"The Education Act clearly outlines the roles of parents, teachers and administrators. Without motivating teachers and addressing basic needs like lunch and scholastic materials, better results will remain elusive," she said.