

BY SIMON PETER EMWAMU

Karamoja minority groups demand better schools

MOROTO. Leaders and residents of the Ik and Tepeth communities in Karamoja Sub-region have appealed to the government to improve access to education, healthcare and road infrastructure, saying persistent neglect is undermining efforts to eradicate illiteracy and improve livelihoods among the region's minority groups.

Speaking during an engagement with officials from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in Moroto last week, community representatives said inadequate public services continue to leave many residents excluded from national development programmes.

Pastor Jacob Lochul of the Baptist Church in the Ik community in Kaabong District said access to education remains one of the biggest challenges facing the community.

According to Pastor Lochul, the ar-

ea has only three community primary schools — Timu, Lokinene and Usake — all of which end at Primary Four.

"As a result, many children consider Primary Four as the end of their education because the nearest government schools offering classes up to Primary Seven are between 25 and 30 kilometres away," he said.

Mr Lochul added that the schools are largely staffed by unqualified teachers, a situation he said compromises the quality of education and affects learners' future prospects.

He urged the government to formally code the three community schools to enable them to receive government support, including qualified teachers and learning materials.

Mr Paul Omen, the Kaabong District councillor representing the Ik commu-



Justification.

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nity, echoed the concerns, saying long distances to school have contributed significantly to school dropout rates.

"There is no way children can walk 25 to 30 kilometres every day to access education. The only practical solution is to have these community schools coded and staffed with qualified teachers," he said.

In neighbouring Moroto District, members of the Tepeth community also raised concerns about inadequate access to basic services.

Ms Margaret Dakitar, a resident of Lowei Village in Katikekile Sub-county, said poor road networks and limited healthcare facilities continue to affect service delivery in the area.

"Our challenges go beyond education. Accessing health services remains difficult, and some government affirmative action programmes do not adequately reach our communities," she said.

Ms Dakitar added that many expectant mothers still deliver outside health facilities because of the long distances and poor transport links to health centres.

Mr Kalisto Losike, the Community Development Officer for Tapac Sub-coun-

ty, acknowledged the challenges facing remote Tepeth communities.

"In areas such as Narengenyang, there are no roads, no health centres and no schools. Access to government services remains extremely limited," he said.

Mr Losike called for increased government investment in infrastructure and social services, saying local governments often lack the resources required to address the challenges.

Responding to the concerns, Mr Yusuf Muziranza of the EOC said they would ensure that issues raised by the two minority communities are presented to the relevant government ministries for consideration.

"The commission exists to ensure that no Ugandan is marginalised or discriminated against in accessing services and opportunities," he said.