



UGANDA NATIONAL TEACHERS' UNION (UNATU)

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WORLD TEACHERS' DAY MESSAGE 2020

THEME-*Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future*

1.0 ABOUT THE WORLD TEACHERS' DAY 2020

A common proverb is “*Every cloud has a silver lining.*” This is true indeed because with the abrupt closure of schools and institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has come to the realisation that “**TEACHERS MATTER.**” The closure of schools and institutions has given the public an opportunity to walk in the shoes of a teacher. The home-schooling situation has been so difficult for most people that they are still wondering, “*How do teachers do it??*” Some of the parents gave up on the home-schooling sessions after only one week with claims that they could not take the ‘*stress*’ anymore. Others claimed that the learners, who are actually their own children, are very hard to manage during lessons.

What has COVID-19 taught us about education and teachers?

1. Not everyone can be a teacher
2. A school, without teachers is merely a building
3. Technology such as internet, radio, TV cannot replace teachers.
4. Distance learning is highly problematic and daily interactions at school are fundamental for learning
5. The world has taken teachers for granted for far too long
6. We can no longer afford to undermine and belittle the teaching profession
7. The teachers' contribution to nation building must be formally recognised and appreciated.

THE MESSAGE IS VERY CLEAR; WE NEED TO RECOGNISE AND APPRECIATE THE TEACHERS' OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO NATION BUILDING AND PROMOTION OF QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION

On 5th October every year, World Teachers' Day is commemorated. This day provides an opportunity to celebrate the teaching profession and to promote the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers (1966) and the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel (1997). Complemented by the ILO Policy Guidelines on the Promotion

of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel, these instruments define international standards for the teaching profession.

The theme for this year's World Teachers' Day is: "**Teachers: leading in crisis, reimagining the future**". Following this year's theme, Uganda has opted to observe the day with teachers taking the lead in climate change awareness through a **nation-wide tree planting exercise**. As the saying goes, "**Charity begins at home**". Our tree planting campaign will be prioritised in schools and education institutions. In every district/ Municipality/ City, UNATU has selected a number of schools and institutions per Sub County where not less than 10 trees will be planted.

Importance of planting trees in Schools

- Better retention: Learners retain more information if they spend some time in green spaces.
- Less sun exposure: Tree shade for playgrounds reduces Ultra Violet Rays exposure
- Better concentration: Trees can have a relaxing effect on learners and can therefore influence their academic performance
- Reduces pollution: Tree foliage filters pollutants from the air and converts carbon dioxide into the much-needed oxygen
- Trees can help cool school environments during the dry seasons.
- Fruit trees can supplement on the school menu and income
- Trees planted on school grounds provide opportunities for environmental education, giving learners an opportunity to think about environmental conservation
- Some trees have medicinal benefits
- Trees also provide habitat for different species of insects, birds and plants which can give learners real-life examples when learning about bio-diversity.
- Trees act as wind breaks
- Trees stabilize the soil and give life to the world's wildlife
- Control soil erosion

Lessons from COVID 19: Recommendations for urgent action

-Urgent need for better teacher welfare, motivation and morale: The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to reality the fact that we do not pay teachers enough for the work that they do. The continuous

request for better teacher remuneration and working conditions is very genuine and therefore requires urgent action.

-Continuous professional development: The COVID-19 experience has also fully confirmed that distance education cannot replace school communities. Governments must invest in continuous professional development of teachers and other education personnel.

-Teacher engagement and involvement in policy formulation: The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light the fact that Government cannot work in isolation especially on matters such as education that are the concern for all. There is need for continuous engagement with teachers through UNATU, in education policy formulation and implementation. Information, Communication Technology should be emphasized in the 21st Century Teacher Support Mechanisms.

- Re- opening of schools and education institutions: UNATU previously issued our proposed guidelines to Government that must be considered before school reopening to safeguard the lives of the learners, teachers, and the entire school community. The teachers are not yet convinced that the required preparation has been done. As the plans to re-open schools on 15th October 2020 for candidates and finalists are in high gear, the teachers need assurance from Government that their health, safety and welfare have been considered.

CONCLUSION

As Uganda, we cannot afford to ignore the teaching profession. The time is now, for Government to not only address the teachers' concerns but also work with UNATU to devise strategies of; making the profession more attractive; motivate and retain quality teachers in the profession and encourage the youth, who are the future to take on the profession.

BECAUSE WE ARE, THE NATION IS



**TUMUHIMBISE ZADOCK
NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON**



**BAGUMA FILBERT BATES
GENERAL SECRETARY**