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Every Child Can Learn Podcast

Episode 12: Gulu District's School Inspector speaks about inclusive education

Intro: You are listening to the every child can learn podcast. The podcast is offered to you by Backup Uganda and Brainstud. You can listen to our podcasts online on our website, www.backupuganda.com. And if you are in Gulu, you can pick up the audios offline from Mega FM, Radio Rupiny, Divine Video and Music Library. Head teachers from the district's schools can pick this podcast from the District Education Office. And Head teachers from city schools can pick theirs from the City Education Office. You can as well pick up the podcast episodes from the following schools Highland Primary School, Gulu Prison Primary School, Gulu Town Primary School, Mary Immaculate Primary School, St. Joseph Primary School, or Christ the King Demonstration Primary School. Do you like our podcast? Feel free to share it with your family, friends, or neighbors? The more people learn about learning difficulties, the better we can help our children.

Glades: A very good evening, I'm called Lanyero Glades, I work at Backup Uganda. Today I'm very happy to meet a very special person. And once again, you're very welcome to our 12th episode of Every Child Can Learn. Allow me welcome our guest today.

Robinson: Thank you Glades, Obot Robinson, Senior Inspector of schools Gulu District, Local Government.

Glades: Thank you very much Inspector of Schools. Just like I said, I'm very delighted and happy to meet you. Today we want to discuss something about inclusion. And I would love you to a little bit tell us more about what inclusive education is, according to you.

Robinson: Thank you very much, dear listener, inclusive education. This is an initiative that the Minister of Education and Sports has come up with because it is now universal, that in every education system, inclusive education should be promoted. And inclusive education is a program that targets disadvantaged children, especially children with special needs, because you are aware that many times children with special needs are left out and in many cases you

will find there at home there in the community, they are not going to schools. So this inclusive education is now a system that is designed to welcome all learners regardless of any challenge the child might be having. And so, inclusive education welcomes all learners respective of gender, disability, and so on. So this is a system that is already in place in our education system in in Uganda.

Glades: Thank you very much, Inspector, you brought it so clearly. And in today's education, if you see what is being spoken everywhere we go is inclusive education. And this is something that we are going to really learn about. So our listeners, I hope you listen so carefully. Mmm inspector would also love to know how does your job relate to inclusive education? Or maybe what do you do to promote it?

Robinson: Yes, when you look at the categories of learners we have in our schools, my job first of all is to ensure quality because another concept of inclusive education is about excellence in teaching and learning. And that means excellence in teaching or learning welcomes or it includes every learner that is in a classroom. So when teachers are well equipped, well prepared, have plan lessons, they have instructional materials. So in inclusive education, all learners that are in a classroom can benefit from an inclusive setting, an inclusive class. So my work there as an inspector of school is to support teachers in ensuring that these learners also learn my work is to guide them my work is to train them to train teachers where they need capacity building my work is also to meet parents and talk to them sensitize them so that they also know what brings about maybe disability or in in any other circumstances that that hinders learning development. So my work is to create awareness to different stakeholders so that we work together because quality assurance, as far as learning is concerned, cannot be promoted by one person. So my work is also to work with all different kinds of stakeholders so that we have quality in our schools, and that caters for all categories of learners that parents bring to our school. And that is my work. My work also is to share findings in schools with different stakeholders so that we improve on the quality of teaching learning in our schools.

Glades: Thank you very much, inspector for sharing that you really have a lot of work to do with schools, pertaining inclusiveness in our schools. Now, we would also love to know how inclusive Do you think schools in Uganda are, at the moment? I know, our schools have been affected by the pandemic, now schools are back and a lot of schools are really struggling, how inclusive Do you think schools per now or in Uganda are at the moment,

Robinson: I think I may not be able to say exactly how inclusive education is in Uganda. But since it is already a policy in the Minister of Education, and sports, I believe inclusive education is working in all our schools in the country. But of course, the level might vary. And that depends a lot on how committed are the stakeholders, including parents, in promoting inclusive education in our in our school system. And you know, inclusion is a process, and the it is a never ending search to find better ways of responding to diversity. So you may find some schools are doing very well. And you may find some schools are not doing well. But what I know is that inclusive education in this country is working because it's already part and parcel of our education system. So it is upon us as inspectors of schools as head teachers and teachers to work very hard so that all the efforts are put together to ensure that inclusive education works very well for our children. Because since I said it is a process, you will find some schools have gone very far. Meanwhile, some schools have not gone far. So it's a different level. But it is working, because it's already part of our education system.

Glades: Thank you very much, inspector for sharing that. I also want to concur with you that inclusive education is working in our schools. As backup Uganda, we have schools that we work with. And this is something that we are trying to bring up in all the schools, we partner with Inclusive Education and our teachers, we are very happy that they are doing that already. Inspector would also want you to help us What can parents and teachers do to make learning more inclusive now that the schools have reopened?

Robinson: Gladys does? That's a very good question. You know, in our education system, we have four pillars that are very key. One of them is Teacher pillar, and the other one is parent pillar, and then also a leadership and management pillar, including learner pillar. Now that you have asked about teachers and parents, first of all, you know, teachers are very key in an education system. In this world, teachers are the implementers of any curriculum, teachers are

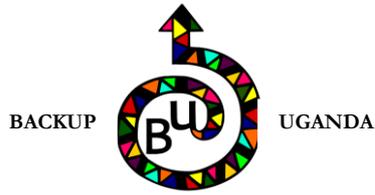
very important. So what teachers can do is, first of all, to work with the school leadership, work with the parents work with our education department, even work with partners because we have partners in this district of Gulu that are focusing in promoting inclusive education. One example is backup Uganda. So these are very important stakeholders with whom teachers can work with so that teachers improve in their service delivery. Not only that, teachers can even work with service providers, for example, we have health, there are certain things teachers cannot provide. If a child once the child needs or the child has been assessed, and the child requires earring, a teacher cannot provide hearing aid, and therefore the teacher should work with a health department. If a child wants maybe crutches to ease movement, a teacher may not be able to provide crutches, a teacher can work with the parents, a teacher can work with the maybe orthopedic department in the health sector so that this child gets what he needs for better movement and so and so to teachers need to know how and who he or she can work with in order to improve on inclusive education in their schools. Of course, parents play a very big role also because parents first of all, they are the first teachers. Parents sometimes are overwhelmed by negative attitudes about a child with disability. But disability cannot be eradicated. Disability is already a part of human being. And therefore what is very important for our parents is to know how a child with disability in the family can be supported how a child when sent to school can be support supported, so parents need to work very closely with the teachers because teachers can can't constrain our parents can create awareness to our parents so that parents knowledge and skills in supporting a child with disability improve so that this child is in an environment that enables him or her to learn better, because a home is a learning environment. A school is a learning environment. And therefore these two learning environment calls for better support from teachers better support from parents so that the child is able to learn inclusive education is not only in schools, inclusion must also happen in homes, in communities. And so parents and teachers need to work together. So that is my pieces of advice to the stakeholders.

Glades: Thank you so very much, Inspector, you have really shared a lot of information and to our listeners, I hope after this episode, or after this teaching, you will learn a lot or you'd have learnt a lot of things to do pertaining inclusive education. The inspector has talked a lot about what parents can do and what teachers can do pertaining inclusive education, maybe to

adorn or inspector maybe you have something to add on what do you advise parents to do if they think their child has a learning difficulty? Or has a learning disability? What do you think parents can do to add on what you earlier mentioned?

Robinson: Well, if a parent has a child with disability, and the child is already school age going, I think the parent can consult the school because all our schools are aware that any child who has reached a school age going should be enrolled in the near a school to the home of the child so that the child goes to school so the parents, the parents can consult his school on what to do, the parents can also consult health centers. I know some health care centers may not have adequate information concerning the child but the parents can be guided and may be referred to like Gulu referral because guru referral has all sections concerning health. Like if you have a child with a physical impairment, we have orthopedic department, if a child has problem with vision, we have eye clinic in the referral. If a child has problem with the hearing, we have EMT in the referral hospital. So even intellectual impairment, so the school should be the focal point where parents can go and get information so that the child is not left to stay at home when the child has reached the age of going to school. And not only that, parents need to know what to do while the child is at home. And so parents can seek for knowledge. Parents can seek for skills on how to work with the children at home. We have we have our community development officers, they all know this. So parents can also work with community development officers because issues to do with the disabilities or impairments, all our community development officers, they know and so there shouldn't be any parent staying at home and not knowing what to do when actually they have children with disabilities in their home. So they need to know what to do so that this child is not left to stay at home. I think this is the advice I can give.

Glades: Thank you so much, Inspector, just to add on what the inspector said, now that we are it's almost a song that inclusion as to be there in every school in Uganda. Please, our dear parents don't hesitate to take your children to school. There is no school that will just do away with your child that has a disability. Because each and every school already knows what disability is, and it is something that the government is trying to put across, that all schools should be inclusive. Therefore, you can send your children to all the schools that are around your community. And please, let's learn to love these children. Let's take them at heart, let's



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have them at heart. We shouldn't hate them. We shouldn't put names on these children because that already will stigmatize them and make them note, love whatever they are doing. Thank you so much, inspector for your time. And thanks for sharing this information. I believe our parents, listeners and the teachers out there will learn a lot from this information as Backup Uganda we believe every child can learn or every child counts. Thank you.

Outro: Thank you for listening to Every Chance Can Learn. Please share your thoughts with us. Join the conversation on Facebook, or send your questions to 0772630078 Do want to learn more about backup Uganda and stay updated about our activities? Check our website on www.backupuganda.org and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn.