

## Managing school finances made friendly: 'The Nakapiripirit Experience'

For many headteachers the mention of the annual audit exercise is sometimes a clear passport to the hospital ward in search of a way to avoid auditors and their questions related to every coin received and expended on behalf of the school. It is a time when headteacher absenteeism can not be explained by anyone on the staff. Most head teachers will leave a message at school indicating they have an urgent meeting with the District Education Officer (DEO), yet they do not appear at the DEO's offices. In fact, Rosemary Napwat, Inspector of Schools- Nakapiripirit, consents that in 2005 a number of headteachers in the district were imprisoned and made to pay for Universal Primary Education (UPE) funds due to lack of proper or complete absence of financial records to account for the way they had used these funds. So this time round in the district of Nakapiripirit the long awaited training on Financial Management for heads of primary schools was greeted with a lot of excitement.

The District of Nakapiripirit is one of Uganda's most remote districts. Bordering on Kenya in the farthest eastern reaches of Uganda, it has a population of approximately 40,000, a majority of which are nomadic peoples and cattle keepers. Cross border cattle rustling and internal disputes, makes this area a site of frequent violence.



A typical workshop venue- Nakapiripirit district.

Amidst this turmoil, Uganda Program for Holistic and Human Development has been training the district education staff, staff from Moroto Core Primary Teachers College, which serves the district, and all the head teachers and deputies in the district since 2004. Nakapiripirit district has 26,664 children enrolled in 54 Primary schools. Earlier trained by UPHOLD on Leadership, Managing School Improvement and Using Cooperative Learning in the classroom, the heads and deputies of the 54 primary schools showed exceptional interest in the training on Financial Management. When asked "Why?," The participants, some of whom traveled as far of 30 kilometers to attend the 3 day training, had positive remarks. "This is an opportunity for us to learn the technical way of managing school finances." "We have not been knowing how to do these things (keeping and maintaining financial records)." Most of them acknowledged not having had training on financial management before.

The headteachers during the training sessions eagerly did all the activities provided for them to practice the different aspects of financial management. Many refused to begin plenary sessions if they had not completed the practice activities individually. The inspectors from the district committed themselves to providing follow up support to those trained in the very next term to see that the practices taught are carried over to the trainees' worksites.