



# **Economic and Social Rights Advocacy (ESRA) Brief**

Nov 2014 - Issue 3

## **Beyond Statistics**

**How can we achieve  
universal basic education  
of acceptable quality in Uganda?**

*"It is not beyond our power to create a world in which all  
children have access to a good education. Those who do not  
believe this have small imaginations."*

**Nelson Mandela**

## Acknowledgment

The Economic and Social Rights Advocacy (ESRA) Brief is a biannual publication of the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) whose goal is to create awareness, encourage and stimulate national debate around social and economic rights as well as act as a knowledge exchange platform for stakeholders and the broader Ugandan populace.

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## Beyond Statistics:

### *How can we achieve universal basic education of acceptable quality in Uganda?*

The Right to Education is guaranteed under article 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda; the country is, moreover party to International Conventions that guarantee this right, including the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

Uganda has been praised for introducing free Universal Primary Education (UPE), and the scheme has indeed registered some successes over the years – including an increase in school enrolment rates countrywide, with girls and children from poor families benefiting in particular. Notwithstanding these successes, however, basic primary education is not without its challenges, which have the potential to undermine the quality of education offered and to erode the gains attained if remedial action is not prioritized. The deteriorating quality of education has been documented in several studies, such as UWEZO (2014), and the Ministry of Education and Sports, together with the Stromme Foundation, Save the Children, UNICEF, and UNHCR (2014).

In addition to the above studies, in October 2014, two alternative reports on education were submitted to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ahead of Uganda's review in June 2015. One report was submitted by ISER and the Global Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, with the support of the Privatization in Education Research Initiative; the Right to Education Project; Education International; the Global Campaign for Education; the Africa Network Campaign on Education For All; and the Girls Education Movement Uganda Chapter.

The second report was submitted by the civil society coalition on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and concentrates on the state of public primary education.

Some of the issues highlighted in two reports include the phenomenon of parents being forced to resort to private schools because the Ugandan public education system is largely failing; and that the government is gradually releasing itself from its obligation to provide quality public education for all, as it is increasingly relying on private actors to do so. The report also highlights the exponential growth of the private education sector which has rapidly outpaced the development of appropriate regulatory, supervision and monitoring frameworks, with the result that private schools are equally not immune to some of the challenges confronting UPE schools, poor infrastructure and teacher absenteeism.

In this edition of the ESRA Brief, we look beyond the increased enrollment figures and provide a qualitative assessment to determine if in fact the current basic education system in Uganda is directed to the full development of the human personality as per the ICESCR and other conventions, legislations and policies at the domestic, regional and international levels. Education Minister Hon. Jessica Alupo sets the scene in a Q&A by revealing that her Ministry has received a \$100m grant to build new schools, rehabilitate existing ones and purchase motorcycles for school inspectors. Hon. Alupo further voices her support for the increment of the UPE Capitation grant and implementation of other measures aimed at motivating teachers. She

asserts that it is illegal and criminal for government schools to charge extra fees as this increases the prospects of students dropping out and being coerced into early marriages. Hon. Alupo raises many important issues pertaining to education: but what exactly is the state's obligation in relation to the right to education? This question is answered by the Uganda Human Rights Commission. Policy analyst, Ms Annette Were, provides us with a broad overview of the general constraints to the harmonization of Uganda's primary education system. Veteran journalist and Observer Education Editor, Moses Talemwa, writes about the state of public education in Uganda as well as the implications and impact of privatized education on the broader right to education. UNESCO makes the case that quality education requires a commitment to invest in teachers, significantly and over the long-term, an investment not only of material but also intellectual resources. We feature the views of six Members of Parliament from the Education Committee on how to improve the quality of universal basic education such that it adheres to an acceptable standard.

The Brief also provides excerpts and highlights from the alternative reports on education submitted to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ahead of Uganda's review by the Committee in June 2015.

Finally from the field; former ISER intern/Makerere University law student, Ramathan Wandera writes on the impact of poor sanitation and hygiene facilities on learning in Apac District.

We hope you enjoy and find this edition of the ESRA brief illuminating.



***“We have succeeded in increasing enrollment; our focus is now on quality”***

***Q & A with the Minister of Education,  
Hon. Jessica Alupo***

*Minister of Education, Hon. Jessica Alupo*

**Question: What is your assessment of the Ugandan government’s free Universal Primary Education (UPE)?**

**Answer:** UPE is appreciated by members of the public and continues to be the main focus of government towards the eradication of illiteracy in the country. Many pupils have been empowered with numeracy and literacy skills under the programme and people now better understand and thus support UPE more than ever before. During the early stages of its implementation, the UPE programme was misunderstood and criticized; however, as a result of awareness raising, the public has a greater understanding and appreciation of its relevance. It is not a surprise, therefore, that enrollment figures have increased, which to government affirms the confidence people now have in it.

**Question: While an increase in the number of people accessing education is encouraging, there are concerns that the standard of this education is declining, some even say it is second-rate. What is your take on this issue?**

**Answer:** The declining standard of education is compounded by factors such as the inability of communities to tackle challenges such as high rates of absenteeism due in part to livelihood needs, which result in pupils being married off early, tending to family farms or seeking other forms of employment to contribute at home. There needs to be a commitment by pupils and communities to prioritize school work and school-related activities. The Ministry of Education is also cognizant of the high ratio of pupils to teachers. We formulated a policy which calls for every primary school to have at least 7 teachers in addition to a head teacher. We must concede, however, that in some cases we are still falling short of that figure. Some teachers go on maternity leave and there are no others to replace them but we have not given up and we are providing the necessary guidance to pupils.

***How can we achieve universal basic education of acceptable quality in Uganda?***

**Question: How can we achieve UPE of acceptable quality?**

**Answer:** We have succeeded in increasing enrollment numbers, so we are now turning our attention to improving the quality of UPE in this country. We are going to train governance bodies like the Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) to serve as a bridge between management and parents. We also intend raising awareness among parents and teachers of the collaborative effort they

*We are motivating teachers through salary increments and we have availed some funds [Shs 5billion] for their Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) in addition to the 30 percent salary increment for teachers in hard to reach areas.*

should make to establish a steady educational foundation for pupils. We are going to work together with all relevant stakeholders to improve the quality of UPE for the benefit of every Ugandan. We will continue to provide instructional materials as we have been doing for some time. Currently, we are focusing on training teachers and we are encouraging District service commissioners to replace those teachers who have retired, absconded from duty or pursued greener pastures. We are motivating teachers through salary increments and we have availed some funds [Shs 5billion] for their Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) in addition to the 30 percent salary increment for teachers in hard to reach areas. In addition, we are awarding 30 percent allowances to science teachers and we are tackling the accommodation challenge of teachers; all of which are aimed at improving the quality of education.

**Question: Last term (19<sup>th</sup> May 2014 to 8<sup>th</sup> August 2014) government released capitation grants to some schools towards the end of the second term while others had not received their capitation grants by the time schools closed. What is the reason for this?**

**Answer:** This question should be answered by officials from the Ministry of Finance because government gave a directive that capitation grants must be released early enough. They are responsible for sending the money to schools and we have been reminding them to release it on time.

**Question: Are school inspectors doing their job and are they well facilitated? What should be done to improve this function?**

**Answer:** School inspectors have done a tremendous job amidst challenges that range from limited funding to limited capacity. There are very few inspectors who are expected to monitor a significant number of educational institutions (in practice they reach more institutions than is stipulated in the policy). One inspector monitors about 300 schools and in some districts 600. We have provided resources and most districts will receive over Shs 1 to Shs 2billion for inspection annually. We have also changed the monitoring system and asked inspectors to allocate more time to a school thus allowing for a thorough inspection intended to provide the Education Ministry with more accurate results than was garnered by previous inspections, which were often rushed by inspectors seeking to meet unreasonable targets. Inspectors are now afforded days rather than a few hours to review schools: they are expected to conduct comprehensive investigations by among other things conducting interviews, scrutinizing attendance, curriculum, student's books and so forth. The findings from such investigations are reported to the district Chief Administrative Officer who is empowered to take appropriate action on the basis of the inspectors' findings and recommendations. The districts are then required to report to the Education Ministry on what action Chief Administrative Officers have taken.



**Question: What plans does the ministry have as far as UPE funding is concerned? Can government prioritize and allocate more money to UPE?**

**Answer:** We are collaborating with the Ministry of Finance to increase capitation grants. The problem is the feeding component which is not embraced by parents. We are encouraging schools that have land to utilize it to teach children that work is a blessing. We have also encouraged district leaders to sensitize communities on the values of teaching to discourage absenteeism. We have asked local leaders to sensitise schools about the mechanisms of feeding all children so that they can be useful in class. The Finance Ministry, however, does not have an unlimited supply of revenue and so we do have to accept that there are resource constraints.

*We are collaborating with the Ministry of Finance to increase capitation grants.*

**Question: Some classroom blocks and latrines have remained substandard despite billions being injected into such projects. Who is responsible for the shoddy work?**



*Pupils of Awir Primary School in Apac District writing exams under a tree due to limited classrooms*

**Answer:** In terms of capital development for primary schools, officials from the Education Ministry authorize projects on the basis of reports from districts on their needs and motivation regarding the urgency with which these infrastructural improvements need to occur. We have formulated guidelines stipulating how funding for such projects ought to be disbursed to districts. This happens in the form of special facilitation grants, for example the Shs 500million we release on the basis of a schools' needs as identified on assessment. Such money is subject to scrutiny by the district council, which is tasked with monitoring construction to ensure that quality standards are met. We feel the councils are most effective in as far as monitoring contractors is concerned. Additionally, we have received a \$100million grant to rehabilitate existing primary schools; establish new primary schools; to procure motorcycles to be used

for inspections; and up skilling primary one up to primary three teachers. We will launch the project this month (November) and this will be the cure to primary schools. We as stakeholders shall follow up on this money to ensure that it is put to proper use and we will blacklist all those contractors that do shoddy work.

**Question: How are teachers being motivated?**

**Answer:** As I stated earlier, we are motivating them through salary increments and the provision of SACCO money in addition to offering them extra allowances like the 30 percent given to teachers in hard to reach areas and the 30 percent for science teachers plus accommodation. You know the resources are never enough but we are trying to make them smile within the available means.

*They should make sure nobody charges parents any extra fees. We are fighting to control school drop outs and early marriages by discouraging such fees.*

**Question: UPE is free, but some schools charge extra fees like development tariffs, which has contributed to drop out rates. What is your take on this?**

**Answer:** Leaders, head teachers and school management committees are doing this illegally and should be aware that this is a criminal act. Pupils and parents are encouraged to bring this to the attention of the authorities so that those involved can be arrested. They should make sure nobody charges parents any extra fees. We are fighting to control school drop outs and early marriages by discouraging such fees.

*How can we achieve universal basic education of acceptable quality in Uganda?*



## *What is the state obligation in relation to the right to education?*

**By Patricia Nduru, Director of Monitoring & Inspections - Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and Sarah Birungi, Officer, Directorate of Monitoring & Inspections - UHRC**

The starting point in understanding what constitutes acceptable quality universal education is to make reference to government's obligations at the international, regional and national levels. These include ensuring that: every individual has a right to education<sup>1</sup>; education is directed to the development of the human personality and to strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms<sup>2</sup>; there is non-discrimination in the field of education<sup>3</sup> and reducing the female student drop-out rates<sup>4</sup>; education is directed to the development of the child's personality, physical abilities and talent<sup>5</sup>; and that children with disability can access education.<sup>6</sup>

Acceptable quality implies education services that comply with minimum standards, that are acceptable to both parents and children, and which have been approved by the state.<sup>7</sup> The National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy provide that every citizen shall be afforded an equal opportunity to attain the highest education standard possible.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the minimum standards set by the Ministry of Education and Sports include putting in place quality controls; enhancing equal participation in the education system; developing a child's capabilities; ensuring access to quality physical education and sports; and the elimination of stigma and discrimination.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the form and standards include a curriculum that is suitable for the needs of both parents and children.<sup>10</sup>

### **Making universal basic education of acceptable quality**

Education is a fundamental human right and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. The primary duty to ensure quality education falls on the Government of Uganda.

*The primary duty to ensure quality education falls on the Government of Uganda.*

### **Quality education for all**

The government should be commended for the Early Childhood Development Policy which increased the rate of enrollment from 289,862 in 2011 to 345,295 in 2012.<sup>11</sup> In addition the government should be commended for introducing the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in 1997.

1 Article/Section 30 of the Ugandan Constitution of 1995; Article 17 (1) of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Article 28 (1) (a) of the Convention on the Rights of a Child

2 Article 13 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

3 Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Woman

4 Article 28 (1) (e) of the Convention on the Rights of a Child

5 Article 29 (1) (a) of the Convention on the Rights of a Child

6 Section 32 (1) of the Ugandan Constitution of 1995,

7 General Comment 13 para 6 (c).

8 Objective XVIII.

9 Summary of the Goals and Objectives of the Education The Pre Primary and Post Primary Act, 2008, Gender in Education Policy 2010, and National Physical and Education and Sports Policy 2014.

10 General Comment 13 para 6 (c).

11 Education and Sports Sector Fact Sheet 2000-2012.

The UPE increased the rate of enrolment of children from poor households from 8,089,000 in 2011 to 8,220,000 in 2012. Not only has this reduced the poverty gap, it has also increased gender parity, resulting in an increase in pass rates for the Primary Leaving Examinations as well as improvements in infrastructural development in schools.

These gains, however, do not apply to the same extent with respect to children in rural areas due to constraints and negative attitudes among local community members who consider it a waste of money.<sup>12</sup> There are several other factors threatening UPE, including a high incidence of school drop-outs, particularly in rural areas, attributed in many instances to teacher absenteeism and the resultant deterioration in delivery and quality of education.<sup>13</sup>

### Parental responsibility



*In rural areas it is common practice for UPE schools to require families to make in-kind donations of foodstuffs for their children to be permitted to eat lunch at school.*

The role of parents in ensuring the right to education differs according to context and advocates have different opinions about the extent and form of parental responsibility. Some argue that basic education should be the responsibility of the state.

In our opinion quality education requires both the state and parents to avail scholastic materials and basic necessities to children, including meals in order for them to concentrate during the lessons and take part in extra-curricular activities. Though the government has encouraged parents and guardians to support its efforts through, for instance, the provision of scholastic materials, several parents failed to meet this obligation because of the misconception that the government is responsible for meeting all of the needs of a school-going child. This has been further aggravated by parents abdicating their responsibility to feed their

children, which has compelled schools to assume this responsibility. Parents and guardians need to understand and embrace the supportive role they provide to their children's schools by meeting the costs, within their means, of scholastic materials, basic necessities, meals, etc.

### Elimination of stigma and non-discrimination

Vulnerable children, such as those with disabilities, are also entitled to access quality universal basic education. The government should be commended for formulating the Special Needs Policy, which is aimed at providing frameworks for the support of pupils and students with special educational needs.<sup>14</sup>

The Special Needs subsector must by necessity procure instructional materials such as braille paper, braille kits, sign language dictionaries, etc. In spite of these positive developments, however, the Special Needs Sector continues to receive minimal funding despite an increase in the number of special needs children enrolled in primary schools.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> UHRC 15th Annual Report, 84.

<sup>13</sup> As above.

<sup>14</sup> n 8 above, 181.

<sup>15</sup> n 9 above, 183.

In addition, this sector faces challenges such as a limited number of special needs instructors to cater to the broad spectrum of needs of students with disabilities.<sup>16</sup>

In order to ensure that children with disabilities access quality universal basic education there is need for the Ministry of Education and Sports to implement the Special Needs Education Policy and provide sufficient funding to cater for the specific needs of this sector.

### Highest attainable standard for all

The notion that every individual has a right to education is increasingly becoming subject to acknowledgement that the standard of the education in question is equally important. This debate is premised on recognition that minimal standards should ideally be pegged as high as possible; this has generally been true in respect of private institutions, but not consistent across UPE schools.

Private schools generally provide better education services and thus have higher retention rates and pass rates in comparison to UPE schools.<sup>17</sup> More worrisome than this general assessment, however, is the even bigger disparity that exists between rural and urban schools.<sup>18</sup> In addition, government has not effectively monitored private education institutions to ensure that they conform to the rules and regulations governing education in Uganda.



*At Olelepek Primary School in Apac District, girl pupils bathe in a make-shift shower with little privacy. The lack of adequate sanitation compromises pupils' human right to health and dignity.*

There is, therefore, need for the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to implement a salary scale that attracts and retains adequate and qualified teaching professionals within the sector. It cannot be emphasized enough, that an increase in funding should be coupled with strengthened monitoring and supervision by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

### Conclusion

Although there has been some progress made in improving the quality of education, crucial issues underpinning the provision of quality education such as the responsibility of parents; the ever increasing divide between private and UPE; and the elimination of stigma and non-discrimination need to be resolved in order to strengthen the gains made in the provision of basic education to all Ugandans.

<sup>16</sup> n 10 above, 184.

<sup>17</sup> n 11 above, 185.

<sup>18</sup> Conan Businge, Andrew Masinde and Stella Naigino, '90,000 teachers needed to fill gap in Primary Schools, New Vision of 8th October 2014.



## Constraints to harmonized development of Uganda's Primary Education System

**By Annette Were Munabi - Socio-economic policy analyst**

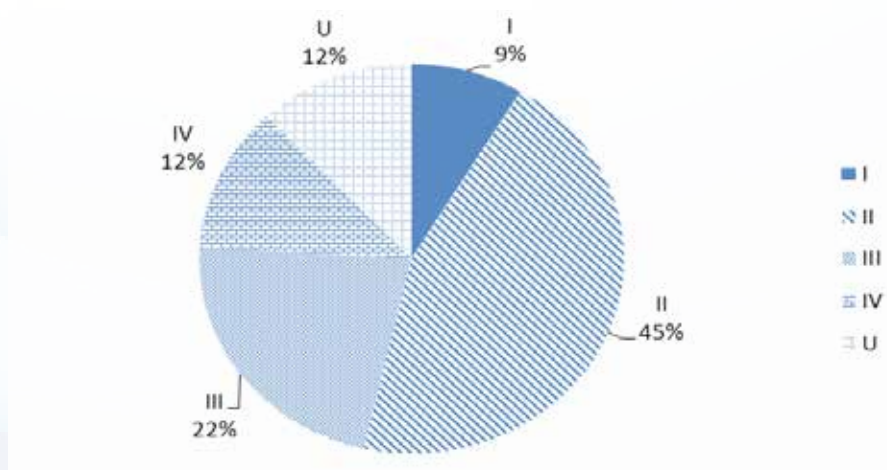
The Government of Uganda (GoU) shifted from the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) as the development framework to the National Development Plan (NDP) in 2010. Education has consistently featured as a priority human development sector. It is among the eight priority objectives of the NDP aimed at contributing towards “increasing access to quality social services”.

In 1997, the GoU introduced the free Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme and in 2003, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2004 – 2015 was formulated with the following specific objectives in the primary sub-sector: (i) increase and improvement of equitable access and completion rate for primary education, and (ii) improvement of the quality and relevance of primary education among others aimed at enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of education services delivery.

The net enrolment rate of primary education improved from 84.8% in 2002 to 96.0% in 2010. According to the Basic Education study<sup>19</sup>, the drop-out rate was 4.4% while the survival rate up to primary 5 (P.5) was low at 62.0% in 2012. Although the gender gap in terms of access to primary education was low, the high drop-out rates and absenteeism for girls are implied by the low entry to the secondary education level. While the completion rate increased from 49.1% in 2002 to 54.0% in 2010, the national examinations and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) report noted that Uganda lagged behind its neighbouring countries in literacy and numeracy.

In 2009/10, literacy rates for the population 10 years and above had improved by only 3 percentage points over a 7 year period. In 2000, Uganda was 9<sup>th</sup> out of 14 countries in reading and 8<sup>th</sup> in mathematics. In SACMEQ III of 2007, Uganda ranked worse (11<sup>th</sup> out of 15 countries) in both subjects. The Eastern and Northern regions registered the worst literacy rates of 64% and 68% respectively which were worse compared to the national rate at 73%. According to the ministry of education, out of 490,374 pupils who sat Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) in 2010, 88% passed as portrayed in the graph below.

National PLE performance by grades (2009/10)

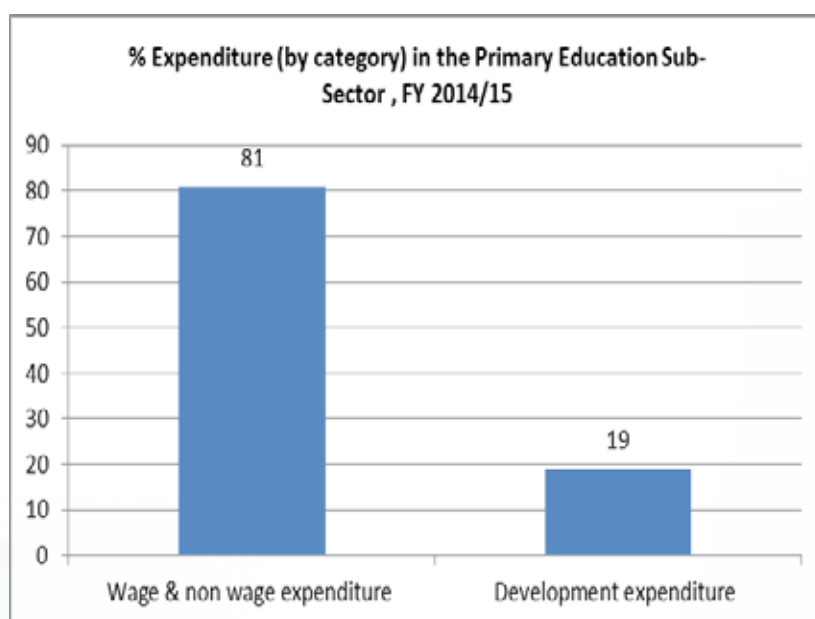


Source: Author's computation based on UBOS data

Several reasons explain the poor quality education outcomes especially in the public primary section;

- 1) Enrolment has increased, however, the required facilities and human resources have less than proportionately increased leading to overcrowding in classrooms and pressure on the existing resources. The national classroom deficiency was 39,788 in 2012 yet the budget for the Schools Facilities Grant<sup>20</sup> (SFG) has reduced from UGX 48Bn to 27Bn in FY 2014/15. There are cases where pupils study under trees, from incomplete classrooms with dusty floors, without shutters and classrooms that are generally ill-equipped; none of which are environments conducive to learning. While guidelines for the School Facilities Grants (SFG) clearly specify the construction of ramps and special water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities for persons with disability (PWDs) and the Girl Child; these are often ignored and compromised hindering equitable and effective participation. Girls miss up to a week when in their menstrual cycle due to lack of WASH facilities and sometimes they are forced to drop-out of school.
- 2) The Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme remains private-sector led and has mainly thrived in urban centres to the exclusion of rural child whose access is impeded not only by the long distances, but also the prohibitive costs which few rural parents can afford. The importance of this stage for the full development of human personality is under-appreciated and thus under-prioritized; hence the high number of poorly developed pupils churned into the system at the primary level.
- 3) Pupils lack scholastic materials and several of their human rights are violated as they endeavour to access basic education. Children from poor households walk long distances to school; getting there late, exhausted and thirsty. Worse still, the majority have to go without meals and drinking water the whole day making it difficult to concentrate and effectively learn under such circumstances.
- 4) Poor working conditions and inadequate opportunities for professional development adversely affect teachers' performance. The outdated instructional materials used in both the teaching curricula and teacher training hinder effective transfer of knowledge and understanding. These coupled with the ineffective methods of instruction and testing at different levels undermine the gains from increased access to primary education. Poor remuneration and lack of residential, health and recreational facilities compromise the quality of teaching services.
- 5) In the FY 2014/15, education's budgetary allocation remained among the top 5 largest. However, wages are increasingly taking up a larger share of the total sectoral allocation. 80.7% (UGX 1,566.94Bn) of the total was for wage and non-wage recurrent expenditure leaving only UGX 375.11Bn for development. Corruption is also prevalent in the sector: often times 'ghost' schools, teachers and pupils distort the planning and budgeting, resulting in poor results.

20 The UPE component for construction and equipping of schools



For improved performance of the primary education sub-sector, the following are recommended for government consideration:

- For inclusion in the ECD programmes, government initially can provide the necessary incentives for the private providers to absorb more and expand service delivery to rural areas.



*At Bbajjo Primary School in Mukono District, school structures were left incomplete due to lack of funds to finish construction. Incomplete structures not only disturb child learning but also compromise pupil safety.*

- Increase in infrastructure investments in schools should be followed up by regular monitoring to ensure that quality standards are met, and routine maintenance undertaken. This is likely to improve the learning and teaching environment for both pupils and teachers.
- While it may be costly for the government to construct schools up to the community level, it is critical that transport incentives for pupils without schools in decent proximity be considered.
- The role of parents in providing meals and scholastic materials ought to be emphasized. Partnerships with both state and non-state actors are necessary for improved provision of relevant water and sanitation facilities, scholastic materials and school feeding programmes.
- Deepening and focusing the education curriculum along the entire value chain, to enhance balanced development of children from various socio-cultural backgrounds, is overdue.



## *The state of primary school education in Uganda*

**By Moses Talemwa, Education Editor at the Observer Newspaper**

Every year, the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) releases a National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) report. The NAPE report looks at progress in learning outcomes at both primary and secondary school level. In addition to its annual assessment of performance based on the examinations of candidates, the UNEB examines the proficiency of a sample of P3 and P6 pupils in numeracy and literacy. This assessment is based on a random survey of 1,200 pupils, usually drawn from at least 50 districts.

An assessment of all NAPE reports since 2009 shows that education standards in the country's primary schools are making a slow but steady improvement in performance. For instance in 2011, only 42 per cent of the P3 pupils were proficient in reading. These pupils had problems reading and comprehending a story, as well as writing sentences and nouns with correct spelling. Their P6 counterparts had difficulties in reading and comprehension, and writing relevant compositions with the correct format. This was attributed to a weak reading and writing culture in schools, as well as poorly trained teachers.

The findings reveal that only two thirds of P3 pupils demonstrated acquisition of numeric competence up to the standard required in the national curriculum, a slight improvement on 2010. The use of local languages as a medium of instruction in lower primary classes has been singled out as the most likely cause of the poor performance. The report adds that pupils in P3 also had difficulties with basic concepts such as addition, subtraction, division and multiplication. At P6, pupils also had difficulties performing long division, measuring length and angles, drawing parallel lines, among others.

*The report adds that pupils in P3 also had difficulties with basic concepts such as addition, subtraction, division and multiplication*

The corresponding figures for 2012, which is the last time such a test was undertaken by UNEB, showed a marked improvement. Overall 69.9 per cent of the P3 pupils reached the defined proficiency level in numeracy and 53.8 per cent attained a similar rating in literacy in English. Whereas two thirds of the pupils were proficient in numeracy, only slightly more than half were deemed to have a 'good' literacy score.

In the 2010, the corresponding numbers show that just 38 per cent were adjudged proficient in numeracy and literacy, while in 2009 only 31 per cent passed.

*most teachers assessed have also failed to attain the required proficiency levels.*

According to the Senior Examinations Officer at UNEB, Amos Opaman, the findings show a steady trend towards improvement. However, Opaman expresses concern at the learning outcomes, blaming the poor training teachers get for the challenges that pupils face. "We recommend a comprehensive re-training of teachers, including appropriate techniques to assess their progress. Teachers should be taught how to interpret the curriculum properly and teach accordingly, instead of relying on pamphlets," Opaman says. According to Opaman, most teachers assessed have also failed to attain the required proficiency levels. "Sadly, the majority of the teachers themselves also failed the proficiency test ... in numerical

*NAPE results show that a crisis is brewing in the education sector;*

skills, teachers had difficulties rounding off numbers, using decimal points, dividing fractions, finding the lowest common multiple, square roots, drawing bar graphs with well-labeled axes and suitable scales.”

Another official at UNEB, Sande Jonas warns that the NAPE results show that a crisis is brewing in the education sector; however, Jonas points out that with care the trend could be reversed. “These children are patients and if the doctor just looks at the patient and prescribes medicine, they could kill the patient,” he notes.

***“These children are patients and if the doctor just looks at the patient and prescribes medicine, they could kill the patient,”***

### **Enrolment versus completion**

According to statistics released by the Ministry of Education, over one million pupils who enrolled for primary one under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 2006 failed to complete primary school, while 71 per cent dropped – a much higher rate than the 40 per cent usually quoted. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, 1,598,636 pupils enrolled for primary one in government-aided schools in 2006; however, according to Uganda National Examinations Board figures, only 463,332 sat for Primary Leaving Examinations in 2012 – just 29 per cent of those who enrolled in 2006. The ministry estimates that nearly 3.8million Ugandans are in primary schools across the country, although a substantial number of them are expected to drop out at some point. What can account for this worrying trend?

***poor working conditions have driven qualified teachers out of the classrooms, requiring schools in some cases to rely on unqualified individuals.***

Some posit that poor teaching skills coupled with a severe lack of motivation among teachers is to blame. According to a researcher at Makerere University, Peter Basanyu, poor working conditions have driven qualified teachers out of the classrooms, requiring schools in some cases

to rely on unqualified individuals. “Let us not kid ourselves that there are no qualified teachers around...the teachers are floating on the streets because of the poor pay and working conditions in the schools. We must improve teachers’ pay as a priority,” he says. Indeed the NAPE report finds that in 1.1 per cent of the secondary schools surveyed, primary school teachers were on duty; while 12 per cent of the teachers at the same schools surveyed were A-level graduates or held other non-teaching qualifications.

Basanyu says the increasing school dropout rate – especially among girls – can also indirectly be linked to the poor



*Pupils of Alwal Primary School in Apac District sit on the floor due to acute shortage of furniture*

training teachers receive. Many girls drop out of school after being sexually assaulted by their teachers. Incidences of rape and defilement of students by teachers needs to be averted through criminal sanction and also through targeted training and awareness raising among teachers of their responsibility to respect their student's human rights.

### **Poor infrastructure**

Apart from poorly trained teachers, learning outcomes at primary school level are also affected by poor infrastructure. According to the Ministry of Education, at least 100 schools are supposed to be rebuilt or refurbished every year, for the next three years. Most of these schools are under grass thatched structures or within old, but derelict, buildings that are in dire need of repair. For instance according to a status report, prepared for this year's Education Sector review workshop, at least 30 primary schools were unable to conduct classes when it rained in Namutumba district alone.



## *Invest in the future by investing in teachers for quality education*

**By Charles O. Obiero, Project Coordinator - UNESCO Uganda**

### **Situational analysis**

The quest for quality education is a legitimate priority for many developing countries in pursuance of better learning outcomes. This was emphasized in the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) at Jomtien held in 1990, and the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum, which provided a framework for member states' engagement with and commitment to addressing quality in education.

One of the major concerns among Sub-Saharan African countries is the poor quality of teachers, which has made it difficult to achieve the EFA goal 6 by 2015. The 2013/14 EFA Global Monitoring Report indicated that the poorest countries lack teachers often resulting in large class sizes in early grades and in the poorest areas. Analysis by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics shows that 5.2 million teachers need to be recruited by 2015 to ensure that there are sufficient teachers to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE).

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) Uganda, with technical support from UNESCO carried out a comprehensive study on teachers under the framework of Teacher Initiative of Sub Sahara Africa (TISSA). The study indicated that Uganda faced challenges in the quantity and quality of teachers. There was decline in the share of education budget from 4.2% in 2004 to 3.3% in 2011; low retention of pupils at 63% in 2011 and low pupil achievement (59% proficient in Literacy, 54% proficient in Numeracy).

Several concerns pertaining to teachers were documented; these include but are not restricted to: a mismatch between the number of teachers required in schools and those deployed; teacher dissatisfaction and teacher absenteeism; non-competitive remuneration of teachers; and limited scope for career development.

The study found that teachers in the science fields are lacking in quality at all levels and therefore tend to have a practical rather than theoretical bias. Professional development is fragmented with no institutionalized Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes.

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were put forward to government: adequate budgetary provision should be made to cater for both salary and non-salary teacher expenditures; the training and recruitment of teachers should be increased; the recruitment and deployment of teachers streamlined; teacher information management systems should be improved; working conditions and teacher payroll management should be improved; and social dialogue on teacher issues should be implemented.

### **Institutional capacity development**

The objectives of capacity development are (i). to provide support to countries identifying skills gaps pertaining to educational issues; (ii). plan appropriate interventions; (iii), implement programmes effectively and efficiently to achieve desired goals; (iv) monitor implementation and evaluate the success or failure of interventions. In the light of this, the Capacity Building on Education for All (CapEFA) programme is to create institutional capacity of the Government and Ministry of Education and Sports to address issues hampering the recruitment, development

and retention of quality teachers. Technical deliberations with the Teacher Education Working Group (TEWG) members led to evidence based priority areas of actions utilizing the TISSA report.

The CapEFA implementation has four components: (i) strengthening of teacher management information system (TMIS); (ii) harmonization of teacher training programmes and Continuous Professional Development; (iii) teacher policy development; and (iv) establishment of a social dialogue platform for teacher welfare and status.

In order to continuously plan and manage teacher issues, there has to be a reliable and accurate information system. Such a system will allow planners and policy makers to monitor and ensure that the education system responds to the needs in all educational institutions, both in terms of demand and supply. Policy makers will also have ready access to information pertaining to teacher utilization and teacher projection in terms of access, efficiency and effectiveness.

Admissions to teacher training institutions and delivery of teacher education should respond to the market demands both at global and national levels. The existing teacher policy has weaknesses in addressing: pre-service and in-service training; teacher performance standards; appraisal and school based assessment; teacher management – licensing, registration, code of conduct, terms and conditions of teachers, recruitment and deployment among others.

### Status of strategies to address teacher issues



*A teacher supervises pupils doing a test under a tree at Awir Primary School in Apac District. The school has over 1,500 pupils but with limited classrooms and picture of Olelpek P.S no staffroom*

Although the Ugandan government and other organizations involved in the education sector have put in place many interventions aimed at improving access and the quality of education, inadequate measures exist to address the professionalism plight of teachers. Therefore, a comprehensive teacher policy with pragmatic political support is required. This process has been initiated and a drafting team constituted by the Permanent Secretary (PS), MoES.

The process of policy development is contingent on the existence of political readiness to enact policy. The fact that Uganda has already initiated the identification of problems requiring policy decision is a step in the right direction.

This forum provides a means of initiating consultation for the drafting of the policy. A Teacher policy has to be holistic/comprehensive, participatory, flexible/dynamic, and useful for advocacy purposes. It should be followed up for proper implementation and must be evaluated at intervals to update provisions based on existing reality. During the teacher stakeholder workshop, the PS, MoES noted the following “*teacher professional knowledge and skills are the most important factor for quality education. This requires stronger training upfront and continual professional development support to enhance performance and learning outcomes. My Ministry has put in place a range of efforts to improve teacher status through teacher professionalization and certification schemes. In addition, in recognition of the teachers’ role*

*the best performing head teachers were identified and their names published in newspapers”.*

### **Strategic engagement and partnership**

The role of UNESCO and other agencies is to promote capacity development to enhance institutional mechanisms for sustainable development. Ensuring quality teaching needs to be a national priority through strong national policies, in order to improve learning and teaching so that all school children obtain the skills and knowledge they are meant to acquire.

Development partners are ready to support the government to put in place plans and approaches to improve teacher quality that should include consultation with teachers and teacher unions. The Global partnership in education is one such intervention that allows the Government to address school improvement and teacher effectiveness.

In celebrating the World Teacher Day 2014, UNESCO selected the theme, ***“invest in the future...invest in teachers”***. The investment referred to is based on four main strategies: attract and recruit the best candidates to teaching; train all teachers well by providing good quality pre-service and ongoing teacher education; allocate the best teachers to where they are most needed, including disadvantaged areas, by providing incentives to work in remote areas; and provide incentives to retain teachers by remunerating them well enough to meet at least their basic needs and ensure an attractive career path.

Policy-makers must integrate implementation strategies on teachers into existing or envisaged policies on education to ensure quality learning and ultimately the acquisition of skills for economic development towards the achievement of Vision 2040.



## *Members of Parliament opinions and insights on how best the country can achieve universal education of acceptable quality*

In 1997, the Government introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme, which was followed in 2007 by the Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme with the aim of making Uganda's education system equitable and accessible for all citizens.

The introduction of free Primary and Secondary Education programmes was also meant to reduce poverty in the country by equipping every individual with basic skills. The two programmes have, however, come under increased public attack owing to the poor quality of students produced. Other factors, such as limited funding, high teacher-to-pupil ratio, high student dropout rate, absenteeism by both the teachers and students and ill motivated staff are also cited as problematic features of UPE and USE.

While the two programmes have had disheartening challenges with regards to the caliber of students produced, its successes, such as the significant increases in student enrolment numbers in primary and secondary schools, should not be downplayed.

We interviewed Members of Parliament (MPs) who sit on the Parliamentary Education committee to ask them how best the country can achieve universal education of acceptable quality in Uganda.

Below are the MPs' opinions and insights:



*Hon. Gudoi Yahaya*

Bungokho North County MP, Hon. Gudoi Yahaya, a teacher by profession and a long serving educationist, believes that the country can achieve universal education of acceptable standards if all actors including parents, teachers, learners and central government, play their role effectively. Parents, he says, should monitor their children's attendance and performance at school; and they should, furthermore, equip them with all of the necessities required to succeed at school, such as uniforms, scholastic materials and food. "Parents should make sure that their children have enough to eat at school; teachers should be well remunerated by the government; and both parents and the local leadership should motivate and support teachers by providing them with free accommodation at schools; attending school meetings on a regularly basis and implementation resolutions agreed to at such meetings," he said. He added that; "Teachers should be regular and punctual at school and should adhere to the teachers' code of conduct as

stipulated by government. The schools' code of conduct, which all teachers are expected to adhere to, clearly bars defilement, beating, absenteeism and dressing in an inappropriate manner.

He also pointed out that "...central government should give teachers a living wage commensurate to the current needs of the country and give capitation grant according to the current cost of items that go to schools. "Shs6,000 given as capitation grant per pupil per annum is meaningless," he said.

***"Shs6,000 given as capitation grant per pupil per annum is meaningless"***



*Hon. Sarah Lanyero*

Hon. Sarah Lanyero, the Education Committee chairperson and Lamwo woman MP points out that the issue of teachers' remuneration must be treated as a top government priority. "Basically, the issue of remuneration must be addressed as a top priority to ensure that teachers remain motivated. The teachers are paid too little and often not on time," she says.

She advises that the scheme of service must be implemented to ensure that teachers are paid differently according to their years of service to reward their experience and expertise. "This scheme was put in place; but it is not being properly implemented. The

Ministry of Education blames the lack of its implementation on the Ministry of Public Service. In the scheme of service, if you have just joined teaching, there must be an increment yearly that is reflected on your salary but it's not being implemented. More teachers are now running away from the profession," she observed.

***the scheme of service must be implemented to ensure that teachers are paid differently according to their years of service to reward their experience and expertise.***



*Hon. Sylvia Namabidde*

Hon. Sylvia Namabidde, former Education Committee chairperson, shared the same sentiments regarding teachers' remuneration, delayed release of capitation grants and lack of teachers' accommodation, advising that government must tackle the challenges as a matter of urgency. "Government must ensure that the teachers are of acceptable standards and well-motivated. Reforms have been made to the national curriculum; however, focus must now be turned to ensuring that teachers are remunerated fairly to ensure that they remain motivated and committed to remaining within the teaching profession. The government can build classrooms, and release capitation

grants on time - but if there are no teachers, then students cannot learn" she said.

***The government can build classrooms, and release capitation grants on time - but if there are no teachers, then students cannot learn***



*Hon. Jacob Opolot*

Hon. Jacob Opolot, the Pallisa County MP and the deputy chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Education concurred with MP Gudo's proposal that all stakeholders must be brought on board to agree and come up with a harmonized position on improved quality. "Politics must be removed out of this programme to avoid undermining the quality of education on offer. The government must allocate substantive resources for schools; but overall, the national budget is misleading because what is announced is not what is released to

***the national budget is misleading because what is announced is not what is released to the Ministry of Education,***

the Ministry of Education,” he said. If only Shs700 billion of the national budget is released, you are not being sincere because it means a very small percentage is released. Also inspection requires a lot of money but these are not well facilitated.



*Hon. Joseph Gonzaga  
Ssewungu*

Kalungu West MP, Hon. Joseph Gonzaga Ssewungu who together with the Initiative for Economic and Social Rights (ISER) took government to court over reduction of UPE capitation grants says the country can achieve quality education for as long as government remains committed to this cause. “In Rwanda, government is committed to delivering free education and their capitation grant is significantly higher compared to what is released to schools here .We have to look at so many factors,

***“In Rwanda, government is committed to delivering free education and their capitation grant is significantly higher compared to what is released to schools here .***

including infrastructural development. How do we develop physical education, how do we bring back the mindset of parents to support UPE? In Rwanda for instance, all primary schools have computers – our government must also now start to walk the talk.

Feeding in schools is not official so there is currently no policy regulating the feeding of school children,” he remarked.

***there is currently no policy regulating the feeding of school children***



*Hon. Gertrude Nakabira*

The Lwengo district woman MP, Hon. Gertrude Nakabira emphasized the importance of school inspections. “Inspectors of schools should be remunerated so that they do inspection on a daily basis. Local leadership should have their own by-laws and ordinances that can crack down on indiscipline in the schools they manage,” she said.

***“Inspectors of schools should be remunerated so that they do inspection on a daily basis.***



## *The impact of privatization on access to education*

**By Moses Talemwa, Education Editor at the Observer Newspaper**

In January 2014, the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC) released the results of the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) of the previous year. The results saw Kabojja Junior Primary School and Winston Primary School, register a 100 per cent performance in division one: in other words, the pupils at both schools obtained a pass in the top tier or first division. Also on the list were Mbarara Municipal School, which registered the highest number of pupils passing in division one in the whole country at 293, followed by City Parents' School with 233, Kampala Parents Primary School with 209 and Greenhill Academy with 201.

While these were not the only schools which performed well, it is notable that the overwhelming majority of schools in this category were private schools. As parents and pupils celebrated the results, many top-performing schools raised their tuition fees by between Shs 100,000 – Shs 250,000. The reason proffered was that there was a need to motivate teachers to continue churning out good results in future. Thus parents at Kabojja Junior Primary School and Kampala Parents Primary School are now paying over Shs 1.3 million per term for their pupils' education, higher than the university fees paid by some private students! Complaints have also been expressed by the parents of children attending City Parents' School and Mbarara Municipal School, who are paying fees of over Shs 850,000 per term. These parents are grumbling because while they are pleased that the schools are doing well, they are worried that the next set of PLE results will see further tuition fees of up to Shs 100,000.

*As parents and pupils celebrated the results, many top-performing schools raised their tuition fees by between Shs 100,000 – Shs 250,000.*

Primary school parents are not the only ones grumbling. Nursery schools in the urban areas are also increasing their fees, with fees ranging from Shs 300,000 at the lower end to Shs 900,000 per term! What is the rationale for this? Many of these nursery schools market themselves as providing a good learning environment, and cultivating a setting that motivates their pupils; increasing their prospects of gaining access to elite primary schools at P1. Overwhelmed by the number of parents seeking to get their children into schools such as Kabojja, City Parents, Winston and Kampala Parents, nursery school owners are hiking fees to reduce the number of children enrolled in a bid to uphold the prestige of the nursery schools in question.

At secondary school, the trend continues with large numbers of parents turned away at such elite institutions as St Mary's SS Kitende and Uganda Martyrs SS Namugongo, even in cases where they can afford the exorbitant fees, which in some cases now stand at over Shs 1 million per term.

### **How we got here**

Kampala Parents School (initially Kampala Primary School), which was established in 1973 by Edward Kasole, was the first secular private school to be opened in the country. Prior to this, however, there were several faith-based institutions in the country, which dated back as early as 1895 like Mengo SS. Faith-based or missions schools only embraced Ugandans who subscribed to the faith of the institution, excluding those who did not conform. To address this, the government started public schools. For instance, schools such as Masaka SS were started to address access challenges faced by Muslims in that area, while Jinja SS was started to



support Ugandans of Asian descent. There are many other examples of schools established to address this challenge. Public schools were intended to deal with gaps in accessibility. However, currently, the vast majority of schools are privately owned, or run.

Over time, and particularly as the economy struggled in the 1980's, the central government started to support more of the faith-based schools, initially with scholastic materials. Those who attended these schools, recall with nostalgia, receiving books and pens, labeled "property of the government –not for sale". Also around this time, several schools received trucks from the government, which they used not only for school purposes but also to raise additional funds by hiring out the trucks.

By 1986, many private schools were buckling under the strain of supporting themselves and so they appealed to the government for greater support. The argument at the time was that additional support for these schools would enable them to take on more students. Persuaded by this line of argument, the government started what is now known as the school capitation grant, a fund granted by the government each term, to support learning in schools. Initially the grant was given in unison with internally generated funds in faith-based schools (known as the Parents and Teachers' Association - PTA). The PTA fee was used to supplement the salary paid to teachers and staff by means of the school capitation grant. However, for schools affected by the volatile political situation or overwhelmed by increasing enrolment, it was insufficient to support the construction of new classrooms and dormitories.

### **Increased access to learning**

By 1994 various studies by the Ministry of Education found that despite government support to schools, more than 50 per cent of children of school-going age were not enrolled in educational facilities. Thus in 1997, the government introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme and later the Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme to address the enrolment shortfall.

The move dramatically increased enrolment in schools from less than 800,000 in 1996 to over 3million by the end of 1997. That number has since doubled according to the latest head count conducted by the Ministry of Education and Sports. What is pertaining in the market is a mix of private but government-aided faith-based institutions, public schools and private institutions. Most of these schools receive assistance from the state in one way or the other. Some receive the school capitation grant, while others receive assistance with respect to scholastic materials such as books, desks and chairs, etc. Others even receive assistance with the construction of classrooms.

In all, the education sector has managed to work for increased access to education, as seen by the increase in enrolments. That being said, school dropout, particularly among girls continues to be a major worry. There is also a glaring divide in terms of the quality of education provided by schools. UNEB results show that elite private schools provide the best education followed by faith-based institutions, public schools, and finally more recently established private schools pulling up the rear.

### **Consequence of privatization**

Prof Edward Rugumayo, Chancellor at Uganda Pentecostal University in Kabarole, has studied the discrepancy in the quality of education provided by public and private institutions. In his opinion, the privatization of the education sector has done more harm than good. Prof. Rugumayo



*A shack constructed of tin sheets and tree branches serves as a staff room at Nakagere UMEA Primary School in Mukono District.*

recently told *The Independent Magazine* that “[t]he standards vary enormously, ranging from the elite owned and managed [schools] where fees are as high as those one pays at universities in developed countries, to the lowest where children live like animals. [We see] overcrowded schools ... students living on top of each other’s heads, so to speak; three-level beds; overfilled toilets; barely adequate food, poor sanitation [as well as] compromised safety standards.” Prof. Rugumayo complains that in some

of the schools, the proprietors are only interested in increasing their enrolment to earn even bigger profits. “So discipline and moral standards are ignored. In the absence of a good educational environment that fosters self-discipline, such students tend to indulge in drug taking, alcohol, sex and other destructive activities.”

Dr. Euzobia Baine Mugisha of Makerere University agrees with Prof. Rugumayo, explaining that since 1988 when the first private university was opened, the winds of change have swept Uganda’s higher education sector to change how it is financed and managed. “The shift has seen the state move from being the predominant provider of education to fully private institutions, operated as commercial enterprises, carving out a significant niche alongside and in many instances outperforming state-owned ones. Even institutions that are still owned by the state are being run on the basis of free market principles,” she writes. The two dons argue that this relaxed attitude to the supervision of schools, if left unfettered, could develop into a full blown crisis whereby the wealthy are assured of quality education whilst poorer Ugandans are resigned to accessing whatever education they can.

Prof. Rugumayo advocates for greater prioritization of the school inspectorate system to ensure good learning standards across the board. “The current global crisis has shown that unregulated privatization has failed... There should be a consolidation of the gains made thus far, without unnecessary expansion,” Prof. Rugumayo says. “Teachers’ salaries need to be improved. [Government should] set up a strong centralised school inspectorate that is well facilitated, and adheres to high professional and ethical standards. Sports and other extra-curricular activities must also be given due attention.” Rugumayo adds that it is not too late for government

***“[t]he standards vary enormously, ranging from the elite owned and managed [schools] where fees are as high as those one pays at universities in developed countries, to the lowest where children live like animals.”***

***this relaxed attitude to the supervision of schools, if left unfettered, could develop into a full blown crisis whereby the wealthy are assured of quality education whilst poorer Ugandans are resigned to accessing whatever education they can.***

***our leaders should muddy their boots, roll up their sleeves, face the crisis head on and reclaim the moral high ground which they have lost.”***

to improve the state of education. “It is the duty of government to regulate market forces otherwise the law of the jungle will take over ... our leaders should muddy their boots, roll up their sleeves, face the crisis head on and reclaim the moral high ground which they have lost.”

### **Hope for the future**

The Ministry of Education, concerned about the criticism of the sector by Prof. Rugumayo and others, has formulated guidelines to help improve standards at all private schools, from primary to secondary. These guidelines were launched in September 2014 by Dr. Robinson Nsumba Lyazi, the ministry’s Commissioner in charge of Private Schools.

The guidelines stipulate that all private schools should have qualified head teachers, at least seven teachers (all registered by the ministry), administrative and financial records, a formal school bank account, at least five acres of land in a safe and secure environment, enrolment of not more than 40 pupils per class per teacher, one pit latrine or toilet for every 40 pupils by sex, proper security and an operational school board of governors. Not surprising, some private school operators have expressed concerns that the guidelines are too onerous. However, Dr. Nsumba Lyazi insists that the standards must be upheld.

Notwithstanding this, elite private schools continue to perform well, at least in so far as UNEB standards are concerned, churning out some of the best brains in the country. Consequently, parents who can afford private school fees are willing to pay top shilling to ensure that their children attain a high standard of education regardless of how one gets access.



## *Highlights from alternative reports submitted to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ahead of Uganda's review in June 2015.*

### **1. Alternative report on privatization in education**

The Report was submitted by the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) and the Global Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (GI-ESCR), with the support of the Privatization in Education Research Initiative, the Right to Education Project, Education International, the Global Campaign for Education, the Africa Network Campaign on Education For All, the Girls Education Movement Uganda Chapter, and the Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU).

This report demonstrates that:

- Parents are often forced to resort to private schools because the Ugandan public education system is largely failing, while private schools have common perceptions of better quality;
- Despite this, and although privatization in education is growing, government financing for public education is decreasing. This is contrary to international standards that require that privatization should only supplement public education;
- The State party is gradually releasing itself from its obligation to provide quality public education for all, as it is increasingly relying on private actors to provide education;
- The fees attached to privately provided education are bound to result in discrimination by keeping more children out of school, particularly those from low-income households and especially girls;
- The growing private sector in education has not been matched by appropriate regulatory, supervision and monitoring frameworks, resulting in many concerning issues in private schools.

Basing on work that has been done in Uganda and six other countries<sup>1</sup> around privation in education, the report recommends that, while private education should and must be allowed, private education must:

- Not lead to the creation of or reinforce extreme disparities or discrimination of any sort, or be a factor of segregation or division in societies in general and education in particular;
- Provide for a true alternative choice to quality public education, and not replace the public system, as the State retains the responsibility to offer quality public education for all;

<sup>1</sup> See <http://globalinitiative-escr.org/advocacy/privatization-in-education-research-initiative/international-advocacy-on-privatisation-in-education/>

- Not lead to a marketization of education which would entail that education is no longer directed to the full development of a child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest, but instead only to achieving measurable outcomes, which would be contrary to the aims of education recognised in human rights law;
- Be adequately regulated, both in law and in practice, with adequate inspection staffing, effective accountability mechanisms, and without corruption; and
- Be subject to democratic scrutiny, and open to the human rights principles of transparency and participation.

Please visit this link for the full report: [http://www.iser-uganda.org/images/stories/Downloads/ISER\\_GIESCR\\_report\\_to\\_UNCESCR.pdf](http://www.iser-uganda.org/images/stories/Downloads/ISER_GIESCR_report_to_UNCESCR.pdf)

## **2. List of issues in connection with the initial report of Uganda on public primary education in Uganda**

The Report was submitted by the Uganda Civil Society Coalition on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and raises the following key issues:

- The Declining Quality of UPE Literacy and Numeracy Skills;
- Stagnation/retrogression in Primary Education Financing (Capitation and School Facilitation Grants);
- Inadequate infrastructure affecting delivery of free, quality and compulsory Primary Education including (insufficient classrooms, teacher residences, furniture and poor sanitation and hygiene);
- The Right to Education is not enjoyed equally by all Ugandans.

To access the full report, please visit the link below:

[http://iser-uganda.org/images/stories/Downloads/CSO\\_alternative\\_report\\_on\\_right\\_to\\_education.pdf](http://iser-uganda.org/images/stories/Downloads/CSO_alternative_report_on_right_to_education.pdf)

## *And from the field*

### ***(A) Poor sanitation and hygiene compromises the quality of education in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Uganda***

**By Ramathan Wandera, Former ISER Intern/ Student of Law Makerere University**

Since education is a human right<sup>21</sup>, all children are entitled to access free, quality and compulsory primary education<sup>22</sup>. All people have the right to receive education that equips them with the knowledge and skills for economic sufficiency, enables participation in civil society and an understanding of and respect for their own human rights and those of others.<sup>23</sup> In order to enjoy the right to education, a suitable learning environment must be provided. Clean and hygienic toilet facilities are an essential component of any such an environment, given the considerable length of time that people spend in educational institutions.

The successful provision of quality sanitation and hygiene facilities in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools in Uganda has presented a significant challenge to the government for some time, despite various efforts by government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to address this issue. A considerable number of schools still do not have sufficient toilets, urinals, water sources and hand washing facilities of an adequate standard to meet the needs of the students enrolled.

This state of affairs has been made worse by the increased enrollment of pupils in UPE schools in recent years, which has resulted in additional demands being placed on already inadequate facilities. This observation was borne out by our field visit to Apac District, where we found poor sanitation and hygiene facilities.

In Abelokweri Primary School, for example the total enrollment was 1,196 pupils, (496 boys and 700 girls); however, both the boys and girls had only one toilet each with five stances, which translates to 140 girls sharing one stance and 99 boys sharing a single stance – clearly insufficient to ensure the maintenance of a sanitary and hygienic educational environment conducive to learning.

***In Abelokweri Primary School, for example the total enrollment was 1,196 pupils, (496 boys and 700 girls); however, both the boys and girls had only one toilet***

In Alwal Primary School, where the total number of pupils enrolled was 750 pupils (400 girls and 350 boys), there were only 4 toilets [one toilet with 4 stances] provided for girls. By implication this means that each stance would serve an average of 100 girls. Even more distressing, however, was the poor condition of these stances, as can be discerned from the photo below.

21 Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

22 Article 26 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

23 UNICEF report 2007 on education





*At Abelokweri Primary School in Apac District, inadequate latrines contribute to the spread of water borne and bacterial infections and offer pupils no privacy, which is especially important to girl pupils during menstruation.*

In the light of the above, it should come as no surprise that the poor sanitation and hygiene in UPE schools has adversely affected the quality of education provided and partly to blame for the increase of school dropout rates. School dropout rates resulting from poor sanitation disproportionately affects the girl child, and it has been observed that over years many girls enroll in the lower classes but few finish primary seven. One of the reasons attributed to this phenomenon is the poor sanitation and hygiene conditions found in many schools, which do not favour girls, particularly during their menstrual periods. Many girls are, consequently, compelled to stay at home, during which time they miss lessons or exams, which invariably impacts negatively on their academic performance, and in the long run may result in some girls abandoning their studies completely.

Accordingly, one of the head teachers interviewed during the field visit stated the following;

“...[Because water is not piped into the school] pupils move long distances looking for water and some end up not attending classes more especially after lunch. It sometimes makes it hard to clean the toilets on a daily basis and to provide water for pupils to wash their hands after using the latrines. The poor sanitation in these schools has greatly affected the learning environment for girls generally in that many have contracted diseases resulting from using these dirty toilets, others stay at home more especially when they are on their periods because the hygiene at school is not good, some lack pads to use... and this makes many stay at home and in the end they miss exams and classes. For this school for example out of 289 pupils who missed exams last term, 200 were girls mostly in upper classes and I think some of the reasons behind was that some lacked pads...; others stay at home because they are not in [a] position to use these toilets...[during] their periods and you find that the dropout rate for girls is very high.....”

***For this school for example out of 289 pupils who missed exams last term, 200 were girls mostly in upper classes***

In conclusion, the government should allocate more resources to improve hygiene and sanitation facilities in UPE schools. It can do this by increasing the School Facilitation Grant that caters for school infrastructure including toilets, hand washing facilities, sanitary towels and the like. This would go a long way towards ensuring that government provides not only access to free education, but equally importantly, an environment conducive to the delivery of quality education as well as the retention of pupils, particularly girls who are disproportionately affected by poor sanitation and hygiene conditions in schools.

Parents also have a pivotal role to play in reducing the exceedingly high dropout rate, more especially for girls. Parent as the primary care-givers of pupils ought to advise and strongly urge their children to attend school regularly; parents should be advised of the negative effects of forcing children into marriage at an early age. These are just some of the measures advocated to enhance implementation of the right to education.

### ***(B) The failing Universal Primary Education (UPE) System in Uganda: State failure to invest in the nation's future***

From May 2014 to August 2014, the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) visited a number of UPE schools in the districts of Apac, Kayunga and Mukono to document school conditions. The most common challenges observed were inadequate infrastructure, lack of supplies and poor sanitation. A photo essay; The failing Universal Primary Education (UPE) System in Uganda: State failure to invest in the nation's future; was published in August 2014.

To access the photo essay, please visit:

[http://www.iser-uganda.org/images/stories/Downloads/ISER\\_photoessay\\_August\\_2014.pdf](http://www.iser-uganda.org/images/stories/Downloads/ISER_photoessay_August_2014.pdf)



# ISER

Facilitating Social Justice

## About the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights - Uganda

*ISER is a registered national Non – Governmental Organization (NGO) in Uganda founded in February 2012 to ensure full recognition, accountability and realization of social and economic rights primarily in Uganda but also within the East African region.*

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