



ISER

Facilitating Social Justice

INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS



February 2019

Introduction

The conference was organized by the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)¹ in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) Basic Education and Secondary Education Department under the theme *Governance and Accountability in Primary Schools in Uganda* on 28th February 2019 at Hotel Africana in Kampala.

School Management Committees (SMCs) are one of the governance structures in primary schools charged with the responsibility of managing and overseeing the schools for which they have been established. SMCs are provided for under the Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post- Primary) Act 2008. Parents, pupils, foundation bodies are other accountability structures that are supposed to hold the school accountable.

One of the key priority interventions for the Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017- 2020 under Strategic objective 2 (i) on ensuring delivery of relevant and quality education and training, government considers strengthening the current inspection and supervision system of schools. The focus here is on the quality of leadership and management, among other things. Further, the government plans to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that strengthens community and parent participation in the affairs of the schools.

ISER's research on Citizen Participation in Local Government Service Delivery Processes in Uganda indicated that the increased teacher- pupil absenteeism and declining education standards are attributed to poor school governance.²

It is against this background that this conference was convened to explore the opportunities and challenges of governance and accountability structures in primary schools as well as come up with recommendations to strengthen the system.

The meeting was officially opened by the Director Basic and Secondary Education MoES Hajji Ismail Mulindwa and closed by the Permanent Secretary MoES Mr. Alex Kakooza. It attracted over 150 participants including officers from the MoES head quarters in Kampala representing different departments, District Education Officers (DEOs), Inspectors of Schools, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Development Partners, Head Teachers and Teachers, Members of SMCs and Community Advocates monitoring the right to education in different local governments. Please see Annex 1 for the full list of participants.

¹ ISER is an independent, not-for-profit human rights organization responsible for promoting the effective understanding, monitoring, implementation and realization of Economic and Social Rights in Uganda including the right to education.

²https://www.iseruganda.org/images/Citizen_Participation_in_Local_Government_Service_Delievry_Processes_in_Uganda.pdf

Conference Concluding Observations and Recommendations

A multifaceted approach is needed to strengthening governance and accountability in primary schools that involves among others Local Governments (LGs), community members and development partners that contribute to the financing of education in Uganda.

Key in terms of strengthening governance and leading to better quality education is the issue of social accountability. As government works to strengthen upward accountability by for example head teachers working well, school inspectors working well, and effective parliamentary oversight; downward accountability to the beneficiaries of the education system is also very critical.

School Management Committees (SMCs) as a governance structure for primary schools do not understand their roles and responsibilities. SMCs must be inducted and trained once appointed and the responsibility lies with the District Education Office and Municipal Education Office in the case of municipalities.

The issue of community participation as regards schools' governance and accountability can be addressed through community dialogues. The Ministry of Education and Sports is already holding some dialogues with LGs but this is largely donor driven and it is being implemented in areas of interest of donors. There is need for the Ministry of Education and Sports to institutionalize these dialogues. Community participation in the management of private schools needs to be addressed especially in light of the fact that the foundation body might be a one person calling.

There is urgent need to review the legal and policy framework that provides for governance and accountability in schools especially the 2nd Schedule of the Education Act about SMCs guidelines. If it is envisaged that for instance reviewing the Education Act 2008 might be a long process, the Minister of Education has powers under the Act to issue regulations with advise from the Director of Education (Director Basic and Secondary Education).

LGs should always work closely with foundation bodies to select/appoint persons with some requisite experience and reasonable education background to be able to manage schools including the head teacher. However, it was noted that there is a need to find a balance between qualifications of SMCs members and community participation. On qualifications of SMCs, the PS noted that in law there is a general rule and an exception. If in a particular area there are no people who are qualified it can be taken as an exception. *“It would be very good to have people who know what teaching means, what education means, what inspection means and those will be the people to raise the relevant questions when things are going wrong. SMCs should have people who have some level of education not like people who fail to swear in English, this is education.”*

On the foundation bodies being too powerful and compromising SMC functioning. It was acknowledged that foundation bodies have a number of unresolved issues but everything should be done in the interest of learners. The PS called for dialogue with foundation bodies because *“we do not want to pull in different directions. When we*

discuss and agree the sum total is bigger than when each one of us goes in a different direction.”

Head teachers need training in management similar to business. The PS too agreed with participants that there is a problem with training of head teachers because they are recruited from teachers and have never done management, never heard of Public Finance and Management (PFM) Act, or Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets (PPDA) Act, and they in most cases do not intend to abuse their powers. The MoES is thinking of talking to Uganda Management Institute (UMI) to have a particular course that is tailored to training head teachers in management.

Related to the above, the training for head teachers will be done in preparation to have the teacher policy. The teacher policy is to help professionalize the teaching profession in this country and one of the components is to establish an institute for teacher training basically for professional development including management but in the interim the ministry is discussing with UMI to manage the training.

Parents Teachers Association (PTAs) are currently not provided for in the Education Act. Discussions of reviving them should consider addressing gaps that were associated with them and addressed. The School Management Committees (SMCs) accounting and reporting mechanism confirmed to be under the District Education Office.

Is the money for monitoring and inspection inadequate? The ministry has increased the amount of money given to DEOs and inspectors of schools to inspect schools. The only challenge now according to the PS MoES is how the money is being spent. The PS referred to a recent circular he wrote to the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Local Government about the district chairpersons and Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) about utilization of money for inspection. *“We know that when the money comes to the district, it is shared instead of giving it to the DEO and his team. It is spread, everybody gets this money and therefore you do not get enough to use on the actual inspection of schools. We buy you vehicles and they are taken away from you and you do not put in the resolution. It is not an issue anymore that we are not giving you enough money, we know we are giving you enough money it is how you are using it.”*

Local governments need to make motivations and LG rewards and sanctions committees functional. Additionally, head teachers need to conduct internal supervision. The PS Education is working with the PS local government to make sure that office of the DEO is strengthened. Among the proposed new reforms include setting up some regional offices so that the ministry can come closer to the local government and especially get down to the teacher network.

Teachers houses to be prioritized in the strategic plan 2021/ 2025, participants called on to participate in regional consultations. *“Teacher housing, as a ministry we are thinking about it and as a ministry whenever we go into a school we have a comprehensive plan including construction of teachers houses because we know that there is a correlation between absenteeism and housing,”* noted the PS.

DEOs and head teachers tasked to make follow up and clap down on people who use teaching positions existing in hard to reach areas like islands to access the payroll but never report to those schools. Ps affirmed that when teachers are appointed, the

appointment letter says your date of assumption of duty will be the first day one reports to work and it is the head teacher to inform the ministry that the teacher has reported. *“You are not permanent and pensionable you are on probation because if you do not report you have not started work.”*

Relatedly, DEOs tasked to help head teachers and teachers access the payroll because when they are posted they take long to access the payroll. Teacher motivation is not how much they are paid but timely payments and the right amount and this is not happening. *“A number of teachers struck of the payroll for a simple thing and getting back is a challenge. We have people who have deserted but are on a payroll but the ones teaching are not we hope DEOs embrace this work and do what is required.”*

Teacher presence and time-on-task is one of the key challenges affecting the education sector in Uganda today. Many districts local governments have deployed and posted teachers to schools but the output has still remained very low in terms of results achieved.

From time to time, the Ministry of Education has developed policies, guidelines, regulations and standards in consultation with the stakeholders in education. Follow up needs to be done to check on the implementation. There is need to translate materials like guidelines for the implementation of Universal Primary and Secondary Education in local languages. An example is the MoES 2008 Guidelines on Policy, Planning Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders in the Implementation of UPE and USE for Districts and Urban Councils. This is aimed at re-awakening stakeholders’ commitment to offer quality education in addition to strengthening governance and accountability in schools. The onus is on the LGs, and schools who are at the implementation level to ensure that these policies and guidelines are adhered to.

DEOs, inspector of schools and community advocates to continue the discussion on school governance and accountability in their respective forums so that it gets to everyone.

Welcome Remarks by the ISER Executive Director, Ms Salima Namusobya

The ISER Executive Director Ms. Salima Namusobya welcomed participants to the meeting to discuss issues of governance and accountability especially at the primary level. Ms. Namusobya explained that ISER works on a number of issues relating to health, education, business and human rights, social accountability and citizen participation, and economic inclusion. She hastened to add that specific on education ISER works to ensure that all children have access to quality education regardless of their social status, including ensuring that even the vulnerable groups are able to access the education that is necessary to turn them into well developed citizens and be able to contribute to the country but also the world generally.

She thanked the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) for working with ISER over the years to strive to ensure that *‘we achieve quality education in this country’*. She elaborated that ISER has worked together with the MoES around so many issues for example regarding regulation of private actors, the rising cost of education that is

proving to be unaffordable, issues around Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and others.

Ms. Namusobya observed that Uganda has worked so hard to increase access to education and indeed there is an increase in enrollment of also marginalized groups for example girls, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs),



children from minority groups and so on. However, she recognized that there are still challenges including with quality and this has been recognized by both government reports and reports from non state actors including reports from CSOs, development partners and other players and highlighted that there is still work to do in terms of improving the quality of education in this country.

She emphasized that as the country embarks on fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially Goal No.4 that talks about inclusive education for all, there is need to strengthen governance and accountability in schools which is why ISER deemed it fit to have a conference on governance and accountability according priority to primary education as it is one of the important stages of education and needed concentration. She called for a multifaceted approach to strengthening governance and accountability that involves among others Local Governments (LGs), community members and development partners that contribute to the financing of education in Uganda.

One of the areas ISER considers key in terms of strengthening governance and leading to better quality education is the issue of social accountability, and as government works to strengthen upward accountability, head teachers working well, school inspectors working well, parliamentary oversight; downward accountability to the beneficiaries of the education system is also very critical.

She announced that ISER has secured a grant from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) under which there has been recruitment of Community Advocates (CAs) from various districts who will among others monitor the governance in schools and ensure that the schools are more accountable. She introduced the CAs present at the meeting from the districts of Namayingo, Kumi, Kayunga and Mukono. CAs are volunteers from within the community committing to ensure that the education sector improves. ISER will be working with the CAs to ensure that they interact with the schools to see that even parents play their role. They will be formally introduced to the local

governance structures and head teachers to see how they can work hand in hand with communities to improve quality of education.

Also under that grant, Ms. Namusobya explained that ISER will be working with School Management Committees (SMCs) to build their capacity in districts where ISER has Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) like Kumi, Buikwe, Kayunga, and Wakiso to improve governance and accountability in various schools where they are.

At the legal and policy level, she informed the participants that ISER has been analyzing the Education Act and the Regulations governing the SMCs at the primary level and Board of Governors (BoGs) at the secondary level and found gaps that need to be looked into, and made several recommendations. The ISER Program Manager in charge of the Right to Education Ms. Saphina Nakulima spoke to this research later in the programme. ISER will formally forward it to the MoES for action.

Ms. Namusobya was hopeful that the meeting will identify opportunities and challenges that exist within the area of governance and accountability in various schools and that stakeholders present would be able to make recommendations that the MoES and Parliament can work with but also various stakeholders present i.e CSOs to improve quality of education in Ugandan schools.

She thanked again the MoES for the cooperation in organizing the conference and ensuring that the right people are in the room.

Opening Remarks by the Director Basic and Secondary Education Ministry of Education and Sports, Hajji Ismael Mulindwa

Haji Ismail Mulindwa was excited by the rich mix of participants including head teachers, MPs, teachers, Inspectors of schools, District Education Officers (DEOs), CSOs, community advocates, development partners and community members adding that he has not seen such a forum in recent times in the education sector. He elaborated that normally forums have one team may be of DEOs, and have parents on the other side. He said that this is the way to go and appreciated what ISER is doing for the MoES especially the opportunity to interface to get to know what is happening on the ground.

Haji Mulindwa recognized the presence of MPs including the Deputy Vice Chair of the Education Committee of Parliament and noted that the current committee is quite different from the many that existed before and assured participants that that issues to be discussed at the conference will get to the highest level.

He appreciated ISER and his colleagues at the MoES for the good mobilization to have a diverse team and underscored the need for a similar meeting for the secondary education sub sector. He told participants that the conference theme is very clear, *“governance and accountability in primary schools in Uganda. That is where we have gone wrong. In terms of infrastructure, government has done some work but when it comes to governance and accountability we have issues and we are the right people to address this. How do we account? How do we make sure our schools are properly governed? SMCs are in words, not doing what they are supposed to do.”*

Mr. Mulindwa explained that Government has done whatever it takes, built schools, though he acknowledged that the country still has some poor ones but hopeful that with time will address the few that are remaining.

He gave an example that in recent times when Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) results are released, something strange happens like parents, SMCs chasing away the head teacher because he failed to perform. He explained that it is not the head teacher that has failed to perform because the SMC is supposed to supervise the head teacher. SMCs failed to do their part. He maintained that the SMC is responsible for whatever is happening in the school.

How have we failed? Mr. Mulindwa said this touches a number of issues starting from the constitution of the team [SMC], do we identify the right people to be on the SMC? Some SMCs members do not have the capacity to ask questions or guide the head teacher then you do not expect much. He tasked the DEOs and Inspectors of schools to make sure schools have got the right people in coming up with the committees. He noted that he had interacted some SMC members but they even do not know if a budget exists or what it is they are supposed to do instead they just go to a meeting to get the small allowance. *“If you do not know the budget and it is one of the things you are supposed to look at and approve, do you deserve to be a member of that committee? Where everything is rotating, can’t find a file, minutes of things discussed, how are you going to run the school? But why I am putting it to you as members of the committee it is because it is you supposed to ask this head teacher what happened here, why this, why don’t we do this?”*

He squarely blamed the head teacher for not providing guidance because by default he/she is also part of the governance as secretary to the committee. He said that some of the SMC members are picked from the local environment and some have never been exposed, do not know much about management of schools and need to be guided but people are only interested in guiding on finances that is where the interest is. He said if head teachers do not practice good governance then they will never be accountable adding that there is no way one can account if management has got issues.

He explained that people think of accountability in terms of money but this is limited as one is supposed to account for what they have done. He said that when government invests in education by for example paying head teachers they are expected to account in kind by producing good performance. He labored to explain that good performance is not necessarily the number of first grades that a particular school attains, *“that is where we have gone wrong by even cheating in examinations. You need to account in terms of the quality of learners produced at the end of the day, quality of staff you have, in terms of kind of school set up, SMC committee doing their part, in one way or the other you are accounting.”*

In concluding his remarks, he also accepted blame on behalf of the MoES and the government at large for the challenges experienced by the schools noting that some schools are struggling with only three teachers on pay roll and acknowledged that they have a role to play. He appreciated development partners like DGF for the support and asked everyone to be concerned that our children are not learning in reference to the recent World Bank report.

Remarks from Hon. Kiisa Stephen, Member of Parliament (MP) Luuka South, Busoga Region, Member of the Education Committee of Parliament and Member of the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Quality Education

Hon. Mukasa too appreciated the organizers and funders of the conference for touching ‘the heart of our schools’ in particular when looking at governance and accountability. Under the Education Committee of Parliament, Hon. Mukasa noted that he had the opportunity to visit primary schools across the country but on reaching the schools one could hardly know whether these schools have SMCs.

He welcomed the initiative by ISER to do capacity building for SMCs confirming that this will go a long way in enhancing governance and accountability. He echoed that as a teacher and a politician, most of the schools have a problem of politicking where you find a head teacher and members of SMCs not rhyming in decision-making because of involvement in local politics. He noted that this is a very serious matter as head teachers are posted on political grounds and SMCs have wings where they fall on political ground thus one can not expect good governance resulting from this and tasked all stakeholders to take this, as you matter into account as deliberations go on.

He said that he had discovered unnecessary conflict between foundation bodies of particularly church founded schools, SMCs and the school administration saying that these three are a problem in as far as governance and accountability is concerned.

Remarks from Hon. Twesigye John Ntamuhira, Vice Chair of the Education Committee of Parliament, Chair of the Parliamentary Forum on Quality Education

He thanked ISER and the MoES for the timely conference and theme. He informed participants that he was delegated by Chair of the Education Committee in Parliament Hon. Opolot Jacob.

He noted that the things up for discussion by the conference are what we do on a daily basis adding that while on oversight visits as a committee or as just as MPs they move to schools and find a lot of issues and sometimes wonder whether it is by choice. He noted that many things are wanting. He said that the responsibility lies with the head teacher because he is appointed and posted to a school to manage it. *“When it comes to accountability people think it is only accounting for funds given to the school. In my own thinking, first look at the children given to you by the parents, account for their presence, the few teachers. You as the head teacher how have you accounted for the few teachers, infrastructure? You go to some schools, wonder whether it is a school, I will not name them.”* He reechoed Hajji Mulindwa’s remarks regarding weakness on part of the MoES and government where some schools operating with 2 to 3 teachers and the failure to grant aid community schools because of the wage bill saying it is a very big problem. *“The community constructs a school and are willing to hand it over to government but government cannot take it on because of the wage bill something I have been grappling when looking at the budget. In some districts, children still studying under trees that also touches the ministry, when they come to discuss the education sector budget we shall put them on task to explain some of these issues.”*

As an educationist, he warned against focusing on money as a number one challenge because it will never be enough and instead called for better management of schools. He hastened to add that when they go to schools we are they are not looking for faults but to find out how they are operating and see how you can be assisted for the things to get better. He tasked the organizers of the conference to make sure recommendations reach the education committee of parliament to get the attention they require to improve the education system in the country.

Presentation on the Status of Governance and Accountability in Primary Schools by Assistant Commissioner Ibrahim Bigabwa

Mr. Bigabwa emphasized the principles of participation, transparency and accountability

In Uganda, under the Ministry of Education and Sports there are governance structures include School Management Committees (SMCs), Parent, Foundation Bodies, Learners, and other accountability structures that are supposed to hold the school accountable.

SMCs are one of the governance structures in primary schools with the responsibility of managing and overseeing the schools for which they are established. SMCs are provided for under the Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post Primary) Act 2008.

In particular, SMCs are responsible for among others: -

- Giving overall direction to the operation of the school.
- Approving the school budget annually,
- Monitoring the finances of the school to ensure that resources are used for the maximum benefit of all learners.
- Working as a linkage between the school and the community

The parents in turn should actively participate in the activities of the school through the Parents Teachers' Association (PTAs).

All primary schools in Uganda (both public and private) are expected to have SMCs that are fully constituted, trained and functional.

The Ministry has plans to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that strengthens community and parents' participation in the affairs of a primary school. The Ministry is currently drafting PTA Guidelines.

From time to time, the ministry has developed policies, guidelines, regulations and standards in consultation with the stakeholders in education. Follow up is done to check on the implementation.

The ministry has also continued to issue circulars and re-issued the relevant UPE policies and guidelines to be used as a reference point for officers, managers and administrators at national, district and school levels. An example is the MoES 2008 Guidelines on Policy, Planning Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders in the Implementation of UPE and USE for Districts and Urban Councils. This is aimed at re-awakening stakeholders' commitment to offer quality education in addition to

strengthening governance and accountability in schools. The onus is in the local communities and schools who are at the implementation level to ensure that these policies and guidelines are adhered to.

Ass. Commissioner Bigabwa in his conclusion reminded and urged the district local governments to strengthen community and parent participation by:

- Ensuring that SMCs are in place in schools, trained and functional.
- Increasing on community mobilization and sensitization drives through Barazas, Annual General Meetings (AGMs), speech days, school open days, sports days, science fair and visitation days.
- Ensuring that the key stakeholders play their roles and responsibilities adequately.
- Ensuring that District Education Officers (DEOs) follow the financial and accounting regulations as they manage school financial resources and that both Financial and Physical Accountabilities should be in place in addition to providing regular reports to the relevant authorities.

Panel discussion on improving education quality through social accountability and community participation

The panelists were Ms. Saphina Nakulima, Program Manager of the Right to Education at ISER, the DEO Sheema Nshabirwe Esau and a primary school head teacher. Mr. Musingo Moses, a Principal Education Officer in the MoES Basic and Secondary Education Department, moderated the discussion.



Highlights

Social accountability and community participation are inseparable in development of educational institutions for attainment of quality education. Education Managers and implementers should ensure that the two go hand in hand. This will improve on

communities owning these institutions and therefore supporting them for improved performance.

SMCs are mandated to manage the schools for which they have been established in accordance with the Education Act subject to any directions which may be given under the Act by the Hon. Minister of Education and Sports on matters of general policy. Therefore, SMCs without fear or favour, should ensure harmony in all the schools by carrying out their roles and responsibilities.

The SMC is mandated to address the issue of quality education by co coordinating and collaborating with all stakeholders through the head teacher who does the day-to-day work.

Each SMC should ask this question: - In which direction is my school moving presently? Forward or backward? Take action immediately by involving all stakeholders as a team including staff, PTA, pupils.

Equally important is the involvement of foundation bodies to mobilize pupil enrolment and strengthen school level supervision.

The SMC through the head teacher should work closely with teachers and school committees to identify marginalized / disadvantaged children like orphans, children with disabilities and cater for them in a special way.

Ensure linkages with stakeholders to promote good practices that ensure head teacher and teacher regular attendance e.g. SMCs visiting schools to check on teachers' work, use of attendance registers for teachers.

All local governments (districts and municipalities) should ensure that all schools (government and private) have community engagement programmes and are accountable to people e.g should ensure that schools have functional SMCs. All expired SMCs should be replaced immediately.

LGs should always work closely with foundation bodies to select/appoint persons with some requisite experience and reasonable education background to be able to manage schools including the head teacher.

LGs should ensure that Inspection, monitoring and support supervision are regularly carried out in schools. The head teacher should always support his/her teachers where possible and ensure performance records are well kept and up to-date.

LGs should ensure that Teacher attendance and time on task is ensured in schools for better results.

LGs should ensure that all Private schools have up to-date licenses to operate. All un licensed private schools should be closed.

LGs should disseminate and enforce all government policies and basic requirements and minimum standards.

LGs should ensure that relevant school stakeholders (parents, the staff- both teaching and non teaching, school committees, learners, the community in which the institutions are located) who are the owners and beneficiaries are involved in managing schools.

LGs should ensure that schools carry out reporting and send feedback through school meetings, school assemblies, science fairs, class days, sports days and parents' days.

LGs should organize community dialogues/barazas, for social accountability.

LGs should carry out regular Audits of schools to check whether resources are being used according to the government policies and guidelines. Additionally, ensure that schools display accountabilities for all public funds on notice boards and other accountability platforms.

LGs should organize radio talk shows to discuss school related programmes with the public/community members.

LGs should make Rewards and sanctions for staff functional.

Presentation by Hajji Abbey Musoke on teacher presence and time-on-task

Teacher presence and time-on-task is one of the key challenges affecting the education sector in Uganda today. Many districts Local Governments have deployed and posted teachers to schools but the output has still remained very low in terms of results achieved.

Mr Musoke based his presentation on the Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness (UTSEP) Project being implemented by the MoES with funding support from the Global Partnership for Education. The new **DLI7** of Teacher Presence and Time on Task is being implemented in the 29 districts of Early Grade Reading targeting 2,727 Public Primary Schools. It was introduced to address the high teacher absenteeism and further improve teacher & school effectiveness.

The overall goal is to improve teacher presence and time-on-task to 100% in public primary schools in Uganda. The objectives are to:

1. Strengthen curriculum coverage in the 29 DLGs by enhancing teacher presence and time-on-task.
2. Effective usage of the existing materials to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
3. Strengthening the rewards and sanctions regime.
4. Strengthening the capacity of the head teacher in support supervision.

The envisaged outcomes are:

1. Improved teacher presence and time-on-task.
2. Effective curriculum coverage
3. Effective use of teaching and learning materials.
4. Effective communication and reporting at all levels
5. Improved support supervision at all levels (Head teacher, SMC, DLG, MoES)
6. Improved school attendance by the learners
7. Motivated teachers through rewards and sanctions.

Under this initiative, monitoring is done by school administrators, local government education administrators at district and sub-county level and ministry officials at national level with support of UTSEP project Coordination Unit.

Baseline (mid- term and Terminal Evaluation) is done by OPM –Delivery Unit and external firm out-sourced by the Project Coordination Unit.

A baseline was conducted, a teacher’s code of conduct disseminated to all 29 districts, and two verifications on teacher presence and time on task had been conducted by the time of the conference.

Findings from the verifications indicate that there has been 5% increment on teacher presence from 76% at baseline survey to 81% 2nd verification. Out of the total number of verified teachers categorised under authorised absence, 591 (9%) had official absence compared to 220 (4%) at baseline. Teachers on sick leave had increased from 123 (2%) at baseline to 150 (3%) and 149 (2%) at verification I and II respectively.

Official absence reduced from 486 (8%) at Baseline to 220 (4%) at Verification I and 259 (4%) at Verification II.

Teacher presence by region in Verification 2 stood at;

- **Northern region** – 93.4%,
- **Eastern Region** – 90.2%,
- **Central Region** – 91%
- **Western Region** – 88%. (*had the worst percentage*)

Taking gender analysis into consideration – female teachers have consistently been more physically present than their male counterparts.

Some of the recommendations to improve teacher presence and time on task include:

The need by the DEO to strengthen supervision of schools and submit reports to relevant authorities to take necessary action. The DEO should be more active in ensuring that the school supervisory function is effectively executed and the head teachers are rightly performing their duties.

The CAO to prioritize teacher effectiveness in schools including teacher presence and ensure that head teachers and teachers are appraised to reprimand the undisciplined and inefficient personnel in line with education. Additionally, work with sub county chiefs to make teacher presence key on the school supervision agenda and support the head teacher to be more effective.

CAO to ensure that at least one female teacher is posted to a primary school and be held accountable for non-compliance.

Closing Remarks

ISER Executive Director, Ms. Salima Namusobya

Addressing the Permanent Secretary (PS) MoES, Ms. Namusobya noted that she was very glad that the PS made it to the conference despite the many commitments. She took him through some of the relationships ISER has had with the MoES and highlighted things done since 2014.

Realizing that the ministry of education is a key stakeholder and regulator in this country, ISER felt it necessary to reach out at very early stage and engage with the ministry because it would not help very much to speak from one side and also the ministry from another. She reminded the PS that ISER sits on the basic education-working group of the MoES and has been part of the meetings that have been happening and providing input in the various discussions that have been happening at that level.

ISER has also been part of a number of monitoring initiatives with the Ministry of Education, been involved in a number of research projects where ministry officials have participated and even where they have not participated, been able to share information of what is found in the field because the ministry plays a central role in terms of implementation. ISER has worked on particular areas that have been very challenging for example discussions of regulation of private actors, Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), and discussions around the cost of education. These are things we have worked on from a monitoring perspective and done research.

ISER has been able to engage the ministry from time to time as the regulators. ISER has also been working to popularize and implement the recommendations from regional and international mechanisms and found this to be a gap because many times when things happen in Geneva (for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) or in the Gambia where the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights sits the implementers are not aware so when ISER returns from those processes convenes the relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to share what has happened in these forums. And specifically around the UPR, ISER developed a matrix, engaged among others the planning department within the MoES.

Under governance and accountability, ISER has been involving the ministry officials in training of SMCs and been supplementing the efforts of the ministry in terms of strengthening governance and accountability by recruiting CAs that were introduced earlier to be able to mobilize their communities and work hand in hand with the schools to ensure that we improve quality which is a key thing. ISER also create platforms for interaction between the ministry and various stakeholders and this conference is one of them and we think it will be very useful for the different stakeholders to make recommendations about what can be done to strengthen governance and accountability.

She reminded the PS that ISER is not a business; it is an NGO and introduced some of the partners who finance the work we done with for example the ministry. Some of the partners are outside of the country but within the country we have the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF), which is represented here and they will be financing the work that ISER is going to do with the SMCs but also with the CAs. She thanked the PS and the entire ministry of education for the cooperation and pledged to continue cooperating with the ministry to ensure that we achieve inclusive quality education for all children in this country.

Director Basic and Secondary Education, Hajji Mulindwa Ismael

Hajji Mulindwa informed the PS that the relationship between the Ministry of Education and ISER is not yet formalized but now he has the basis on which to

expedite the formalization of the relationship by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

He told the PS that the forum had been discussing governance and accountability in primary schools and “as you are well aware that is where we have a very big gap in terms of the management of our schools, talk of all categories of our schools.” He said the focus was on primary but there are also known challenges the country is facing at the secondary level and the conference has been an opportunity for the ministry to get views from a wide range of stakeholders.

He noted that quite a number of issues had been raised and hopeful that many will be addressed. He underestimated the presence of DEOs and inspectors of schools that whom he referred to as the PS’s field commanders adding that by working with them, the ministry can’t go wrong. He again appreciated ISER’s support at the different levels, including LG level to make sure that many of the ministry policies are implemented.

Closing Remarks from the Permanent Secretary MoES Mr. Kakooza

In an apparent reference to the conference theme, the PS started by narrating how the day prior to the conference he was supposed to travel with Hon. Muyingo [Minister for Higher Education] to Luweero to address the District Council and discuss with them their roles as leaders but most importantly highlight the role of SMCs. Unfortunately, because the minister was not feeling well, the engagement had to be postponed. The meeting was prompted by a finding while visiting his [Hon. Muyingo] constituency to the effect that three weeks into the school term some teachers had never reported to work.



He noted that head teachers are not at school and some teachers are not even supposed to be in those schools because they do not qualify to be there. He announced that the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports is on leave but when she comes back

she will be embarking on a countrywide tour to sensitize the local leadership on the role of SMCs. “What does that mean? It means we know as a ministry that without effective SMCs, we do not have schools. Therefore, when we see ISER coming to partner with the MoES to among others to promote the functionality of SMCs we can only say thank you so much because you are closing that gap we know that SMCs are the foundation of schools, foundation of learning.”

The PS noted that the difference between those regions and schools that are performing well comes from the local leadership and from the local leadership is where SMCs are derived. “We do not import them, we pick them from the area local leadership, parents, foundation bodies. In most cases it is the head teachers who propose the SMC members and normally propose those people who will not give them headaches.”

Like previous speakers, he confirmed that SMCs do not know their roles and added that if the local leadership insists on having the best independent individuals who are community minded to be part of the SMCs, there will be a difference. He said that independent individuals will set targets and follow up if they do not achieve them 100 percent, they will task different people and do an evaluation of what happened but if they do not know what they want to achieve.

He lectured participants that the SMC is an accountability mechanisms and its role is to promote accountability like Board of Directors in private companies adding that their role is to ensure that the interests of the owners of the company are protected because in most cases companies are owned by many people if it is a public limited liability company. “In our case the SMCs represent the public if it is a government school. It is a public good, it is a public school. The role of SMC is to see what management is doing, your job is not to sign cheques, not to dismiss teachers but to point out what is not moving on well.”

The PS raised the issue of absenteeism where government is paying people on pay roll who have never reported to school and the respective SMC does not know because accountability is not only in terms of money, it is also in terms of resources, human resources, procurement and etc.

He regretted to note that there are schools the ministry has given equipment and that equipment is never removed from the boxes until the learners are about to do examinations; they do not do practicals and therefore fail.

He reminded participants that the role of SMCs to improve accountability, ensure that learners in their school have lunch and that that lunch is not provided by Government but by parents, ensure that head teachers exercise their powers judiciously within the law adding that when we do that we have functioning schools and everyone will be proud of the schools.

The PS thanked ISER and all those that worked to put this together saying it is a wonderful function, well attended but also the quality of people who attended, the spread and diversity is what is needed. He called on the DEOs, inspector of schools and community advocates to continue the discussion on their respective forums so that it gets to everyone.

Finally, “I will be happy to conclude the MoU with ISER because we have seen what they can do, sometimes we get institutions who sign MoUs with us and after five years you cannot see what they have done, we have already tasted what ISER can do and we think we can have a good working relationship and invite them to conclude the process of MoU with us.”