

**CSO POSITION PAPER ON THE EDUCATION SUB PROGRAMME IN RESPONSE
TO THE FY 2024/25 EDUCATION MINISTERIAL POLICY STATEMENT**

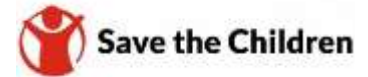
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Acknowledgment

This CSO position paper in response to the Ministerial Policy Statements FY2024/25 on the Education Sector has been developed through a consultative process involving various civil society organizations including Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC), Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) and Save the Children in partnership with Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG). We recognize the supporting partners whose financial support has enabled us to prepare this paper. These include The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the Education Out Loud (EOL). CSO Education actors are committed to upholding constructive engagements to ensure that the national budgets address the education needs of the poor and marginalized populations in Uganda.



Introduction

The education sector is one of the key drivers to spur long term economic development in Uganda. Quality education not only empowers individuals and communities but also lays the foundation for a skilled workforce that can contribute to the country's growth and prosperity. By investing in education, Uganda can create a more equitable society where all individuals can reach their full potential and contribute to the country's development. In this CSO Position Paper, we outline key recommendations for the Education Ministerial Policy Statement to achieve the above goals and consequently drive sustainable economic growth in Uganda.

We commend the Ministry and other votes under the sub-programme for the milestone undertaken over the course of the 2023-24 financial year. The sub-programme has commenced construction of 115 phase II seed schools under Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfer Project, construction of a Skills Development Headquarters at Kyambogo, renovation and expansion of 60 secondary schools under the Development of Secondary Education Project, Supported operations of the Uganda National Institute for Teacher Education (UNITE), facilitated preliminary activities for the establishment of Busoga and Bunyoro Universities, Supported 300 students on international scholarships, and supported 3,120 continuing degree and 238 continuing Diploma students with tuition fees under the Loan Scheme among other activities as detailed in the MPS.

We as CSOs continue complement Government efforts in ensuring that there is overall improvement in access to education narrowing the financing gaps within the sector. Our efforts include offering trainings to teachers, strengthening school structures, procuring of learning materials, construction of classrooms and latrine stances, payment of salaries for additional teachers, and Supporting the Accelerated Education Programmes within the refugee communities and others.

CSBAG in a consortium with ISER and USDC under the Strengthening Public Accountability and Investment in Education (SPAIE) project will be training and strengthening the School Management committees in Yumbe, Sheema and Namayingo. USDC in the last financial year trained 80 teachers in Inclusive Education, supported 1200 children with disabilities with learning materials and assistive devices. Windle trust reached 296,503 (139,263 female and 157,240 male) refugee and host community learners and a total of 2,469 teachers/ care givers on their pay role for financial year 2022/2023 (Windle Trust Annual Report, 2022). This is to mention but a few.

Upon reviewing the budget estimates for the 2024/25 financial year, we observe that the Education, Sports, and Skills Development Sub-programme has been allocated UGX4,542.40 billion, compared to UGX4,246.01 billion in FY 2023/24, indicating a 7% or UGX296.39 billion increase. However, we note that several challenges spanning both implementation and funding adequacy remain for consideration in the FY2024/25 budget as indicated below.



Key issues for consideration for FY 2024/25

1. Inadequacies in the School inspection and monitoring systems

Despite commendable efforts made by government in school inspection like digitalizing school inspection through initiatives like Teacher Effectiveness and Learner Achievement (TELA) and E-inspections, school supervision remains insufficient which has hindered the enforcement of education standards and supporting the delivery of quality services. This could be attributed to the acute underfunding of the Directorate of Education Standards at the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and local governments leading to unreliable school-level supervision. The Budget Committee report on the FY2024/25 budget underscores the importance of strengthening the current inspection system. It emphasizes completing the roll-out of the TELA system to improve education quality nationwide and the e-inspection system to enhance monitoring efficiency. These recommendations aim to address the ongoing challenges and ensure effective oversight in the education sector.

Recommendations

The MoES and Parliament should prioritize resource allocation to the Directorate of Education Standards to support complementary physical inspections especially at this critical time of rolling out the new lower secondary school curriculum and new digital solutions.

The Ministry of Finance should allocate funds to build the capacity of all school inspectors in the districts to ensure proper use of the TELA system.

2. Inadequate resources for assessment of the new lower secondary school curriculum

The current education and curriculum reforms proposed continuous assessment (CA) as a methodology to allow schools to assess candidates in areas not covered by summative assessment. We commend the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEBC) having developed technical tools and procedures for Continuous Assessment. However, there's insufficient budget allocated for retooling examiners and training teachers in these tools. Moreover, there's a lack of funding for the final rollout to schools in 2024, during which UNEBC is expected to collect CA scores from S.1 to S.4. UNEBC faces a shortfall of UGX6.5 billion required to assess the new lower secondary school curriculum. Addressing these funding gaps is critical for the successful implementation of continuous assessment and the effective evaluation of students under the revised curriculum.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education and sports together with the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic development should repurpose especially some of the consumptive budget lines to create and allocate at least UGX 6.5bn to UNEBC for assessing the New Lower Secondary School Curriculum.



3. Inadequate investment in pre-primary education

Quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) services play a crucial role in shaping a child's life trajectory, impacting education, health, employment prospects, income, and overall quality of life. According to the Response to Intervention (RTI) Uganda Early Years Study, actual repetition rates may exceed official statistics, with students who didn't attend pre-primary being 3.8 times more likely to repeat a grade.

The RTI study estimates that these and other inefficiencies cost the government USD 177 million or UGX 678.7 bn annually. Furthermore, the RTI model suggests that investments in pre-primary education, coupled with improvements in primary education quality, could yield returns within 12 years by reducing repetition rates.

While the private sector has stepped in to supplement government efforts, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) remains unaffordable for many, especially marginalized and vulnerable populations. All children, regardless of socioeconomic background should be able to access Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education and Sports should amend the policy on primary education to accommodate the financing of ECCD education in the medium to long term.

4. Inadequate Financing of Education in Emergencies and Host Communities.

As of June 2022, Uganda hosted approximately 1.53 million refugees and migrants, primarily settled in 12 districts in the West, West Nile, and Kampala. This has exacerbated existing challenges of poor infrastructure in schools across all education levels straining the education service delivery in these refugee-hosting districts. Excluding Kampala, the school-age population of refugees aged 3–18 years stood at 785,216, constituting 51.3 % of the total refugee population. The school-age population has more than doubled in Yumbe district since 2016 with refugee learners outnumbering host community learners in some schools. While schools have embraced and integrated refugee children, district education departments lack the capacity to provide additional facilities and resources for the current number of learners. There are also staffing challenges with the pupil-to-teacher ratio in refugee-hosting districts exceeding the national average for all education levels necessitating an estimated additional 6,185 teachers to meet government standards of 25 pupils to 1 teacher for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and 53 pupils to 1 teacher for primary and secondary levels.

The Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of refugees increasing from 58.2% in 2017/2018 to 88.5% in 2020/2021, it still lags behind the national average primary GER. Moreover, teachers in refugee settlements and host communities are often paid by donors and partners operating on project-specific budgets, leading to over-dependency on donor/project financing and creating uncertainty in funding stability.



Recommendations

- a) The Ministry of Education and Sports needs to step up support towards education interventions in refugee-hosting districts through the regular budgeting process, particularly capitation grants and teacher's salaries in government-aided schools, funds for inspection and support supervision, as well as school supplies including materials.
- b) There is a need for the Ministry of Education and Sports to budget for construction of schools and school infrastructure in refugee hosting communities to promote inclusive education among refugees and host communities.
- c) The Ministry of Education and Sports should ensure that teachers teaching in schools from refugee host communities and settlements are included on the government teachers' pay roll.

5. Curbing the rising cost of education

Currently Uganda is implementing a hybrid system of delivery of education which include public schools, government grant-aided schools, and the purely private schools - both for profit and not for profit. Although the hybrid system has been credited for expanding access to education, it has also been equally criticised for the growing commercialization of education thus increasing the cost of education. This was evidenced in January 2024 when several schools raised their school fees and other non-tuition fees including development fee, registration fee, examination fee among others. While we commend the Government on the progress made towards promoting universal primary and secondary education, we are concerned that the high cost of education threatens completion rates and rolling back significant achievements in the education sector.

Recommendation

Parliament together with the Ministry of Education needs to look into having this issue resolved in the FY2024/25 budget process given that failure to address the rising cost of education poses a significant danger to a learner's future and hinders the country's sustainable economic growth and development.

6. Limited Financing for Instructional Materials in Primary Education

Following the introduction of UPE, enrolment in primary school increased from 3.1 million in 1996 to 8.84 million in 2018¹ in 36,565 institutions of which 34% are public schools. Despite this increase in access, most of those remaining in primary education do not achieve minimum levels of literacy and numeracy. In 2018, the numeracy and literacy rates were still very low at 55% and 50% Literacy at Primary 3. At primary six, it was 51% numeracy and 53% at Primary 6 (NAPE 2018). These outcomes are lower in refugee hosting districts, with 5.6% literacy at P3 and 33% at P6 literacy (ERP Baseline Survey, 2021).

¹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics Primary school enrolment by class and sex-2022



In the FY 2024/25 the Education Sub Programme priorities speak to this issue and aim to procure 1,380,591 copies for P5-P7 English Readers, Local Language, English Dictionaries, and IRE readers. However, there is a shortage of books in P5 where the pupils are higher than the budgeted books. This predicament will undermine improvement of reading outcomes that are required at early learning stages.

Recommendation.

- a) The Ministry of Education and Sports should make a budget provision to increase the number of copies for P5-P7 English Readers, Local Language, English Dictionaries and IRE readers to the number of pupils in P5 such that each pupil has a personal copy to increase the contact time with the instructional materials.

7. Low capitation grants for Universal Primary (UPE) and Secondary Education (USE) Programs

In 2018, the National Planning Authority (NPA) evaluated the public financing for UPE and established that the UGX 10, 000 that was being allocated per pupil per year as capitation grant (operational) expenditure was insufficient. It accordingly recommended that government makes capitation grant allocation of UGX 59, 503 and UGX 63,546 per pupil per year in rural and urban schools respectively to enable schools to meet the operational costs.² However, the allocation was increased to UGX 20, 000 despite the increase in inflation over the years. As a result of the insufficient funding, parents are required to contribute 57% of the total cost for public primary education despite the high levels of poverty.³ At the secondary level, NPA estimates for schools to be able to effectively implement the new lower secondary curriculum, they need a capitation grant allocation of UGX. 177,500 per student per term compared to the current capitation grant allocation of UGX 51000.⁴ The limited funding of public primary and secondary education has led to schools charging non tuition fees and consequently contributing to school drop out for those who fail to meet the non – tuition. The Uganda National Bureau of Statistics has reported that 67.7% of boys and 62.1% of girls drop out due to unaffordability of education in its Uganda National Household Survey 2019/ 20.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Parliament of Uganda and the Ministry of Education and Sports should ensure that the capitation grants for UPE and USE

² National Planning Authority, Comprehensive Evaluation of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Policy, Thematic Report 5: Financing and Costing of UPE, 2018, p. xv at <http://www.npa.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Thematic-Report-5-Financing-and-Costing-of-UPE-080119.pdf> accessed on February 2, 2024.



schools are enhanced as per the unit thresholds recommended by the National Planning Authority.

8. Lack of School Health Policy.

The absence of a school health policy affects the control and management of health-related challenges in the educational environment. Critical issues like mental health, teenage pregnancies, substance abuse, among others are not effectively managed due to a lack of a governing policy. The policy was drafted in 2013 but has not been finalized. It has been reported that 45% of Ugandan primary school learners and 25% of teachers are having social emotional or mental health challenges.⁵ Unfortunately, school mental health programs for children and teachers do not exist in the Ugandan education system. Out of the total budget for the health sector for FY2024/2025, only 0.7% had been allocated to mental health of which a big proportion is retained by Butabika National Referral Hospital.

Recommendations

- a) MOES Education should increase budget allocations to critical departments of Basic Education- Guidance and Counseling from the current 0.6% to cater for mental health and psychosocial well-being of learners.
- b) The Ministry of Health should make budget allocations to fast track the development and roll out of the Uganda School Health Policy.

Conclusion

We continue to commend the Government on putting in place policies aimed at ensuring universal access to primary and secondary schooling that have greatly expanded education opportunities. However, Uganda's per capita public education spending has been consistently low in recent decades, falling below international benchmarks and other East African countries. To address this, Government needs to increase public spending on education in the FY 2024/25 budget to achieve its goals while keeping pace with population growth as households still take a disproportionate share of the burden of education financing.

References

- Ministry of Education and Sport Ministerial Policy Statement for FY2024/25*
Approved budget estimates for FY2023/24
Second Budget Call Circular for FY2024/25
Human Capital Development Programme Performance report 2023

⁵ LASER PULSE Program in the Mental Health and Social Emotional Learning Policy Brief Version March 1, 2023,