



2004/ED/EFA/MRT/PI/52

Background paper prepared for the
Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2003/4
Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality

Does increasing access mean decreasing quality?

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2003

This paper was commissioned by the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* as background information to assist in drafting the 2003/4 report. It has not been edited by the team. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* or to UNESCO. The papers can be cited with the following reference: "Paper commissioned for the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4, The Leap to Equality*". For further information, please contact efareport@unesco.org

1. Introduction

Basic Education in Uganda

In 1997, following a Presidential declaration to provide Universal Primary Education (UPE), Uganda implemented its UPE program, and became one of the first African countries to see significant gains in achieving EFA goals. The principal components of the UPE policy were the elimination of tuition fees and PTA fees for vast majority of students, which resulted in an unexpected massive increase in enrolments. Since that landmark declaration, enrolments in primary education have jumped from 2.7 million in 1996 to approximately 7.2 million in 2002, moving Uganda much closer to achieving UPE. The sudden and dramatic expansion of enrolments, however, has put tremendous strains on the entire education system, most specifically on the quality of education.

To cope with the massive growth in primary school enrollments, Uganda has adopted a number of policies, reforms and innovations to make universal access to primary education a reality. These efforts over the course of the decade brought and sustained the attention of the Government of Uganda (GoU), several funding and technical agencies, and civil society to deliver and improve basic education in Uganda. This has translated into significant increases in funding for primary education and new forms of coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders. Each of these aspects makes Uganda an interesting case to examine progress towards EFA.

Methodology

The methods used to complete this assessment include document analysis, interviews, attendance and observation of education policy forums and reviews.¹ Referring to the terms of reference, the key questions guiding this assessment are:

- In what areas has Uganda made progress towards reaching the EFA goals and objectives? Is progress similar across the country?
- How was progress made? Specifically, what policies, strategies and reforms can be attributed to progress?
- What is necessary to sustain progress and continue to work towards reaching EFA goals by 2015?

To assess the progress Uganda has made in basic education, first, a brief review of progress made in the EFA goals is given. Second, the policies, strategies, and reforms Uganda adopted to reach EFA are identified and examined. Third, critical issues for sustaining and reaching EFA goals are discussed. One final note, the 2002 EFA Monitoring Report provides evidence to suggest that Uganda is on track to reach the EFA goal of Universal Primary Education by 2015. At the same time, Uganda has tried to improve the quality of education provision with much less

¹ The documents analyzed include major education policy documents from 1990-present, final reports from education sector reviews, and studies conducted on Uganda's experience in the delivery of basic education. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including representatives from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), funding and technical agencies, Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), District Officials and other members of civil society including teachers unions, church representatives, and parents.

success. Much of this paper assesses progress made in these areas as the majority of policy initiatives, financial resources, and implementation efforts have gone to expand access to and improve the quality of primary education.

2. Progress made towards EFA Goals

Universal Primary Education

Uganda has made significant progress in expanding access to primary education around the country through the UPE program.² Enrolment figures have gone from approximately 2.3 million in 1990, to 2.7 million in 1996, to 5.1 million in 1997, to 7.2 million in 2002 (MoES, 2000; MoES, 2003c). In addition to the dramatic increase in the number of children enrolled in primary school, Uganda had made significant progress in the following areas:

- financial resources available for primary education
- teacher recruitment
- classroom construction
- purchase and distribution of textbooks

For each area, indicators have been developed to monitor progress in these areas. Table 1 identifies these indicators and provides data, where available, to show change over time.

Table 1: Progress towards Universal Primary Education

Indicators	1990	1995	1997	2002
Pupil/classroom ratio ³	1:50	1:39	116:1	95:1
Pupil/Teacher ratio ⁴	1:28	1:35	100:1	55:1
Pupil/Textbook ratio	N/A	N/A	N/A	4:1
Total Enrolments	2,281,500	2,636,400	5,303,500	7,346,600
Teachers on payroll	81,590	84,043	89,200	122,500
Total expenditure in Education	>15%	20%	25%	31%
Expenditure in Primary Education	N/A	49%	60%	65%

(Source: MoES, 2000; MoES, 2003; MoESa, 2003; MoESd, 2003)

How did Uganda make such progress in a short period of time? The following section describes many of the strategies and innovations developed in Uganda that are attributed to the gains made in UPE.

Enabling Policy Environment: Over the past decade, Uganda has adopted a number of policies that promote the expansion of primary education. The first of these, the Government White Paper on education, put education priorities in a legal framework and called for increased

² The author noted that when interviewing several individuals no distinction was made between progress in EFA and UPE. They are often used interchangeably by government and funding and technical agencies and viewed to be working towards the same end. As the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) address two of the six EFA goals, further emphasis of EFA has been directed to UPE.

³ The Mid-term ESIP Review (2002) estimates that approximately 25,000 new classrooms and 12,000 classrooms have been completed since the implementation of UPE. Additionally furniture has been supplied for approximately 1 million children; and 35,000 latrines 2,000 offices and storerooms, 1500 houses have been constructed.

⁴ There is wide variation across districts and between the upper and lower grades of primary education. For example, lower primary grades have a ratio of approximately 1:80. District ratios vary greatly. In Kotido, teacher: pupil ratio is approximately 1:200, Moroto is 77:1, Kampala is 33:1 (ActionAid Uganda, 2003; MoESc, 2003).

emphasis and expenditures on education, specifically the achievement of UPE by 2001. Major policies that followed include: the Presidential UPE declaration, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP or PRSP), Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP), and Uganda’s Vision 2025. In each policy or plan, expanding and improving primary education is identified as a key strategy towards poverty eradication and addressing equity issues. Two of these policies—PEAP and ESIP—formed the basis for the development of a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) in Uganda. With UPE the primary focus of the education sector, the majority of the GoU’s political attention and financial resources have gone towards the expansion of primary education.

Sustained Political Will: A useful indicator of political commitment to primary education is sustained levels of government spending on education. In the early 1990s, GoU committed less than 15% of its general budget to education. Since the introduction of UPE, GoU commits approximately 31% of the recurrent budget to the education sector, of this, approximately 65% of is allocated to primary education (ACUU, 2003; MoES, 2003).⁵ This sustained commitment of government financial resources to primary education over the past 7 years has meant a consistent funding base to implement UPE and to attract and sustain the attention of funding and technical agencies. Additionally, as UPE was initiated and has been monitored by the President, the MoES has the ‘buy in’ of other key ministries involved in the delivery of primary education—specifically the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MoFPED), Ministry of Public Service (MoPS), and Ministry of Local Government (MoLG).

Increase in external support for basic education: Since 1996, Uganda has seen a rise in external financial support for basic education. The increase in funding came with a shift in how several funding and technical agencies disburse funds. Several funding and technical agencies provide the financial resources to implement UPE mainly by giving funds to support budgets.⁶ Funds are released on bi-annual basis when agreed upon targets—referred to as budget undertakings—are met by the MoES. Under ESIP, these funding and technical agencies committed to funding the education sector until 2003, which meant that the government had a consistent, predictable funding base to implement the UPE program. For example, between 1998 and 2001, budget support to education grew by nearly 50% (from US\$120 million to \$177 million). Currently, over 60% of the education budget is provided by funding and technical agencies engaged in budget support (AUCC Consortium, 2003).

Removal of school fees: UPE came with a number of education reforms designed to expand access to primary education. The most well known reform was the **removal of school and PTA fees**. With UPE, four children per family—including 2 girls—did not have to pay school fees. Recently school fees were lifted for all children. As school fees may be the biggest barrier for children to access education, the removal of school fees led to a doubling in enrolment figures almost overnight. The GoU instead pays these fees to the school through the UPE capitation grant. This grant, based on enrolment figures, allocates resources to the school to cover

⁵ Uganda’s commitment to allocate 31% of government budget to education and of that 65% to primary education is also a critical undertaking for meeting the requirements of funding and technical agencies that offer budget support funding to the education sector. Thus while sustained commitment is remarkable, it is also a condition Uganda must meet in order to continue to receive budget support.

⁶ The funding agencies that fund ESIP through budget support include, World Bank, USAID, DfID, SNV, Ireland Aid, European Union, CIDA (AUCC Consortium, 2003).

operating costs. Families are still expected to contribute in the form of school uniforms, school lunch, books, and—in some cases—salary top-ups.

Expansion of school infrastructure: To cope with massive increases in enrolments, the MoES developed policies to **expand school infrastructure** (mainly classroom construction) and to rapidly **recruit primary school teachers**. The MoES developed the School Facilities Grant to rehabilitate schools and build classrooms and encouraged community-based construction. To recruit more teachers, policies such as lowering necessary qualifications for teachers to access the payroll and placing a freeze on the recruitment of secondary school teachers were instituted. The result was that many classrooms were constructed at a lower cost than a central construction unit and the numbers of teachers increased (MoESd, 2003). Examining the ratios presented in Table 1 shows that sufficient numbers of teachers and classrooms are still lacking; significant differences also exist across the country.

Decentralization: Uganda sought to expand and improve basic education services by localizing the management and implementation of basic education. The 1997 Local Government Act, which decentralized the provision and supervision of social services, transferred the responsibility for implementation of UPE to districts and communities. This means, for example, district officials are responsible for teacher recruitment, deployment, and supervision. Districts are also responsible for the disbursement and management of the limited funds received to implement UPE, namely the UPE capitation grant and School Facilities Grants. These conditional grants make up the bulk of district budgets for education. Yet, in most cases, districts lack the capacity, training, and financial resources to manage these funds and fulfill the larger mandate they have been given. As key stakeholders note that UPE funds were mis-used within districts and schools, the money that was appropriated to support UPE did not always reached the beneficiaries. Most of the plans included in ESIP to strengthen the role of the districts and communities in education provision have not occurred because UPE funds have been allocated elsewhere. Decentralizing the management of the education sector when primary school enrolments were rising dramatically, reflects a strategy, on the one hand, to involve more (local) stakeholders in the provision of education, mainly by allocating UPE money to schools. On the other hand, instituting UPE and decentralization at the same time put an even greater strain on the education system.

Improved planning processes: With a shift towards sector wide planning, the increase of budget support and the implementation of UPE, the process for education planning and reviewing underwent several changes, namely the development of a sector-wide approach. The MoES now develops strategic, long-term plans which include goals, strategies, targets and costs to implement the plans. The education budget, previously planned in the short term, is now planned for in the medium term (approximately three years).

Creation of forums to coordinate and manage the Education Sector: The MoES and the funding and technical agencies developed several forums to better manage and coordinate the education sector. These include: Education Sector Consultative Committee (ESCC), Technical Working Groups, Education Sector Review (ESR), and the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG).

- The ESCC is a consultative body where MoES, MoFPED, MoPS, and EFAG meet to discuss progress on various aspects of the education sector. The representatives advise

the MoES on issues related to education policy, strategy and financing. The Technical Working groups serve to advise the ESCC on technical issues such as budgets and monitoring and evaluation. The vision is that following discussions in the ESCC, the top management within the MoES takes decisions on relevant matters or takes issues/policies to Cabinet for approval.

- The ESR is a bi-annual meeting led by the MoES where representatives from relevant Ministries, District authorities, EFAG, and—most recently—civil society gather to review the education sector. At the ESR, the budget is discussed, new initiatives and draft policies are presented, progress reports are given, and an aide memoir is drafted which includes the a review of the outcomes agreed upon by the MoES and EFAG which, if met, trigger the release of budget support funds.
- EFAG was established to reduce transaction costs, to improve coordination of funding and technical agencies supporting ESIP, and to institutionalize channels of coordination and dialogue with the MoES. EFAG meets monthly to discuss and reach consensus on various issues. The EFAG coordinator, then, communicates with the Permanent Secretary in the MoES on technical and financial matters of concern by EFAG. In turn, the MoES uses the EFAG coordinator to brief and liaison with EFAG members.
- To increase dialogue and coordination between the MoES and NGOs, the Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU) was also established. ActionAid, along with a few other INGOs and local NGOs, instituted and largely financed the establishment of FENU. While FENU now receives invitations to the ESCC and ESR, it does not have the same institutionalized forms of communication and coordination with the MoES and EFAG. Several representatives from EFAG and the MoES also state that the representation and “value added” by FENU needs to be strengthened. To date, the participation of FENU in the various forums has been mainly to provide information to other NGOs about the current policies and actions taken in the education sector.

Inclusion of various stakeholders in Policy Planning and Reviewing: The institutionalization of the ESR also brought more stakeholders to policy arena. In addition to representatives from the MoES and EFAG, District Authorities, Members of Parliament, representatives from other Ministries, representatives from teachers unions and churches, academics, and NGO attend and participate in the ESR. This set precedence for broader consultation in policy planning. For example, civil society has been involved in the formation of one draft policy and will be consulted in the formation of ESIP II. The institutionalization of the ESR and the ESCC fostered a more participatory, consultative process in managing and reviewing the education sector, however, many Ugandan stakeholders suggest that these forums are generally dominated by the need to maintain Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) flows.

Ongoing Monitoring and Assessment: The ESCC and ESR—with the attention given to the relevant outcomes for budget support—also foster ongoing monitoring and assessment of interventions and strategies designed to reach education targets. Both forums provide opportunities to review and assess progress and to flag concerns or gaps within the education sector. The MoES has also developed a culture of contracting studies in particular areas to provide more information before policy decisions are taken. Similarly, particular interventions are piloted, then the results discussed during the ESCC and/or the ESR. ESIP, initially designed

as a five year plan, has also been reviewed in preparation for the development of ESIP II. This provided another major opportunity to assess goals, strategies, and progress in both.

Links to International Community: As Uganda has participated in numerous international conferences—including the World Conference on EFA and World Education Forum—and has been receiving ODA over the past decade, stakeholders note that these links to the international community helped to develop a program in line with international agreements and, subsequently, to attract funding and technical agencies to rapidly expand primary education.

Summary

Several interventions and strategies have been implemented achieve Universal Primary Education. The most noteworthy and important seem to be, first, the sustained political will for investment in the education sector. This has been key to the expansion of primary education as it ensured sufficient, timely resources—from government and funding and technical agencies—to implement the UPE program. Second, with the institutionalization of ESCC, ESR, and EFAG, Uganda and the funding and technical agencies have achieved significant gains in the overall management and coordination of the education sector. This has also provided focus for the sector and on-going examination of how education targets are reached. Third, the removal of school fees went quite a distance towards realizing UPE.

How Widely Shared are the Benefits?

It is undeniable that Uganda has made significant progress in reaching out to all primary school aged children, however, providing a quality and equitable education for all has yet to be achieved. Significant numbers of children are dropping out and many children, especially in the rural and war-torn areas, still lack access to basic education. For example, according to enrolment figures, in 1997 enrolments were as high as 2,159,850. The numbers dwindled to 832,855 by the time they reached P5 in 2001. One study found that of those students who enroll in Primary 1, less than 40% (19% of the girls and 20% of the boys) reach Primary 5 (Kakanyike, 2002). The MoES (2003d) estimates primary completion rates currently to be around 45%. Others estimate that between 13-18% of children still do not have access to primary education and/or attend alternative education centers.⁷

Accordingly, the attention of various stakeholders has turned to examine equity issues, i.e. reaching the ‘all’ if UPE is to be achieved. It is here that NGOs have contributed significantly to the education sector. Several INGOs, including ActionAid, Save the Children Norway, Save the Children US, have developed alternative basic education programs that target those not enrolled in formal schools. In the past year, the MoES has given more attention to equity issues as the conditions of education in the Northern part of Uganda has been discussed and a policy to reach the disadvantaged groups has been developed. The box below briefly discusses the situation and challenges to the provision of basic education in Northern Uganda and provides specific information about the progress (or lack thereof) in this region. Then the development of a policy for disadvantaged groups is briefly discussed.

⁷ Discussions and interviews conducted with some funding and technical agencies, NGOs, rural communities and district education officials state that this figure is much higher than this estimate reflects.

Basic education in Northern Uganda

The particular history of conflict and war in the Northern region has greatly affected the provision and quality of basic education. The Northern region comprises nearly ¼ of the national population and has seen 17 years of extreme poverty and war. Children in this region are abducted to serve as soldiers in the rebel group, these means that schools are prime targets for the rebel group and many children have been abducted by the rebel group at least once. While data is scanty compared to other regions, the high illiteracy rate of 53% (67% for women), high dropout rates, and low exam scores reveal the long term affects of the war on the provision of basic education (ActionAid Uganda, 2003). The ongoing war has meant that thousands of students and teachers have been displaced, schools have been destroyed or abandoned, and temporary schools in the camps for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are extremely overcrowded and lack resources to provide basic education. Many children do not finish school, children who have been abducted and escape find it difficult to return to their old classes and have immense difficulties integrating, and the overflow of IDPs to neighboring districts and their schools has placed a tremendous stress on an already overloaded education system.

The overcrowding of schools explains, in part, the high teacher: pupil ratio. See Table 2 below. Pupil: textbook ratios are also high in these districts as instruction materials have been destroyed, left behind, or host school shares materials with other IDP students. Pupil: classroom ratios are not necessarily a good measure in the North as schools have been destroyed and children have fled from schools, attending temporary schools in IDP camps. Recent estimates show that there are approximately 200,000 students displaced within their district of origin. Many more students have gone to neighboring districts. In one district—Gulu, over 155 schools are displaced and/or non-functional; over 77 schools have been destroyed (ActionAid Uganda, 2003).

The money going to the Northern region under the UPE program does not seem appropriate given the situation in the district. The funds—allocated for classroom construction and provision of instructional materials—often times cannot be used in this capacity. Yet provisions have not been made to make the funds more flexible and address the needs of this region. The May 2003 ESR placed the education in Northern Uganda on the agenda for the first time. Recommendations, such as making the UPE grants more flexible, are to be taken to Parliament to address these inequities in provision of education. Given the political sensitivity of this ongoing war, it remains to be seen what—if anything—will occur. Yet two generations of children in the Northern region have suffered because of lack of school facilities and continued insurgency. The overall success of UPE must address these issues if regional differences in access to education and completion rates are to be reduced.

Table 2: Comparison of Ratios in Northern Uganda

Teacher: Pupil Ratio		Pupil: Textbook Ratio	
National	1:55		1:4
Kotido	1:200		N/A
Masindi	1:120		1:15
Nebbi	1:100		1:10
Pader	1:100		N/A
Gulu	1:150		N/a

(Source: ActionAid Uganda 2003; MoESc, 2003)

In 2002, the MoES drafted a policy for providing education to the disadvantaged children in Uganda.⁸ Considering the high number of dropouts, those who are enrolled in alternative education programs, and those displaced and/or affected by war and insurgency, the inclusive definition of ‘disadvantaged’ constitutes a large number of children. The policy draws on the experience of NGOs and other alternative basic education programs that provide flexible, relevant basic education to children not enrolled in the formal system. Documentation shows that these programs provide low cost education; have low dropout rates and students perform relatively well on school examinations (MoES, 2002; MoES, 2002a).

If passed and incorporated into the budget framework, the policy for disadvantaged would extend services to include children not in formal schools and could have larger implications in adopting a more flexible approach to the delivery of education services.⁹ The development of such a policy points towards a growing recognition that achieving universal coverage of primary education requires adopting alternative strategies and programs for those children still left out of formal schooling. Successful implementation of this policy, however, depends on sustained interaction between civil society and MoES; the political will of the government to address the conditions of education in the North; and the ability of the MoES to generate additional resources for basic education.

The condition of education in Northern Uganda and the development of the policy for disadvantaged reveal two main things. First, significant regional differences exist in the achievements of UPE. Second, if all children in Uganda are to be reached under UPE, a more flexible approach to financing and delivery of education needs to be adopted.

Quality

It is widely stated and recognized that the expansion of access to primary education has come at a significant cost to the quality of education. Some stakeholders suggest that progress made in enrollments may have hampered progress in other areas of EFA goals—namely quality (MoESd, 2003). Teacher shortages, repetition and dropout rates, and declining scores on school exams and primary school leaving exams all suggest that the quality of basic education is declining.

One study commissioned by the MoES concluded that:

...Despite the fact that the rate of dropouts in primary schools appears to be alarming as the children ascend through the rungs of primary school system, there does not seem to be any corresponding concern to keep the children in school as there is in enrolling them in primary one. In other words, retaining children in school does not seem to be as highly prized by the parents, community and the schools and the government as enrolling them in school for the first time (Kakanyike, 2002; pg. 60).

Key stakeholders, noting a decline in quality, state that the quality of education needs to be the principle focus of the education sector in the future (MoES, 2003; MoESc, 2003; MoESd, 2003). Yet improving the quality of basic education has long been of concern and priority for Uganda.

⁸ The disadvantaged has been defined to include: children who have never enrolled in school; those who have dropped out; orphans; refugees, geographically and culturally isolated children; street children; children who must work; children with disabilities; abused children; and children in school who are ‘denied the chance of optimum participation in learning activities’ due to inadequate resources (MoES, 2001).

⁹ The current budget provides funds to alternative education through UPE capitation grant for only 67,000 children (MoES, 2003c).

The White Paper attests to concerns over declining quality, ESIP identifies improving the quality of education as a major priority area, and any major education review highlights quality as a growing concern. Given the policies and plans to provide quality basic education and the increased levels of support to basic education, what has been the approach to improve quality? How far have these efforts gone to the overall improvement of quality?

Uganda has focused much of its efforts to improve quality of basic education by working to improve mainly in four areas.

- to improve pupil: teacher ratio and pupil: textbook ratio
- to improve the curriculum and distribution of curriculum
- to sustain and improve teacher training and support
- to improve systems to monitor and measure the quality of education

A description of these approaches and their effectiveness is discussed below.

Improving Ratios: Similar to the expansion of primary education, strategies used to improve quality have largely focused on teacher recruitment and provision of instructional materials. Uganda targets reducing teacher: pupil ratios to a level of 1:40 and, as stated above, has made some progress towards this target. This national ratio, however, does not show that teacher: pupil ratios in lower levels of primary school are approximately 1:80 and there are vast regional differences. Most schools in rural areas do not have sufficient numbers of teachers and have the highest teacher: pupil ratios. With such differences, it remains to be seen whether resources will target particular grades and areas to reduce the ratios.

Working to provide more textbooks, the MoES used more resources to purchase textbooks and revised textbook procurement to make the purchase and distribution of textbooks more efficient (MoESd, 2003). While costs have been reduced significantly, the challenge remains to get textbooks utilized within the schools. A policy was recently formed to get textbooks into the hands of children. The May 2003 ESR noted some progress in this area, however, there is general consensus that textbooks are utilized very effectively and that the pupil: textbook ratios remain high, at around 1:5 (MoES, 2003).

Improving curriculum: ESIP called for a reform to improve and expand the curriculum. To do so, new curriculum guidelines were written and the subject areas expanded. The reform also brought new pedagogical ideas such as integrated learning and continuous assessment. This new curriculum, however, has been heavily critiqued and a review of the curriculum is already underway. Teachers say they lack the training and knowledge to teach (all) the subjects. Others state that the new curriculum is too extensive and knowledge based, making it irrelevant to most students. Mother tongue instruction was adopted, however, availability of instructional materials and placement of teachers with relevant language skills remain large obstacles to implement this. As teachers have received little training in the new curriculum, recent field visits found that many teachers are not using the new curriculum (MoES, 2003). With all these critiques, it is too early to determine whether students will perform better or worse on examinations with this curriculum and what recommendations will come of the curriculum review.

Improving training & support for teachers: With high demand for qualified, well-trained teachers, the MoES engaged in a few activities. First, the MoES took the USAID-sponsored

Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS) once the project cycle ended. Second, the MoES developed a Teacher Development and Management Plan (TDMP) which intends to address teacher training at primary teaching colleges (PTCs) and on-going support and professional development of teachers. Still concerns abound over the training, supervision and support for teachers. For example, the PTCs are inadequately staffed, poorly funded and have a high failure rate of students—averaging around 40% (MoESd, 2003). Key stakeholders also note that the inability of district school inspectors and teacher support providers (referred to as Center Coordinating Tutors) to fulfill their job responsibilities—whether because of large numbers of teachers, lack of training, or lack of financial or technical resources—undermines the objective of supporting teachers to improve the quality of education. As teachers are identified as central to improving the quality of education, low wages and high levels of teacher absenteeism, abscondment, and attrition (at around 35%) also pose big challenges. More attention and financial resources are needed if plans are to function to improve teacher training and provide support. It remains to be seen whether resources will be given here and how these efforts will contribute to the overall quality of education.

Monitoring Quality: Uganda has two main systems in place to collect data on the quality of education. First, there is an assessment system—called the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE)—which serves to provide information on student education achievement in various subjects over time and at different education levels. Second, the MoES instituted Education Information Management System (EMIS) to collect and use data, such as school enrollments, dropouts, to monitor progress and target districts and schools where further interventions are needed. NAPE has been involved in studies examining student performance as it relates to teacher and parent characteristics, and school environment. The NAPE studies show a decline in student performance over time (and between lower and upper grades of primary schooling) and provide information on factors related to student performance (MoESb, 2003; NAPE, 2000). The studies also provide policy recommendations which seem to have little influence on education policy. To date, EMIS has been used primarily to determine budget allocation to districts and schools and to monitor ratios (pupil: teacher, pupil: classroom) used to determine the release of budget support funds. To that extent, EMIS is an important tool for making budgetary decisions. Yet EMIS has been critiqued for the quality of data (Kakanyike, 2002; MoESd, 2003). Reports suggest that enrolment figures are over-inflated; studies have shown that attendance, dropout and retention figures are inaccurate; key stakeholders suggest that EMIS is not being effectively utilized as a tool to monitor progress and, eventually, make policy decisions. Plans are being developed to have a more coherent system in place to measure and assess quality which may make better use of these systems in the future.

Summary

The efforts discussed above to improve the quality of basic education have seen progress in a few areas. Teachers have been recruited to reduce teacher: pupil ratio. Textbooks have been purchased, costs reduced, and are being distributed to schools. A new curriculum was developed and implemented. Teachers are receiving some support through the TDMS program. EMIS is in place to monitor progress in certain areas. Many stakeholders suggest that these efforts will continue, as quality of education will be central in the development of ESIP II. Still lacking, however, is a strategic, coherent vision or underlying methodology for how these efforts will be

linked and quality improved. Currently, quality is seen primarily as a function of student performance on examinations, teacher training, teacher-pupil ratio, pupil-textbook ratio. Some stakeholders recognize the need to look beyond school inputs (pupil: textbook ratio, teacher: pupil ratio) to improve quality, however, existing policy and budget planning have yet to move in this direction.

Early Childhood Care and Education

To date, the provision of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECD) has been mainly in the hands of the private sector and concentrated in urban areas. Progress made in ECD has not been to increase access but rather efforts have gone to ensure the quality of ECD programs. To do so, the MoES has taken the lead in coordinating and providing direction for provision of ECD. A department for pre-primary education has been established; a policy for early childhood education is being drafted; learning materials have been developed and distributed to various ECD centers in efforts to ensure quality of services. Funding and technical agencies have become more involved ECD (ACUU, 2003). 390 ECD centers have been established in two underserved districts; learning materials have been distributed to 515 primary and nursery schools; advocacy and sensitization messages on the importance of ECD have also been developed and distributed across the country. A brief description of how this was achieved is provided below.

- More strategic, coherent planning processes: ECD has been integrated into ESIP and, subsequently a department established and policy drafted.
- Increase in External Funding: As ECD falls within the ESIP framework, a few members of EFAG, namely the World Bank and USAID, have supported activities in this area.
- Increased coordination among stakeholders: The development of learning materials and establishment of ECD centers brought together stakeholders from the private sector, funding and technical agencies, MoES, and NGOs. This collaboration will continue with the drafting of the policy on ECD.

Adult Literacy

Uganda has the lowest literacy rate in East Africa at around 63%; 6.9 million adults are illiterate (5.5 million women and 1.4 million men). A few steps have been taken in this area, although they have not yet translated into significant reductions in illiteracy rates.

Progress in this area has been, first, to expand literacy services and, second, to develop a strategic plan to improve and further expand adult literacy programs. With World Bank support, the strategic plan has been allocated US\$2.5 million of the \$85 million needed to implement the strategic plan (MoGLSD, 2002). Still this is the highest level of budget spending, to date, on adult literacy services. The Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MoGLSD) and NGOs have been the primary providers of literacy services. Enrolment in literacy classes represents approximately 3% of the total number of illiterates in the country. The MoGLSD has approximately 140,000 enrolled in pilot projects in 26 districts; the remaining adults are enrolled in NGO literacy projects. In both cases, there are plans to extend literacy services, pending availability of resources.

The little progress made in literacy occurred through an increase of external funding to support literacy activities; development of a strategic plan; and broader coordination and consultation of various stakeholders, namely NGOs, to be involved in the planning and implementation of activities. Since more funding and technical agencies are engaged in budget support of the education sector and adult literacy is not integrated into the ESIP framework, few funds are channeled to the MoGLSD or NGOs to support literacy activities. With the development of a strategic plan, perhaps more funds will be allocated to literacy activities in the future.

Lifelong Learning Opportunities

The rapid expansion of primary education has brought more demand for post-primary education and other opportunities to continue lifelong learning. A few initiatives have begun to address these needs. First, in 2002, the GoU passed a policy on post-primary education and training, addressing the growing number of students who will complete primary education in the next few years. The policy lays out strategies and priorities to expand and improved educational services at the post-primary level—including expansion of secondary schools—including instituting universal secondary education—and vocational education programs. As the majority of education sector funding goes to primary education, financial resources and external agency support are severely lacking to implement this policy. Uganda has also taken steps to make studies, and entry, in post-primary institutions more flexible (MoES, 2000; MoESd, 2003). Progress made in this area includes the following. The number of secondary schools has increased considerably in the past few years. The private sector has played an important role here creating more places for students to continue their studies.¹⁰ After the President's call to have polytechnics in each district, sixteen community-based polytechnics are being piloted with plans to expand further once studies have been conducted and funds have been secured. The few achievements, then, have been the development of a strategic plan; expansion of the private sector in the delivery of secondary education; and increased political will to address and expand post-primary educational services.

Gender equality

Uganda has achieved near gender parity in enrolments at primary level (48% of total enrolments are girls) and has increased the number of girls enrolled in secondary education from between 30-39% to approximately 44% (MoESd, 2003).¹¹ These enrolment figures mask that higher numbers of girls drop out and do not take into account the institutionalization of gender-bias that is reflected, for example, in curriculum and teaching methods (MoESd, 2003; Kwesiga, 2002). As well, scores on the Primary School Leaving Exam are lower for girls than boys (MoESd, 2003). The World Bank Study on Financing for Education for All (2002) also states that Uganda is not on track to achieving gender equality in primary and secondary schooling by 2005.

Nevertheless, Uganda has gone considerable distance towards reaching gender parity in enrolments. This happened through a variety of strategies involving many stakeholders from the

¹⁰ In 1998, 43,864 students were enrolled in private secondary schools and 254,975 students were enrolled in government schools. In 2001, EMIS data shows the enrolment in private schools to be 278,122 and enrolment in government schools was 261,664.

¹¹ Female enrolment in tertiary education it is approximately 38% (Kwesiga, 2002).

local to international level. First, the UPE policy stipulated two of the four children enrolled without paying school fees should be girls. The MoES also provided funds to district levels to sensitize communities and parents about the importance of girls' education and developed incentive programs to encourage girls retention and completion in education. A National Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda was also developed. Second, Uganda has taken a lead in Africa in the promotion of girls' education as politicians, government representatives, religious and cultural leaders, funding and technical agencies, and NGOs have all be involved to popularize the notion and importance of girls' education. This has been done through public lectures, radio debates, use of the media, holding conferences and involvement in international initiatives—namely the Girls Education Movement (GEM) and the 2003 Global Week of Action, which focused on achieving the MDG on girls education by 2005.

Key strategies to reach gender parity in enrolments have been: reduction of school fees; targeted resources to reduce inequities; involvement of leaders at local, national, international level; and development of strategic plans.

3. Sustaining Progress towards EFA Goals

The above review identifies several factors that contribute to the gains in achieving EFA goals thus far. These include (but are not limited to):

- Sustained political will and increased government expenditures on education
- Increase in coordinated external support (financial and technical) and shifts to budget support funding modalities
- Creation of new forms of cooperation—ESCC, ESR, EFAG—to review and assess the education sector
- Wider participation in the review, implementation, and management of education sector
- Institutionalization of strategic, long term planning
- Development of alternative education programs

Yet instituting these factors does not necessarily translate into significant educational gains in and of themselves. For example, in both ECD and adult literacy, strategic planning and increased coordination occurred but did not translate into significant gains, possibly as resources to implement the plans are lacking. The following section attempts to identify factors that are critical for sustaining and improving on EFA achievements seen to date.

Sustained (and Increased) Levels of Financial Resources: Uganda has adopted a high-risk strategy for implementation of its education programs. As over 60% of the budget is contributed by funding and technical agencies, if external support diminishes, Uganda is left with an education system it cannot afford. This raises questions about the sustainability of the UPE program, as it is heavily dependent on external resources. One estimate is that funding and technical agencies would have to maintain funding levels for at least 10 years before the GoU could provide the resources to fund UPE (ACUU, 2003). Some studies state that without a dramatic increase in the funds available for primary education, the current education system cannot be sustained, let alone improved (ACUU, 2003; Klees et. al., 2002). Questions about the sustainability of funding is also tied to questions of how long GoU will be able to meet the required targets to receive budget support funds further . For example, budget cuts initiated by

the GoU or a slowdown of teacher recruitment could seriously jeopardize the ability of the MoES to reach agreed upon targets.

Greater Focus on Improving the Quality of Education: Uganda has made significant gains in expanding access to education, however, the low completion rates and low performance on exams raises questions about the quality of education that is being accessed. To date, the overwhelming emphasis has been on improving targeted ratios but this has not substantially addressed quality concerns. Thus it is essential Uganda place much of its efforts on improvements in the quality of primary education if UPE is to be achieved, or considered a ‘success’. As the existing efforts have not gone far enough to improve quality, these need to be reinforced and extended to other areas, such as teacher training. The ability of stakeholders in the education sector to ascertain which interventions are the priority and to develop a coherent strategy for quality reform, especially given competing needs and resource constraints, is paramount to achieving gains in the quality of primary education.

Adoption of Flexible Approaches to Reach All Children: Uganda still faces many challenges to reduce inequities in the education system and reach all children. Towards this end, the MoES has taken few steps, mainly the development of a policy for disadvantaged groups to address those still not benefiting from the UPE program. This policy remains in draft form and is yet to be integrated into the budget. More needs to be done in this area if the most disadvantaged children and the Northern region are to benefit from basic education. Efforts to develop more flexible approaches in the delivery of education services may include, more flexibility in budget allocations to target particular areas and needs; increased role for NGOs in policy dialogue and in building capacity at the local level; and adoption of the policy for disadvantaged children.

Expansion of Post-primary Education Opportunities: There are mounting questions about whether the lack of placements in post-primary education has, or will have, an affect on enrollment and retention of students in UPE. Several stakeholders expressed concern over the “UPE bulge” which refers to students enrolled in school under UPE who are now approaching Primary 7. In the next few years, approximately 2 million children will be completing primary school with very few opportunities to continue their education. If lifelong learning opportunities are to be provided and the value of obtaining a primary education sustained, more attention and financial resources need to be given to this area.

Greater Support to District/Local Level: After the development of ESIP, the attention of the MoES and EFAG was on developing procedures and establishing forums at the central level to better coordinate, plan for, and review the education sector. Once these were in place, their focus went towards achieving the agreed upon targets set every six months. This sidelined the attention given to the overall management and implementation of education, for which the responsibility was transferred to the local level. As the Mid-term ESIP Review (2003) notes, the demands and expectations of funding and technical agencies has pulled the structure and performance in education towards meeting their demands—i.e. the agreed upon targets for release of funds. Little time, attention, and financial resources have gone to serve the needs of local partners or enhance the capacity of districts and communities to manage primary schooling. Given the concerns over quality and effective use of financial resources, more attention needs to be given to the local level.

Increased Coordination to Meet all EFA Goals: Currently, ESIP is recognized as the National EFA Plan which contains strategies for targeting two of the six EFA goals. Some EFA goals—adult literacy and lifelong learning opportunities—are not only missing from the plan but are under the jurisdiction of the MoLGSD. As there is no functioning body to examine progress towards all the EFA goals, progress in certain areas goes unchecked and under resourced.

Sustained Attention and Support of the International Community: As Uganda is heavily dependent on external funding, the sustained attention of international community on EFA—including fulfilling commitments made to the provision of resources—is essential if Uganda is to reach EFA targets. Uganda has gone through the process of developing a proposal for the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) as it is perceived to be the way to mobilize the necessary resources to reach EFA and MDG targets. However, FTI will not bring more resources for primary education as funding and technical agencies have not decided how FTI proposals will be funded and the MoFPED did not approve the FTI proposal. It remains to be seen, then, how Uganda will mobilize the funds needed to improve and expand primary education, especially if the existing funding and technical agencies move their attention elsewhere.

4. Conclusions: What Kind of Education for All

Uganda is an interesting case to examine progress made towards EFA goals. This paper shows while Uganda made significant progress in achieving UPE by increasing access to education, it is not an unqualified success story. The intent of UPE—to reduce inequities and bring education to the most disadvantaged—has yet to be achieved. Quality issues also must be addressed if Uganda is to enjoy and sustain gains achieved by increases in enrolments. Moreover, as expanding access came at the expense of quality, the questions are raised; does a rapid expansion of access mean a decrease in the quality of education? If quality is lost, is a rapid expansion of access, then, a desired approach?

Some stakeholders seem less sanguine about the progress Uganda has made in EFA goals. The dramatic increase in enrollments is remarkable, but other countries also had an upsurge in enrolments after the announcement of UPE. What is different in Uganda are the many new forms of cooperation and coordination, and perhaps stakeholders want to be hopeful and see progress. Moreover, concern over the misappropriation of UPE funds at national, district, or local level raises questions about whether increased financial resources are the key to improve the entire education system.

In any case, Uganda faces many challenges in sustaining and improving its education system. With budget constraints and competing areas for existing resources, how priority areas will be determined and funded remains to be seen.

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Appendix 1: Acronyms

ECD	Early Childhood Development and Education
EFAG	Education Funding Agencies Group
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESCC	Education Sector Consultative Committee
ESIP	Education Strategic Investment Plan
ESR	Education Sector Review
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
FENU	Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development
MoGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MoPS	Ministry of Public Service
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PLE	Primary School Leaving Exam
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan
PTCs	Primary Teachers Colleges
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
TDMP	Teacher Development Management Plan
TDMS	Teacher Development Management System
UPE	Universal Primary Education