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EFA policies, strategies and reforms in Uganda: assessment of the current potential for sustainable progress toward achieving the EFA goals by 2015

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EFA policies, strategies and reforms in Uganda: assessment of the current potential for sustainable progress towards achieving the EFA goals by 2015.¹

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1.0 Introduction

Since the 1990 Jomtien World Conference, EFA issues have been subjected to unprecedented rhetoric in international summits. However, there have also been genuine attempts to put the goal of EFA at the centre of national attention and action. On the basis of recent education statistics, Uganda is one of the countries that have demonstrated meaningful progress towards EFA over the past dozen years (see, e.g., *Uganda EFA 2000 Assessment report; 2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report*). This fact, however, raises several questions, including: what further progress, if any, has been made since the last assessment? On what EFA goals has there been most progress, and why? Have any of the Dakar goals and targets been achieved over the reporting period? If so, how was this achieved? If not, then is there a realistic chance of achieving them by 2015? What current potential hence is there for the sustainable progress? In short, Uganda's past progress begs the question whether Uganda is (still) on track?

At the Jomtien conference all countries that participated, including Uganda, resolved to provide education for all their citizens of all ages. Six goals and targets to be met were set and these were to be monitored under the EFA 2000 Assessment. The anticipation then was that EFA goals and targets would be achieved by the year 2000. The Assessment provided a basis for discussions at the 2000 Dakar World Education Forum. The diagnosis of the Dakar Forum (and which the *2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report* reconfirms) was that achieving the EFA goals remains a dream for approximately a third of the world's population. Therefore, the Forum reaffirmed the six goals previously set at the Jomtien conference. The Dakar Framework for Action declared that by 2015, all children of primary school age would attend free schooling of good quality and that the gender gap in schooling would be eliminated. Levels of adult literacy would be reduced by a-half, early childhood education (ECE) and opportunities for appropriate youth and adult learning and life skills education would be greatly increased, and all aspects of the quality of education would be improved. In September 2000, the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted at the UN Millennium Summit, of which the second and third goals relating to education – achieving universal primary education (UPE) and promoting gender equality/empowering women – were defined as critical to poverty eradication. Uganda was one of the many governments represented and that committed itself to achieve the Dakar and Millennium goals.

This paper constitutes the Uganda EFA 2003 assessment report. It is a result of a commissioned study for the 2003 EFA Global Monitoring Report published by UNESCO. The final responsibility for the views and information contained in the paper is

¹ A report of Uganda to the 2003 EFA Global Monitoring Report published by UNESCO.

that of the author. The overall purpose of this paper is to assess the extent to which the benefits of EFA are being extended to all Ugandans of all ages and whether the Dakar commitments have a realistic chance of being met by 2015. In particular, this paper will on the basis of recent education data monitor progress towards EFA in Uganda in three ways as follows:

1. identify and assess the progress made towards each of the six Dakar goals, and in particular underscore where there has been **substantial progress**;
2. identify the policies, strategies and reforms or legislation that have been **primarily responsible for the progress** that has been made;
3. identify the strategies that will be **critical to sustaining progress** and to achieving the EFA goals by 2015.

The paper is presented in three broad parts. Part 1 is the introduction, while Part 3 summarizes the major issues discussed under items 1-3 and draws a tentative general conclusion on the current potential for sustainable progress towards achieving the EFA goals by 2015. Part 2 is sub-divided into six parts. Each of the six parts updates our understanding of both the progress towards achieving one of the six EFA goals in Uganda and the reasons for such progress, and the prospects for achieving each of the six EFA goals in Uganda by 2015. Discussion of the six Dakar goals is presented in the following order: Universal primary education (UPE), Gender equality, Education quality, Adult literacy, Youth and adult learning and life skills education and Early childhood care and education.

2.0 Update on progress towards, and prospects for, achieving the six EFA goals

2.1 Universal Primary Education

Monitoring progress and measuring successful achievement of the UPE goal in Uganda is a bit complicated, although this is the aspect of education where there has been most substantial progress. Up-to-date official figures are often not accurate and reliable, or they are unavailable. Also, interpretation of the UPE goal itself poses a challenge (see *2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report: 55*). Enrolment rates are key indicators of the extent to which the education system manages to serve all children. However, current official statistics in Uganda still do not, for example, measure the net attendance rate (NAR). And, the net enrolment ratio (NER) for 2001 is, for example, higher than 100%. Total NER for 2001 was 117.51% (see *Education Statistical Abstract 2001: 50*). This implies that there is bound to be a problem in assessing participation in UPE in Uganda. It is not certain whether, and the extent to which, children that are formally registered as pupils actually attend school. Nor is it clear why the NER for 2001 was so high. For example, is it because of high rates of grade repetition, or is it a consequence of inflated enrolment figures²? The latter implies that when calculated, the non-attendance rates would in any case be misleading due to possible inflation of enrolment figures by corrupt

² This refers to the tendency by some head-teachers to inflate pupil enrolment figures simply because of fear of losing UPE grants, especially the Capitation Grant that is pegged to pupil enrolment and released directly to schools by government in order to support UPE.

school officials. Nevertheless, there is overwhelming qualitative evidence on Uganda gathered through participatory research approaches to suggest that there is a high level of non-attendance under UPE due to absenteeism and dropping-out. (see 2nd UPPAP Draft National Report 2002: 131-134, 127).

The above notwithstanding, the following are the summary of indicators for 2002 of the extent of enrolment and survival in, access to, and legislation of compulsory, primary schooling in Uganda (see Table 1 below).

Table 1

Indicator	2001	2002
National total enrolment figure	6, 900,916	7,354,153
GER	129.85%	140.5%
NER	117.51%	125.7%
GIR	193.63%	193%
NIR	70.05%	71.8%
Repetition rate	9.5%	11%
Survival rate to Primary level 4	N/A	66%
Survival rate to Primary level 7	N/A	58%
Pupil classroom ratio (all schools)	90	87 ³

Source: *Education Statistical Abstract 2001*; *Education Sector Fact-file 2002*: 1, 4; *New Vision*, May 12, 2003.

The extent of achievements in total enrolment, GER, NER and NIR reflected above show substantial steady progress towards ensuring the attainment of enrolment in and access to primary schooling in Uganda for all eligible children. This is all primarily due to the UPE policy launched in 1997. However, the policy shift during the year ended (2002), from FOUR children per family as earlier stipulated when the UPE policy was first launched to ALL children has made a significant contribution too, and partly this strategy may in the long run turn out to be critical to sustaining progress and to achieving the UPE goal by 2015 (see *New Vision*, May 12 2003: 49).

Still, it seems that the age of entry is influential in helping to secure some of the important intended outcome from UPE (see *2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report*: 51). The above indicators for GER and GIR in 2002 suggest that there are still many pupils that begin primary schooling when they are older (or younger) than the official starting age of six years, and who repeat grades. The latter is also indicated by the increasing figures for repetition rate, and the declining figures for survival rate to the end of primary schooling from 66% to 58%. The 2002 survival rate in the first four years of primary education of 66% is higher compared to a previous rate of 45% (see *2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report*: 16, 51). Nevertheless, it implies a still relatively high level of early dropout in Uganda with the attendant risk of the pupils affected subsequently relapsing into illiteracy. Also, over-age intake and repetition of grades suggest that there is still

³ The pupil classroom ratio in 1998/99 was 116.

high over-age enrolment in Uganda, particularly in the higher grades, and which perhaps explains the relatively lower survival rate up to the end of UPE. Therefore, with the success in increasing access to primary schooling, eliminating completely or reducing significantly the numbers of over-age entrants into UPE is critical to sustaining progress towards UPE goal because it would promote higher survival rates up to and beyond grade 5. In this regard the Ministry's Policy Framework for Basic Education for Educationally Disadvantaged Children and the on-going Complementary Basic Education Programmes both have a crucial role to play (see discussion of Adult literacy and Youth and adult learning and life skills education in Parts 2.4 and 2.5 below).

Besides, government has enacted legislation to make primary schooling compulsory for the relevant age group (0-17 years) (see *Children's Statute, 1996*: 10-11). With the relative success in classroom construction under UPE (see Table 1 above), such legislation will be critical in sustaining progress towards the UPE goal because it shall promote continued high levels of enrolment. However, such legislation may not be decisive in achieving universal participation in schooling, not least because of the relative ignorance about the existence of the legislation by the general public, and especially by the (rural) local leaders who are mainly required to enforce it. The right to "education and guidance" is listed as the first among the six rights of the child guaranteed by the statute. Thus, the issue of *compulsory* schooling in the *Children's Statute, 1996* is merely implied but not stated. Further, since the statute was enacted it has been overshadowed by the debate over corporal punishment (see 2nd UPPAP Draft National Report 2002:127).

2.2 Gender equality

Education is a fundamental right for all, including girls and women. Yet, despite considerable progress in narrowing the absolute gender gap in Uganda primarily through UPE, girls are still less likely to enjoy full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality (see 2nd UPPAP Draft National Report 2002: 135-6). The following are the summary of gender indicators for 2002 of the extent of enrolment and survival in, and access to primary schooling in Uganda (see Table 2 below).

Table 2

Indicator	2001	2002
National total enrolment figure	Girls: 3,372,881 Boys: 3,528,085	3,633,018 3,721,135
GER	Girls: 127.76% Boys: 132.91%	138.1% 142.9%
NER	Girls: 115.86% Boys: 120.03%	123.9% 127.5%
GIR	Girls: 194.93% Boys: 193.38%	194% 192%
NIR	Girls: 71.51% Boys: 68.98%	72.9% 70.7%
Repetition rate	N/A	Girls: 11% Boys: 11%

Survival rate to Primary level 4	N/A	Girls:67% Boys:66%
Survival rate to Primary level 7	N/A	Girls:55% Boys:61%

Source: *Education Statistical Abstract 2001; Education Sector Fact-file 2002; New Vision*, May 12, 2003.

Judging from Table 2 above, the GIR and NIR of girls in 2002 is still higher than that of boys, and in the case of NIR especially it has also continued to rise between 2001 and 2002. This is positive indication that gender disparities throughout the primary school cycle in Uganda may eventually be reduced substantially or even eliminated in the long-term. This is likely because, as relatively more girls than boys who are of official primary school entrance age enter in primary grade 1, the reduction in GIR between 2001 and 2002 implies that there is a growing trend towards relatively less over-age intake of girls that tends to result in high rates of dropout before and after grade 5. Altogether this may point to progress towards higher internal efficiency of the primary school system in Uganda, which is crucial for sustaining progress towards achieving the gender equality goal by 2015. These achievements are a result of Affirmative Action and all the efforts geared towards the girl-child. Strategies and a policy framework to complement UPE policy have been or are being designed or implemented by the Ministry of Education and Sports. A National Strategy and Plan of Action for Girl's Education was developed in 2000 and a Girl's Education Movement (GEM) launched in 2001. Also, the Ministry has been preparing a specific Gender in Education policy since 2002 that will be finalized during 2003 (see *New Vision* May 12, 2003:49).

However, although the participation rates for girls in Uganda may be increasing it also remains true that the gender disparities in primary education indicated by the GER and NER (see Table 2 above) is amplified at secondary level. The statistics available indicate that absolute gender gap in Uganda in 2001 for primary schooling was 2% compared to 12% at secondary level (see *Education Statistical Abstract 2001*:18-19, 68). At the primary level, boys and girls repeated grades equally frequently in 2002 (see Table 2 above), and so girls in Uganda are as likely as boys to be over-age. This seems to suggest a watering down of the expected progress towards reducing the gender disparities mentioned above, because it appears girls will be as likely as boys to dropout especially after grade 5 due to being over-age. Indeed, in Table 2 above it is plain that girls' survival rate up to the end of primary level is significantly lower than that of boys.

Further, despite evidence from many countries to the contrary there is no data found to suggest that increasing the proportion of women teachers is a strategy used in Uganda to facilitate girls' access to education and to help improve their learning process (see *2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report*: 77). Indeed there appears to be no deliberate policy initiative yet, although it would be expected that the Gender in Education Policy in the offing would address this issue. Meanwhile, the unfortunate trend in Uganda is that the number of female teachers at all levels except pre-primary is much less than that of their male counterparts (see Table 3 below).

Table 3

Teachers/Educators	Male	Female	Total
Pre-Primary	451	2443	2894
All Primary	87,883	51,601	139,484
UPE/Government Primary	75,401	40,932	116,333
Secondary	28,884	7,425	10,588

Source: *Education Sector Fact-file 2002*.

2.3 Education quality

Monitoring progress and measuring successful achievement of the quality of education goal in Uganda is not easy. Hence, the present ability to monitor the quality of UPE in Uganda is limited, especially with regard to measuring what pupils' really learn and actually do with what they have learned. Instead, there is a heavy reliance on proxies: (a) levels and quality of inputs such as public current and recurrent expenditure on UPE as a percentage of both GDP and total recurrent public education expenditure, capitation grants, provision of physical facilities and instructional materials, teacher numbers and qualifications, etc. (b) process indicators such as enrolment, intake, survival and repetition rates, etc., and (c) output indicators, especially performance in Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Therefore, this is an aspect of education where there has no doubt been significant progress in Uganda, but there is little consensus about the nature and degree of success, what is primarily responsible for the discernable progress that has been made, or the prospect of achieving this goal by 2015. In short, identifying the key strategies in Uganda that will be critical to sustaining the progress is vital.

Investment in UPE

Uganda has continued to invest heavily in primary education. Public current expenditure on primary education was 256.13 billion shillings in 2001/02 and has increased to 365.49 billion in 2002/03. This increase is an equivalent of 66.4% up from 63.2% public recurrent expenditure on primary education as a percentage of the total recurrent public education expenditure. As a percentage of GDP, public expenditure on primary education in 2002 was 2.2% compared to only 0.53% expenditure on secondary education. Release of capitation grants to support the UPE programme have continued to rise from 14.3 billion shillings in 1996/97 when UPE was launched to 41.8 billion in 2001/02, representing an increase of over 190%. The number of primary classrooms in use will have grown from 47,674 in 1998/99 to 69,409 by the end of 2002/03, representing a decrease in pupil classroom ratio from 116:1 to 94:1 in government schools (and to 87:1 in all schools). Meanwhile the process of constructing teachers' houses, more classrooms, providing desks and furniture is ongoing. And, significant measures have also been undertaken to improve the pupil textbook ratio to at least 1:3 for all core subjects, to emphasize the use of non-text book materials in primary grades 1 and 2. (see *Education Sector Fact-file 2002*: 1; *New Vision*, May 12, 2003: 49). Such relatively high level of investment in primary education suggests the great attention that quality is receiving in Uganda. Indeed, the just ended 9th Uganda education sector review workshop noted with satisfaction the remarkable performance of the budget for the first half of 2002/03,

enabling the donor budget support agencies under the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG) to release more funds for implementation of education activities (see *New Vision* May 16, 2003:4).

However, at the same time the workshop noted that out of a total budget provision of 505.17 billion shillings only 230.17 billion had been released by the end of 2002 instead of 252.59 billion as expected. This is partly the result of the 23% across the board budget-cut imposed on all government departments late 2002 to bolster the governments' efforts to end the long-running armed insurgency in Northern Uganda. Donors have warned that the pending education budget cut is a hindrance to targets and will derail the country's progress towards EFA by 2015 (see *New Vision* May 13, 2003:3; *New Vision* May 19, 2003:29). Besides, widespread corruption has meant that accountability by districts for funds released between 1998-2001 to support UPE, especially for classroom construction under the Schools Facility Grant (SFG), has not been forthcoming (see *New Vision* May 14, 2003:3). The strategy has been to channel such money directly to the schools through the local districts under the decentralization or local government act. The proposals that classroom construction be re-centralised, although put on hold due to being contrary to the decentralization policy, may be a crucial legislative reform and necessary strategy vital for sustaining progress (see *New Vision* May 19, 2003:30-31). Further, the Education Ministry's proposal to scrap the construction and instructional materials units may undermine the progress so far made and ensure failure to achieve the EFA goal by 2015 because the units have in the past played vital roles in monitoring classroom construction and textbook procurement (see *New Vision* May 15, 2003:4).

Teacher recruitment

Towards the same objective of assuring quality, Uganda government has continued to aggressively recruit qualified teachers. The summary of ESIP 2002 indicators for primary schools in Uganda indicate that the percentage of teachers having the required academic qualifications was 91%, while the percentage of those who are certified to teach according to national standards of professional qualifications was 74% (see *Education Sector Fact-file 2002*: 1). The number of teachers on government payroll has grown from 86,348 in 1998/99 to 122,055 in 2002/03, representing a reduction in pupil teacher ratio from 64:1 in 1998/99 to just above 52:1 in 2002/03. The just ended education review workshop noted with satisfaction that this achievement slightly surpassed the original target of having 122,000 teachers on the government payroll by April 2003. However, at the same workshop it was revealed by the Ministry of Public Service there is high rate of teacher attrition in primary schools. Primary teachers abandon the profession at a rate of 35%.

Besides, recent qualitative data on Uganda gathered through participatory research approaches suggests that the effect on quality that the statistical gains in numbers of qualified primary teachers is supposed to have is not being felt by the majority poor and rural dwellers. The second Uganda participatory poverty assessment project (UPPAP) study found out that deterioration in quality of primary education was widely cited as the major negative effect of UPE, and that inadequate training, motivation, commitment and monitoring of teachers, lack of housing for teachers especially in rural areas and extra-

large classes due to few teachers, among others, were most frequently related to the deteriorating UPE quality. Thus, motivating teachers to work, especially in rural and difficult-to-live-in areas and improving supervision and monitoring by district school inspectors was the most frequently mentioned community recommendation to improve UPE quality (see 2nd UPPAP Draft National Report 2002: 129-130, 143). The just ended educator review was informed that government proposes to set aside part of the UPE Capitation Grant to facilitate district school inspectors, although the World Bank, a major education donor agency in Uganda under EFAG, has opposed this proposal (see *New Vision* May 15, 2003:4). It is plain from the above that offering relatively better salaries and benefits for primary teachers is a strategy that will be critical to sustaining progress and to increasing significantly the prospect of achieving the education quality goal by 2015, because if salaries/benefits are too low then access, equity and quality all suffer (see 2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report: 19).

Grade repetition or Automatic promotion

As noted above, Uganda has relatively high levels of grade repetition and drop-out which indicate low levels of system efficiency and quality of learning (see 2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report: 19). However, recent qualitative data on Uganda gathered through participatory research approaches also suggests that the widespread practice in Uganda of “automatic promotion” has a significant effect on UPE quality. Automatic promotion entails elevation of pupils to a higher grade up to Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) regardless of their progress in learning achievement. The second UPPAP study found out that there was widespread concern about automatic promotion of pupils coupled to the inability of some pupils to read and write or speak good English. Automatic promotion was said to encourage emphasis on simply doing/sitting exams, and not on passing the exams. Hence, absenteeism was rife during most of the year except during end-of-year promotional exams. And pupils thus reach PLE when still academically weak (see 2nd UPPAP Draft National Report 2002: 130). Therefore, it is noteworthy that internal efficiency can be symbolically improved by automatic promotion, but a real improvement in quality of learning requires attention to the causes of low learning in school. Unless a specific policy framework and strategy for implementing automatic promotion is designed and effected, the widespread haphazard practice of automatic promotion in Uganda threatens to undermine the progress made so far or likely to be made in the future towards achieving the quality education goal by 2015.

Learning outcomes

The establishment by the Uganda government of the Education Standards Agency (ESA) shall be critical to sustaining the discernable progress and to improving the prospects of achieving the education quality goal by 2015. This is because so far through the ESA the Education Ministry has, among others, developed new quality indicators and conducted a baseline study on learning achievements and outcomes in primary grades 1 and 2. These are to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of non-book materials that are being encouraged for use at these levels. Also, through the ESA the Ministry agreed on the framework for monitoring learning achievements to ensure that pupils receive quality education and indeed acquire basic learning competencies (see *New Vision* May 12, 2003:49).

2.4 Adult literacy

In view of the current conceptual framework for assessing adult literacy, this paper addresses literacy both as an outcome of learning and by focusing on literacy programmes in Uganda (see *2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report*: 17, 60, 66).

The degree of priority accorded to adult literacy in policy and resource allocation in Uganda compared to UPE is relatively low. Therefore there has been relatively modest progress in Uganda. For example, adult literacy policy formulation and resource allocation in Uganda was shifted from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and is currently assigned to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD). The Education Ministry generally enjoys relatively higher priority in receiving government and donor funding. The relocation of adult literacy may be good for monitoring and assessing progress in closing the gender literacy gap in Uganda, but it does not seem to improve *overall* assessment and monitoring of national trends in adult literacy rates because implementation and analysis of Functional Adult Literacy Programme (FALP) and Complementary Basic Education Programmes (CBEPs) may not be well integrated (see discussion below). This suggests that improving assessment and monitoring of adult literacy in Uganda, as indeed is part of the focus of the forthcoming UN Literacy Decade (2003-2012), will be a vital strategy critical to sustaining progress and to achieving Dakar adult literacy goal by 2015.

A national adult literacy programme was launched in 1992 by the Uganda government, in conjunction with NGOs with the objective to reduce the rate of illiteracy from 48% to 24% by 2003 (see *New Vision* October 18, 2002: 34). A pilot project for the FALP of the MoGLSD was started that same year in eight districts, targeting persons aged 15 years and above with emphasis on women. A review of the project carried out in 1995, among others, recommended a controlled, systematic and well-planned expansion of the pilot project into a national FALP. By 2002 the programme had almost covered the whole country (i.e. 51 out of 56 districts). This has led to an increase in adult learners to 149,019 in 2001 compared to 93,289 adult learners in 1997, representing a 63% increase since 1997. Also, the majority of the participants attain a level of reading, writing and numeric computation comparatively higher than of primary grade 4 pupils (see *UBOS 2002 Statistical Abstract*: 8). By 1998 the adult illiteracy rate had reduced from 52% in 1989 to 38.2%. The illiteracy rate for females had reduced from 66% in 1989 to 52% in 1998 (see the *Uganda EFA 2000 Assessment Report*: vi). On the other hand, the Uganda government through the Education Ministry and in collaboration with education stakeholders especially NGOs is both implementing CBEPs and has developed a policy framework for basic education for all educationally disadvantaged children/groups, including over-age UPE entrants, intended to harmonize and mainstream their educational opportunities. On-going CBEPs targeted at the disadvantaged groups within the 6-18 years age-group include: Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education (COPE), Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) and Basic Education for Urban Poor Areas (BEUPA) (see *New Vision* May 12, 2003:49). From this discussion it appears that a strategy vital to sustaining progress in Uganda towards the adult literacy goal would be to integrate policy formulation, resource allocation and implementation of

the FALP and the CBEPs by placing the programmes under one government Ministry – preferably MoES – in order to improve simultaneous assessment and monitoring of the overall progress including the comprehensive reduction of the national gender literacy gap. Such a strategy would also be vital to sustaining progress towards the youth and adult learning and life-skills education goal (see discussion in part 2.5 below).

The relatively low level of priority accorded to adult literacy in Uganda compared to UPE is in part because Uganda, like many governments, perceives the expansion of primary education as the main impetus for the eradication of illiteracy (see *2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report*: 17, 66). However, as also noted in Parts 2.1 and 2.3 above, many children in Uganda still miss out on UPE, and many who attend UPE do not become literate (see also *2nd UPPAP Draft National Report 2002*: 129-130; *New Vision* May 19, 2003: 32). With mainstream adult literacy programmes in Uganda suffering relative neglect, this fact about the effectiveness of UPE appears to significantly undermine the prospect of achieving the Dakar adult literacy goal by 2015. This is because the numbers of adult illiterates may continue to be swollen by both primary school dropouts and leavers for whom the UPE system has not provided an adequate level of literacy that would enable them avoid relapsing into illiteracy. Nevertheless, with the relatively high priority still accorded to it, improving the internal efficiency of UPE will remain the strategy most vital to sustaining progress and to achieving the adult literacy goal by 2015.

2.5 Youth and adult learning and life-skills education

Monitoring non-formal education in Uganda is yet to be well developed. Hence, data is often unavailable or very scanty. Besides, it is also universally accepted that it is difficult both to measure what youth's and adults are able to do as the direct outcome of their learning and to determine whether what they actually do is the direct consequence of their learning. The youth and adult learning and life-skills education goal defines a vast territory of education activity, not encompassed by a single policy or managed by one authority (see *2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report*: 58). As noted above, youth and adult learning needs and life-skills education policy formulation and resource allocation in Uganda are managed by at least two different government ministries (i.e. MoES and MoGLSD). And, as observed above a strategy vital to sustaining progress in Uganda towards the third Dakar goal would be to integrate policy formulation, resource allocation and implementation under the Education Ministry in order to improve simultaneous assessment and monitoring of the overall progress. Such a strategy would be vital to sustaining progress towards the youth and adult learning and life-skills education goal, because as seen above the MoES already has in place some informed policy frameworks and/or strategies for life-skills programmes, including the new syllabus for primary schools Volume II launched recently and the Business, Technical, Vocational Education and Training (BTJET) sub-sector (see discussion in part 2.4 above). Volume II of the new syllabus comprises of six subjects: Agriculture, Integrated Production Skills, Performing Arts/Physical Education, Local Languages, Swahili and Religious Education. In addition, the MoES has commissioned a Task Force for designing a National Agricultural Education Strategy, and it is in the process of developing a Strategic Framework for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (see *New Vision* May

12, 2003: 49). The latter is a particularly noteworthy strategy for sustaining progress towards and for achieving the third and fourth Dakar goals by 2015, since it also appears to be in line with the conceptual view of literacy as communication and, therefore, as plural 'literacies'. The UPPAP qualitative study also specifically investigated poor people's attitudes towards introduction of Agriculture in the primary curriculum, commissioned by the MoES (see 2nd UPPAP Draft National Report 2002: 139-140).

2.6 Early childhood care and education (ECCE)

ECCE has a powerful and constructive impact on further learning, in primary education and beyond (see 2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report: 38). However, despite the significance of ECCE as part of a comprehensive approach to achieving EFA, the measure of ECCE in Uganda is still relatively unreliable. To gauge progress in ECCE in Uganda is not yet possible because of the wide variety in ECCE provision. ECCE in Uganda ranges from private kindergartens and other day-care centres where play and education or guidance go hand-in-hand, sometimes alongside or even inside the classrooms of older primary school-going age siblings, to more informal home-based activities. With the priority in terms of resource allocation in Uganda given first to primary schooling under UPE, ECCE strategies often have resulted in informal ECCE activities that are often home-based and probably rooted in indigenous traditions of child raising. However, it is noteworthy that this pattern of provision of ECCE in Uganda is not merely a legacy of UPE policy. For a long time, formal ECCE was (and still is) mainly a privilege enjoyed by a minority of Ugandans living and holding better paying jobs in urban areas. The fact that private ECCE provision dominates in Uganda is clear testimony in this respect. There is no single government or government-aided pre-school in Uganda, compared to 757 such privately run institutions (see *Education Sector Factfile 2002: 2, Issues Paper on Early Childhood Development (First Draft-Undated): 2*). It is much easier to collect data on attendance in formal pre-schools than on participation in community-run or family-based arrangements, because information on the latter varies widely, and the home-based activities are almost impossible to monitor (see 2002 EFA Global Monitoring Report: 39-40). Therefore, data about ECCE in Uganda are incomplete and not dependable. This hinders policy analysis and assessment of the progress towards achieving the ECCE goal by 2015.

Nevertheless, the limited data available on formal pre-school enrollment and policy suggest that by 2003 Uganda combines low enrolment rates with very limited progress and a lack of ECCE policy framework. The 2001 and 2002 education statistics indicate that total formal pre-primary enrolment was only 59,829 and 69,436 children, respectively, compared with 6,900,916 and 7,354,153 pupils enrolled in primary schools during the same period. And, as the just concluded 9th Education Sector Review workshop was informed, the MoES is still hoping to have finalized the Policy Framework for Early Childhood Development (ECD) by May 2004 (see *Education Statistical Abstract 2001: 2-3; Education Sector Factfile 2002: 2; New Vision May 12, 2003: 49*). But with the substantial progress towards achieving UPE noted above, the MoES may be well positioned now for gradual priority shift in terms of resource allocation to and policy implementation of government-aided ECCE. There is encouraging evidence that this may

be beginning to happen or is already happening. For example, there has been a national curriculum for pre-primary schools published by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) since 1993, notwithstanding that very few pre-schools actually use it as teaching guide (see *Issues Paper on Early Childhood Development (First Draft-Undated)*: 3). There is also the ECD policy framework in the offing.

In the meantime, a strategy critical to sustaining progress towards the Dakar goal appears to lie in strengthening the existing and forging new multi-sectoral NGO-community partnership initiatives in order to further reinforce the informal home-based ECCE activities. This is vital because with the obvious resource constraints in Uganda likely to persist for the foreseeable future, it is in the informal sub-sector that the majority of eligible children, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, are most likely to continue seeking for ECCE. Thus, NGO-community partnership initiatives such as the long-running Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)'s Madrasa Resource Centre (MRC) projects in East Africa, including Uganda and the UNICEF-supported Child-Friendly Basic Education and Learning/School Sanitation, Hygiene and Water Programme (2001-2005) are good examples, and are evidence that this may be beginning to happen or is already happening. The first annual review of the UNICEF-supported programme recommended, among others, that the emerging family/community-based ECD models from their pilot project interventions be quickly documented, and shared with partners for adaptation and support in other regions to carry through the revolution in ECD in Uganda (see *Government of Uganda-UNICEF Country Programme 2001-2005*: 27). Similarly, the achievements of the AKF-MRC programme thus far have been quite remarkable. Most significantly, increasing numbers of communities are coming forward to take charge of their pre-schools and the responsibility for sustaining them. Their willingness to do so demonstrates that family/community-based initiatives can indeed provide quality, affordable ECD (see *Madrasa Pre-School Programme-East Africa: Project Brief*: 7).

3.0 Current potential for sustainable progress towards achieving the EFA goals

On the basis of current (i.e. 2002/03) data available on policies, strategies, reforms and education statistics, Uganda still demonstrates actual progress and potential for sustainable progress towards achieving most, if not all, EFA goals by 2015 despite not having achieved any of the Dakar goals and targets yet over the reporting period. Further progress and potential for sustainable progress over the reporting period include:

(1) Substantial steady progress towards ensuring the attainment of enrolment in and access to primary schooling for all eligible children primarily due to the UPE policy and the recent policy shift during the year ended (2002) from FOUR children per family as earlier stipulated when the UPE policy was first launched in 1997 to ALL children. UPE is where there has been most substantial progress, and the policy shift mentioned above may in the long run turn out to be critical to sustaining progress and to achieving the UPE goal by 2015. With the success in increasing access to primary schooling, eliminating completely or reducing significantly the numbers of over-age entrants into UPE is critical to sustaining progress towards the UPE goal because it would promote higher survival rates up to and beyond grade 5. In this regard the Ministry's Policy Framework for Basic

Education for Educationally Disadvantaged Children and the on-going Complementary Basic Education Programmes both have a crucial role to play. Besides, government has enacted legislation to make primary schooling compulsory for the relevant age group (0-17 years). With the relative success in classroom construction under UPE, such legislation will be critical in sustaining progress towards the UPE goal because it shall promote continued high levels of enrolment. However, such legislation may not be decisive in achieving universal participation in schooling, not least because of the relative ignorance about the existence of the legislation by the general public.

(2) Considerable progress in narrowing the absolute gender gap in Uganda primarily through UPE. The GIR and NIR of girls in 2002 is positive indication that if this trend continues gender disparities throughout the primary school cycle in Uganda may eventually be reduced substantially or even eliminated in the long-term, because it implies that there is a growing trend towards relatively less over-age intake of girls that tends to result in high rates of dropout before and after grade 5. Such progress towards higher internal efficiency of the primary school system in Uganda is crucial for sustaining progress towards achieving the gender equality goal by 2015. Achievements in gender equality are a result of Affirmative Action and all the efforts to complement UPE policy geared towards the girl-child. A National Strategy and Plan of Action for Girl's Education was developed in 2000 and a Girl's Education Movement (GEM) launched in 2001. Also, a specific Gender in Education Policy is in the offing during 2003. Hopefully, the impending policy framework will consider interventions to overcome barriers to girls' education such as incentive programmes, flexible school calendars, the on-going mass media education campaigns, gender-sensitive school environments, alternative educational approaches to overcome opportunity costs to girl-child education, etc. (see *The Monitor* April 7, 2003: 15). However, statistics available show that boys and girls repeated grades equally frequently in 2002, and so girls in Uganda are as likely as boys to be over-age and to dropout. They also indicate that girls' survival rate up to the end of primary level is significantly lower than that of boys. This seems to undermine the expected progress towards reducing the gender disparities mentioned above. Further, it also remains true that the gender disparities in primary education indicated by the GER and NER is amplified at secondary level. And, despite evidence from many countries to the contrary there is no data found to suggest that increasing the proportion of women teachers is a strategy used in Uganda to facilitate girls' access to education and to help improve their learning process.

(3) There has been significant progress in Uganda towards achieving good quality primary education, but there is little consensus about the nature and degree of success, what is primarily responsible for the discernable progress that has been made, or the prospect of achieving this goal by 2015. Therefore, identifying the key strategies in Uganda that will be critical to sustaining the progress is still vital. Uganda has continued to invest heavily in primary education and to aggressively recruit qualified teachers, both of which suggest the great attention that quality as a measure of inputs is receiving in Uganda. However, the pending education budget cut, the scrapping of the construction and instructional materials units in the MoES plus widespread corruption under decentralization threaten to derail the country's progress towards EFA by 2015. The

proposal that classroom construction be re-centralised may be a crucial legislative reform and necessary strategy vital for sustaining progress. Also, recent qualitative data suggests that the positive effect on quality that the statistical gains in numbers of qualified primary teachers is supposed to have is not being felt by the majority poor and rural dwellers. Offering relatively better salaries and benefits for primary teachers is a strategy that will be vital to reducing the present high rate of teacher attrition and, thus, to sustaining progress and to increasing significantly the prospect of achieving the education quality goal by 2015.

Uganda has relatively high levels of grade repetition and dropout and a widespread practice of “automatic promotion”, which altogether indicate low levels of system efficiency and quality of learning. Unless a specific policy framework and strategy for implementing automatic promotion is designed and effected to complement the other measures to increase levels of system efficiency, the widespread haphazard practice of automatic promotion in Uganda threatens to undermine the progress made so far or likely to be made in the future towards achieving the quality education goal by 2015. In this regard, the establishment of the Education Standards Agency (ESA) is vital to sustaining the discernable progress and to improving the prospects of achieving the education quality goal by 2015.

(4) There is relatively modest progress, and limited prospect of sustaining progress, towards achieving the adult literacy goal in Uganda because of the relatively low priority accorded to it in policy and resource allocation compared to UPE. This is partly because the expansion of primary education is perceived as the main impetus for the eradication of illiteracy. However, it is a fact that many children in Uganda still miss out on UPE, and many who attend UPE do not become literate. With mainstream adult literacy programmes in Uganda suffering relative neglect, this fact about the effectiveness of UPE appears to significantly undermine the prospect of achieving the Dakar adult literacy goal by 2015. Nevertheless, with the relatively high priority still accorded to it, improving the internal efficiency of UPE will remain the strategy most vital to sustaining progress and to achieving the adult literacy goal by 2015. Also, improving assessment and monitoring of adult literacy in Uganda, as indeed is part of the focus of the forthcoming UN Literacy Decade (2003-2012), by relocating and integrating all mainstream adult literacy policy formulation, resource allocation and programmes implementation under the Education Ministry will be a vital strategy critical to sustaining progress and to achieving Dakar adult literacy goal by 2015.

(5) Monitoring non-formal education in Uganda is undeveloped and the data is either scanty or unavailable. Therefore, it is difficult to measure both the progress made so far, and the prospect for sustainable progress towards the EFA goal by 2015. Besides, the youth and adult learning and life-skills education goal defines a vast territory of education activity, not encompassed by a single policy or managed by one authority. In Uganda such education activities are managed by at least two different government ministries. Hence, similarly a strategy vital to sustaining progress in Uganda towards the third Dakar goal would be to integrate policy formulation, resource allocation and programme implementation under the Education Ministry in order to improve monitoring

and assessment, and because the Education Ministry already has in place several informed policy frameworks and/or strategies and programmes for life-long and life-skills education.

(6) The measure of ECCE in Uganda is still relatively unreliable because of the wide variety in ECCE provision. There is no single government or government-aided pre-primary school/institution in Uganda, and ECCE strategies often have resulted in private formal pre-schools and informal ECCE activities that are often home-based and probably rooted in indigenous traditions of child upbringing. This trend is explained by historical development and the fact that today priority in terms of resource allocation in Uganda is given first to UPE. Nevertheless, the limited data available on formal pre-school enrolment and policy suggest that by 2003 Uganda combines low enrolment rates with very limited progress and a lack of ECCE policy framework. But having achieved substantial progress towards UPE already, the MoES may be well positioned now for gradual priority shift in terms of resource allocation to and policy implementation of government-aided ECCE. Meanwhile, a strategy critical to sustaining progress towards the Dakar goal appears to lie in strengthening the existing and forging new multi-sectoral NGO-community partnership initiatives in order to further reinforce the informal home-based ECCE activities, where the majority of eligible children are most likely to continue seeking for ECCE for the foreseeable future.

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