



Uganda

Country Context

After two decades of political turmoil (1970s and 80s), which saw Uganda plummet to one of Africa's poorest countries with a non-functioning economy and barely existent social infrastructure, a new Government embarked on a process of political, social and economic reforms. Government identified the achievement of Universal Primary Education (UPE), as a key requirement for sustainable development, peace and stability. In 1992 Government commissioned a review of its education system and adopted the Commission's findings and recommendations into a policy document known as the *Government White Paper on Education*. This document defined basic education as the minimum package of learning which should be made available to every individual to enable him/her live as a good and useful citizen in society.

As a core objective of Government policy, the UPE programme was launched in 1997. UPE aimed to put all children in school by 2003. To help this happen Government spending in percent of GDP devoted to education went up from 2.6 % in 1995/96 to 4.3% in 1999/00, 70% of which is now allocated to primary education. Due to UPE programme, enrolment went up from 2.5 million in 1996 to more than 6.8 million children in 2001. Currently 7.2 million children are accessing UPE of these 51.1 % are boys and 48.9 % are girls. To deal with the massive increase, and address issues of quality, Government programmes have recruited and trained new teachers, built classrooms, revised the curriculum and bought textbooks. Uganda is widely considered to be one of the few low-income countries that have achieved notable progress towards achieving Education For All. It has acknowledged the right of its citizens to education and has a National Education Plan in the form of ESIP, which links UPE to the country's wider macro-economic planning processes as articulated in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan PEAP. Despite these efforts, current studies show many children (especially poor children and those in difficult circumstances, marginal communities and differently abled children - worst affected in all these categories being girls) are excluded from school. Most of those in school lack adequate learning resources and environments conducive to learning. In addition to this, Government emphasis on the UPE programme in primary schools has narrowed the White Paper's definition of Basic Education, ignoring early childhood education and adult literacy, which have been left to the voluntary sector.

Yet the above brief illustration indicates that Uganda is far from achieving its goals on EFA. There are serious challenges in terms of resources. Even though government has put in substantial financial resources as stated earlier, these are just not enough. The existing resources as well, get inefficiently used or siphoned off. HIV/AIDS is a major developmental challenge and its effect on education status is yet not understood fully. It is manifested in terms of a

general shortage of teachers; children (especially girls) dropping out of school for care and other household responsibilities and child headed households where children get pushed into adult responsibilities. Added to this is the conflict context. CSOs have been working within the field of education in a range of activities. Engagement in activities such as provision of infrastructure is fairly old amongst CSOs and Faith Based Organisations. However, engagement in policy processes is a fairly recent phenomenon with only a few CSOs and networks actively engaging in education and other national policy processes.

Key Achievements

- Facilitating civil society input into a range of policies within the existing policy framework and the drafting of new legislation on NFE curriculum, OVCs and conflict/post-conflict affected children.
- In Apac district 10 sub-county groups were set up to monitor local school budgets. This has increased the influence of local people on their schools and led to recommendations on government funds disbursement procedures.
- CEF-supported projects were instrumental in influencing government recognition of NFE programmes provided in areas affected by conflict. The programmes were recognised as innovative and effective.

Breakdown by Criteria

CRITERION 1

CEF worked with three networks at a national level: Forum for Education NGOs (FENU), Uganda Children's Rights NGO Network (UCRNN), and Uganda Adult Education Network (UGAADEN). This work provided a platform to bring experiences from the poor into a policy dialogue. In the process, civil society networks increased their capacity and confidence in holding government to account against the EFA and MDG attainment. Each of the networks CEF has worked with has good links to government or school management committees and a number of policy and practice changes resulted from the CSOs engagement to date. For example there is evidence of consideration of educationally disadvantaged children in a number of government strategy and policy documents. These are listed in the Uganda MTR on pages 4 and 5.

CRITERION 2

Uganda has shown significant success in this respect. Budget tracking in Apac and Bundibugyo districts has resulted in reduced time lag between disbursement and use of funds, public display of school budget, utilisation and disbursement schedules, and involvement of parents and children in the planning and budgeting for the school. It has also unearthed ghost pupils, teachers and schools through CSOs field verification. Funds diverted have been recovered and errant officers charged in courts of law. Monitoring by children themselves in the children programme has improved school attendance by both

teachers and pupils due to increased ownership of the learning process and school by the children. Children have held their parents, school management committees, teachers, and head teachers accountable especially on the use of funds, lesson planning, punctuality, and school feeding amongst others. In some schools pupils have been empowered to express concerns on early marriage of girls and marital relationship of parents that impact on them to their teachers and asked for help.

CRITERION 3

The complexities of internal displacement in Uganda have enhanced the requirement for innovative ways of providing basic education. Most of the success of the programme has been based in the north with the Northern Region Education Forum (NREF) and a loose network of NFE providers. CSOs have been providing temporary classrooms, mobile toilets and psychosocial support to children, teachers and parents. However the learning environment has remained very hostile and coverage of these services has been inadequate and much of the support was too rigid to reach children currently outside of the education system. The loose network of NFE providers has undertaken several programmes to reach these groups and sustained advocacy led to the formation of the NFE National Working. These programmes have been recognised as innovative, effective and requiring government support. The forum also provided policy alternatives based on data from human stories to several government groups and officials. This resulted in a number of government policy developments in favour of inclusive education. In conjunction with Kyambogo University a NFE curriculum is in formation with a view to government enrolling, training and paying instructors. However, a number of innovative schemes have not been documented and there is still work to be done in identifying schemes and sharing them at a national level.

Case Study: The Apac Anti-corruption Coalition (TAAC)

In the Apac district of Uganda, 'Community Monitoring Groups' have been set up in 10 sub-counties. These groups are made up of 12 individuals (at least one boy, one girl and four women) and they monitor the local school budget and strengthen local people's involvement in decisions around how to use the budget.

Many of these groups have exposed serious faults in the present disbursement system, poor quality of classroom construction, misappropriation of building materials by contractors and civil leaders and the unscrupulous award of contracts. These issues have been raised for discussion with and follow-up by the District Local Government authorities. Some findings have been used to discuss changes with the District Education offices and others have fed into the Northern Region Education Forum and presentations at national level. On the basis of their experiences at this level, the groups have formulated recommendations for changes to how education funds should be disbursed at the national level in order to ensure greater transparency.

These Community Monitoring Groups have an impact that goes beyond the education budget - they are a mechanism to give local people confidence and the understanding that they have a say over what happens in the local school. The groups are also a means for children to have a greater say in the running of their own schools. In the same district, with the technical support of Save the Children Norway, children have been empowered by the formation of child-led monitoring committees in schools. The children are tracking education expenditures, assessing their learning environment and recommending what they would want the education system to help them become. They develop action plans for improving the school environment and then make presentations based on these to the School Management Committee and the school administration, sometimes even taking their presentations to district or national-level policy workshops.