



Press Release | 1 June 2016

Learning outcomes in Uganda remain low, static and inequitable Education system needs better distribution and use of limited resources, and a focus on inclusiveness

1 June 2016: Despite marked progress in increasing access to education in recent years, Uganda has not fully met its commitments under the Education for All Goals. And the improved national average figures conceal stark contrasts between the different districts and wealth classes of Uganda. In addition, there has been an intensive policy and resource focus on primary education at the expense of early childhood development, adult literacy and vocational and other training for young people. Even in primary education, the high investment has not translated into learning outcomes; too many children in Primary 3 to 7 are unable to complete Primary 2 level work.

These findings were released by Uwezo at Twaweza in a report entitled *Are our children learning? Five Stories on the State of Education in Uganda in 2015 and beyond*. The report is based on data collected by Uwezo, a citizen-led assessment of learning outcomes in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This report is based on data from the fifth Uwezo assessment that was carried out in 2014 and a review of available evidence. The data were collected from a nationally representative sample of 28 districts in Uganda.

The findings of this fifth Uwezo report are clustered around the six Education for All (EFA) Goals and focus on: early childhood education (EFA Goal 1 on early childhood care and education), access to, and progression through, primary school (EFA Goal 2 on access to and completion of primary education for all), youth and mothers' literacy as well as vocational and business training opportunities (EFA Goals 3 and 4 on adult literacy and lifelong learning), inequalities including gender (EFA Goal 5 on gender and other inequalities) and learning outcomes (EFA Goal 6 on the quality of education).

The fifth Uwezo assessment found that 6 out of 10 pupils in Primary 3 (59%) have attended two or more years of early childhood development education.

Enrolment in primary school is high. Only 4% of children have never been enrolled in school. However the national average conceals stark inequalities: many children have never been enrolled in school in Kotido (61%), Nakapiripit (35%), and Moroto (27%).

Another major issue identified by the Uwezo data is the slow rate of progression through primary school. Many children are more than two years too old for their grade and the problem gets worse among older children. At age 8, 31% of pupils are two or more years too old for their grade and at age 13, 82% of pupils are two or more years too old for the grade they are in.

Uwezo data show that 64% of mothers have primary education or below, while 24% of mothers have no education at all. Given these figures and the low availability of adult literacy programs, the data indicate that the Education for All Goals on adult literacy and lifelong learning are not being met. In addition, the data point to a relationship between mothers' and their children's literacy: Half of children whose mothers can read a Primary 2 level story can read the same story whereas 36% of children whose mothers cannot read the story can themselves read it.

Significant inequalities exist in terms of access to education and learning outcomes. Uwezo data show that children in Eastern region have the highest pupil to teacher ratios (62 pupils per teacher, compared to 41 per teacher in Western and Central), and pupil to classroom ratios (104 pupils per classroom compared to 64 per classroom in Western). The fifth learning assessment also found that 3.5% of children in school have problems with vision in one or both eyes.

When it comes to learning outcomes, the story is similar.

- In Eastern, 21% of Primary 3-7 pupils are able to read a Primary 2 story and do Primary 2 level division, compared to 41% in Central.
- In private schools, 31% of children can read a Primary 2 story (in English?) and 36% can do Primary 2 division. In Government schools 12% have basic English literacy skills and 23% have basic numeracy skills.
- Girls and boys tend to perform similarly in literacy and numeracy across all grade levels.

Despite these contrasts, the national picture is also troubling.

- Among pupils in Primary 3 – 7, just three out of ten (32%) can read a Primary 2 story and do Primary 2 division.
- Among pupils in Primary 3, only 13% have Primary 2 level English literacy and numeracy skills. Among pupils in Primary 7, 74% have Primary 2 English literacy and numeracy skills.
- In addition, 10% of pupils in Primary 3 can read a Primary 2 level local language story and in Primary 7, the figure is 31%.

Dr Mary Goretti, Manager of Uwezo Uganda at Twaweza said *“The end of the period for achieving the Education for All Goals offers an opportunity for us to take stock and reflect on what our education system is and isn’t delivering. Budgets for education have been dropping in real terms for a number of years. It is also clear that primary education has been prioritised at the expense of other aspects of the education system. And even in primary education, learning outcomes are low and inequitable. We need to make primary education more efficient and effective, increase government’s role in the provision of early childhood development and education, and expand adult literacy and youth training programs. Otherwise we are unlikely to be able to achieve our vision for a prosperous and stable Uganda.”*

John Mugo, Director of Data and Voice at Twaweza said *“The new Sustainable Development Goal for education emphasises equity and holistic provision of education. The Uwezo data provide a strong baseline for where we are in these areas so that we can re-focus and re-prioritise to ensure that all Ugandans are provided with the skills and opportunities to be healthy, wealthy and happy citizens.”*

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Contact: Martha Chemutai, Communications Officer | e: mchemutai@twaweza.org | t: 0782 405 210

Notes to Editors

- This report, the tools used for the assessment and the underlying data can be accessed at www.twaweza.org, or www.uwezo.net. Twitter: Twaweza_NiSisi
- Twaweza is a not-for-profit company working in Kenya Uganda and Tanzania with a vision of an open society, built on the human impulse to make a difference; where information and ideas flow, citizens engage, and authorities are responsive to the needs of the people. Our flagship programs include *Uwezo* and *Sauti za Wananchi*, Africa’s first nationally representative mobile phone survey. We undertake effective public and policy engagement, through powerful media partnerships and global leadership of initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership.