



Press Release | For Immediate Release

Across the country, in public and private schools, children are not learning as they should But nursery school, literate mothers and parental involvement in education all appear to lead to better learning outcomes

18 June 2015, Kampala: A new study reveals that very few children in Primary 3 and higher are able to do basic reading and mathematics. In Primary 3, nine out of ten children (or 88%) are unable to both read and solve division at Primary 2 level, while in Primary 7, almost three out of ten pupils (or 26%) are unable to complete the same tasks. On average, among all children tested in Primary 3 to Primary 7, two out of three pupils (67%) are unable to read and solve division at Primary 2 level.

These findings were released by Uwezo at Twaweza, an East African initiative, in its fourth Annual Learning Assessment report. The findings are based on East Africa's largest scale household assessment to test children's basic literacy and numeracy skills. The assessment was carried out nationally in August 2013; involving 87,339 children aged 6-16 years in 34,013 households in 2,372 enumeration areas in 80 districts of Uganda.

The differences between government and private schools at the lower levels of education are stark at the start of the primary school, but this gap appears to close substantially by the end of primary school.

English literacy

- **Primary 3:** one out of ten pupils in government schools against three out of ten pupils in private schools can read a Primary 2 level story
- **Primary 7:** nine out of ten pupils in government schools and nine out of ten pupils in private schools can read a Primary 2 level story

Numeracy

- **Primary 3:** two out of ten pupils in government schools against four out of ten pupils in private schools can solve Primary 2 division.
- **Primary 7:** nine out of ten pupils in government schools and nine out of ten pupils in private schools can solve Primary 2 division.

However these are basic tests set at Primary 2 level and so do not capture any additional skills children may acquire as they go through school. In addition, one would expect that many more children in private schools, whether at Primary 3 or 7 level, should have these skills. The data still show that three out of ten pupils nationally, whether in government or private schools, complete primary school without having mastered basic literacy and numeracy.

The Uwezo assessment also collected data on factors that might have a bearing on learning outcomes.¹

Nursery school

English literacy: Three out of ten Primary 3 pupils who attended some form of nursery school could read a Primary 2 English story, while only one out of ten of their fellow pupils who did not attend nursery school could.

Numeracy: Over four out of ten Primary 3 pupils who attended some form of nursery school could solve Primary 2 division, while only two out of ten of their fellow pupils who did not attend nursery school could.

¹ The observations below need further statistical analysis before they can be fully verified. We present them as trends worthy of investigation.

Mother's Literacy

Five out of ten pupils (50%) in Primary 3-7 whose mothers could read a Primary 2 level English story could also read the story, as compared to less than four out of ten (or 36%) whose mothers could not read the story.

Active Parents

English literacy among pupils in Primary 3 – 7

- 42% of pupils whose parents checked their homework could read a Primary 2 level story as compared 34% of pupils whose parents did not check homework.
- 42% of pupils whose parents attended school meetings were able to read at Primary 2 level as compared to 35% of those who parents did not participate.

Numeracy among pupils in Primary 3 – 7

- 51% of pupils whose parents checked their homework could read a Primary 2 level story as compared to 45% of those whose parents did not check homework.
- 51% of pupils whose parents attended school meetings were able to solve Primary 2 division as compared to 45% of those who parents did not participate.

“The fact that the majority of our children are unable to read and do basic mathematics is not a simple matter. It foretells a worrying future for Uganda. How shall prosperity for all as projected by Vision 2040 be achieved without literate and numerate citizens? How can the majority of Uganda’s youth become confident, enterprising, innovative and competent for employment regionally and globally when they are completing education cycles without basics?” said Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Uwezo Country Lead. *“Beyond policies and practices to get children into school, the government and key education partners need to also prioritise policies and practices that guarantee learning for every child”* added Nakabugo.

“This fourth Uwezo report on learning outcomes provides great insights for policy-makers and everyone interested in education,” commented Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director of Twaweza. *“A focus on quality nursery education and adult literacy – particularly for mothers – together with encouraging parents to actively participate in education merit further attention. The message at the heart of this and previous Uwezo reports, is that we must design education policy and make investments based on evidence of what works to improve outcomes and to ensure that our children are learning.”*

The Uwezo assessment was carried out by a team of 4,800 citizen volunteers, who in turn were overseen by district partners in 80 districts of the country.

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Note to Editors

- The full report, including samples of the tests used, is available on www.uwezo.net.
- **About Twaweza:** Twaweza means “we can make it happen” in Swahili. Twaweza works on enabling children to learn, citizens to exercise agency and governments to be more open and responsive in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. We have programs, staff and offices across all three countries, and a world respected practice of learning, monitoring and evaluation. Our flagship programs include *Uwezo*, Africa’s largest annual citizen assessment to assess children’s learning levels across hundreds of thousands of households, 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.