Education Policies in Africa and their Gender Responsiveness: the case of Uganda

Equity

- *Accessibility (geographic, financial & availability)*
- *Acceptability*

Effectiveness
Efficiency

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1. Introduction

Basic Education has a constitutional guarantee in Uganda. This derives from its recognition as critical in unlocking and transforming human potential and creating peaceful, secure and developed societies. Education lays the foundation for productivity, civic responsibility and good governance; as summarized by UNESCO:

> *"Education is the key with which individuals can unlock their full range of talents and creative potential. It gives disadvantaged people requisite tools for moving from exclusion to full participation in their society. It empowers entire nations because educated citizens and workers have the skills to ensure efficient functioning of democratic institutions so as to meet the demands for a sophisticated workforce, to work for a cleaner environment, and to meet their obligations as parents and citizens." UNESCO, Adult Education in a polarizing World, 1997.*

Unfortunately Uganda's constitutional education guarantee continues to elude major section of its populations especially women. To Ugandan girls, access to [quality] education remains illusionary even though it holds the key to their emancipation. Some of the long term implications of these play out in their development and participation. The poor state of the country's human and social capital is revealing of the efficiency and effectiveness of its education system. As a result of poor education, Uganda has failed to effectively harness the contribution of its female population to national production and development. Part of the problem relates to the system's failure to recover from the "finger prints" of past misrule and mismanagement that continues to affect planning, management, human resource and budgetary processes. The Education and Sports Ministry is mandated to plan, formulate, monitor, and evaluate guiding policies and standards. The persistence of war in parts of the country doubles the jeopardy.

The concept policy refers to a coherent set of decisions with a common long-term objective (or objectives) affecting or relevant to aggregated entities or a set of decisions oriented towards a long-term purpose: such decisions are usually embodied in legislation covering whole countries/ or regions. From Governmental premise, it embodies: (1) basic principles guiding government and, (2) declared objectives pursued and preserved by government in national interest. In education, this translates into educational goals that encapsulate national interests. Policy in education, like in other social services, is often misconstrued as synonymous with specifics such as teaching and learning, whereas such form only one aspect of the policy. Others include: the socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants, lifestyles and socialization and empowerment.

Gender, on the other hand, refers to the socially constructed roles, behavior, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. The distinct roles and behavior may give rise to gender inequalities, i.e. differences between men and women that systematically favor one group. In turn, such inequalities can lead to inequities

between men and women in education, health and economic statuses and ultimately access to essential services. Whereas, efforts have been made globally and nationally to recognize gender disparities as a problem and have them addressed in public policy and practice, much remains outstanding as the problem persists. This paper reviews the gender responsiveness of Ugandan education policies as a case study for Africa using equity (accessibility (geographic, financial & availability) & acceptability), effectiveness, and efficiency as key parameters. It draws from current evidence on status of education in the country.

2. Context

2.1 International

At the 2000 UN Millennium Summit, world leaders from 189 rich and poor countries alike committed - at the highest political level - to a set of eight time-bound targets that, which if achieved, would end extreme poverty worldwide by 2015, and free over a billion men, women and children from abject and dehumanizing conditions, commonly referred to as the "Millennium development goals" (MDGs). Although covering a wide range of areas perceived as critical to development, MDG 2 & 3 specifically focus on education: as many girls as boys exercise the right to education by 2005, (Global Campaign for Education, 2005). During the same year, over 1000 participants including teachers, prime ministers, academics, policymakers, non-governmental agencies and heads of international organizations from 164 countries committed to:

(i) Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children; (ii) ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory good quality primary education; (iii) ensure that learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs; (iv)achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults; (v) eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in good quality basic education; (vi) improve all aspects of quality of education and ensure excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. *(UNESCO)*

These landmark commitments drew heavily from the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was the first legally binding international instrument that incorporated the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. This convention was an acknowledgement by world leaders of the vulnerability of people under 18 years of age. It set out 54 articles and two Optional Protocols that spelt out the basic human rights that

children everywhere must have: right to survive; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the dignity and harmonious development of the child. It sets standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services. By ratifying the convention, national governments committed to protecting and ensuring children's rights and agreed to hold themselves accountable internationally for their commitment. States parties to the Convention are obliged to develop and undertake all actions and policies in the light of the best interests of the child.

[*UNICEF*-Human Rights Watch, 2005].

2.2 Nationally (Uganda)

*In 1986, i*n light of prevailing challenges and international commitments GOU initiated sweeping reforms in all sectors including Education. Since then, the country's Education policy has evolved in response to contextual realities like need for industrial transformation, history of organized violence/war, and broader socioeconomic and global determinants. As a result, numerous policy and program interventions were initiated including public-private sector partnership initiatives, and bilateral and multilateral interventions; the major ones being the following:

2.2.1 The 1987 post liberation National Education Review commission (EPRC) that appraised the existing system of Education system and recommend measures and strategies for improvement. The review had focused on modernization of the curriculum and pedagogic trends, and development of productive and modern marketable skills, and socially responsible citizenship. It also reviewed and reformulated the general objectives schooling; ways of integrating academic, commercial and technical subjects; management of educational institutions; financing systems; national distribution of education institutions; national examinations and assessment methods; and role of the private sector in education. The review culminated into the education white paper.

2.2.2 The 1992, Uganda Government Education white paper that re-defined Uganda's basic education, realigning it to sustainable development in consort with the 10-point program enshrined in the Manifesto of the ruling National Resistance Movement was launched. The White Paper defined basic education as the minimum package to be availed to all individuals to enable them live good and useful lives, with promotion of: citizenship; moral, ethical, and spiritual values; scientific, technical and cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes; eradication of illiteracy, and equipping of individuals with basic skills, and knowledge and abilities to contribute to the development of an integrated, self sustaining and independent national economy, as main objectives (Government of Uganda Education White Paper 1992). Some of the white paper

priorities were funded by the World Bank through subsequent projects like Northern Uganda Reconstruction Program (NURP, 1993 -1997), Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) which supported youth to acquire vocational skills, and Northern Uganda Reconstruction Project (NURP - 1993 -1997) whose education sector component enabled purchase of construction materials for schools in greater north. The Poverty action fund (PAF, 2003) which targeted classroom construction/rehabilitation, provision of text books, and teacher development.

2.2.3 The 1990 Program for the Alleviation of Social Costs of Adjustment (PAPSCA, 1990), which included assistance to primary education rehabilitation in 12 of the poorest districts (4,266 schools were to be built).

2.2.4 The 1995 Uganda National constitution which underscored education as a right of Ugandan citizens and stipulated the role of Government and other stakeholders in education services; the Local Government Act (1997), which transferred Primary and Secondary Education services to Local Governments; Revised School Management Committee Regulations (2000); and the Education Bill 2000, that revised and updated the Education Acts 1970 and provided for a more contemporary framework for managing Education services.

2.2.5 The 1997 introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE-MoES 1997) as a key outcome of the Education White Paper with an ambitious plan to provide free education to four children per family, initially, from class 1 to class 4, and to all school age children by 2003. In that year alone, school enrolment shot up by 93.4 %[1]; enrolment has since tripled from 2.5 million in 1996 to 6.8 million in 2001 and 7.2 million at present.

2.2.6 The 1998, MoES Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESIP, 1998-2003), developed in partnership with funding agencies, also embodied key aspects of the Education White Paper and formed basis for medium term education development in Uganda. It prioritized access through universal enrollment of children by 2003, access to post-primary vocational opportunities and achieving and transition from primary to secondary schools; enhancing quality and relevance of instruction through provision of relevant instructional materials and teacher training; increasing equity by shifting public expenditure in favor of broader access to basic educational opportunities and directing special incentives to disadvantaged groups; Public-Private Sector Partnership through creating a financial framework for sustained and equitable educational provision with appropriate levels of contribution from public sector – private sector and household community partnerships at post-primary level; strengthening capacity of Central Government to formulate sectoral policy and broadly direct financial resources in response to evolving priorities and needs; enhancing Capacity of Districts and Local Government through promotion of greater

[1] Uganda: aid & education Development, Zie Gariyo, Uganda Debt Network, (The Reality of Aid 1998/99)

participation of and responsibility of local authorities and communities in development of education at all levels.

2.2.7 The 1997 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP, 1997 – 2007/8), that was established as an overarching policy planning framework for eradicating poverty, promoting peace, prosperity and growth in Uganda. PEAP hoped to propel Uganda into a middle-income country. PEAP was presented under five pillars: (1) Economic Management, (2) Production, competitiveness & incomes, (3) Security, conflict resolution & Disaster Management, (4) Governance (5) Human Development. A key priority under Pillar (5) is Primary and secondary education with a clear focus on quality and the ultimate objective of learning.

2.2.8 The 2004 MoES Policy for Educationally Disadvantaged (MoES 2004) aimed at guaranteeing UPE access to the disadvantaged including children in conflict, infected or affected by HIV and girls among the educationally disadvantaged, and sought to increase community participation in education, strengthen formal and non-formal education links, improve quality of teaching and learning, avail appropriate learning materials, and eliminate disparities.

2.2.9 The 2005 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP, 2005-2015) which prioritised acquisition of basic literacy, numeracy and life skills along with equitable accommodation of students at post-primary and tertiary levels. To address the conflict specific constraints.

2.2.10 The Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP, 2008-2011), launched in a bid to fast-track the recovery process of Greater Northern Uganda which provides for *desegregation of the* region's needs and priorities from national ones and for integrated stakeholder rallying for efficiency and effectiveness. PRDP is a demonstration of national political will and commitment to stabilize and recover the greater north through a set of program strategies that form a framework that all stakeholders are obliged to adopt when implementing activities in the region. It is a national and holistic response to the region's conflict imposed challenges; It is a special plan of action, adapted to the conflict contexts in the "greater north"[2], to strengthen coordination, supervision and monitoring of national and internationally supported activities to better achieve a common set of results.

2.2.11 Other policy and program interventions implemented in partnership with donors included; IDA (1989-1995), SUPER (1997-2003), National Minimum Health Care Package (1997-2009), BEPS (2004-2006); Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF, 2006-2008), National OVC Program (NSPPI for OVC), and Automatic

[2] *The PRDP describes northern Uganda as three sub-regions comprising 32 districts1. These three sub regions are: north western districts (West Nile); north central districts (Acholi) and north eastern districts (Karamoja). Included in the north central districts are the Teso and Lango districts which in the past have been affected by the war with the Lord's Resistance Army, as well as the problems in Karamoja, but are now returning to peace.*

Promotion Policy. In 1992, USAID funded SUPER project instituted the Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS). SUPER was replaced by the Basic Education and Policy Support Activity (BEPS). School feeding program – by WFP & MOES (2003-2007), REPLICA (2006-2009), Community led HIV/AIDS Initiative (CHAI, 1997-2003) and Community Based Rehabilitation for PWD's, Gender and Equity Budgeting initiative.

Unfortunately these well intended and commendable policies have not been adequately complimented with good implementation strategies. There has not been optimal use of social infrastructure, resources and funding to ensure policy success and to address educational peculiarities. Many of the Policy documents were less sensitive the socio-political and historical gender disparities in the country. There was no meaningful affirmative action targeting gender inequality and social exclusion.

In 2007, a MoES Needs Assessment (MoES, 2007) to identify fundable needs of primary schools in selected districts in PRDP region identified key gaps including: infrastructure, instructional materials, human resources, furniture and utilities (water and energy). Infrastructure, particularly teachers' houses, classrooms and sanitation facilities (i.e. latrines and water source) was deemed a pre-condition for the speedy re-settlement of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The Education Blueprint (ULGA, 2008) also identified the education needs for the 40 districts of the PRDP region estimating their educational recovery needs at a minimum of $1.5bn in school level "hardware" development investment over a three-year period.

With exception of private primary schools, other primary schools especially those in the PRDP region depend entirely on government funding. Community contributions in the PRDP region are at an all time low due to political interference, poverty, negative attitudes among parents, and other factors yet to be studied. It is evident that the educational needs of the PRDP region greatly exceed the available funding. Urgent innovations are needed to address this funding gap.

Given the above policy and program trail, what does one find on ground? How has women's educational cause advanced in real terms? What is the level of equity, effectiveness and efficiency in pulling women out of the historical and persistent education abyss?

According to the Needs Assessment Report (MoES, 2008), there is educational decline, nationally. Access and equity indicators showed GER average for above parity 100% (national estimate of 112%). Quality indicators at primary school level show decline, with performance in national examinations especially PLE remaining generally poor over the past 20 years (1986-2006). The analysis of quality indicators for primary education also revealed a steady rise in Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) from 47:1 in 1996 to 67:1 in 2006. As of 2006, Pader had the highest PTR of 83 pupils per teacher, followed by Oyam (70), Amuru (65), Amolatar (64), Gulu (62), Dokolo (61) and Apac (60). These PTRs are well above the national targeted benchmark of 54:1 and the national average of 48:1.

Similar enrolment growth was reported in the North and East: a 2008 MoES study concluded that basic education access had not been significantly curtailed by war in the region, enrolments having tripled between 1996 and 2006 (from 356,182 to 983,538). Average Gross

Intake Ratio (GIR) fell from 160% in 2001 to 132% in 2006 and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) declined from 124% to 96.8% during the same period. GER for entire Northern Uganda declined from 141% in 2000 to 134.1% in 2006. Declines in GER and GIR were interpreted as indications of progress in eliminating under- and over-age enrolments towards the ideal GER of 100%. As expected the education system capacity was greatly challenged by the "tsunami" increase in pupil numbers resulting from implementing the UPE policy; Government had anticipated this and increased budget support to the sector from 2.6% of GDP in 1995/96 to 4.3% in 1999/00, 70% of it to the primary education sub-sector; but despite this adjustment and an increase in donor education financing, it was insufficient to provide the required space, number of teachers, scholastic and teaching materials to handle the enrolment surge across the country.

UPE was a bold GoU decision to activate the country's commitment to the Millennium Development (MDGs) and Education for All goals (EFA). The relevant MDG aimed at ensuring that by 2015, boys and girls will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that gender disparities will be eliminated at the primary level by 2005 and at all levels by 2015. The EFA goals include completion of free and compulsory primary education of good quality, equitable access by all children, elimination of gender disparities, and achievement of measurable learning outcomes, especially in literacy, numeracy, and essential life skills. The World Bank, funded several projects directed at addressing basic gaps in the education sector in the 1990s. IDA Project provided emergency funds to finance the education sector budget and to respond to the surge of enrolment. It pioneered the use of Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) in Uganda to detect leakage in budget allocations. The Education sector adjustment credit (ESAC) financed 23% of the total UPE budget.

With regard to the Pupil Classroom Ratio (PCR), the sub-regional measure for primary education level has increased by 24 points from 73 in 1996 to 97 in 2006 - significantly higher than the desired average of 54:1 and the national average of 71:1. This is partly attributed to the slowing down of infrastructure development in the northern region because of insecurity. The high PCR districts include Oyam (129), Pader (108), Amuru (105), Kitgum (97), Amolatar (94), Dokolo (93) and Lira (91).

In addition to the general inadequacy of primary school teachers, approximately 2% of those in post are untrained while 4% are under trained. Pader district had the highest number of untrained teachers (242:– 194 males and 48 females) which translates into about 14% of the total teacher workforce for the district. On the other hand, Oyam was relatively better-off with only 2 untrained male teachers out of its pool of 1,394 primary teachers. Regarding female educationists, it is evident their numbers remain far below the required targets. The lack female teachers has been attributed to socialization and sex stereotyping and other external factors which structure women into low power, low-visibility and dead end jobs. At school level, such factors are believed to limit number of female pupils (future female teachers): girls are often made to attend to household chores, agriculture and siblings and hardly to school. Uganda school census data confirms this with consistently fewer girls than boys throughout the

basic education cycle. The situation is worse for those in war areas whose prolonged confinement in Internal Displacement Camps exposes them to abuse, sexual violence and exploitation from male relatives, partners or combatants. With most girls dropping out, (i) the female teacher gaps will never be filled; (ii) and that the "drop outs" will not access higher public and private sector jobs further limiting their access to productive resources: this has already been identified as a major contributor to poverty."(*World Bank Policy Research report: Engendering Development, 2000*) The educational disparities and control of productive resources are known to limit women's possibilities; sustain poverty and associated diseases, malnutrition, illiteracy, innumeracy, and information access gaps. Better education generally leads to higher incomes translating into greater gender equality. If not addressed, the gender disparities in [basic] education could entrench poverty, slow community development, and cripple good governance. A good education and development strategy should reflect on women's socioeconomic status.

Efficiency too declined: the number of primary school pupils repeating a grade increased sharply from 56,328 (33,308 males and 23,020 females) in 1996 to 159,898 (82,380 males and 77,518 females) in 2006, roughly translating into 34% increment in repetition rates, implying a low coefficient of efficiency at primary school level. The repetition rates in 2006 were highest in Adjumani district (20% - 22% for boys and 24% for girls) and lowest in Pader district (13% - 13% for boys and 14% for girls). Widespread insecurity impaired school attendance, staffing positions as well as general concentration on school processes.

There is also limited utilization of existing regulatory frameworks including policies, ordinances, byelaws, guidelines, curriculum, syllabi, and timetables. Reasons for this remained unclear; possibilities include inherent weaknesses in the legal frameworks, and limited user knowledge, and attitudes/ acceptance. Pertinent issues include: extent of end user engagement in formulation; extent of grass root diffusion; availability of feedback loops, opportunities and review mechanisms. Field anecdotes attribute the bulk of regulatory failures to ignorance of substance and facts of policies and regulations, "paralysis" of management action and poor coordination. Districts have abundance of untapped capacity for policy formulation that requires harnessing. When appropriately guided, they can develop valid regulatory frameworks; at least, in district interest as demonstrated through the REPLICA supported education ordinances in Northern Uganda.

The results suggest underutilization of the region's supportive stakeholders especially communities. Although full community participation in education is encouraged by MoES, their genuine integration and engagement eludes the sector. This is facilitated by posterior perceptions of communities as end users and not proximal contributors to the education agenda. Community outreach is recommended and needs to be entrenched in education programming and practice. Programs like REPLICA actively promote it. Although stakeholder ownership and buy-in is low, it remains a critical pursuit of MoES. It helps communities appreciate the sector's mission, what children learn and how they can participate in the process. Communities can contribute role models, educational materials/infrastructure, development champions; they can also participate in co-curricular activities. Forums for school community engagements need to be expanded and entrenched within education programming. Entry points include awareness campaigns on statutory, moral and social issues. School Management Committees (SMC) and Parents Teachers Associations (PTA) need to spear head community mobilization.

A major limitation of the policy and program interventions, especially the1992 Education White Paper and related national policy frameworks and strategies, is their predication as post-conflict frameworks. At the 1992 launch of the White Paper, for example, close to half of the country (current PRDP region) was in middle of a vicious insurgency that had claimed hundreds of lives, relegating close to 2 million people to squalid internal displacement camps and disrupting the entire economy of the North. Over 8000 children were conscripted into rebel ranks as combatants, sex slaves and domestic labor.

Given the magnitude of the affected conflict affected population in northern Uganda, the white paper was not suitable to address the education needs of northern Uganda; Although the context (Conflict) was similar in some ways, there were major differences in the nature, duration, and impact, between the National Resistance Army and Lord's Resistance Army guerrilla wars in the Luweero Triangle and Northern Uganda, respectively. As a result, the 1992 white paper prescriptions and related interventions for education quality recovery could not adequately address the unique education challenges of Northern and Eastern Uganda thereby motivating for policy "patches" to cover some of the glaring inadequacies.

The consequences of the protracted insecurity and violence has negatively affected the lives of children in various ways; apart from being denied normal childhoods in stable homes and peaceful environments, many witnessed the murders of family members, abduction or maiming. Others were themselves abducted and recruited into the rebel armies. Some of them grew up in settled homes living in relative peace while others were raised in highly congested IDP camp environments where reality was distorted and adults abdicated their parenting responsibilities to become dependents of local government and humanitarian agencies, together with their children.

Research findings show that for children in conflict affected areas, access to quality education remains an illusion. However quality basic education holds the key to their recovery, reintegration and future. Limited access to quality basic education has long term implications for potential development and the locally available stock of intellectual and social capital

There is clearly gross under performance in Education nationally, with very high enrolment attrition rates, low pass rates and waning stakeholder interests. Attrition trends evidence gender disparities favoring boys at higher and girls in lower primary.

*From the review, it is clear that, i*n its current form, UPE is over stretched and its absorptive capacity is outstripped by current demand from communities. Further influx of children could only worsen the problem. *Further investment towards increased NIRs may be counterproductive given the over stretch. Secondly, there is likely to be an increased demand for adult literacy programs in the medium and long terms if the educational needs of the population continue to be unmet.*

This study raises several legal, ethical and moral questions regarding education services in PRDP region: firstly, what would a "win-win" in policy and practice look like *given the dichotomy* between planners

and beneficiaries regarding motivation for formal education access, and "resource limitations". Secondly, how can education policy be more relevant and seen to espouse contextual access and uptake determinants amidst regional/national diversity? Thirdly; h*ow sensitive are current GER measurements to the constitutional guarantee regarding basic education and what message may current interpretations send to nationals? Fourthly; does universalized access apply to the 6-12 year olds? Fifthly; does universal education mean free education? Sixthly; what options are there for those currently below 6 and above 12 who are interested in education in contexts where facilities are non-existent?* Seventh; how genuine are enrolment trends in PRDP region and why the decline? Eighth, what absorbs school dropouts in the North and East? And finally how might enrolment be revitalized and sustained?

A number of factors could account for the poor system performance in PRDP region including humble resource investment, inability to harness SWOT advantages, and appalling indicators. The observed blend of poor pupil: teacher, pupil: class room, teacher: teacher housing, pupil: desk and pupil: toilet stance ratios, is recipe for educational catastrophe. These ratios are inconsistent with aspirations of 1992 Education White Paper, ESSP, MDGs and EFA goals and only serve to repel stakeholder interest and sap resilience from children, teachers and parents; they undermine the well-intended government policies and interventions. One painful result of this being the fact that the region's once outstanding schools having turned into poorly attended shadows of their past glory, unable to produce men and women who can compete nationally and internationally.

Current access assessment based on primary one enrolment could also be problematic. The growing number of incompetent primary one "dropouts" questions its reliability and validity. For all practical purposes, UPE primary one "dropouts" remain as incompetent and distant from all coveted educational competencies including knowledge, skills, attitudes, connections, networks and prospects as those who do not enroll at all: they need the entire basic education cycle to access them. Using P1 enrolments as a basis for access assessment can therefore mislead grossly. Competency based access assessment could be a better approach.

Children do not enroll to sit in class and play; rather, acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes to empower them to thrive and contribute socially. Uganda's access success in PRDP region may be more apparent than real given the high attrition rates. A question that begs answers is, "what proportion of those who attend school end up literate and numerate by the end of primary seven?" Attracting children to primary one is only "base one", they need full access to the whole basic education cycle. Grade specific NIR instead of current entry level generalization will track access performance better!

A major policy and program intervention may be necessitated if the established negative patterns and trends are to be addressed. While infrastructure does influence attractiveness, investing in infrastructure needs to be carefully balanced against proximal stakeholder interest and demand creation. Areas with low attractiveness need to focus of creating local demand and interest. Districts with appreciable attractiveness could focus on sustenance and empowerment. Strategies like improvement of physical conditions within educational facilities, making learning healthy, safe and fun, increasing participation and optimizing teaching and learning could be helpful. The question of financing must also be addressed: pertinent in this are issues of how far existing UPE financing should go in terms of age, and what financing alternatives, mechanisms and modalities could be within reach of interested communities and how their educational aspirations can be matched with resources.

Available evidence indicates that about 75% of children attempt but do not complete their primary school education and the 25% that sit for the final primary leaving exams perform poorly with the majority failing to pass in the first and second divisions. Anecdotal evidence from the field indicated persistent enrolment surges (MoES, February 2008), that could not be sustained due to decay in infrastructures, and decline community support, and proficiency in numeracy and literacy; All this stemmed from poor education quality and led to poor performance in major national examinations.[3] Cognizant of the complex multilevel human, material, financial and policy factors at play;

It would seem that the different interventions of government and its development partners failed to transform the education status of Uganda, a situation that is worse in the North and East of Uganda. Some of the contributing factors exacerbating the decline include insecurity, internal displacement[4], abject poverty that had lingered above 60%, , heavy family responsibilities, ill health, HIV/AIDS, negative attitude towards education, , deliberate discouragement of girls from staying in school, and lack of schools for children with disabilities; Besides this, the North and East continued to face challenges of attracting, retaining and empowering pupils as evidenced by their low NIRs and high enrolment attrition rates that exceeded national average: the region reported high enrolment attrition between P1 & P2 and P6 & P7, blaming it on repetitions by under age and "PLE unfit" pre-candidate children. [5]

According to Harrison, 1983, African women face a variety of legal, economic, social constraints and are still treated as minors. While female education is known to impact on family health and nutrition, there is a wide gender gap in education. As a result, women are less well equipped and hence less competitive in the formal job market. Obbe (1980) observes that often times, there is more respect for male professionals than females. Women also suffer employment discrimination because of their need for maternity or child related sick leaves; therefore career women often have to work harder at their jobs to keep even with male counterparts. When face with economic problems, families often prefer to invest in boys education rather than girls. IIEP, found shortage of trained or experienced teachers in conflict settings because they often get targeted, killed or or may abandon work stations for safety. While both male and female teachers are affected by this, the vulnerability is worst for the females.

Conclusions

Much has been achieved
Too many policies
Lack of overarching philosophy problematic
Approach to policy reactionary and piece meal

[3] MoES, Report on the Needs Assessment of Post Conflict Education Provision in Northern Uganda

[4] Over 1.7 million people in Acholi and Lango were displaced from their homes into cramped make-shift camps for over 10 years

Gender imperatives must be real; beyond slogans
Use of evidence for tracking progress, but more importantly mapping direction

Recommendations

More ambitious targets needed
Better integration
Incisive systems
Engender EMIS and policy formulation