



Final Report  
Scoping Study on Early Learning Innovations in Uganda

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## ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BEPS	Basic Education and Sports Policy Support
BTVET	Business Technical Vocational Education and Training
CCTs	Coordinating Centre Tutors
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DLCs	District Local Councils
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Learning
EFA	Education For All
FENU	Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda
FY	Financial Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HUYSLINCI	Huys Link Community Initiative
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education
LLBs	Local Language Boards
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MTE	Mother Tongue Education
NAPE	National Assessment of Progress in Education
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre

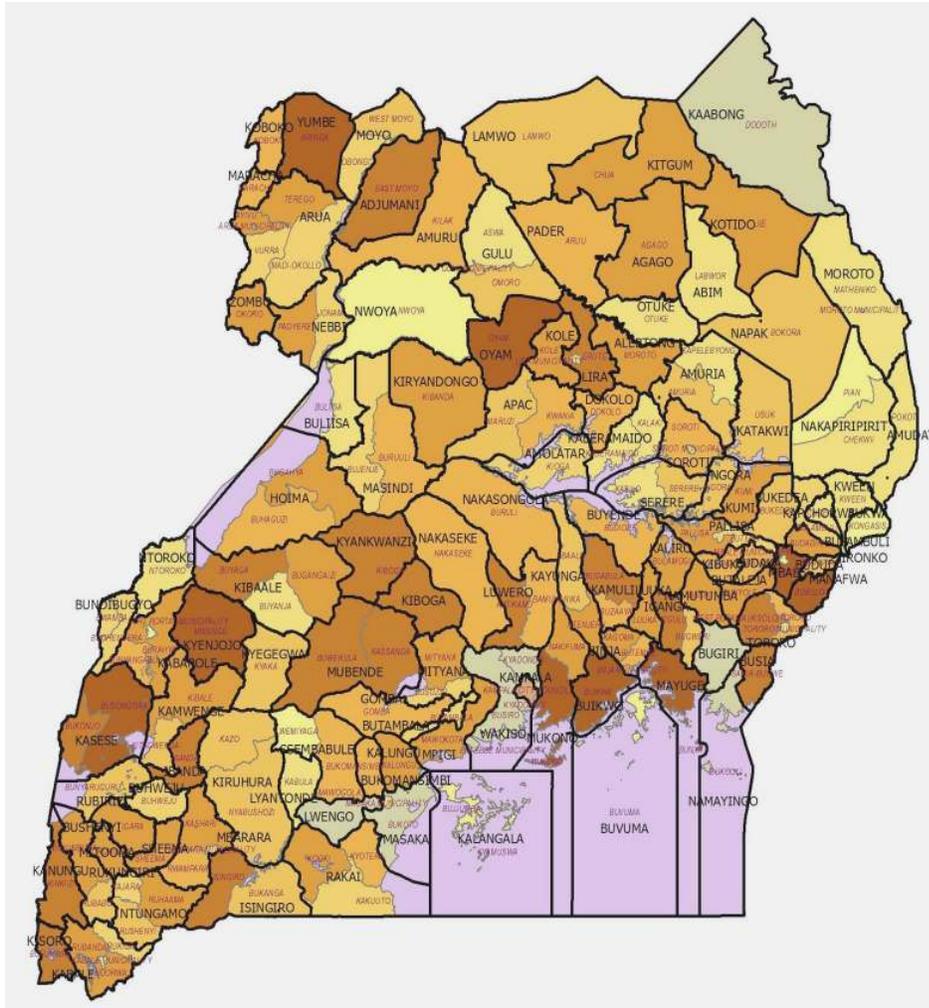
NDP	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non – Government Organisations
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PPE	Pre – primary and Primary Education
PTCs	Primary Teachers Colleges
UNEB	Uganda National Examinations Board
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPPET	Universal Post – Primary Education and Training
USE	Universal Secondary Education
UWEZO	Capability
YMCA	Young Men’s Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women’s Christian Association

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 POLITICAL CONTEXT

Uganda is a land-locked country in the East African region. It covers a total area of 241,038 square kilometers. It borders Kenya in the east, Tanzania in the south, Rwanda in the southwest,

#### MAP OF UGANDA



Democratic Republic of Congo in the west and South Sudan in the north. It lies astride the equator, home to the source of the River Nile and greatly endowed with diverse fauna and flora, including gorillas, part of the equatorial forest, lakes and rivers.

Uganda became independent in October 1962, and a republic in 1967, under the leadership of Apollo Milton Obote. Idi Amin overthrew the Obote government in 1971 and ruled under a

military regime until 1979, during which time Uganda experienced both economic and political turmoil. A broad-based Movement government under Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni was established in 1986, and later in 1995 a new Constitution was promulgated. Since then, Mr Museveni has been the President of Uganda under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party that has won elections for three successive terms in 2001, 2006 and 2011. In 2005, the Constitution was amended to change from a one-party 'Movement' system to a multi-party political system of government.

Over the period of NRM leadership, Uganda has been transformed from a failing state to one of Africa's fastest growing economies and has achieved national stability that was conspicuously absent under previous regimes, although this is contested by some critics of the regime. Security in Northern Uganda has improved considerably following the cessation of hostilities and military pressure by the Uganda Peoples' Defense Forces (UPDF) on the LRA, leading to their withdrawal to the Democratic Republic of Congo and later Central African Republic. Some residents in the displacement camps in Lango and Acholi sub-regions have moved home or to new settlement sites closer to their villages.

Uganda introduced the decentralization policy under the Local Government Act of 1997. The policy inherently decentralized service delivery institutions and their governance in order to improve access to services for the rural poor.

## **1.2 SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONTEXT**

Since the early 1990s, Uganda's economy has more than doubled, growing at an average of 6% per annum. Real GDP at market rates has averaged 6.5% per annum since 1990/1 but declined between 1998/9 to 2002/3 to 6.1%. The tremendous economic growth was fostered by factors such as improved security, restoration of macroeconomic stability, the removal of economic distortions and an improvement in the terms of trade, and as a result of the coffee boom in the 1990s. On a sector basis, industrial growth registered the highest, averaging 10.4% per annum from 1991/2 to 2003/4, while services were 7.5% per annum and agriculture 3.8%. However, despite these encouraging trends, poverty remains endemic in Uganda and the per capita income is still very low. Decline in poverty has been more pronounced in urban than rural areas, where the majority of the people live, and is more severe in the northern and eastern regions. Several factors account for this, including insecurity, climatic variations, HIV/AIDS incidence, type of agricultural activity and degree of access to infrastructural and social services. The northern region, particularly the northeast, still lags behind the rest of the country in all the socio-economic welfare indicators.

Uganda is basically agrarian, with 80% of the population deriving livelihoods from agriculture. The total population by 2005 was 26.81 million, with a relative high growth rate of 3.31% as compared to the 2.6% average for Sub-Saharan Africa and 1.7% for low-income countries.

Uganda's population today is estimated to be approximately 30.7<sup>2</sup> million, of which 51% are below 15 years of age, and 3.1% are 65 years and older. The female population at 51.2% is slightly more than the male population. Eighty-five percent of the population is in rural areas. The literacy rate for people age 10 years and above is estimated at 73% which is an increase from 69% in 2005/6, the school age population 6 – 12 years is 23%, and 0-5 year olds are 22.6%. The annual labour growth rate stands at 4.7% and the majority of workers (82%) live in rural areas, while the unemployment rate stands at 4.2%. Malaria is the most prevalent illness at 52% while non-communicable diseases, such as high blood pressure and heart disease, are more common among females than males, aged ten years and above (UNHS, 2009/10).

The Government embraced and adopted the MDGs and EFA goals for socio-economic development of the population. The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) was the national development framework between 1990 and 2008. Effective FY 2009/10 the National Development Plan (NDP 2010/11 – 2014/15) became the new overarching national planning and policy framework for service delivery across all sectors of government. Its primary goal is to increase economic growth and eradicate poverty<sup>3</sup>.

## 1.3 EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

### 1.3.1 The education system

Uganda's education system is comprised of three years of pre-primary school, though still optional, seven years of primary education, six years of secondary education (which is divided into four years of lower secondary and two years of upper secondary), and three-to-five years of post-secondary (tertiary) education. The present system has existed since the early 1960s. Over the last decade, an integrated but parallel post-primary vocational education tier has been introduced.

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<sup>1</sup> Uganda national census report, 2005 UBOS

<sup>2</sup> Uganda National Household Survey, 2009/10

<sup>3</sup> MoES, Facts Booklet

### **1.3.2 Education sector policy and objectives**

The MoES is mandated to carry out the Government's vision of using quality education delivery to accelerate the nation's socio-economic development. Its overall goal is to provide relevant and quality education for all Ugandans, especially the disadvantaged, to enable them to acquire skills, which will make them functionally literate and productive to facilitate poverty alleviation and promote the rapid socio-economic growth of the country. Its mandate is to plan, formulate, analyze, monitor, evaluate and review policies, provide technical support and guidance, and set national standards for the education sector.

The Government White Paper on Education (1992), which is the sector policy, the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2007 – 2015), and the international Commitment on Education (EFA and MDGs) provide a framework for education and sports service delivery in Uganda.

The broad sector objectives are expansion of access to equitable and quality education at all levels, as well as enhancement of efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

Specific education priorities are:

- a) To ensure universal and equitable access to quality education for all children;
- b) To improve the quality of education at all levels;
- c) To ensure equal access by gender, district and special needs at all levels; and
- d) To build capacity of districts education managers for planning, monitoring and accountability

### **1.3.3 Institutional framework**

MoES sector is comprised of two sectors: the public and private sectors. The public sector consists of 12 Departments and four Directorates (i.e. Higher, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Basic and Secondary Education Standards and Industrial Training). The private sector is diverse and comprised of individual investors, communities, civil society organisations, international organisations and faith-based organisations.

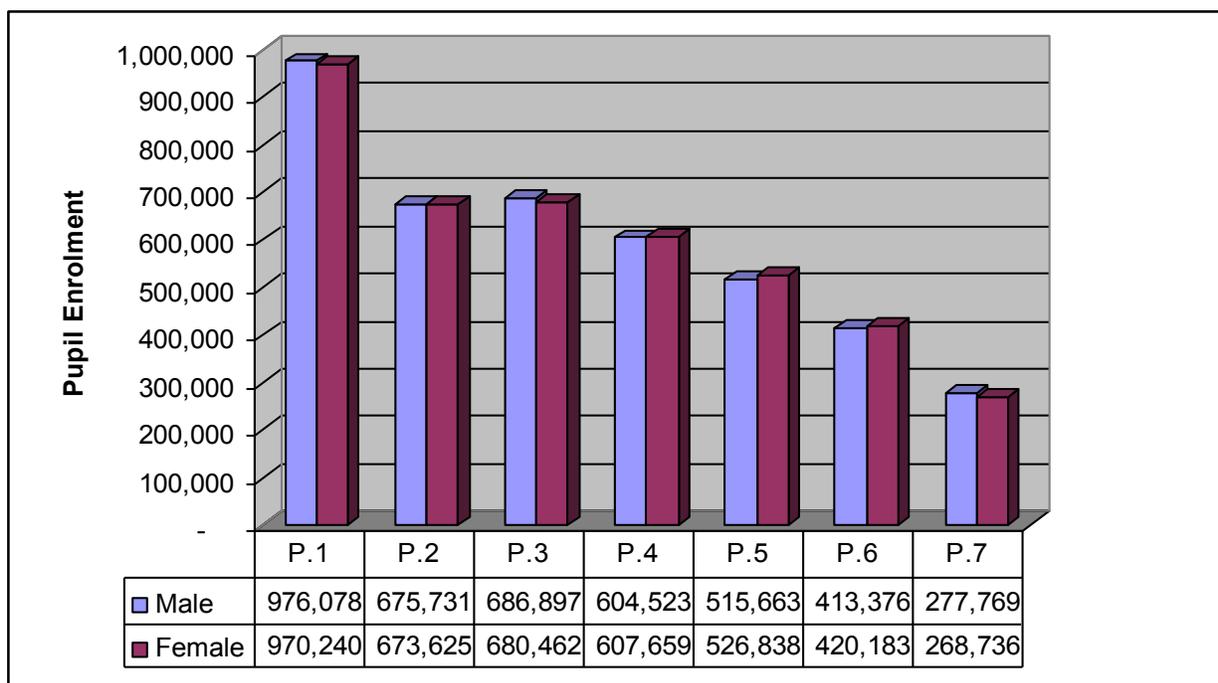
### **1.3.4 Regulatory framework**

The sector's legal and regulatory framework is comprised of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995); the Education Sector Policy and various policy initiatives such as UPE Policy, USE/UPPET policy, science education policy, etc and the Education Bill (2008), the BTVET Act (2008), the Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001), the UNEB Act (1983), NCDC Act (2000) and Education Service Act (2002). The evolving policy and regulatory instruments are geared towards enhancing access, participation and quality in education delivery.

### 1.3.5 Status of Education sector

In 1997, Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced, initially free for four biological children, but later for all learners of primary school age, which resulted in an instant increase in enrolment from below two million to over seven million and has sustained an upward trend. For the period 1986-2004, enrolment in primary schools rose from 2,203,824 to 7,377,292<sup>4</sup>. The sector is set to attain the MDGs targets for access, but still grapples with issues of quality and equity. Literacy and completion rates are still below targets, while there is still inequality in access in the remote rural areas and northern region, and among the disadvantaged groups. Teaching in mother tongue has been adopted in the first three years of primary schooling, transitioning to teaching in English language in primary four up to primary seven. There are issues of teachers not being literate in their mother tongue and lacking in skills to prepare teaching materials in the local languages. There is also resistance from some parents and even head teachers towards the mother tongue policy, which undermines its effective implementation. The policy of automatic promotion is being implemented in primary school, though there are concerns over its inefficacy to produce learners with the desired learning outcomes.

**Primary Schools Enrolment by Grade and Gender**



MoES, Education Abstract, 2009

<sup>4</sup> MoES, Facts Booklet

In 2007, Universal Secondary Education (USE) and Universal Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET) were introduced and made free for all learners in government-aided and select private post-primary schools and institutions. This includes formal secondary education and business, technical and vocational education and training. The sector has registered significant increases in enrolment and continuous improvement in gender parity and participation. The sector is focusing on infrastructural development and promotion of science education.

In response to the global skills enhance initiative, the sector is focusing on promoting a vibrant business, technical, vocational education and training (BTVET) subsector. The theme for Financial Year 2009/10 was “*Skills for National Development*”<sup>5</sup>. In addition to establishing a fully-fledged BTVET department and having in place the relevant regulatory and policy instruments, the sector is undertaking a major expansion programme. The BTVET strategic plan, 2011 – 2015 was approved by the Cabinet in 2012, multi-level and multi-disciplinary BTVET institutions are being established across the country, while non-formal short programmes are being piloted for instruction and assessment.

Management of the delivery of pre-primary and primary education has been delegated to the District Local Governments (DLGs), in accordance with the decentralization policy, while post-primary and post-secondary education is still the direct responsibility of the central government, as the institutions’ catchment areas cut across various districts.

In FY 2009/10 education and sports sector had a share of 28% of the total national discretionary recurrent expenditure<sup>6</sup>. The pre-primary and primary education subsector receives the highest budget share of 56.1% (excluding direct donor project support) and 48.4% (including direct donor project support) of the education sector.

## 2.0 CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY ON EARLY LEARNING

The context of early learning in the MoES mandate is restricted to ECD which is the pre-primary subsector and targets children of 3 – 6 years. The centre handles policy, regulation and quality aspects of ECD, while ECD delivery is entirely by private providers. The context of this study, on the other hand, targets early learning among children of 5 -11 years, implying that it cuts across pre-primary and lower primary, which is the last two years in ECD and the first five years in primary schooling in Uganda’s education system.

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<sup>5</sup> Final ESAPR, November 2010

<sup>6</sup> Final ESAPR, November 2010

The scope of the study is to undertake an analysis of learning among the children in upper ECD and lower primary schools in Uganda. It is, therefore, confined to presenting a holistic picture of the early learning sector, but with emphasis on its delivery on literacy and numeracy outcomes. Data is collected at two distinct levels and from two distinct categories of respondents, and outcomes are analysed and presented separately.

The study involved a diagnostic assessment of the entire ECD sub-sector and first four years of primary schooling. An extensive desk review of relevant literature was done. Key stakeholders and mainly non-governmental actors were selected purposively and interviewed, and provided useful information on roles of government and its institutions and the merging challenges, and their individual and collective efforts to enhance effectiveness in early learning.

There were problems encountered in carrying out the study. First, early learning in the MoES is construed as ECD. The MoES provides information only on ECD, but even this is limited to the available data on enrolment and provision. There is no official and well-systematized detailed information on early learning such as sub-sector performance reports. Secondly, the non-governmental players in early learning include nursery schools for ECD and NGOs for augmenting government programmes in early learning in lower primary schooling. Thirdly, non-governmental players rarely get involved and/or interested in policy and programming aspects of sector management, as they concentrate on implementation of their projects. They could only provide information on their organizational profiles and performance. As a result, the data collected is too disjointed and lacking in coverage to be used meaningfully.

The study was, therefore, largely informed by secondary and administrative data and information, and the consultant's insight of the sector. The findings and conclusions may not be accurate enough to meet the expectations of the report, but nevertheless suffice to give a picture of the early learning sector.

## 2.1 EARLY LEARNING IN UGANDA

### 2.1.1 BACKGROUND OF EARLY LEARNING SECTOR

The EFA goals and targets include expansion and improvement of comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) by 2015 (EFA goal number 1)<sup>7</sup>. The relevant indicators are:

- a) Gross Enrolment in Early Childhood Development Programmes, including public, private and community programmes expressed as a percentage of the official age group concerned, if any, otherwise, the 3-5 year old age group;
- b) Percentage of new entrants to primary grade 1 who have attended some form of an organized Early Childhood Development Programme.

The early learning sector in Uganda is mainly confined to nursery/kindergarten, which is the pre-school level of education. Children usually enroll at the age of three and complete nursery school by the age of six. Early childhood development programmes were designed to develop mental capabilities, health and physical growth of the child through play activities, to inculcate moral values and good social habits, and to help the child to appreciate his/her cultural background and customs. Further the programmes were designed to enrich the child's experience by developing imagination, self-reliance and thinking power, and to develop language and communication skills in the mother tongue.

The Early Childhood development programmes are not yet well developed. For example, although time series data is not available in this field, indicator number 2 shows that the percentage of new entrants to primary one who attended some form of an organized early childhood development programme is about 2.6%<sup>8</sup>.

### 2.1.2 POLICY ON EARLY LEARNING

MoES developed and adopted the Early Childhood Development (ECD) policy (2007) that focuses on implementation of the ECD learning framework and training of nursery teachers. Aims and objectives<sup>9</sup> of the ECD policy (which essentially are for pre- and primary education in Uganda) are:

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<sup>7</sup> The EFA 2000 Assessment: Uganda Report

<sup>8</sup> The EFA 2000 Assessment: Uganda Report

<sup>9</sup> ECD Policy, October 2007

- i. To develop the child’s capabilities, healthy physical growth, thinking power, good social habits, moral values, imagination, self-reliance, appreciation of cultural background, customs, language and communication skills in the mother tongue, and
- ii. Emphasize the development of a feeling of love and care for other people and for Uganda as a whole.

The policy vision is: Quality ECD services for children 0 – 8 years of age

The mission is: to support, guide, coordinate, regulate and promote quality and relevant ECD services for children 0 – 8 years of age.

The specific objectives of the ECD policy are:

- a) To clarify the role of government in the provision of and support for ECD services and indicate its commitment to the welfare of children;
- b) To consolidate and systematize existing programmes and activities related to ECD for the maximum benefit of all children;
- c) To clarify roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the provision of children’ learning and well being;
- d) To provide guidelines and standards for those wishing to develop quality ECD programmes; and
- e) To promote and strengthen the coordination mechanism that foster partnership, networking and linkages in the provision of ECD services

## **2.2 DELIVERY MODES OF EARLY LEARNING**

### **2.2.1 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS**

The Ministry of Education and Sports mainly plays a supervisory role. The ministry developed the policy and currently collects data on enrolment in and provision of ECD programmes in Uganda. In a mode to deliver on the EFA targets Government adopted the following strategies:

- i. 10 PTCs to commence on training teachers for Early Childhood Education and number of PTCs offering early childhood education would be increased according to improvements in the economy and manpower needs;
- ii. All PTCs students to be given basic training in early childhood methods and specialization;

- iii. Government committed to work out a comprehensive programme to assume increased control of pre–primary education; key bodies to monitor implementation include MoES, Commissioner PPE and district LCs;
- iv. A system of continuous comprehensive evaluation to be introduced in primary schools and cumulative record cards of pupils showing their performance in all areas of the curriculum to be maintained;
- v. Teachers to be trained to carry out both formative and summative evaluation of students through periodic tests, assignments, practical, oral and written examinations; and
- vi. For P1 – P5 (5 -9 years) reading, writing oral expression, numeracy and life skills are the learning needs identified.

Other international partners like Basic Education and Sports Policy Support (BEPS) projects have worked with MoES to improve teacher training and promote decentralization. Teachers have been trained in participatory classroom methodologies, and in turn provide in service guidance to teachers.

As highlighted in section 2.4.1 the sector has commenced to capture data on enrolment, provider numbers and teacher availability. More data is still required on participation, completion and quality enhancement.

MoES provides UPE for all primary school – age going children. The enrolment in lower primary (especially P1 and PII) is high and increasing and with high gender parity ratios. The MoES introduced the thematic curriculum for lower primary education in 2007, beginning with P1, followed by implementation in PII and PIII classes in subsequent years. A revised ‘transition’ curriculum for P4 was implemented in 2010. The thematic curriculum is based on three main principles: 1) a focus on the development of literacy, numeracy and life skills at lower primary, 2) the use of themes of immediate meaning and relevance to the learner, through which to teach key concepts, and, 3) use of languages in which the learners are already proficient.

Teaching in the Mother Tongue (MTE) is central in the thematic curriculum, and was adopted as a result of studies<sup>10</sup> that had revealed that teaching children in mother tongue enables them to learn better and faster, and thus acquire literacy and numeracy competences more effectively. Teaching is done in mother tongue up to PIII and teachers

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<sup>10</sup> UNESCO, Education notes, 2005

are oriented in teaching methodologies in the mother tongue. The ministry also provides teaching and reading materials in the respective local languages. The policy, however, is yet to deliver on the desired results and outcomes due to supply related constraints such as inadequate teaching materials for lesson planning and teaching, ill-trained teachers in teaching and assessment methodologies, a majority of teachers who are illiterate in the mother tongue, lack of reading materials in local languages and large class loads, among others.

Some education experts are still concerned that the Thematic Curriculum was hurriedly introduced without sufficient preparation in terms of textbooks. Most speech communities are still trying to make sense of the Thematic Curriculum. The MT teachers lack training on how to teach using the mother tongue and have to work from scratch. Sometimes even more disastrous, the teacher and pupils are given books written in the mother tongue of the nearest mutually intelligible language. This causes confusion and serious comprehension problems for both teachers and pupils.

UNICEF is supporting the government to address some of these problems by sponsoring the preparation and production of some teacher resource books, but in a few languages.

Complementary to the policy of mother tongue education, the automatic promotion policy was introduced to improve efficiency in primary schooling. But various external evaluations carried out revealed that the UPE policy had been successful in achieving access targets, but has not scored well on attaining literacy and numeracy outcomes<sup>11</sup>, completion rates and ensuring equity across regions and disadvantaged groups. As explained in 2.3.4 a cross section of diverse government players and programmes are partnering with government to address this anomaly.

## **2.2.2 NATIONAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

The NCDC was established by the NCDC Act, 2000 Chapter 135 and its core mandate is to develop curricular and related materials. NCDC is comprised of several departments, including the pre-primary and primary department. The department has two units, namely ECD Unit and Primary Unit.

The NCDC has developed the pre-primary and primary education curriculum. It has also supported the process of developing orthographies and writing diverse reading materials in local languages by vetting them with help of the LBs.

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<sup>11</sup> UWEZO Competence tests, 2010

### 2.2.3 CORE PRIMARY TEACHERS COLLEGES

The PTCs are mandated to train teachers for pre-primary and primary schools. They also conduct pre-service and in-service training of teachers and have facilitated the orientation and dissemination of the learning framework for ECD. The Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs) provide continuous professional development (CPD) to serving teachers in primary schools for skills enhancement. They have been instrumental in equipping teachers with MTE methodologies and the development of instruction materials in local languages. A total 168 ECD tutors have been trained on the learning framework and teacher trainees using a cascade system.

### 2.2.4 SERVICE PROVIDERS

Early childhood education/learning is primarily in the hands of non-government providers both for profit and not-for-profit. The number of providers is on the increase, especially for ECD as presented in section 2.4.1. Non-profit organizations are also partnering with government to implement programmes and projects with the aim of improving the delivery of learning in lower primary. These are both direct donor funded and international and local NGOs. Their operations are premised on the same principle that government is out rightly committed towards delivering quality education and ensuring equity but it is both resource and capacity strained to attain these objectives.

The use of mother tongue, especially in early learning, can be effective in attaining literacy and numeracy outcomes. In a typical Ugandan situation this can only happen through design and application of innovative programmes, such as equipping teachers with relevant skills and production of diverse reading materials. The various organizations have mobilized resources including technical assistance and initiated programmes on a pilot basis in various parts of the country to promote teaching in the mother tongue. They, in the process, have produced innovative and more effective models for enhancing learning in their mother tongue. Some of the organizations were assessed by the consultant as part of this study and assessment tools submitted to TrustAfrica. The design approaches involved the transfer and tailoring of success stories from other countries, such as Save the Children Uganda and Mango Tree, trials of new models developed according to the specific local needs and gaps, such as Aga Khan, and fine tuning of models that had proved successful in the local environment for other purposes, such as LABE and HUYSLINCI. The level of appreciation among a cross section of stakeholders, including local and central government, has been overwhelming, but is yet to attract overt commitment to adoption and scaling-up. A multitude of other organizations have been effective in networking and advocacy to solicit increased participation by government agencies to scale-up these

innovations and/or address the inherent inefficacies in delivery of quality early learning. These have evolved as platforms at the regional and national levels, such as Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU), National NGO Forum, Acholi NGO Forum, etc.

The government has instituted Local Language Boards (LLBs) for the various major and regional languages partly to promote the use of local languages in early learning, and at Ordinary Level and Advanced Level, as well as at university level. The LLs are at various levels of formation and supported by District Local Councils (DLCs), and their functionality is still hampered by lack of financial support from the Government, as well as clear oversight from NCDC. But some LLs have been innovative in mobilizing funds by registering as NGOs and CBOs, and attracting local and international funding for their programmes. Their key roles include writing of orthographies, writing and/or editing/vetting reading materials and storybooks in local languages, supporting teachers of lower primary classes to prepare teaching materials in local languages, and promoting the use of the mother tongue in early schooling. Both international and local non-government players in early learning are partnering with LLBs to enhance improvement in literacy and numeracy among primary school learners. There are indications that LLBs could constitute a valuable platform for early learning on being well established, and with proper local and international funding.

## 2.3 ISSUES IN EARLY LEARNING

### 2.3.1 ACCESS

Uganda, like other sub-Saharan African countries, still grapples with difficulties in attaining EFA goals for ECCE. This is mainly due to the prevailing economic, social, geographical and cultural differences, as well as general beliefs about ECCE.<sup>12</sup> There were 2,469 pre-schools (all private schools) in 2009<sup>13</sup>; the total enrolment was 157,002 (76,590 males and 80,432 females) pupils, 7,177 teachers (1451 male and 5726 female); the highest percentage of pre-primary schools (32%) was located in the central region; the lowest percentage (1%) in the northern region.

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<sup>12</sup> ECCE in Uganda: Challenges

<sup>13</sup> Education Abstract, 2009, MoES

Number of pre – primary schools by region, 2009

Number of pre – primary schools				
Region	Private	Community	Total	Percentage
Central	695	90	785	32%
East	298	128	426	17%
N. East	9	7	16	1%
North	237	121	358	14%
S. West	345	222	567	23%
West	257	60	317	13%
Grand Total	1,841	628	2,469	100%

EMIS, 2009

Enrolment by and children with special needs by region in pre – primary schools

Region	Enrolment in pre - primary			Children with special needs		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Central	22241	22904	45,145	305	271	<b>576</b>
East	12337	12710	25,047	336	282	<b>618</b>
N. East	1092	1162	2,254	31	21	<b>52</b>
North	20088	21828	41,916	842	1005	<b>1847</b>
S. West	11833	12368	24,201	490	459	<b>949</b>
West	8999	9460	18,459	308	270	<b>578</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>76590</b>	<b>80432</b>	<b>157,022</b>	<b>2312</b>	<b>2308</b>	<b>4,620</b>

EMIS, 2009

According to the EFA Monitoring 2009 report, only 2% of Ugandan children receive early childhood education.

Many pre-primary schools are aimed at preparing children for primary. Data on providers, users and numbers of children accessing early learning and stimulation in both formal and non-formal settings is not readily available. Many vulnerable children, especially in conflict areas, isolated communities, and poor urban and other disadvantaged communities do not access any form of ECD or access very poor services. A community worker in a remote district in eastern Uganda observed, *“Until recently, rural areas like Katine Sub County did not have nursery schools. But more and more villagers, inspired by the early start in the education system of children in towns, are wanting nurseries for their children. Katine has at least one nursery, located within the premises of a charitable organization.”*

The current non-government actors in early learning are located in disadvantaged areas like northern and northeastern regions of Uganda, mostly in line with the policies of their funders.

## 2.3.2 QUALITY

### 2.3.2.1 ECD Subsector

The MoES developed a learning framework to be used as a basis for determining the content to teach children. The framework is in use by all providers of pre-primary schooling. In the FY 2009/10, the ministry trained 1,507 nursery school teachers in the central region on the ECD learning framework with the aim of providing unified curriculum guidelines and improving the quality of instruction in pre-primary school.

A number of organizations offer teacher training for ECD such as Makerere University Child Study Centre, YMCA, YWCA, Sanyu Babies Home, Montessori, Nile Vocational Institute, Makerere University External Degree programme and Kyambogo University. Extensive professional, educational and training support for individuals within early learning services and for the ECD subsector as a whole is still inadequate.

ECD policy documents and guidelines are not widely disseminated and printed only in a few dominant languages. This limits not only the understanding but also usage of the guidelines. While the Government recognizes that ECD is important and registers it as the first level of education (Education Act 2008), the investment in ECD remains low and thus impacting negatively on its quality.

### 2.3.2.2 Achievement of learning outcomes in lower primary

The Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) conducts periodic assessment of achievements in learning outcomes under the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) project. The assessment is conducted among PIII and PVI learners and results published by MoES. NAPE assessment results for rating proficiency in literacy and numeracy among PIII learners are shown in the tables below.

The table below shows the percentage of PIII learners rated proficient in literacy.

Year	Boys	Girls	All
2007/8	48.8	45.3	44.5
2008/9	55.2	56.5	55.9

NAPE Report 2009

The table below shows the percentage of PIII learners rated proficient in numeracy.

Year	Boys	Girls	All
2007/8	74.6	68.1	71.4
2008/9	72.8	69.7	71.0

NAPE Report 2009

The National NGO Forum is implementing a four-year 'UWEZO' project that aims to improve competencies in literacy and numeracy among children aged 6 – 16 years old in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, using an innovative approach to social change that is citizen driven and accountable to the public. The project conducts periodic assessment of literacy and numeracy competencies among learners, but at a household level. UWEZO conducted a second annual learning assessment in April 2011 covering 80 districts, 48,000 households, 2,400 schools and 88,373 children aged 6 – 10 years<sup>14</sup>. Tests on PII content of English and Mathematics were administered to children in PIII. The results were quite different from those provided by NAPE. Nine of ten children could not read and understand an English story text, while seven out of ten could not solve a numerical written division or sum. The results sparked further increasing concerns about the quality of the UPE programme in Uganda and perceptions about government's false assessment of literacy and numeracy under UPE in light of UWEZO's findings. There were also findings by the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) conducted by RTI in the Central Region and the Lango

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<sup>14</sup> UWEZO Uganda 2011

subregion in 2010, which yielded similar results such as UWEZO seriously challenging the government's positive report.

### 3.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a strong will and commitment to promote early learning in Uganda. The Government is creating a conducive environment, while non-government players are increasingly offering more opportunities to quality early learning programmes. The overarching objective of early learning is to achieve increasing levels of literacy and numeracy among the target population. The government delivery modes are far from achieving this objective, and as a consequence, non-government players are taking up more space in an effort to bridge the gaps and deliver more on the objective. The non-government players have leveraged resources to design and pilot innovative programmes with a highly commendable level of success. These arguably valuable programmes need to be replicated and/or scaled-up through existing central and decentralized structures and systems which, however, are still constrained.

In light of the above scenario, much still needs to be done to promote the early learning sector in Uganda. First, delivery mode for ECD should be reviewed to focus more on preparing children to learn for acquisition of literacy other than just attaining eligibility for entry into primary schooling. Second, government early learning programmes (through TC) should be augmented with additional external financial support and technical assistance to provide more teaching learning materials, train and support teachers in MTE teaching and assessment methodologies, and produce textbooks. Third, the non government actors that have designed and piloted innovative programmes to enhance early learning, which have been assessed as successful, should be supported to scale-up their "success stories" for increased nationwide benefit. Fourth, the LBs should be supported to become more vibrant and functional so that they can effectively contribute to MTE and create a literacy culture. Fifth, further operations research should be carried out to inform the ongoing early learning policies on more cost effective modes of delivery and attainment of literacy outcomes.

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