

RTEI Uganda Country Brief

Understanding RTEI

The Right to Education Index (RTEI) is a new global index designed to drive accountability and progress towards realizing the right to education. It is a global accountability initiative that aims to ensure that all people, no matter where they live, enjoy their right to a quality education. RTEI works with civil society, research institutions, and governments to collect data on a wide range of indicators of the right to education to identify progress being made towards the fulfillment of the right to education as well as obstacles to it through driving accountability and progress towards the right to education in countries all over the world. RTEI is built out of the International Right to Education Framework to monitor national progress towards its fulfillment.

Overview of the RTEI scores

The State of Uganda has signed and ratified a number of international human rights instruments that provide for the right to education. It has further taken steps by passing legislation, formulate and implement policies such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) that aim at affording all children an opportunity to access education. This explains the country's high score in regard to governance of the education sector by 83%. However, UPE and USE programs are not entirely free, parents are still required to provide a number of school necessities in form of non-tuition fees and government has indicated plans to improve on their implementation to lower costs for families.¹

Also over the years, the private sector has been encouraged to play a leading role in the delivery of education despite the weak regulatory mechanism by the State.² As a result, the private schools are charging high tuition and non – tuition fees.³ The State has not only failed to regulate the charging of tuition and non-tuition fees in private schools but also public schools and grant aided schools. This has affected access to education by children from poor backgrounds which explains the low score on accessibility to education of 54%. The situation is worse for children with disabilities as most schools are ill – equipped to accommodate them.⁴ This is mainly due to poor funding of special needs education.

¹ National Development Plan II 2015/16 – 2019/20.

² Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (2016) A Threat or Opportunity? Public – Private Partnerships in Education in Uganda. P. 1

³ National Budget Framework Paper FY2018/19 – 2022/23, P.21

⁴ See Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and UNICEF (2015) Situation Analysis of Children in Uganda. Available at [https://www.unicef.org/uganda/UNICEF_SitAn_7_2015_\(Full_report\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/uganda/UNICEF_SitAn_7_2015_(Full_report).pdf) p. 61

Despite the country scoring highly on some of the elements of availability like classroom scored at 92% and teachers at 74%, the reality on ground is totally different from the score on these elements. According to Auditor General Reports on Local Authorities over the years many schools continue to operate with limited classrooms and teachers among other basic requirements – for example schools in Kibuku, Paliisa, Manafwa and Alebtong are grappling with shortage of classrooms, staff, text books.⁵ Similarly, the other elements like sanitation and textbooks had insufficient data- which led to the overall score on availability to indicate insufficient data. This therefore implies that the country lacks enough data on availability which is critical for education planning which is needed for improving access to quality education.

Issue one: Free Education

The introduction of UPE and USE in 1997 and 2007 respectively has led to tremendous increase in access to education especially by children from poor backgrounds and girl children.⁶ These programs were designed and implemented to enable children from poor background to access education- because fees had initially been a barrier to access. However, these education programs have ceased being entirely free, parents are required to provide examination, laboratory, sports, development, registration fees, among others.⁷ Financial constraints are the most prominent factor explaining both non-enrolment and high drop-out rates.⁸ Children from poor backgrounds fail to meet these non-tuition fees requirements, the number of school items required and their cost keep increasing to the extent of being unaffordable by most households which is leading to non-enrolment and school dropout. The National Household Survey⁹, indicate that 35% of the school dropout rates are as a result of high school charges. This comes at a time when the poverty levels in the country have increased from 19.7% in 2012/2013 to 21.4% in 2016/17.¹⁰ The poor children are experiencing high school charges in all schools; public, government aided and private schools.

The Ministry of Education and Sports; Private Schools and Institutions Department (PSID) intends to formulate a framework for private education provision with intention to among others regulating the charging of school fees in private schools. However, as highlighted above, the challenge is not only in private schools but also in public and government aided schools. Therefore, any plans to regulate the charging of high tuition and non-tuition fees should cut across the entire education sector- including public and private education provision

⁵ <http://www.oag.go.ug/local-governments-reports-2017/>

⁶ Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (2016) A Threat or Opportunity? Public – Private Partnerships in Education in Uganda. P.3 & 5

⁷ Ibid, P. 24

⁸ https://www.unicef.org/uganda/OUT_OF_SCHOOL_CHILDREN_STUDY_REPORT_FINAL_REPORT_2014.pdf

⁹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics: The National Household Survey 2016/17

¹⁰ Ibid

Issue Two: Learning environment

Despite the RTEI index reporting the country scoring high on the theme of availability of education in terms of presence of adequate school facilities such as; classrooms, sanitation, teachers and textbooks, the reality on ground is different. The Auditor General has highlighted in a number of Audit Reports on Local Authorities¹¹ of a number of public and government aided schools in various districts operating in a poor learning environment with some learners studying under trees whilst some in dilapidated classrooms with no or less desks, poor and limited clean and safe water and sanitation facilities, limited teaching staff coupled with late coming and absenteeism due to absence of staff accommodation facilities at a number of schools. Despite the Minimum National Standards of Service Delivery, setting the standard; teacher pupil ration of 1 to 55; classroom pupil ratio of 1 to 55; latrine stance to pupil ratio of 1 to 40; desk pupil ratio of 1 to 3, instead a number of districts local governments are operating below the standard with teacher pupil ratio of 1 to 167; classroom pupil ratio of 1 to 198; latrine stance to pupil ratio of 1 to 90; desk pupil ratio of 1 to 15.¹²

The Ministry of Education and Sports and District Local Governments have also over the years closed a number of private primary and secondary schools for not meeting basic requirements and minimum standards.¹³ These include; qualified teachers, classrooms, desks, clean and safe water and sanitation facilities, qualified teachers. The absence of these basic requirements and minimum standards, leaves a lot to be desired of the environment in which the students are studying from and the quality of education being delivered.

There is need for Ministry of Education and Sports which plays both roles of providing and regulating education to ensure that all players in education provision comply with basic requirements and minimum standards. This can be achieved in two ways, one, increasing on resource allocation for construction, renovation and rehabilitation, filling of staff gaps in schools, desks and clean and safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. Secondly, enhancing the monitoring and inspection function of both the Directorate of Education Standards and the Districts inspectorate of schools through increased funding for monitoring and inspection funds for recruiting the required human resource and availing them with the funds for monitoring and inspection operations. The enhanced monitoring, supervision and inspection of schools should address the question of compliance to basic requirements and minimum standards of all schools with those that are non – compliant closed.

¹¹ Audit reports for the years; 2015, 2016, 2017

¹² CEPA (2016). Summary of the Auditor General's Report for FY. 2014/2015 Kampala, P. 25

¹³ Report of the Sectoral Committee on Education and Sports on the Closure of Private Schools by the Ministry of Education and Sports. Available at https://www.iser-uganda.org/images/downloads/Education_Committee_Report_April_2017.pdf P 7 -11

Issue Three: Discrimination of children with disabilities

Generally, access to education by Children with Disabilities (CWDs) in Uganda remains relatively low. First, despite the fact that CWDs constitute a high population of 2.5 million children,¹⁴ only 5% CWD are able to access education within an inclusive setting in regular schools while only 10% access education through special schools and annexes.¹⁵ This low enrollment rate of CWDs is mainly attributed to two major issues. One, CWDs face discrimination and stigmatization within their families and communities and they are kept at homes instead of enrolling them in schools.¹⁶

Secondly, the low enrolment and completion rates for CWDs is due to limited well-equipped schools that can meet the needs of CWDs. This is largely attributed to the inadequate financing of special needs education component. In 2006, government enacted the Persons with Disability Act, Section 5 (j) of the Act that provide for allocation of the 10% education sector budget to education needs of persons with disabilities. However, ever since the passing of the law, the education sector budget has not complied with its provisions. The allocation to the special needs education has averaged at 0.1% of the entire education sector budget.

This limited financing has hindered the construction and equipping of public schools that can accommodate CWDs. Also, the CWDs who live in areas with well – equipped private schools that can accommodate them, are unable to enroll due the high tuition and non – tuition fees albeit the high vulnerability and poverty levels among persons with disabilities including children. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics report, 2016 indicates that 55.6% of Persons with Disabilities (CWDs inclusive) in Uganda live in rural poor households with limited access to majority basic social services such as education. There is need by the responsible state agencies; Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and Parliament to ensure that the education sector budget complies with the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2006 on allocation of resources towards special needs education.

Data availability

During the collection of data for the RTEI 2018, the research team experienced a lot of challenges of absence of data for a number of questions under various themes. There is need for government to avail data; the percentage of total national education budget that is allocated to teacher salaries, teaching and learning materials (including teacher training),

¹⁴ Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and UNICEF (2015) Situation Analysis of Children in Uganda. Available at [https://www.unicef.org/uganda/UNICEF_SitAn_7_2015_\(Full_report\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/uganda/UNICEF_SitAn_7_2015_(Full_report).pdf) (last accessed on October 26, 2018), P.61.

¹⁵ Ibid , P.61

¹⁶ Ibid P.7

capital development (Infrastructure), the current public expenditure per pupil in constant USD and as a percentage of GNI per capita PPP in primary and secondary. The government needs to also collect data on percentage of household spending on primary and secondary education. And the gross enrollment, net enrolment, completion rate, percent of students in primary and secondary schools that received an overall passing score on the national assessment/exam adult and youth literacy rate. This data needs to be disaggregated in terms of; urban, rural, lowest income quintile, second income quintile, middle income quintile, the fourth income quintile, the highest income quintile, students with disabilities

Recommendations

- i. The Ministry of Education and Sports should as a matter of urgency develop and enforce a comprehensive regulatory and financing framework that provides for the minimum and maximum unit cost required to educate a child in both primary and secondary. This will provide proper guidance in financing of public education and regulation of private providers of education especially those for profit.
- ii. The Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and Parliament should provide funds to first, fill the staffing gaps in government schools and grant aided schools, construction, renovation and rehabilitation of school facilities, provision of clean and safe drinking water and desks. Secondly, provide adequate funding for enhancement of the monitoring and inspection in the education sector by putting in place the required human and financial resources for effective supervision of the schools' compliance to basic requirements and minimum standards.
- iii. The Ministry of Education and Sports and Parliament of Uganda should ensure that the education sector budget complies with the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2006. Section 5(j) provides that 10% of the education sector should be allocated towards addressing the education needs of persons with disabilities. The increased allocation of resources to the education sector will enable the construction and equipment of the existing schools with capacity to accommodate CWDs.