

Overview

- **Uganda has the highest youth unemployment rate in Africa : 70%**
 - **High pregnancy rates amongst teenagers**²
- **Quality of education is as big a challenge as access to education**

Uganda is one of the youngest countries in the world. It currently has around 43 million inhabitants³ and estimations say it is likely to reach 100 million by 2050⁴. This is one of the reason why children in Uganda desperately need help. Demography and education are intrinsically linked and it is often the lack of education that leads teenagers and young adults to an early pregnancy which can often result in them having to drop out of education systems in order to take care of children.

The education sector in Uganda faces many challenges such as extremely high number of students per class, teacher and student absenteeism, lack of proper material or unavailability of learning materials. The situation also varies extremely depending on the districts. For instance, rural areas will often have more difficulties finding teachers and providing them with accommodation⁵. Teachers face important issues and will often blame the lack of involvement of the parents, the lack of material or the fact that households are too far away from school for a child's poor learning outcomes.

When people talk about the lack of quality that affects the education system in Uganda, they refer to the fact that most Ugandan schools tend to teach by repetition. It means that in order for children to learn they have to repeat what the teacher says or does but they are not enabled the time and space to learn on a trial and error basis which would foster their critical thinking, undeniably one of the most important attributes which ought to be developed by education systems. Critical thinking is left aside but soft skills and practical knowledge as well. One reason for this is that schools often rely on curriculum coverage as a criteria for success instead of focusing on actual learning outcomes which would be a more illustrative mean of assessment. This is part of the reason why Ugandans score badly during regional tests.

In general, girls will face high degrees of discrimination when trying to follow their studies in Uganda. They face a lot of barriers and marginalization because related culture and practices rooted in the Ugandan society are only changing very slowly⁶.

*“Across Africa, more than **7 million young people** enter the job market each year hoping to make a living. Yet most youth can expect to remain unemployed or underemployed and to live on less than \$2 a day. Because they lack the 21st century skills required to attain further education, overcome gender inequities, and succeed in scarce formal sector jobs.”⁷*

¹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11Je-rl-vsc>. Uganda's School for Life: Educating out of Poverty - Rebel Education, *Al Jazeera English*, January 2017.

²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9pZ53dpPXQ>. UNICEF Uganda - Keeping children Alive, Safe and Learning, *UNICEF Uganda*, April 2013.

¹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11Je-rl-vsc>. Uganda's School for Life: Educating out of Poverty - Rebel Education, *Al Jazeera English*, January 2017.

²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9pZ53dpPXQ>. UNICEF Uganda - Keeping children Alive, Safe and Learning, *UNICEF Uganda*, April 2013.

³ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=UG&view=chart>. Population, total. Uganda, *World Bank*, accessed in July 2020.

⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/overview>. The World Bank in Uganda, *World Bank*, March 2020.

⁵ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/uganda>. Uganda, *Global Partnership*, June 2020.

⁶ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/uganda>. Uganda, *UN Women*, accessed in July 2020.

⁷ <https://www.experienceeducate.org/why>. What We Do, *Educate*, accessed June 2020.

Pre-primary education⁸

- **Only 42% of children benefit from pre-primary education in sub-Saharan Africa⁹**
 - **Pre-primary education's quality is very poor in Uganda**
 - **Children of 3-6 should go to pre-primary school**

Pre-primary education in Uganda can prove decisive for a child's development. All children from 3-6 years old should have some form of pre-primary education according to UNICEF¹⁰. The problem is that in Uganda, donors and governments focus on developing the next breakthrough-innovation or the next new school instead of improving existing offers. This results in quality of pre-primary education being as much of a problem as access to it. If done wrongly, pre-primary education can end up wasting resources for nothing.

Investing in pre-primary education can have a great impact on a child's education and development. When it comes to Uganda, emphasis should be put on quality.

Primary and Secondary

- **Each school year is divided in 3 school terms**
- **School fees usually include a meal per day**
- **Ugandan children score badly in regional terms¹¹**

The Ugandan school year starts in February and finishes in December. The 1st term runs from February to April, the 2nd from May until early August, and the 3rd term from September to December. Normally, children remain in primary school for seven years (Primary 1 to Primary 7), and then continue through secondary school for the next six years (Senior 1 to Senior 6).

Primary School in Uganda:

- from 1st to 7th grade (normally **from 6** to 12 years)
- P1 → P2 → P3 → P4 → P5 → P6 → P7 (from Primary 1 to Primary 7)
- classes of English, Maths, Science and SST (Social Studies including geography, history and religious studies)
- agriculture is optional in certain schools

Secondary School in Uganda:

- from 1st to 6th grade (normally **from 13** to 19 years)
- S1 → S2 → S3 → S4 → S5 → S6 (from Secondary 1 to Secondary 6)
- classes of English, Maths and Science (biology, chemistry, physics)

In Uganda, it is common for families to have to select one of their child in order to support him or her. They choose to invest in one of their children and leave the others with no access to education because of financial constraints. Even for the children who have had the opportunity

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7YlppzzSh0>. UNICEF Education Think Piece #2: Quality Pre-Primary Education, UNICEF Africa, May 2018.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

to join a primary or secondary school, there are a lot of barriers that can harm their attendance. These include in particular child labour, lack of parental support and poverty.

Moreover, classes in Uganda are not based on age because a lot of children only have the opportunity to attend classes at a certain age and might drop out until their parents can afford to pay school fees again. It is very common that children only have been able to attend a small percentage of the full primary and secondary curriculum and this also implies that age difference within the same classrooms is a problem in most of the Ugandan schools.

Children in Uganda usually prefer boarding schools which present the advantage of containing additional evening classes and of providing a good environment for children who are away from potential constraints from their private lives. Teachers who often face limitations due to the extremely large number of students per class in some institutions can use the opportunities provided by boarding schools in order to connect and support children at a deeper level than what is allowed in common day schools.

In conclusion, with only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the children making it through secondary education in Uganda, there important limitations to a child's studies. Uganda has proven to be less performant than its neighbours. Regionally, Tanzanian and Kenyan schools usually score higher in terms of primary school completion and literacy for instance¹².

Different Types of Education

While some aspects of the education system in Uganda are very similar regardless of the school type in which a child finds him or herself, there are very important differences in terms of the quality of education provided according to whether the parents have placed their child in a UPE school, a public school, a private school or an international school.

UPE School

<p style="text-align: center;">Around 30 USD per term</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Estimated ratio of 1 teacher for 150 students</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Usually for families below the poverty line</p>
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The Universal Primary Education policy started out as a great idea in 1997 in Uganda. The initial aim of the policy was to improve access to and quality of education by providing children all over the country with free tuitions. Whereas the idea was and still is praiseworthy, the execution did not live up to Ugandans' expectations because of the very poor quality of a majority of the UPE schools as well as because of the limited capacity available. Also, the government never really managed to maintain UPE schools free. As additional limitations, UPE schools vary a lot depending on whether they are located in Kampala or in remote villages where they can be of a very poor quality. Meals provided within UPE usually do not vary at all^{13,14}. For all these reasons and more, UPE are not ideal at all but are still better than receiving no education at all.

¹² https://www.unicef.org/uganda/media/6136/file/Investing%20in%20Educ%20FY2020_21.pdf. The National Budget Framework FY 2020/21, *UNICEF*, accessed June 2020.

¹³ <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4072.pdf>. Universal Primary Education, *ODI*, February 2006.

¹⁴ The six EFA goals (millennium goals) can be summarized as follows:

- Expand early childhood care and education
- Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
- Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
- Increase adult literacy by 50%
- Achieve gender parity by 2005 and gender equality by 2015
- Improve the quality of education (recovered from Early Childhood Care and Education, *Arun A.*, 2019.)

Public School

Around 200 USD per term

Estimated ratio of around 1 teacher for 60 students

Whereas a vast majority of public schools present decisive advantages over UPE schools, they still face problems of limited capacity, teachers and students' absenteeism, lack of material and unideal learning outcomes. In general students from public schools will finish their studies later than students from private schools because of the broader challenges families face. In comparison with UPE schools, the food varies more and is of better quality. The biggest limitation to attendance and registration to public schools is the very high price for Ugandan standards.

Private School

Around 600 USD per term

Estimated ratio of 20 students per teacher

For expat children and a select few rich Ugandans

Private schools already represent a very high standard for most Ugandans. Prices are usually extremely high. However, the quality of education provided by private schools is way better. Indeed, classrooms are more adapted and less crowded which makes them more manageable for teachers. They usually benefit from all necessary facilities while following a Ugandan curriculum almost matching international standards.

International School

Around 2'000 USD per term

Estimated ratio of 15 students per teacher

Only for extremely rich families

International schools are nearly exclusively meant for expat children. They are way above what even the richest Ugandans can afford and will only concern few of the wealthiest families in Uganda. They completely match international standards in terms of quality.

Rise Uganda

At Rise Uganda, we support disadvantaged families who cannot afford school fees in order to help as many children as possible benefit from an education. We measure success through student enrolment, school attendance as well as completion of primary and secondary studies. Taking into account affordability and quality of education, we consider UPE as well as public schools for the needy children we decide to help. We not only believe that education is the key to the sustainable development of Uganda but we are also convinced that education is what gives children a vision for their life, opportunities, network, confidence, purpose and it teaches them critical thinking. Ultimately, education is the one tool that can empower children to take control of their lives and live a happy life.

Going to school is every child's dream. Imagine being 7 years old and watching your friends and neighbors going to school while you remain – day after day – doing house chores for your little brother.

Ryan Humbert

President of Rise Uganda



Rise Uganda
EDUCATION MATTERS