

Evaluation of the African Girls Education Initiative Country Case Study: Uganda

David W. Chapman
Rabina Kyeyune
Karen Lokkesmoe

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Overview of Key Findings

- UNICEF/Uganda, more than many AGEI countries, made substantial changes in its AGEI programme during its transition from Phase I to Phase II. This shift was prompted by (a) the move to rights based programming; (b) a heightened emphasis on district level programming; and, (c) the influence of the child-friendly school concept.
- The modular approach of the Uganda AGEI programme offers a useful example of how a girls' education programme can be designed in a manner that promotes easy diffusion of components.
- The UNICEF/Uganda country programme offers an example of how girls' education can be fully integrated into the overall country programme.
- Uganda represents a particularly interesting case of Sector Wide Programming. In implementing its sector investment policy, the Government of Uganda (GOU) has placed a hard ceiling on the national budget and, in turn, each sector has been given a spending ceiling. The Ministry of Finance (MOF) will start counting donor-funded, project support within these ceilings as of July 2004. Operationally, this means that donor support allocated to the Ministry of Education for a particular project will reduce the GOU allocation to the Ministry of Education by the same amount. Hence, external donor support will not increase the overall amount available for education. If the MOES accepts funds from an international agency in support of a particular priority, the MOES must reduce its allocation to some other area of current work. While this approach reflects the GOU's commitment to fiscal responsibility, the inclusion of project funds under the budget ceiling will (a) limit the availability of external funds, (b) force Ministries to be very clear about their priorities and, (c) limit the ability of international agencies to shape those priorities.
- The UNICEF Uganda programme provides one of the best examples within the AGEI of the use of evaluation in documenting the effectiveness of an AGEI intervention, specifically the Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL) programme. It serves as an example of the kind of documentation UNICEF needs if it is to advocate for a series of "best practices."
- One premise of UNICEF work in many countries is that clear evidence of the effectiveness of particular activities will lead to government adopting those activities in other locations and eventually implementing them on a wider scale. The experience in Uganda with BTL suggests that, while evidence of effectiveness is necessary, it is not necessarily sufficient to prompt adoption, even when the intervention is aligned with government policies and government budget is available.

- Widespread positive regard for a programme is not the same as clear evidence of impact. The Uganda study found that some AGEI activities strongly supported by UNICEF/Uganda, by government, and by parents lacked systematic documentation of effect. In some cases, available formal data seem at odds with less formal assessments by those closest to the programmes. In Uganda, two interventions to reach out-of-school children, ABEK and COPE, illustrate this point.
- The Uganda AGEI programme illustrates that activities may not always achieve their main goals, but may accomplish other important outcomes. A number of AGEI activities, once implemented, moved away from their original goals. This was not necessarily a bad thing. It sometimes reflected adaptive adjustments on the part of programme managers to the real needs they encounter during implementation. However, such changes, if undocumented, can result in these activities being evaluated against inappropriate criteria, leading to potentially valuable activities being judged unsuccessful. On the other hand, such drift may signal a difficulty in initial problem identification, activity design, or subsequent implementation. Evaluation efforts must have a clear framework for being able to distinguish adaptive adjustment from inappropriate mission drift.
- The evaluation of AGEI activities needs to consider both the extent that intended goals are achieved and the extent to which unanticipated outcomes, possibly just as important as the intended goals, are accomplished. However, it is possible to find redeeming qualities in almost any activity. There is a risk that, with flexible criteria, no activity is ever found to fail and evaluative activities become meaningless. In assessing AGEI “best practices,” UNICEF needs both (a) a mechanism through which AGEI activities can be honoured for what they accomplish rather than for what they fail to attain; and, (b) clear criteria for when to discontinue activities that have moved too far from their original intent, even if they are yielding other useful outcomes.
- The use of aggregate national education statistics to monitor and assess the impact of girls’ education activities in Uganda is of limited use. The districts in which UNICEF is concentrating its work are among the most difficult in the country and not reflective of the situation of the country as a whole. Moreover, these districts differ from each other in the nature of the problems that face communities in general and girls in particular.
- UNICEF Uganda has had an impact on national policy formulation that is disproportionately greater than the money it brings to education development. Three factors appear to contribute to this: (1) UNICEF has direct, substantial and continuing contacts at the district, county, sub-county, parish, and village levels. This gives UNICEF staff a depth of knowledge about conditions, trends and issues which, in turn, gives them considerable credibility in policy discussions. (2) UNICEF is a member of the Education Sector Working Group and makes sure it never misses a meeting. (3) Unlike most other development assistance organizations, UNICEF has education experts on staff. This sometimes gives UNICEF the advantage of being able to engage at a more technical level in the discussions than might be true of other development partners.

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Context

The context for girls' education in Uganda has changed dramatically since the inception of the AGEI. Three factors have been of particular significance. First, the impact of HIV/AIDS has been severe. While Uganda is credited as being one of only a few countries to successfully reduce the prevalence rate in the population, 6-7% of the population is currently estimated to be infected. Among the consequences of this epidemic are over two million orphans and high numbers of children serving as heads of households. Second, the border conflict with the D.R. Congo and the ongoing insurgency of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has led to disruption of the formal education system in some districts and large numbers of internally displaced persons.

Uganda has achieved considerable success in demonstrating commitment to the provision of basic education for school-age children in both formal primary schools and complementary non-formal programmes. Yet, adoption of universal primary education (UPE) has not completely removed gender disparities in education. While overall enrolment has increased to 87% of school-going age children, there is still a 15% gender disparity in enrolment favouring boys (UNICEF/ GOU Master Plan of Operations 2001-2005). Though grade repetition rates are higher for boys, girls drop out at a higher rate than do boys, especially in upper primary school, and fewer girls than boys complete the seven-year cycle. Consequently, significantly fewer girls continue to secondary and tertiary levels of education. The situation is attributed to the barriers faced by girls. Gender related barriers include:

- **Long distance to school.** Parents are often reluctant to let their daughters travel long distances to the nearest school and the time needed for travel competes with the girls' home chores.
- **Poverty.** Some families are unable to afford the cost of the required uniform, scholastic materials and a midday meal. If choices must be made, parents often give preference to educating their male children.
- **Low value attached to girls' education.** Some parents believe that educating a girl complicates their opportunities for marriage.
- **Adolescent pregnancy.** Thirty-one percent of girls in Uganda are either pregnant or are mothers by the age of 17 (DHS 2001). Until recently, government policy has excluded girls from school when they are pregnant or have a child.
- **Early marriage.** Due to cultural pressures, parents and guardians sometimes encourage girls into early marriage.
- **Sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and exploitation.** Girls are frequently the targets of sexual harassment and gender-related violence. Although there are laws protecting girls against sexual harassment, ineffective enforcement results in the prevalence of sexual abuse of girls, including defilement, sometimes by adults they trust.

- **Child labour.** Girls are sometimes kept out of school in order to help with chores in the home, care for younger siblings, or to care for elderly or sick relatives.
- **Inadequate and inappropriate sanitation facilities.** Particularly at the time of puberty, girls tend to drop out of school if the school does not provide adequate sanitary facilities or privacy.
- **Impact of HIV/AIDS** has claimed the life of one or both parents of many children. One consequence is that many children live with guardians who are unwilling to pay the costs of schooling.

National Goals

The Government of Uganda (GOU) has recognized the importance of education in national development and is committed to achieving universal primary education (UPE) by 2010 and the wider goals of Education for All (EFA) by 2015. To this end, GOU adopted a policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. Since the introduction of UPE, enrolment has more than doubled from 2.5 million in 1996 to 6.5 million in 2000. This has put considerable financial pressure on government.

UNICEF has worked as a partner with GOU to achieve its UPE and EFA goals and has given particular encouragement to government's efforts to promote education for girls. Their efforts to do this are guided by the Government's Medium Term Budget Framework (MTBF) which, in turn, is part of a larger policy framework, the Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP). Among the goals of the plan are the revitalization of the Gender Desk at the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and the position of Senior Women Teacher in the schools.

An important feature of the UNICEF-GOU collaboration has been an outcome-based UNICEF-GOU country programme focused on advocacy, policy formulation and development for service delivery in the promotion of girls' education. The programme defines expected outcomes, identifies implementation strategies, inputs and indicators and commits funding to activities aimed at promoting girls' education through a multi-sectoral development approach. The UNICEF-GOU programme is implemented through existing local government structures, with district governments as major partners.

AGEI Activities

UNICEF/Uganda, more than many AGEI countries, made substantial changes in its AGEI programme during its transition from Phase I to Phase II. During Phase I, four main activities were supported under AGEI, as illustrated in **Figure 1** and described below. They centered on creating alternative opportunities for out-of-school children to re-enter the formal education system and combating the spread of HIV/AIDS through Life Skills training in the schools. In Phase II, AGEI involved at least 12 activities linked to promoting girls' education. The activities supported (at least in part) by AGEI funds during Phase II are illustrated in **Figure 2** and described below.

Figure 1: Phase I AGEI Activities in Uganda

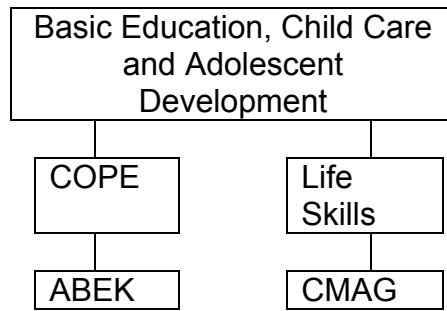
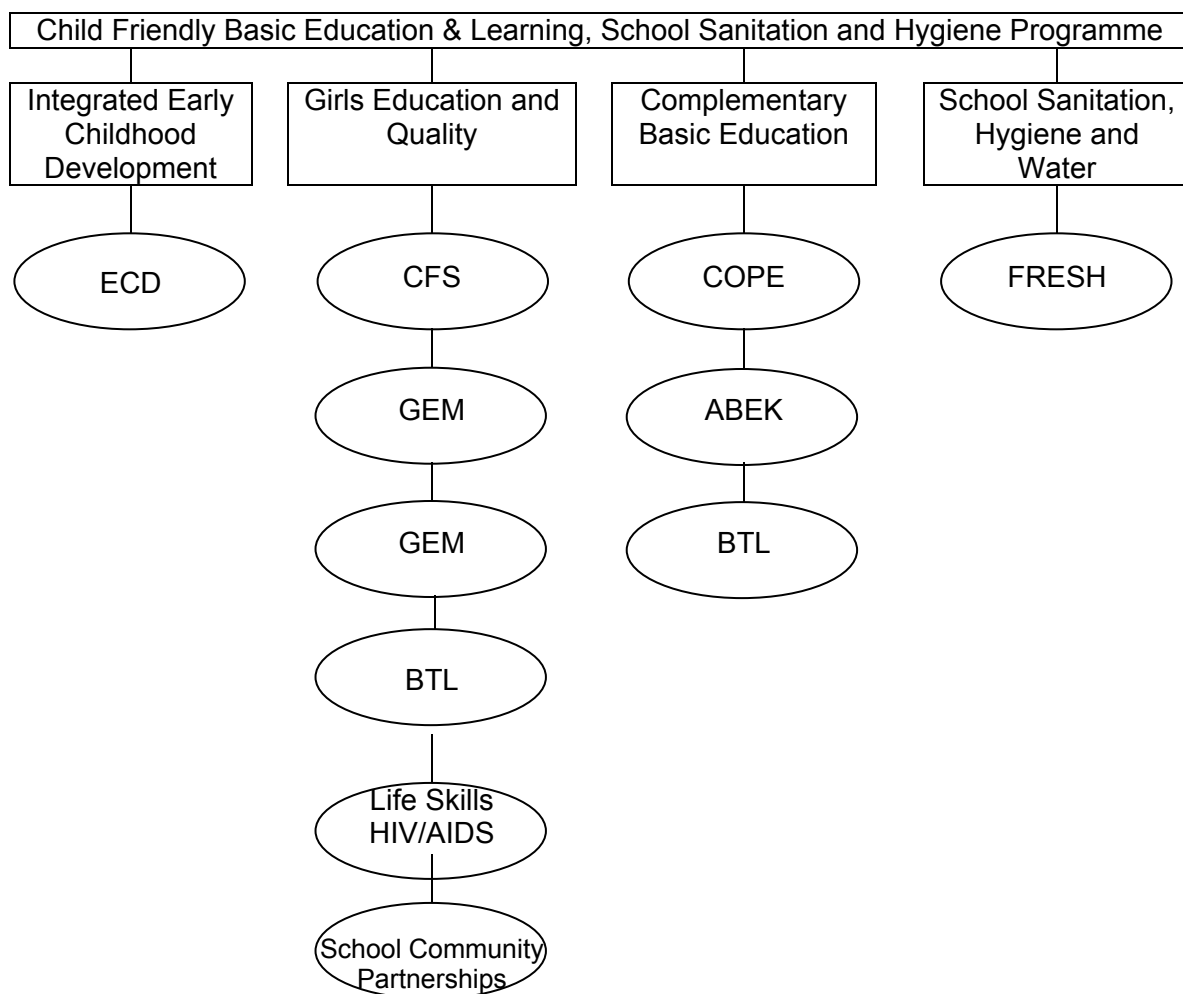


Figure 2: Phase II AGEI Activities in Uganda



Three factors converged to shape this redesign at the beginning of Phase II: (a) the move to rights based programming; (b) a heightened emphasis on district level programming; and, (c) the influence of the child-friendly school concept. Additionally, the Country Office recognized that major constraints in girls' school enrolment, attendance, and achievement had their roots in other sectors. For example, girls' responsibility for household chores, particularly carrying

water, was a main constraint on parents sending them to school; the lack of sanitation was a primary reason for girls' dropping out of school. If girls' enrolment were to increase, it would be necessary to improve sanitation and provide alternative ways of helping families and communities address their needs for water. Moreover, girls were at a much higher risk than boys of contracting HIV/AIDS and schools serve as a primary mechanism for providing education on HIV/AIDS prevention. Getting girls into school was part of a strategy to combat HIV/AIDS. While the Country Office also realized the potential advantages of wider health, education linkages, the national health policy, though formulated, was not yet implemented. The programme reorganization was more than cosmetic. As part of the reorganization of activities in preparation for Phase II, several staff members previously assigned to the Water Section were shifted to the Education Section to help ensure cross-sector integration.

Programme Components

Child Friendly Schools (CFS): The concept of the child friendly school lies at the heart of the Uganda girls' education initiative. The goal of this initiative is to encourage communities to provide universal primary education in a child friendly environment. The six key elements of a child friendly school are:

- *Rights based* – inclusive of all school aged children in community including disabled and poor and open acknowledgement of the rights of the child as outlined in the Uganda Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- *Effective* – focusing on the establishment of effective learning environments and effective teaching and learning practices that aid students in achieving acceptable levels of performance in standardized tests and advancement to post-primary education.
- *Gender sensitive* – gender specific concerns should be addressed in issues relating to enrolment, retention, achievement, health and safety. Leadership role models should be of both genders and both girls and boys should participate in student leadership.
- *Health* – focusing on the provision of adequate sanitation facilities for girls and boys including drinking and washing water and separate latrines for girls and boys. In addition, health and HIV/AIDS lifeskills and sexuality education should be part of the school plan.
- *Safety* – the school environment must be safe for both girls and boys and allow the student to attend school free of the fear of mental, physical, emotional or sexual abuse. It should address both the physical and psycho-social wellbeing of the child.
- *Community partnerships* – the school must develop strong ties to the community and use those links to ensure that all school aged children in the community are reached and enrolled in school.

GEM and BTL are often included as part of a child friendly school plan. More than 700 schools in 31 districts have participated in CFS training.

Girls' Education Movement (GEM): The Girls' Education Movement is a child-centered, girl-led, grassroots movement to empower girls to take action on issues central to furthering girls' education. In each school, the GEM Club is led by girls, with boys as strategic allies and adult women and men advisors who provide the wisdom of age. The local GEM Clubs are started by students who have attended a GEM facilitator training either in Kampala or in their local district. Over 100 young people have been trained at GEM trainings and GEM Clubs are being started in schools throughout the districts. The key activities of the GEM Clubs include:

- Conducting school and community mapping exercises that identify out-of-school youth in the community.

- Identifying barriers to school attendance for girls and develop strategies to overcome these barriers.
- Engaging in community awareness efforts designed to sensitize parents and community leaders about the value of girls' education and the issues girls face.
- Developing partnerships with boys and school leaders to more effectively address the issues identified.
- Designing and conducting peer education efforts aimed at issues of safety, security, and life-skills training on health and sexuality issues.

One important aspect of GEM was its efforts to develop a gender sensitivity and perspective in boys.

Breakthrough to Literary (BTL): BTL is a teaching methodology based in the local language designed to teach children to life skills and read and write and in their mother tongue. It is an interactive, participatory methodology that is child-cantered, child-focused and gender responsive. The BTL programme was evaluated in 2002 and found to be very effective at early learning and the accelerated teaching of reading and writing. BTL strategies are being incorporated into both the primary education system as well as the COPE and ABEK centres through specialized training for the teachers.

Focusing Resources for Effective School Health (FRESH): One of the reasons that girls (especially in adolescence) fail to attend school is poor sanitation facilities and lack of privacy. FRESH works on the premise that effective health and sanitation components are necessary to promoting girls' education and gender parity in schools. In 2002, FRESH interventions provided clean water and sanitation to schools, with separate facilities for girls and boys including latrines and hand washing facilities. Lifeskills training is an integral part of the FRESH programme. Through this programme UNICEF has:

- Installed 172 water tanks, 190 VIP latrines and 45 washrooms.
- Trained 721 teachers in skills-based health education focusing on how to handle girls' issues and equipped teachers with basic counselling skills.
- Developed a partnership with WFP to collaborate with schools where school feeding and rehabilitation are taking place in Bubdibugyo district.

Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education (COPE): The COPE programme was designed to reach those children who were past the age of school entry (ages 10 – 15) with the intention of aiding the child to transition back to the standard primary system. COPE centres are typically located in the most remote areas where issues of poverty, access and sanitation are the most acute. The programme was piloted in three districts with 23 centres and has now expanded to eight districts with 180 centres. COPE centres currently provide both the flexibility needed by older students to accommodate work and family obligations as well as the only access to education for students of all ages in some communities.

Alternative Basic Education in Karamoja (ABEK): ABEK is a specialized form of COPE designed to address the specific needs (specifically, the semi-nomadic lifestyle) of students in Karamoja district. In 2001, there were 47,802 students enrolled in ABEK centres. For the vast majority of these students, the ABEK centres provide the only possible access to education.

Early Childhood Development (ECD): The ECD centres were developed through a process of ***Appreciative Inquiry***. Appreciative Inquiry is not a specific intervention, but a strategy used by UNICEF and GOU in working with communities and schools in designing an appropriate set of

activities to strengthen education access and quality. Appreciative Inquiry engages participants in identifying the positive aspects of what is already underway in the school and how those strengths could be extended. It has the potential to strengthen Rapid Rural Appraisal methodologies, which tend to emphasize deficits, in favour of positive dimensions in what is already present as the basis for additional work. Appreciate Inquiry techniques have been so successful and popular that many of the elements of this approach are now being adapted by other programmes seeking to promote community involvement.

The emerging goals of the ECD centres are to (a) train local women in health and child development strategies that will enhance the early development of the child; (b) free girls from the responsibility of caring for younger siblings in order that she may be free to attend school; and, (c) establish early positive habits for girls' education. Home and community based childcare centres have been established in nine districts of the Country Programme.

Implementation Issues

The UNICEF Uganda AGEI implementation strategy emphasizes a (a) modular programme design, (b) clear geographical focus, and (c) concentration of programme elements:

→ *Modular programme design*: The AGEI implementation strategy used in Phase II is best described as a modular approach. Interventions for any particular schools can be tailored to the needs of the school, supportiveness of the community, and capacity of the instructional staff. So, for example, a school may receive UNICEF and GOU support for a GEM club, school sanitation, and Life Skills, while a nearby location may be supported as a COPE centre with BTL instruction located in close proximity to a community based child care centre.

→ *Clear geographical focus*: UNICEF activities during Phase II are focused in six districts, and selected sub-districts within each of those. In choosing those locations UNICEF has sought to concentrate its interventions on some of the poorest, most marginalized, and most at-risk communities in Uganda. UNICEF country staff feel strongly that this is the essence of their mission. At the same time, it means that AGEI activities are being tested in some of the most difficult conditions in the country, a factor that needs to be considered in interpreting results of both formal and informal assessments of AGEI effectiveness. The implications of this geographical focus are discussed later.

Box A

Progress....but concerns....

The evaluation team from Kampala was running late when they started the focus group discussion with 10 representatives from school, parish, and sub-county level. Participants adjusted by suggesting that the focus group with county education officials, scheduled immediately following, be allowed to blend in to this conversation as they arrived. Everyone seemed comfortable with this arrangement and over the next 90 minutes the membership in the group continued to change as some SMC members left and county officials joined. Three evaluators had come to look at the girls' education activities in this rural Ugandan school and the surrounding area. The conversation started slowly, as the SMC took their measure of the outsiders, but it quickly picked up speed. Participants had a lot to say.

This rural school was redesigning itself to be a Child Friendly School. It offered BTL classes, a GEM club, and had recently gotten new latrines, separate for boys and girls. It had also received instructional materials from UNICEF. SMC members liked these activities and the impact they were having on the children. The GEM club, they believed, was building confidence and a sense of community among the girls. As an example, they told of GEM club members taking lesson materials to

one of the GEM members who was not able to keep coming to school. The addition of the separate latrines has reduced absenteeism of adolescent girls, many of whom had been missing 3-4 days of school a month. The addition of a senior woman teacher in the school was also seen as an improvement, as they thought adolescent girls would be more comfortable addressing some of their problems with her.

The conversation changed slightly as more county education officials joined the group. SMC and county officials both saw a problem developing. They said that children from other schools in the county were shifting to this one. Accommodating all these new students was a problem for this school. But also, they worried about what would become of the primary schools that were losing enrolment. As the conversation moved to more county-wide issues, it focused on COPE. County officials liked COPE. Its flexible schedule allowed children from child-headed households to be able to attend school. Also, they believed that students in the COPE centre developed self-confidence. They were concerned, however, because the COPE teacher had not been paid in six months. The county leaders said they were limited in what they could do to help solve this problem, given the limited revenue base in the district.

They thought it would be a challenge for the innovations in these schools to spread to other schools in the county. Such things take money.

→ *Concentration of elements*: As part of the modular approach, UNICEF/Uganda, working with the MOE and District Education Offices, tries to concentrate interventions on a clearly defined set of target schools so that the benefits of the modules are cumulative. However, the modular approach allows the introduction of the interventions to be paced at a rate the community and school can absorb them.

The Country Office resists claims that it is prioritizing girls' education as either more or less important than other high profile sectors. Priorities can be defined as the amount of money spent on girls' education activities, the number of staff assigned to the area, or the amount of management time allocated to the work in education. Uganda Country Office assigns roughly the same priority to girls' education as it does to health, child protection, and HIV/AIDS.

Achievements

Uganda has made significant progress in extending access and improving teacher preparation at the primary school level, as summarized in **Table 1**. This progress was achieved at a time in which the country was addressing at least three emergency situations: the border conflict and insurgency in the north, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and drought. While some of this progress is tied to the Government's move in 1997 to implement universal primary education (UPE), it is likely that some of it can be attributed to more targeted efforts of government, UNICEF, and other donors to reach children who were previously not served by the formal education system.

Observations

Modular programme design: The modular approach of the Uganda AGEI programme provides an example of how a girls' education programme can be designed in a manner consistent with state-of-the-art research on education change and the adoption and diffusion of innovation (c.f., Fullan, 1995, 2001). This literature argues that new practices are most likely to be accepted when the elements of that change can be adopted in small increments and when adopters have the time and opportunity to make their own decisions about the comparative advantage of the new practices relative to the old ones.

Sector Investment Program/Sector-wide Programming: Uganda represents a particularly interesting case of Sector Wide Programming. The Government of Uganda (GOU) is seen by international agencies as having strong fiscal policies and as being a responsible fiscal manager. As a consequence, Uganda is viewed by the international community as a particularly attractive country for sector investment strategies. In its purest form, this means bilateral and multi-lateral assistance would be provided as direct budget support. Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Ireland have chosen to follow this route. Several other countries, such as the United States, France and Japan, are constrained by their own regulations from providing direct budget support and continue to channel their funding as project support. A third group of countries have chosen to provide a mix of direct budget support and project support. These include Norway, Italy, Denmark, and Germany. The United Nations agencies are required to show a direct link between their contributions and the resulting activities, so continue to operate through project support.

Table 1: Selected Indicators of Educational Progress in Uganda, 1995 to 2002

	1995 ^a (unless otherwise noted)			MRY ^b		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
GER	79%	67%	73%	132% (01)	124% (01)	128% (01)
NER ^c	61%	53%	57%	119% (01)*	112% (01)*	116% (01)*
Primary school enrolment	2,832,472 (1997)	2,471,092 (1997)	5,303,564 (1997)	3,528,035 (02)	3,372,881 (02)	6,900,916 (02)
Repetition rate	18.1	17.7	17.9	10%	10%	10%
Dropout rate	11%	11%	11%			
Primary to secondary transition rate	,	,	44%	35% (02)	38% (02)	36% (02)
Teacher:student ratio (primary)				,	,	1:59
Survival rate to primary 4 (% of pupil cohort actually entering primary 4)				41% (00)	41% (00)	41% (00)
# of out-of-school children	,	,	795,535 (1999)	,	,	1,300,000 (02)
# of teachers (primary)				81,091	45,947	127,038 (01)
% of academically qualified teachers (primary)	67%	82%	72%	91%	89%	90%
# of teacher deaths (primary)	,	,	,	524	358	982 (02)

^a Source: UNICEF Uganda, AGEI Yearly Technical Reports for 1998 and 2000..

^b Source: UNICEF Uganda, AGEI Yearly Technical Reports for 2001 and 2002.

^c Note: Government estimate of gross enrolment rates is over 100% due to inaccurate population data.

The GOU is committed to not increasing the national deficit. At present 52% of the national deficit is financed by international donor support. In implementing its policy, GOU pools direct budget support with GOU funds and has put a hard ceiling on the national budget and, in turn, each sector has been given a spending ceiling. So far, project support has been outside these ceilings. However, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) will start counting project support within the ceiling as of July 2004. Operationally, this means that donor support allocated to the Ministry of Education for a particular project will reduce the GOU allocation to the Ministry of Education by the same amount. External donor support will not increase the amount available for education. It also means that if the MOES accepts funds from an international agency in support of a particular priority, the MOES must reduce its allocation to some other area of current work.

While this approach reflects the GOU's commitment to fiscal responsibility, the inclusion of project funds under the budget ceiling will limit the availability of external funds. This will force Ministries to be very clear about their priorities and limit the ability of international agencies to shape those priorities. Sectors receiving a lot of external project support – education, health, water resources – see these new policies as hampering their work. Sectors that have received less external funding – roads, justice, trade – see fewer consequences.

Box B

Small children all around us....

There were small children all around us. The community-based child care centre was just getting started. As each child arrived, they were weighed on a bathroom scale set on a small rug on the ground outside the main hut. Next to the hut was a homemade playground featuring rope swings and a bamboo construction for children to climb on. Many of the children were in the open area of the hut, gathered around a table, using crayons to draw pictures on paper (fine muscle control). In the enclosed portion of the hut was a mat spread out under a mosquito net. Children could take naps and also learn about the role of mosquitoes in spreading malaria and the use of mosquito nets.

Three rabbits were in a pen outside the hut, allowing children to observe and practice animal care. There was also a goat tethered at the edge of compound. While serving as a pet, it had been donated by an NGO to provide stud services to local goat herds as a way to upgrade the quality of the goat herds in the village.

At the edge of the compound were three latrines that provided an opportunity to train children in their use. Near the kitchen area was a water storage vat and the equipment for making, storing, in drinking safe water. There was a fuel efficient stove that was used both to cook porridge for the children's midday meal and to demonstrate fuel efficient stoves to the larger community. Back in the hut, each child had a toothbrush marked with their name. They practiced brushing their teeth twice a week (the frequency of brushing teeth was limited by the cost of the toothpaste). The ECD Centre had garden plot on which they were growing mangos, vanilla, passion fruit, and other plants, the basis for lessons on plant care and nutrition.

The children were attended by an EDC worker, with some assistance from volunteer parents. Knowing we were coming, about a dozen parents had gathered to meet us. As our conversation got underway, they had a lot to say. They praised the Centre for providing respite care for them. The mothers liked being able to send their young children to the Centre, allowing them a few hours to attend to their own needs. They pointed out that the Centre also freed in their somewhat older daughters from babysitting which, in turn, allowed these older children to go to school. With some amusement, they also pointed out that some of the practices at the Centre were backing up on their homelife, as their children were beginning to insist that their parents buy them a toothbrush and that they start sleeping under a mosquito net.

The response of international donors is mixed. Some want to provide direct budget support but want the ceiling raised, particularly in sectors of interest to them. Other donors fear that their contributions would not improve conditions in their sectors of interest, are unclear about how the money freed up in the government budget would be spent, and are less inclined to provide funds.

There are other practical considerations that still need to be resolved. One concern is how to allocate cross-sectoral project funds against the budget ceilings of the separate Ministries involved in the activity. Another concern is that, in staying within its budget ceiling, the Ministry of Education will find it difficult to free up funds to support innovative ideas. Some fear that

seemingly promising initiatives now underway in the education sector may die for lack of funding as the MOES is unable to redirect funds from other priorities.

One approach of some donors may be to channel education development funds through non-government organizations (NGOs). Presumably money given directly to NGOs would not be counted within the Government budget. One problem is that, while there are numerous NGOs that could receive and spend the money, few are in a position to shape national policy, which is one goal of international donor support. Moreover, Government may not allow this approach (routing funds through NGOs), viewing it as an effort to subvert its commitment to fiscal responsibility.

One implication of Uganda's approach to SIP is that international donors may not be able to directly invest in strategies to promote girls' education. Alternatively, if funds are given to support girls' education, it would mean that GOU would need to reduce its commitment to some other aspect of education, something it may not feel it can do.

Earmarking funds for girls' education: There is a strong feeling among Country Office staff that the earmark for girls' education should be maintained. UNICEF staff argue that any analysis of the serious problems that will continue to face the region of Africa in the next decade centres on issues that will require more highly educated women as a key in their solution. However, they observe that there are still forces within Government and within UNICEF itself that look at education priorities in a different way and, given a choice, would be less inclined to allocate funds to girls' education. These pressures combine with Government's own actions to cap government spending on education to create a political and fiscal environment in which an earmark is needed if special attention to girls' education is to be ensured.

Effectiveness of AGEI Activities: The UNICEF Uganda programme provides one of the best examples across AGEI of the use of evaluation in documenting the effectiveness of an AGEI intervention, specifically the Breakthrough to Literacy (BTL) programme. BLT (described earlier) is a highly interactive approach to teaching reading and writing in local languages at P1 and P2. During 2001, BTL was piloted in 100 Primary 1 classes. A formal evaluation of that program, using a non-random comparison group design, was conducted in 2002 (Lethshabo, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2003). Results indicated (a) that pupils in BTL had significantly higher achievement scores than pupils taught through the conventional approach and (b) that girls' achievement was equal to that of boys, as summarized in **Table 2**. As would be expected, students assigned to progressively higher ability groupings (stages) did progressively better (**Table 3**). Primary 1 students at Stage 3 (the group of learners that had the most success with BTL learning outcomes) performed better than P3 and P4 students in non-BTL schools (means of 19.6 and 39.2 respectively) (Ministry of Education and Sports, April 2003).

Results of the formal evaluation were repeatedly confirmed by comments of parents and teachers in every district visited as part of this country study. Parents said that their children in BTL were learning to read much faster than their other children in non-BTL schools. County officials expressed concern that the presence of BTL programmes was distorting enrolment across schools and swamping BTL schools with over-enrolment as parents pulled their children out of nearby primary schools to send them to BTL schools. Virtually every parent and educator wanted more BTL classes in their schools. The formal evaluation documents what parents and teachers already knew. Students in BTL classes learn more.

Table 2: Summary of BTL and Non-BTL Student Achievement Scores in the Breakthrough to Literacy Evaluation (2002)

	Sample Size (%)		Achievement Results (%)		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Maximum
BTL	391 (51.7)	364 (48.3)	27.0 (50.9)	26.8 (50.6)	53
Non-BTL	96 (31.5)	209 (68.5)	15.3 (38.9)	15.3 (23.6)	53
Total	487 (45.9)	573 (54.1)			

Source: Lethshabo, K. (2002). Breakthrough to Literacy, Volume 1, Evaluation Report, Ministry of Education and Sports, Kampala: Government of Uganda, p. 11.

Table 3: Summary of Student Achievement Scores in the Breakthrough to Literacy Evaluation by Stage (2002)

	N	Maximum	Mean	St. Dev.
Stage 1	24	41	13.1 (24.7)	10.5
Stage 2	107	53	23.2 (43.8)	13.2
Stage 3	163	53	33.0 (62.3)	17.5

Source: Lethshabo, K. (2002). Breakthrough to Literacy, Volume 1, Evaluation Report, Ministry of Education and Sports, Kampala: Government of Uganda, p. 19.

Breakthrough to Literacy stands as one of the few activities across the six country studies to undergo a formal evaluation. As such, it serves as an example of the kind of documentation UNICEF needs if it is to advocate for a series of “best practices.” However, this country case study also found that evidence that the demonstrable success of an intervention does not automatically result in a practice being adopted by government, an issue that will be discussed later.

At the same time, this country study also found that some other AGEI activities strongly supported by UNICEF Uganda, by government, and by parents lack systematic documentation of effect. Of particular interest is that, in some cases, available formal data seem at odds with less formal assessments by those closest to the programmes. In Uganda, the two main interventions to reach out-of-school children, ABEK and COPE, illustrate this point.

ABEK was specifically designed to provide another route to basic education for out-of-school in the Karamoja District in Uganda (described earlier). Those working with the programme believe it is the only educational outreach to some of the most difficult-to-reach children in the country. As with COPE, it offers basic literacy and numeracy through a curriculum specifically tied to the social needs of the people of Karamoja. The curriculum gives particular attention to cattle tending (the primary economic activity in the district).

In 2001, only 854 of the approximately 48,000 participants in ABEK transitioned from ABEK to Primary grade 1 (P1), a transition rate of 1.78%. By P3, 80.7-89.3% of those students (depending on the school) had dropped out, most of them prior to P2 (Odada and Beyene, 2001) (Table 4). The objective measure of ABEK accomplishment on what is presumably a central criteria of its success (e.g., the transitioning of children into primary school) suggest the project cannot be judged successful. Yet its rapid spread suggests it is serving an important purpose. It has grown from an enrolment of 6,507 to 47,802 in just three years. This suggests that ABEK may be serving an important need, but not necessarily the one it was designed to serve. This, in turn, raises a question about the appropriateness of the original goals and the

ability of the project to document its own shift in purpose in a manner that allows a meaningful assessment of effectiveness.

Table 4: Summary of ABEK Service Coverage

	Number in 1999 (% female)	Number in 2001 (% female)	% increase
Learning Centres	69	196	284%
Facilitators	138	392	284%
Children enrolled	6,507 (67% female)	47,802 (67% female)	735%
Children transitioning to primary school	270 (8.5% female)	854 (8.4% female)	316%

Source: Odada, M and Beyene, A. (December 2001). A second review report of Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK), Kampala: Save the Children/Norway.

Adaptive adjustments versus mission drift: Activities of well-documented impact and those with less evidence of effect can both experience “mission drift.” This is not necessarily a bad thing. It may reflect adaptive adjustments on the part of programme managers to the real needs they encounter during implementation. However, such changes, if undocumented, can result in these activities being evaluated against inappropriate criteria, leading to potentially valuable activities being judged unsuccessful. On the other hand, such drift may signal a difficulty in initial problem identification, activity design, or subsequent implementation.

COPE provides a useful example. COPE predates the MOES adoption of UPE. Originally intended to provide out-of-school children with a route back into formal primary schooling, focus group discussions with parents and educators found evidence that COPE centres were functioning in three unanticipated ways. *First*, some children resisted transitioning to regular primary schools because they believed that the quality of the COPE instruction was better than the quality of the instruction they would get in the regular government schools. For them, entry to the formal education system was a step backwards and a waste of time.

Second, COPE centres attracted drop-outs from government primary school. Rather than funnelling children into primary school, it has become a second chance for those unsuccessful in (or unable to sustain their enrolment in) regular schools.

Third, COPE centres in some communities have become *de facto* primary schools. Parents started sending their younger children to COPE centres that offered BTL, mostly because they lived closer to the COPE centre than the government primary school (that might be located 5-6 km away). Initially COPE tried to bar these students, not wanting to be seen as competing with the primary schools. However, the MOES recognized that excluding these children usually resulted in them remaining out of school, the very thing COPE centres were designed to combat. Consequently, younger children are now allowed to participate in BTL classes in COPE centres.

Little formal evaluation of COPE has been done. School officials estimated that 10-60% of COPE students did transition back to primary school, depending on the community. However, these data are not consistently collected or examined. No tracking studies have yet been conducted to determine what happens to COPE students when they leave the COPE programme. COPE is expensive, so the lack of information on what happens to the children it serves should be of some concern.

At the same time, evidence from the focus group discussions suggests that COPE is serving important needs for both children and communities, though not necessarily the ones it was originally designed to serve. Students, parents, school officials, and district leaders all expressed a desire for the COPE curriculum to be extended to provide more vocational skill training. They want COPE centres to become a recognized vocational option to regular schooling rather than a channel back to the formal schools. [This was usually attached to a request that UNICEF, the Government, or some other donor support this initiative, a point discussed later.]

If COPE and ABEK are to be presented as a “best practices,” UNICEF should consider undertaking a more formal tracking study to determine what happens to children when they leave these programmes. In particular, this study should consider the extent to which these activities yield outcomes more important than transition back into primary schooling.

Evaluation efforts must have a clear framework for being able to distinguish adaptive adjustment from inappropriate mission drift.

Refining the Criteria of Success: The ABEK and COPE examples raise a more general issue across AGEI countries. The evaluation of AGEI activities needs to consider both the extent that intended goals are achieved and the extent to which unanticipated outcomes, possibly just as important as the intended goals, are achieved. The risk of this approach is that it is possible to find redeeming qualities in almost any activity. There is a risk that, with flexible criteria, no activity is ever found to fail and evaluative activities become meaningless.

In assessing AGEI “best practices,” UNICEF needs both (a) a mechanism through which AGEI activities can be honoured for what they accomplish rather than for what they fail to attain; and, (b) clear criteria for when to discontinue activities that have moved too far from their original intent, even if they are yielding other useful outcomes. One way to navigate this distinction is through careful attention to the extent the conditions and needs that informed the original plan have changed. If conditions have changed dramatically and AGEI activities are serving the new needs, the adjustments are more likely to be welcomed than if the conditions have remained largely the same and the activity drifted. Evaluators and programme planners need to stay focused on the problem they are trying to solve, even if that differs from the problem their activities do solve.

In considering alternative criteria, it is important that those criteria used to judge the success of activities be more than affect (e.g., stakeholders and beneficiaries like the activity). A recent study of UNICEF education project evaluations found a pervasive tendency to accept the positive regard of beneficiaries of a project as evidence of project success, even in the absence of more objective evidence of success (Chapman, 2001). UNICEF needs to be responsive to AGEI activities that yield important, but unintended, outcomes. At the same time, it needs to have criteria that allow education staff to determine when an AGEI activity is failing.

Indicators of AGEI impact: The use of aggregate national education statistics to monitor and assess the impact of girls’ education activities in Uganda is of limited use. The use of aggregate data encounters three problems. First, national education statistics are still weak. This is illustrated by the official net enrolment rate that is over 100% (a statistical impossibility). This, in turn, is caused by use of population data from 1990 that no longer reflect the current situation in Uganda. A new census was conducted in 2001, but official data from that census will not be available until 2004. Informal indications are that the population has grown from about 18 million to about 24 million people in the intervening ten years.

Second, the six districts in which UNICEF is concentrating its work are among the most difficult in the country and not reflective of the situation of the country as a whole. Moreover, these districts differ from each other in the nature of the problems that face communities in general and girls in particular. Meaningful changes in the conditions of girls' education in the geographical areas in which UNICEF is working are unlikely to be detected in aggregate national statistics.

Third, even dramatic changes in education access or achievement in the six target districts would not necessarily lead to notable changes in national level indicators. Shifts in national indicators could only be expected to occur as UNICEF-sponsored activities are picked up by government and taken to a larger scale.

The efficacy of demonstration projects: One premise of UNICEF work in many countries is that clear evidence of the effectiveness of particular activities will lead to government adopting those activities in other locations and eventually implementing them on a wider scale. The experience in Uganda with BTL suggests that, while evidence of effectiveness is necessary, it is not necessarily sufficient to prompt adoption, even when the intervention is aligned with government policies and government budget is available.

The Uganda MOES acknowledges the effectiveness of BTL and is aware of the results of the external evaluation documenting its impact on language learning in P1 and P2 (discussed earlier). It is aware of the mushrooming enrolments in BTL classes, often at the expense of enrolments in nearby non-BTL schools. It is also aware of the desire of many schools (and parents) to create or expand their BTL offerings.

Expansion of the programme would require the MOES to provide training for BTL teachers and the instructional materials needed to implement the programme. However, some MOES staff observe that the MOES already has allocated funds for teacher training and for materials procurement and that some of these funds are being spent on efforts that yield far less impressive outcomes than those observed in BTL. It might be feasible for the MOES to extend BTL with the funds that are already available within the education budget. In the view of some observers, the resistance is not due to philosophical or educational concerns about BTL, but to the complexities of introducing change in large bureaucracies. Directing resources to any one programme often comes at the expense of others, which may also have strong constituencies.

The lesson for AGEI is that evidence is necessary but not sufficient to lead to widespread adoption, even within an education ministry that has proven itself to be forward thinking and creative on many other fronts. This suggests that demonstration and evaluation are not enough, by themselves, to spark adoption on a wider scale.

In some countries (not necessarily Uganda), there are additional political and economic concerns. Some countries may prefer to keep activities of proven effectiveness outside regular school practice, so that they can seek additional external funding. Were such activities to be mainstreamed into regular school practice, eliciting donor funds would be far less effective than arguing that additional funds could be in support of practices certain to show positive results. The efficacy of demonstration projects and the political considerations that surround adoption of effective interventions are central to larger discussions within international assistance agencies about effective strategies for going to scale.

Parent contributions: COPE, ABEK, and several other AGEI activities in Uganda expect some level of community contribution as a condition of participation. One reason is to help communities see their own role and responsibility in supporting the schooling of their children. Another is to promote sustainability. In Uganda, however, the expectation of community contribution posed a paradox.

Under the 1997 government policy to achieve universal primary education, government committed to funding for all primary schools, including those that previously had been community supported. The policy was successful; primary school enrolments more than doubled. The paradox was that communities with high concentrations of out-of-school children (some of the poorest communities in the country) were being asked to contribute to the support of COPE, ABEK, and EDC centres while government was paying the full cost for primary schools in nearby, more affluent communities.

The Ugandan government has resolved this paradox in Uganda by agreeing to pay the costs of these complementary education opportunities. However, the issue raised by the Uganda experience is important because it reflects a strategy that is used across a number of countries.

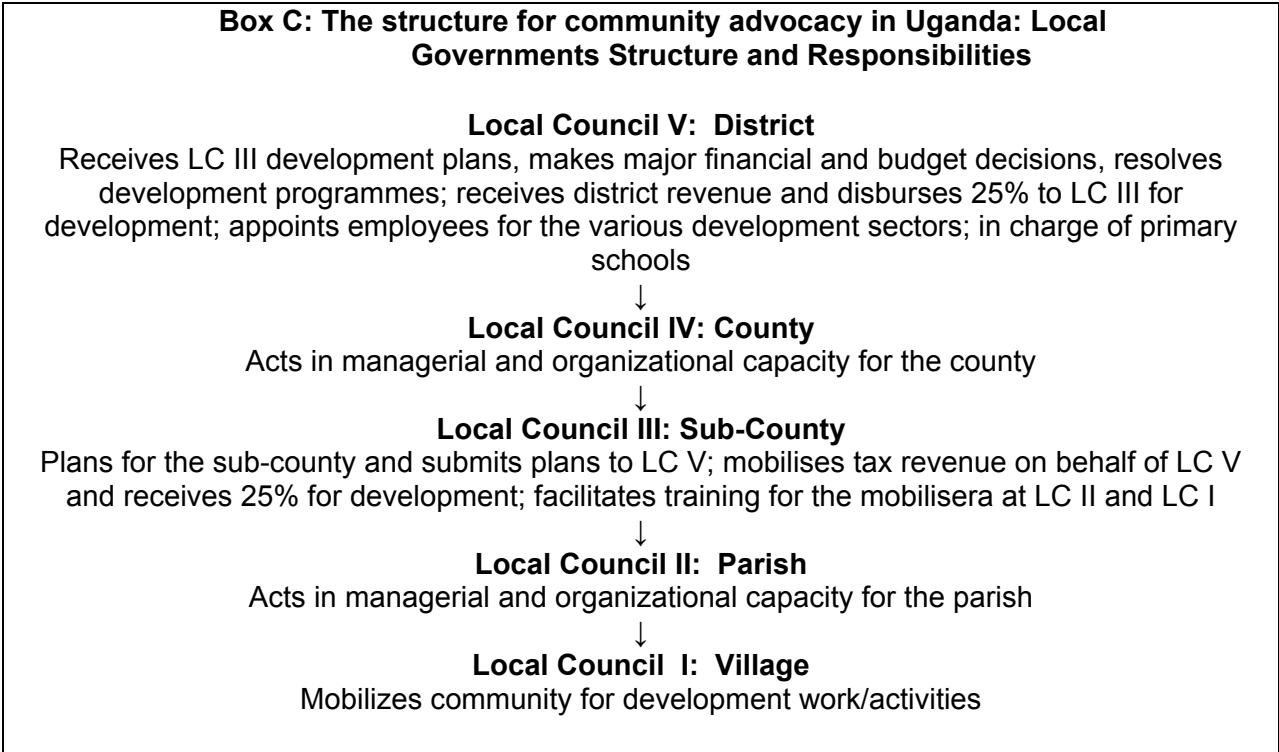
Promising strategies to promote girls' education. *BTL* has already been identified as demonstrably successful and has great promise for wider dissemination. Second, while less formal evaluation is available, *GEM* clubs are an initiative that appears quite promising and worth a more formal evaluation as a step toward being advocated as a "best practice." *GEM* is one of the few initiatives that directly provides a voice for girls (and their strategic allies, boys). The enthusiasm of both observers and *GEM* members suggests that *GEM* can be a powerful mechanism for mobilizing community activity in support of girls' education. Third, the *provision of water* and *separate latrines* for boys and girls appeared to have a strong, positive impact on keeping adolescent girls in school. This indicates that some of the activities most effective in promoting the retention of girls are not directly educational activities, but related to the physical infrastructure of the school itself. Finally, as discussed earlier, *COPE* appears to serve an important educational need, though not necessarily the one for which it was designed.

Partnerships at the district level: Uganda, like a number of countries across Africa, has been following a policy of progressive decentralization of responsibility to the district level. Within Uganda, districts are empowered to implement activities, though issues of money flow remain a problem. Part of the success of the AGEI work in Uganda appears to be tied to UNICEF's ability to work successfully at the district level.

UNICEF has country staff specifically assigned to work with education and government leaders in each of its target districts. These staff make frequent visits and have a personal working relationship with leaders at each of the administrative levels (e.g., district, county, sub-county, parish, village). UNICEF has funded, and District education officials have facilitated, a considerable and sustained amount of training at each of these levels. The UNICEF Uganda experience working at the district level links to a wider discussion about effective strategy for promoting new education practices within increasingly decentralized education systems.

Community advocacy. As in other AGEI countries, community level advocacy and training are important components of the overall GOU-UNICEF programme. **Box C** presents the levels of governmental administration involved in community advocacy and the organizational levels through which communication needs to travel to get to local citizens.

UNICEF Advocacy at the Policy Level: UNICEF Uganda has had an impact on national policy formulation that is disproportionately greater than the money it brings to education development. Three factors appear to contribute to this: (a) UNICEF has direct, substantial and continuing contacts at the district, county, sub-county, parish, village levels. This gives UNICEF staff a depth of knowledge about conditions, trends and issues which, in turn, gives them considerable credibility in policy discussions. (b) UNICEF is a member of the Education Sector Working group. One of the UNICEF strategies for influence is that never misses a meeting. And, (c) unlike most other development assistance organizations, UNICEF has education experts on staff.



The more common strategy among donors is to have an individual or small staff responsible for managing and monitoring education policy and activities, but to call upon short-term expertise when more sustained technical assistance is needed. This means that, in policy discussions, these donors may be represented by individuals with a general (but not always specific) understanding of the more technical nature of some education issues. This sometimes gives UNICEF the advantage of being able to engage at a more technical level in the discussions than might be true of other development partners.

The Uganda AGEI programme illustrates that activities may not always achieve their main goals, but may accomplish other important outcomes.

List of Acronyms

ABEK	Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja
AGEI	African Girls Education Initiative
AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
BEUPA	Basic Education for Urban Poor Areas
BTL	Breakthrough to Literacy
COPE	Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education
DHS	Demographic Household Survey
ESIP	Education Strategic Investment Plan
FRESH	Focusing Resources for Effective School Health
GOU	Government of Uganda
HIV	Human-Immuno Virus
IECD	Integrated Early Childhood Development
LC	Local Council
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
PLE	Primary Leaving Examination
UPE	Universal Primary Education

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People Contacted

Gaudius Ahimbisibwe	Inspector of Schools, (Focal Officer CFS), Mbarara
Paulina Alibaawo	student, Kyegerere Primary School
Mr. Anyine	Information Officer, Mbarara
Augustine Atwijukye	ACAD, Mbarara
J. C. Bbaale	D/CAO Masaka
Agnes Bitature	Programme Officer, Sanitation WES, UNICEF
Mrs. Emma Boona	Vice Chair Local Council Mbarara
Chris Boonah	District Planner / Economist, Mbarara
Edward Bukenya	CIMCI Facilitator, Bwela
Edward Bwengye	Programme Officer, UNICEF, Eastern Region, UNICEF
Beatrice Byakutaga	Principal, Nakeseke PTC
Guy Claryne	UNICEF Regional Manager, Southwest, UNICEF
Grace Evudu	Regional Manager, Central, UNICEF
Mugetwa Fivida	Butebere Focus Group Participant
Mukasa Fuljensio	PDC member, Butebere
Gerurda Ggambina	Butebere Focus Group Participant
Mary Ggala	member of school management committee Kyengerere School
Elias Jjunko	District Water Officer, Masaka
Peter Kabagambe	APO, Eastern, UNICEF
Janet KabarangiraT	PO Health ECCD, UNICEF
Mrs. Kalule	Butebere Focus Group Participant
Emmanuel Kamuli	Evaluator, Hygiene/Sanitation, UNICEF
Methodio Kagola	Butebere Focus Group Participant
William Kanyensigye	Deputy CAO, Mbarara
Muyomba Kasozi	Secretary of Health, Bwela
Vincent Kasumba	PTA Chairman, Butebere
Kicongo Patrick Katabaazi	Gem facilitator, FAWE Uganda
George Kayemba	Chairperson, LC 1, Butebere
William Kayumru	Co-ordinator of Community-Based Services, Mbarara
Drake Kibirige	Butebere Focus Group Participant
Abdu Kikomoko	PC Kamwozi, Butebere
Augustine Kisimbira	Chairman, management, Butebere
Magret Kisokje	student, Kyegerere Primary School
Fatuma Klamala	Gem facilitator, FAWE Uganda
Dany Kokooza	Trainer, EBHC, Butebere
Jannet Zabali Kuteesa	Gem facilitator, FAWE Uganda
Robert Kyewalabye	Education Officer, Masaka
Dhibby Kyewalyanga	D / Speaker, Bwela
Thomas Kyokuhaire	Agriculture Officer, Bwela
M.K. Lubega	DDHS, Mbarara
Douglas S. Lubowa	PO Info Management / Social Policy, UNICEF
Josephine Lubwama	Principal, Busuubizi PTC
Sibeso Luswata	Programme Officer, Education, UNICEF
Agnes Mabamala	student, Kyegerere Primary School
Sylvia Mampijja	P/C Buwung, Butebere
Basil Mbalire	Chairman, Butebere
Maniam Menyha	Education Officer, Masaka
Jamil Miwanda	Vice Chairperson Secondary Education, Bwela
Martin Mogweinja	Resident Representative UNICEF Uganda

M. N. Msereko	AC/PTE, Ministry of Education and Sport
Jolly Mugisha	Gender Officer, Mbarara
Amburwozi Musiitwa	student, Kyegerere Primary School
Moses K. Muscras	Evaluator, Hygiene/Sanitation, UNICEF
Deus Mwesezi	student, Kyegerere Primary School
Nehemiah Mwesigwa	Inspector of Schools, Focal Person IECD, Mbarara
Matovu D.L. Muzzamganaaig	Speaker MSK, District Council, Bwela
Charles Nabongo	Programme Officer, UNICEF
Maurice Nakawojwa	Headmaster, Kyengerere primary school, Butebere
Sylvio Namaato	student, Kyegerere Primary School
Theresa Namisaugo	District Health Visitor, Bwela
Teddy Nnasejje	Senior Woman Teacher, Kyegerere Primary School
Immaculate Nrakirija	Coordinator, Kitouo Mobile, Butebere
Margaret Odwango	PO Northern, UNICEF
Gerre Oumamumbe	National COPE Coordinator, Bwela
Jjingoo Portasio	Butebere Focus Group Participant
Lena Schildt	Regional Manager, North, UNICEF
Ogen Stanislaus	Education Officer, Nebbi
Alex Ssebaggala	student, Kyegerere Primary School
Aisha Ssekindi	Secretary for Gender, Masaka
Molly Ssemuusi	Nutrition Project Facilitator, Bwela
Emmanuel Ssewyonjo	Subcounty Chief, Butebere
Deus Ssettuba	P/C Ggulama, Butebere
S. Tayebwa	Head of Science, Kyegerere Primary School
Dan Tamweisigire	District Education Officer, Mbarara
Jolly Uzamukunda	PEO/HE Ministry of Education and Sport
Juanita Vasquez	PMSE, UNICEF
Dan Igulu Wamurne	Programme Officer, UNICEF, Bwela
Theopista Wandira	Principal, Ndegeya PTC, Masaka
Charles Batte Wassura	Chairman LC III, Butebere