Uganda is a country of great potential but it still has a long way to go to achieve its Vision 2040 of becoming a competitive upper middle income country.

Economically, Uganda is doing well. It was one of the first sub-Saharan nations to liberalize its economy in the 1980s, and its gross domestic product has been growing over the past five years, projected to be 7 per cent or more in the coming years.

Poverty levels have fallen from 56.4 per cent in 1992/3 to 24 per cent in 2009, and the country has managed to surpass the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty.

However, with a per capita income of USD788, Ugandan citizens are far from being wealthy. Income inequality has been on the rise, and the country falls into the ‘low human development’ group of nations when its human development index ranking (164th out of 187 surveyed countries in 2014) and multi-dimensional poverty index are taken into account.

Despite many efforts to improve the lives of its citizens, Uganda was not able to meet several MDG targets in health and education. In the most under-developed part of the country – Karamoja region – 80 per cent of people live below the poverty line.

parts of the country such as Eastern, Northern and Western regions, floods, landslides and disease outbreaks threaten the survival and livelihoods of families. Uganda’s generalized HIV epidemic continues to spread, with the estimated number of people living with HIV increasing from 1.2 million in 2007 to 1.6 million in 2013 (2013 Uganda HIV and AIDS Country Report).

More than half a million refugees and asylum seekers have sought safety in Uganda, making it Africa’s third-largest refugee hosting country. Of these, 64 per cent are children under the age of 18. Uganda is widely recognized as having progressive and forward-thinking refugee and asylum policies. Refugees have access to the same services as Ugandan nationals, and have the right to work and to establish their own businesses. However, in reality, local primary health care services, water and sanitation systems and schools are struggling to cope with the additional population.

“WITH 56 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION BELOW 18 YEARS OF AGE, AND 78 PERCENT BELOW THE AGE OF 35, UGANDA’S VISION TO BECOME A MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRY BY 2040 IS DEPENDENT ON THE COUNTRY’S ABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY INVEST IN ITS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE MOST MARGINALIZED. SHARP INVESTMENTS THAT HELP TO REALIZE THE POTENTIAL OF THE COUNTRY’S CHILDREN ARE THEREFORE OR PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO UGANDA’S DEVELOPMENT AND FUTURE PROSPERITY.”

Dr, Doreen Mulenga, UNICEF Representative in Uganda
Recognized globally for its dedication to helping children overcome poverty, disease, exclusion and violence, UNICEF started a new country programme for 2016–2020 in collaboration with the Government of Uganda and other partners. The main goal for the next four years is to support national efforts to accelerate the realization of children’s rights.

To address the growing social inequalities in Uganda, UNICEF focuses its programmes on the most marginalized parts of the country. In areas such as Karamoja region and Northern and Eastern Uganda, children experience the highest levels of deprivation in health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, child protection, shelter and information.

Using innovations in digital technology and results-based programming, UNICEF supports the government and its partners to build sustainable and scalable programmes that increase the quality and coverage of basic services for children.

To tackle chronic vulnerability in the drought-prone Karamoja region and to support communities hosting refugees, UNICEF is also strengthening resilience by bridging humanitarian and development programming approaches and focusing on longer-term planning and investments.

CHILD POVERTY* IN UGANDA

55% OF YOUNG CHILDREN (0–4 YEARS) LIVE IN POVERTY

38% PRIMARY SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS (6–17 YEARS) LIVE IN POVERTY

60% OF RURAL CHILDREN COMPARED TO 29% OF URBAN CHILDREN LIVE IN POVERTY

CHILD POVERTY RATES ARE HIGHEST IN KARAMO AND WEST NILE (68%) AND LOWEST IN THE SOUTHWEST REGION (41%)

* A child is defined as poor when s/he is deprived in two or more of the following dimensions: nutrition, health, water, sanitation, education, child protection, shelter and information.

THREE PROGRAMME COMPONENTS:
1. Keeping children ALIVE and THRIVING - child survival and development
2. Keeping children LEARNING - basic education and adolescent development
3. Keeping children SAFE - child protection

ONE CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMME
- Social policy, advocacy and evaluation
- Strategic communications and partnerships.
- Programme coordination, planning and monitoring

KEY PROGRAMME STRATEGIES
- Evidence-based advocacy
- Capacity development
- Communication for development
- Generation of evidence and knowledge
- Strategic partnerships
- Child and youth participation
- Innovation

COUNTRY PROGRAMME BUDGET, 2016–2020

- CHILD SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT: USD 154 M
- BASIC EDUCATION AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT: USD 70 M
- CHILD PROTECTION: USD 37 M
- CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMME: USD 55 M
- TOTAL: USD 316 M
Improving child survival in Uganda has had mixed results. Infant and under-five mortality rates have dropped since 1990 but there has been no progress in neonatal and maternal mortality. Chronic malnutrition – stunting – remains high while HIV is now the second leading cause of death in adolescents. Access to improved sanitation is low and hygiene habits such as hand washing are not practised often enough. The quality, coverage and uptake of maternal and child health care services, including those for HIV and tuberculosis, are inadequate, especially in rural areas and under-developed parts of the country.

The UNICEF child survival and development programme strives to improve the health and nutrition of children, adolescents, mothers and other vulnerable groups by strengthening national capacity to deliver services. The programme is implemented in four strategic areas:

1. **Reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health**: Providing high impact maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health and nutrition services, with a focus on integrated and innovative approaches to reach excluded children.

2. **HIV and AIDS and adolescent health**: Improving the quality, access and use of prevention of mother-to-child transmission and paediatric, maternal and adolescent HIV and tuberculosis care and treatment services.

3. **Nutrition**: Scaling up high impact nutrition interventions to reduce stunting and other forms of malnutrition, with a focus on the first 1,000 days of a child’s life.

4. **Water, sanitation and hygiene**: Increasing access to and use of safe drinking water, improved sanitation and personal and environment hygiene practices, especially in schools and among girls.

Uganda, like many sub-Saharan African countries, faces major challenges in providing quality and accessible education to children and adolescents. E-learning and development is compromised by the lack of preschools, early childhood development (ECD) programmes and qualified teachers, as well as limited awareness and appreciation of the importance of ECD. Attendance at primary school level has grown due to a universal primary education policy launched in 1997 but the quality of teaching and learning needs significant improvement. Secondary education is still inaccessible to most adolescents. Children with disabilities are largely excluded from formal schooling because of shortages of special needs teachers and facilities. Teacher absenteeism is high in Uganda, and teaching skills are poor. Schools lack adequate toilets and washing areas, and sexual abuse and corporal punishment at schools are rife.

The UNICEF basic education and adolescent development programme aims to build an effective and well-resourced formal and informal education system that is inclusive, relevant and accessible to all girls and boys. The programme is implemented in three strategic areas:

1. **Early childhood development**: Strengthening national capacity to coordinate, manage and scale up integrated early childhood care and development programmes, with emphasis on the most deprived and vulnerable children.

2. **Quality of basic education**: Enhancing national capacity to increase equitable access, quality and sustainability of primary education that is inclusive and innovative.

3. **Adolescent development**: Improving adolescents’ access to information, life skills and essential services to reduce their vulnerability to HIV, child marriage, teenage pregnancy and violence, among other issues that hold them back.

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**Keeping children LEARNING**

- **23% of young children attend pre-primary school**
- **96% of children of primary school age are enrolled in primary education**
- **Only 67% of children complete primary school**
- **24% of adolescents are enrolled in secondary schools**
- **9% of children with disabilities are enrolled in primary, primary and secondary schools**
- **More than 60% of teachers are not in the classroom teaching**

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Most children in Uganda have faced some form of violence – physical, sexual, emotional or domestic. More than 8 million children, 51 per cent of the child population, are believed to be vulnerable. Girls in particular are at risk of early marriage, teenage pregnancy and female genital mutilation/cutting. After the age of 10 years, adolescent boys and girls are often sent to work or are married off as part of a family’s survival strategy. There are also more than 30,000 child-headed households, and 40,000 children living in institutions in Uganda. The current child protection system needs to be strengthened significantly if it is to adequately protect and care for vulnerable children.

The UNICEF child protection programme works to create a comprehensive child protection system that prevents violence against children and women and responds to victims and survivors of violence with quality services. The programme is implemented in three strategic areas:

1. **Child protection system**: Building an integrated national child protection system that prevents and responds to violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination, and ensures the care of vulnerable children.

2. **Justice for children**: Developing a child friendly and responsive justice system (as part of the national child protection system) that operates in the best interests of children.

3. **Birth registration**: Scaling up a comprehensive birth and death registration system that will provide universal, continuous and free birth registration to all children in Uganda.

The UNICEF child survival and development; education and adolescent development; and child protection programmes are all supported by evidence-based policy analysis and advocacy, communication and partnerships and improved accountability for results. This cross-cutting programme is implemented in three strategic areas:

1. **Social policy, advocacy and evaluation**: Establishing equity-sensitive and child friendly policies, programmes and budgets, based on high quality evidence and strengthened oversight.

2. **Strategic communication and partnerships**: Innovative and participatory approaches and partnerships that drive public action to accelerate the realization of children’s rights in Uganda, especially of the poorest and most deprived.

3. **Programme coordination, planning and monitoring**: Providing oversight, guidance and coordination to the UNICEF country programme so that it is well-planned, managed, implemented and monitored.
#InvestInUGchildren:
Realize Uganda’s Vision 2040