



Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group

CSO POSITION PAPER ON THE EDUCATION SUB PROGRAMME FY2025/26 BUDGET



Presented to the Uganda Parliament Committee of Education, March 2025



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Special thanks to the Uganda Parliament Education Committee that availed us the platform to present this position paper in March 2025 and to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development for making budget information available and accessible through the www.budget.finance.go.ug website.

1. About CSBAG

Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) is a coalition formed in 2004 to bring together civil society actors at national and district levels to influence public resource allocation and accountability. Since 2004 CSBAG engages Uganda's budget process to incorporate the views of the marginalized people in the national budget. In line with this, CSBAG annually produces CSO positions on the proposed public expenditure layout for each upcoming fiscal year in response to the national budget. This paper examines Uganda's FY 2025/26 education sub program sector budget, highlighting key achievements, persistent challenges, and strategic recommendations.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Uganda Government's development goal for the Education sub-programme under Human Capital Development is to ensure equitable access to quality education and skills development, which are essential for sustainable socio-economic transformation. This goal is pursued through various initiatives and reforms aimed at improving infrastructure, teacher quality, curriculum relevance, and the overall learning environment. Additionally, the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV) focuses on consolidating gains in educational access across all levels, enhancing education infrastructure, strengthening human resource capacity, addressing gaps, and harmonizing the policy and regulatory environment. Furthermore, quality education serves as a catalyst for innovation and progress, fostering research and technological advancements that positively impact other key sectors of the economy.

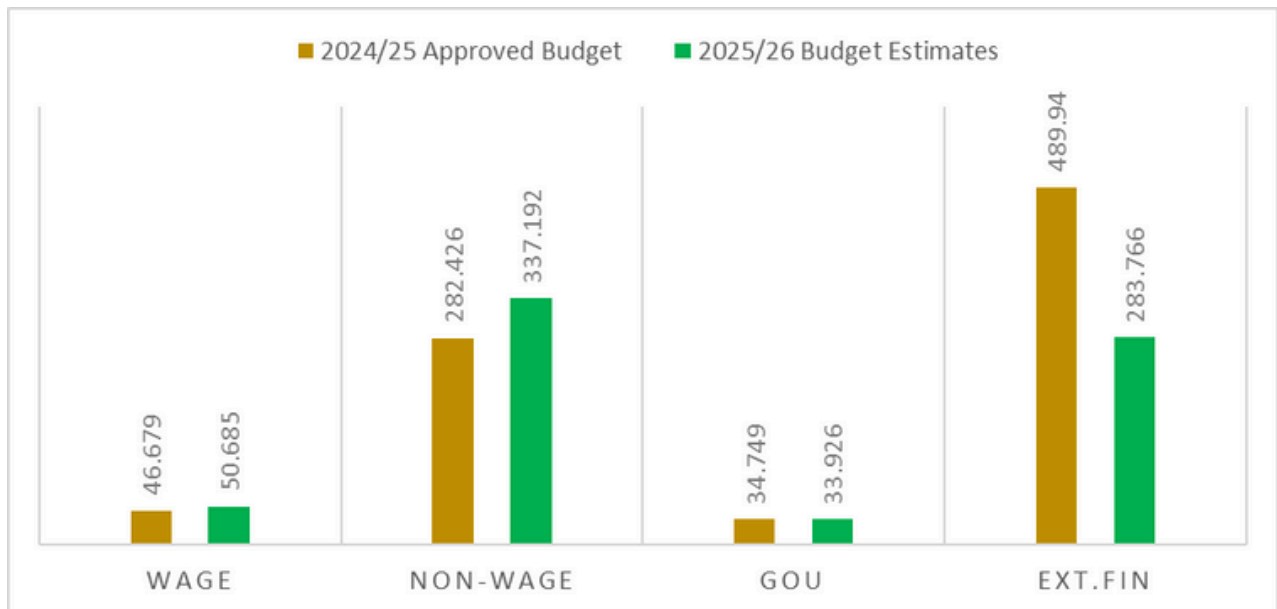
Uganda's education spending falls short of international benchmarks. In FY2024/25, education expenditure is projected at 7% of the National Budget, down from 8.4% in FY2023/24. As a share of GDP, spending is estimated at 2.3% in FY2024/25, a slight increase from 2.2% in FY2023/24. Within the Eastern and Southern Africa region, Uganda ranks second lowest, ahead of Angola, which allocates 6.6% of its budget to education. To align with the regional average of 14.2%, Uganda must double its current education spending

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3. OVERVIEW OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS EXPENDITURE FY2025/26 (UGX BNS)

Budget allocation to the Ministry of Education and Sports is projected to reduce by UGX 148.225 billion from UGX853.793 billion in FY2024/25 to UGX 705.568 billion in FY2025/26. Development expenditure is projected to reduce by 39.5 percent from UGX524.68 billion in FY2024/25 to UGX 317.69 billion in FY2025/26. This is mainly on account to a reduction in external financing which is projected to reduce from UGX 489.94 billion in FY2024/25 to UGX 283.76 billion in FY2025/26. On the other hand, recurrent expenditure is projected to increase by 17.9 percent, with non-wage increasing from UGX 282.426 billion in FY2024/25 to UGX 337.192 billion in FY2025/26 and wage increasing from UGX 46.67 billion in FY2024/25 to UGX 50.68 billion in FY2025/26.

Figure 1: Budget allocation to Ministry of education and Sports in FY2025/26 (UGX Bns)



Source: National Budget Framework Paper FY 2025-26

“Ministry of Education and Sports Budget is projected to reduce by UGX 148.225 billion from UGX 853.793 billion in FY2024/25 to UGX 705.568 billion in FY2025/26”

4. CSO concerns for the Education Sub-programme

4.1 Inefficient School inspection and monitoring systems

School monitoring and inspection is a critical component in the realization of quality education in Uganda both primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions. In recent years the Government has undertaken several commendable efforts in digitalizing the school inspection component. This has been through the introduction of Teacher Effectiveness and Learner Achievement (TELA) and E-Inspection systems aimed at enhancing teacher monitoring to ensure adherence to the syllabus and time at task especially at the primary level. Both the Directorate of Education Standards at MoES and local governments are acutely underfunded and unable to ensure reliable school-level supervision. Furthermore, there is no clear guidance to local governments on utilisation of school inspection and monitoring budgets by the district inspectors and district education officers.

The 2024 Office of the Auditor General's Value for Money report indicated that the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) has only 54 inspectors to cover an estimated 8000 schools in Uganda which implies one inspector oversees 148 schools. Additionally, the allocation criteria for the Inspection and monitoring funds only considers the number of schools in the district and no other factors such as the distance and the state of the transport network. This results in low inspection and monitoring coverage, especially in districts with poor transport networks and with schools far apart from each other.

Recommendation(s):

- The Ministry of Education and Sports should consider the full roll out of the Teacher Effectiveness and Learner Achievement (TELA) system at the secondary school level.
- MoES through the districts should ensure that the supervision of teachers by the head teachers and District Inspector of Schools (DIS) is enforced so that schemes of work are prepared for all subjects and approved by headteachers as evidence of supervision.
- The Ministry of Education should issue guidelines to the local governments on utilisation of the monitoring and inspection funds with a higher threshold allocated to school inspection.
- The allocation of the school inspection and monitoring funds should also take into consideration the factors of distance and hard to reach area

“

The Directorate of Education Standards (DES) has only 54 inspectors to cover an estimated 8000 schools (OAG 2024 Value for Money Audit Report)

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4.2 Coding and Grant aiding of primary and secondary schools

The government policy provides for establishment of at least one UPE and USE school in every parish and sub county respectively. Currently, there are several schools constructed by Non-Government Organizations and communities either in parishes and sub counties without UPE and USE schools or those that cannot be equitably served by one school. In the current FY2024/25, the MoES received requests to grant-aid 302 primary and 175 secondary schools. Considering that the cost of acquiring land and constructing new primary and secondary schools is high yet there are existing NGO and community owned schools, it is more cost - effective for the government to assess and take on schools in parishes and sub counties without UPE and USE schools or those who are underserved by one school due to their large size and population.

It is important to note that in FY2024/25, MoES reported to parliament that it estimated the unit cost of grant aiding one primary school at UGX 64m and a secondary school at UGX 300m.1 However, in the next FY2025/26, the MoES has put the unit cost of grant aiding at UGX 70m per UPE and UGX 666m per USE school, translating into a required budget of UGX 7.14bn for grant aiding primary schools and UGX 116. 55bn for taking over secondary schools

Recommendation

- MoES should provide clarity on the discrepancies in the unit cost of grant aiding of schools, especially, secondary schools from the earlier quoted amount of UGX 300m to UGX 666m.
- The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development allocates the required budget for grant aiding 302 primary schools and 175 secondary schools.
- The priority should be given to parishes and sub counties without UPE and USE schools and those that are underserved due to their large size and population.

4.3 Dilapidated and inadequate infrastructure in UPE Schools

Under the Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers (UgIFT-II) and the Uganda Secondary Education Expansion Project (USEEP), over 200 secondary schools in sub counties without USE schools have been renovated/constructed.

We commend the efforts of the Ministry of Education and Sports for improving the status of infrastructure in government aided schools, especially in secondary schools. Under the Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfers (UgIFT-II) and the Uganda Secondary Education Expansion Project (USEEP), over 200 secondary schools in sub counties without USE schools have been renovated/constructed. However, despite these efforts, the state of infrastructure in the majority of the UPE schools is still in a deplorable state with inadequate classrooms, and desks which has contributed to overcrowding in schools as shown in table 1 below.

Table 2: State of infrastructure in UPE schools in Uganda

Item	Education National Costed Service Delivery Standards	Status in FY2020/21	Status FY2021/22
Classroom pupil ratio	1:53	1:70	1:75
Latrine stance pupil ratio	1:35	1:62	1:65
Desk pupil ratio	1:2	1:4	1:5

Source: Auditor General's Value for Money Audit Report on UPE for the Year 2023

The Auditor General also reported that 40% of the schools lacked staff houses, while 60% of the schools assessed had staff houses. Of the 60% that staff houses, 50% were constructed using the PTA funding and/or support from development partners. The limited infrastructure not only creates inconvenience for the learners and the teaching staff but also puts their safety and health at risk.

Recommendation(s):

- Both the MOES and LGs jointly and urgently take stock of the current infrastructure gap in UPE schools in the country.
- MOES working together with MoFPED allocates funds for renovation and expansion of infrastructure in UPE schools.
- Any amendment of the Education (Pre - Primary, Primary and Post - Primary) Act, should strengthen the role of PTAs in the activities of the school to improve accountability

4.4 Inadequate funding for review of pre - primary and primary education curriculum

The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) currently facing a funding shortfall of UGX 2.5 billion for primary and UGX 1 billion for pre-primary curriculum review.

The government has reviewed and implemented a competency-based curriculum at both lower and upper secondary levels. However, no similar review has been conducted for the pre-primary and primary education curriculum, despite its critical role in laying a strong foundation for children's learning at an early age. In particular, the delivery of pre-primary education is entirely left to the private sector, with the burden of financing falling on parents and guardians, while the government retains the responsibility of regulation and curriculum development.² Public funding for pre-primary education remains inadequate, with the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) currently facing a funding shortfall of UGX 2.5 billion for primary and UGX 1 billion for pre-primary curriculum review.

Recommendation(s):

- The funding gap of UGX 3.5bn should be provided to NCDC to facilitate the curriculum review for pre-primary and primary education.

4.5 Insufficient funding for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Currently, there is limited access to education by learners with special needs. In 2023, the enrolment of learners with special needs in school was only 1.97% of the total enrolment in primary schools against the expected target of 16% children of school going age. The dropout rates of SNE learners are high due to limited access to special schools since most of them are in urban areas and most of the schools require learners to join the boarding section which comes with an extra financial burden to the parents and guardians. Relatedly, the Auditor General's 2024 report establishes that of the 438 teachers in the schools assessed, only 140 had some training in SNE, with the situation being worse for Braille mathematics, which has only two qualified teachers in the entire country.

Furthermore, due to the inadequate SNE staffing shortages, schools that allowed SNE learners to attend only taught life skills, such as dressing themselves, wearing shoes, and feeding themselves. Worse still, the current monitoring tools at the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) do not facilitate capturing and tracking of essential information on special needs education.

do not facilitate capturing and tracking of essential information on special needs education. Additionally, due to the established threshold of a minimum of 7 children with disabilities to access the SNE subvention grant, only 99 out of the 12, 511 government grant aided schools implementing UPE which excludes schools that don't meet the threshold although even those that meet the threshold are currently not accessing the grant.

Also, the budget allocation for learners in Special Needs Schools is far from way below the enrolment rate. For instance, UGX 82 million was allocated for 1,170 learners with special needs in the 18 primary schools, which was not enough to cover 2,580 learners with special needs. MoES has indicated that they have conducted a unit cost study to be utilized in allocating the grants if the required is available.

Recommendations (s)

- The Ministry of Education should increase budget allocation for Special Needs Education (SNE) to bridge the existing funding gap. The current UGX 82 million allocation is insufficient, and a needs-based funding approach should be adopted to ensure all learners with special needs receive adequate support. The eligibility threshold of at least seven children with disabilities per school should be reviewed to include more schools, and those that qualify should receive funding without delays.
- More funds should be allocated to specialized training programs to increase the number of qualified SNE teachers, particularly in critical subjects like Braille mathematics. The government should also provide financial incentives such as scholarships, salary increments, and bonuses to attract and retain SNE teachers.
- There is a need for increased funding to improve and expand infrastructure in special and unit schools. Accessible classrooms, dormitories, and assistive learning technologies should be prioritized. More special schools should be established in rural areas to improve access and reduce dropout rates linked to the high cost of boarding schools.

“The current monitoring tools at the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) do not facilitate capturing and tracking of essential information on special needs education.”

4.6 Limited teacher availability and retention in hard-to-reach areas

MoES, by 2024, there were 129, 856 teacher on government payroll serving in 12,512 UPE schools with 7,953,933 pupils, translating into a national average pupil to teacher ratio of 61.25:1,3 which is above the standard of 53:1.

For most of the schools implementing Universal Primary Education (UPE) are grappling with limited teaching staff. According to the MoES, by 2024, there were 129, 856 teacher on government payroll serving in 12,512 UPE schools with 7,953,933 pupils, translating into a national average pupil to teacher ratio of 61.25:1,3 which is above the standard of 53:1. However, the situation is even dire for the hard to reach areas such as Karamoja and West Nile sub-regions, where the average ratios in recent years assessed (2021-2024) were significantly higher as summarized in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Pupil-to-Teacher Ratios (PTRs) in Karamoja and West Nile Compared to the National Standard

Year	National Standard (MoES)	Karamoja Sub-region	West Nile Sub-region
2021	1:53	1:74	1:83
2022	1:53	1:99	1:74
2023	1:53	1:101	1:81
2024	1:53	1:108	1:85

Source: Impact of the Primary Education Financing on Learners' Performance in West Nile and Karamoja Sub-Regions for Financial Years 2021/22 to 2023/24 (CSBAG)

The high pupil - teacher ratios negatively affect learning quality, as overcrowded classrooms limit individualized attention, increase teacher workload, and lead to lower learner engagement. This situation undermines efforts to improve literacy, numeracy, and overall primary school performance.

Recommendations (s)

- MoES should ensure that LGs with vacant positions due to retirement and death are filled urgently.
- Additional funds should be allocated towards the recruitment of additional teaching staff for LGs starting with those with high staffing gaps.

4.7 Implementation gaps in the delivery of the competence-based curriculum

In 2020, Uganda made a landmark shift in the education sector with the rolling out of the new lower Secondary Competence based Curriculum (CBC). This was a very timely shift and very well received, as Uganda joined other African countries such as: Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, who also embraced the CBC to enhance educational outcomes. The implementation of the CBC is learner centred which requires access to facilities such as adequate textbooks and computer libraries with stable and reliable internet. Recent research indicates gaps in the implementation of the CBC limiting the realisation of its potential benefits. Some of the challenges include, inadequate training with 35% of in-service teachers trained directly, insufficient ICT resources, materials for project work, scarcity of instructional materials.⁴ These gaps are also reflected in the recent report by the Parliamentary Committee on Information, Communications, Technology and National Guidance that reported challenges in schools in regard to ICT resources such as limited internet access, limited supply of computers distributed to secondary schools, the high student to computer ratio that make it difficult for teachers to manage computer based lessons effectively, lack of teacher retooling in ICT, unreliable electricity supply moreover in secondary schools that benefited from the Uganda Communications Universal and Access Fund (UCUSAF),⁵ implying that the situation is even worse in schools that have not benefited from the program.

Recommendations (s)

- Additional funds should be allocated for continuous retooling of teachers in the implementation of CBC and digital skills.
- MoES should liaise with the Rural Communications Development Fund (RCDF) and MoFPED to increase funding for construction and establishment of computer laboratories, libraries and procurement of the required textbooks.
- MoES should liaise with the Ministry of Information, Communication, Technology and National Guidance; Uganda Communications Commission; and MoFPED to provide the required funds to expand internet access especially in rural scho

Only 35% of in-service teachers have been trained directly on competence-based curriculum

4.8 Critical Gaps in Emergency Education Systems in Uganda

Uganda has made significant strides in addressing education in emergencies gaps through initiatives like the Education Response Plan (ERP) for Refugees and Host Communities. One of the initiatives to address education disparities in the ERP is the Accelerated Education Programme (AEP). This initiative promotes access to education in a speedy timeframe for disadvantaged groups: over-age and/or out-of-school children, adolescents and youth who missed out or had their education interrupted due to poverty, marginalization, conflict, crisis, or other constraints. Despite these efforts, critical gaps persist in ensuring effective emergency education systems. Critical among these is lack of comprehensive data on AEP and other informal education programs in the Education management information System.

Relatedly, the fluidity of the regional context in Uganda and the continuous influx of refugees, with over 1.5 million refugees currently hosted in Uganda, has placed immense pressure on the education system. Additionally, the number of out-of-school children and youth remains alarmingly high, with over 1.6 million children in need of humanitarian assistance. These challenges are compounded by inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching staff, and limited learning materials. In addition, the freezing of external financing such as the USAID funding, which has historically supported emergency education initiatives in Uganda, has severely impacted programs like the Education Response Plan (ERP). Furthermore, there is a lack of clear guidelines for local governments on the allocation and utilization of emergency education budgets, leading to inefficiencies in resource distribution. The allocation criteria often fail to account for critical factors such as the distance between schools, transport challenges, and the unique needs of hard-to-reach areas.

Recommendations (s)

- The Ministry of Education and Sports needs to prioritize the dissemination of the Accelerated Education Programme guidelines to ensure a harmonized, relevant and coordinated approach to Accelerated Education.
- The Ministry of Finance needs to establish clear budget utilization guidelines to support local governments in developing emergency education budgets. These should be in consideration of regional disparities to improve service delivery.
- The Ministry of Education and Sports needs to incorporate Accelerated Education Programme data into the MoES - EMIS for harmonized analysis and record keeping ensuring effective planning and budgeting for education in emergencies.

4.9 Duplication of AFCON preparatory Activities in two Votes

UGX 200bn is projected for Vote 166 - National Council for Sports for construction of Hoima City and Akii Bua Stadias and UGX 50bn to Vote 013 - Ministry of Education and Sports for Nambole National Stadium.

We commend the efforts by the government to improve sports infrastructure in the country demonstrated through allocation of funds for construction of Hoima City and Akii Bua Stadias of UGX 200bn and completion of Nambole Stadium of UGX 50bn all in preparation for AFCON 2026. However, we concerned that the funds for the same preparatory activities are being allocated to two votes. For instance, UGX 200bn has been allocated to Vote 166 - National Council for Sports for construction of Hoima City and Akii Bua Stadias and UGX 50bn to Vote 013 - Ministry of Education and Sports for Nambole National Stadium.

Recommendations (s)

- In order to ensure effective supervision, all the funds for preparation for AFCON should be consolidated under one Vote.
- Parliament needs to prioritize the enactment of the Food and Nutrition Bill into a law to enable a mechanism that supports the implementation of the food and nutrition policy

Only 35% of in-service teachers have been trained directly on competence-based curriculum

4.10 Lack of School feeding for school-going children

According to statistics from the state of school feeding worldwide, 2022 indicated that on average, only 11.4% of school-going children in Uganda receive school meals when compared to 23% in Burundi.

Access to school meals for many school-going children, especially those in Public Schools, remains a big challenge. According to statistics from the state of school feeding worldwide, 2022 indicated that on average, only 11.4% of school-going children in Uganda receive school meals when compared to 23% in Burundi. Similarly, only 60% of government primary schools in urban settings provided learners with lunch at school, compared to 44 % in rural areas. Secondly, in one out of five government primary schools in rural areas (20%), learners did not have lunch compared to 8% in urban areas.

This implies that many children study on an empty stomach. Underfed children are susceptible to malnutrition, reduced cognitive growth, and poor academic performance, which threatens their economic progression towards enhanced income and gained opportunities in life. The situation is worse for refugee communities where implementation of school feeding programmes is low; for example, in Kiryandongo, only 59 percent of the primary schools were found to have school feeding programmes[4].

Additionally, on the Human Capital Index (HCI) 2020, Uganda's score was 0.38, indicating that a child born today will reach only 38 percent of what her /his lifetime productivity had she/he received a complete education and been in full health. (World Bank, June 2024). Thus, the lack of a well-coordinated school program remains a major hindrance to the achievement of education outcomes.

Recommendations (s)

- The Ministry of Education, prioritize supporting the legislative regulatory and normative policy framework to support school feeding. For instance, fast-track the adoption and implementation of the school feeding policy and guidelines to support manageable and sustainable school feeding programs as stipulated in the NDPIV.
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- Support the implementation of Uganda's commitments to improving school feeding under the School Meals Coalition[1] which included the development of a National School Feeding Policy by 2025, a dedicated budget for national school feeding, development & operationalization of a digitalized National School Feeding Data Collection and Management System and establishment of a National Multi-sectoral School Feeding Coordination Committee.

5. Conclusion

As CSOs we continue to commend the Government on putting in place an enabling policy environment for ensuring universal access to education that has significantly improved literacy rates in the country over the years. However, Uganda's per capita public education spending has consistently been low in recent years, falling below international benchmarks and other East African countries. To address this, we call upon Government to allocate the required funds to the education sub-program in FY2025/26 budget as it embarks on implementing its NDPIV whose focus is on consolidating gains in educational access across all levels, enhancing education infrastructure, strengthening human resource capacity, addressing gaps, and harmonizing the policy and regulatory environme

6. REFERENCES

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Vision

A Uganda with a people centered budget that dignifies humanity.

Mission

Working towards ensuring that resource mobilization, allocation and utilization is inclusive for a transformed Uganda.

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