

UGANDA EDUCATION OPTIONS

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The Program Option

There are several advantages to non-project assistance for primary education in Uganda. First, given the government's serious initiatives at restructuring the economy, a program approach could be easily integrated into, and assist with, these reforms. Second, the option would lessen the administrative responsibilities on an already overburdened Mission. Finally, the program approach lends itself to leveraging policy and institutional reforms. At the same time, any projects under consideration could be incorporated into a program format.

Sustainability

In the present context, sustainability becomes a major focus. Although some projects and program components are one time expenditures, e.g. exam reform, others are ongoing such as the provision of teaching materials. The host government must be willing and able to assume the burden of financing the ongoing tasks if initial benefits are not to be degraded.

The goals of the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) are to promote economic prices and institute fiscal and monetary restraint. This has major implications for sustainability. Among others, there must be sufficient current revenue to continue initiatives. Hence, special care must be taken to critically examine sustainability. As already noted, a program approach is best able to integrate assistance with the economic environment.

Macroeconomic Benefits

The ERP is the centerpiece of economic policy. As it evolves, the forex rate will be increasing market determined. One proposed step is to narrow the gap between official and parallel rates by introducing an auction system. Funds introduced through an educational program would assist in bridging the painful transition in the forex market. This should be seen as an ancillary benefit to the program.

More specifically, most of the Dollar program funds could be converted to Shillings through the auction, thereby financing imports and cushioning the decline of the Shilling. Moreover, the availability of such a facility should hasten the pace of economic reform.

Monitoring

A program approach will require an effective monitoring system, particularly in the areas of budgeting and expenditure. This will insure addativity, i.e. that assistance is not fungible, as well as proper execution. As frequently noted, GOU financial data is neither timely nor straight forward. Monitoring would involve enhancing financial procedures. Furthermore, this upgrading would be of general value to GOU for policy analysis in other areas.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MFED) would become directly involved in this process. MFED's participation should contribute to the success of the programs, since it would have a direct interest in execution, including the meeting of any condition precedents, in as much as funds would pass directly through that Ministry.

Miscellaneous Proposals

1) The provision of learning materials should be a priority item if it can be effectively coordinated with IDA and other assistance. Sustainability and addativity are critical in this area. One possibility is a buy-in to existing initiatives, thereby making use of established institutions. A CP mandating minimal levels of GOU financing for materials would be desirable.

2) Any system of supplements to the low remuneration of Uganda's 1,400 teacher should be carefully examined. A central question is whether anticipated economic growth and public revenue will be sufficient to sustain the initiative. A second question is the implications of supplements for civil service remuneration in other sectors.

3) Assistance for institution building for the Planning and Statistics Unit (PSU) at MOE could be a project component of a broader program. Several tasks not discussed elsewhere might be considered.

The Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) has presented a set of goals and objectives which are over-reaching in terms of costs, not all of which are financial. Assistance could be given in prioritizing objectives, since without such an exercise, choices will be ad hoc.

PSU could also be aided in publishing an annual report, an option which should be investigated. The timely and authoritative document would be of assistance for policy analysis both by GOU as well as by the donor community.

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