

THE RETENTION CAMPAIGN

REGIONAL RALLIES

MAY – AUGUST 2004



Ministry of Education and Sports

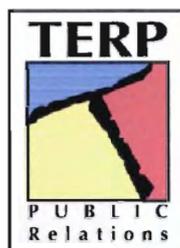
RETENTION

CAMPAIGN

Report

September - 2004

Presented by
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Executive Summary

This report is, in simple terms, a collection of views and ideas from the field. For the first time ever since the launch of Universal Primary Education, various education stakeholders got together to discuss the salient issues surrounding UPE. It was obvious that although UPE was good for everyone in Uganda, there were bigger issues that needed to be discussed and solved if there were to be the desired results. The Ministry of Education and Sports – with the help of the BEPS SUPER Project championed the education workshops and the Education Rallies – **Barazas** – which were the brain child of “**Maama UPE.**” Maama UPE is none other than the State Minister for Primary Education, the Hon. **Geraldine Namirembe – Bitamazire**, so nicknamed at one of the rallies. She attended all the five rallies and was very instrumental in giving them direction.

These rallies were also arenas for research – which is one of the elements TERP Consult Ltd was supposed to look into. The research was to follow up on the leads that the Ministry of Education and Sports EMIS Data had provided in regard to the difficulty in keeping children in schools. In essence, two aspects were handled at this juncture of the ever so challenging **Retention Campaign**. There was, firstly, the element of direct contact between the different communities that were visited by the by the central government on education, which like already mentioned above had not been done to this extent before. Views were exchanged and various queries sought – which have been captured in this report. The second, but not least important issue was the actual research carried out. Each of the 857 respondents to this research gave us insights as to why children were either leaving school or out of school completely.

TERP Consult Ltd is very privileged to have been part of the start of this campaign. We are grateful especially to **Ms. Renuka Pillay** of the BEPS SUPER Project for granting us access to different mediums we had access to – and also to **Mr. Albert Byamugisha**, Commissioner, Ministry of Education and Sports for the ever so steady support in providing background information in all that was planned for. We look forward to providing solutions to the Ministry of Education and Sports – and our team of Communication Strategists and Experts, Researchers and aspiring Education Journalists will continue the vibrant discussion towards strengthening Universal Primary Education and so helping in the increase of literacy rates in Uganda and ultimately, Africa.

**TERP Consult Ltd,
Kampala,
September 2004**



Background

Providing Universal Primary Education remains a **great opportunity**—and a great challenge. Various African countries by the end of 2003 had started providing free primary school education to school going children in order to boost literacy rates and propel their countries to national development. A number of Sub Saharan countries including **Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya** and **Swaziland** are already implementing the rigorous process of increasing access to basic education, building classes, training teachers, among others. Literacy figures across the countries mentioned above are improving and various Education-Funding Agencies have provided immense support to some of these countries in support of various education reforms. There have been many levels of success which will give millions the skills and help eradicate poverty. But failure could fuel an educational—and social—crisis in the decade ahead with a whole generation of future leaders and decision makers spawned on wrong premises.

The Government of Uganda introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997. Since then, millions of Ugandan children who had no access to primary school education have been able to go to school. The programme has been successful in increasing enrollment rates for both boys and girls from 5,303,564 in 1997, to 7,592,293 by 2003. The same statistics show that literacy levels in Uganda are improving and the major objective of UPE of having a big population that can read and write is partly achieved. Statistically speaking, enrolment rates rise, but far too many children remain out of school and even the high enrollment rates are balanced unfavorably by the number of children dropping out of school. Available information suggests that there are high rates of dropouts, absenteeism and repetition to the extent that only about 22% of the children that enrolled in primary one in 1997 managed to get to primary seven in 2003 (**Ministry of Education and Sports EMIS Data, 2003**).

Primary school pupils, both boys and girls drop out of school for various reasons that may be **social, economic, political and cultural**. The government and the donors have done a lot to increase primary school enrolment and now need to do whatever it takes to keep the children in school. Research indicates that there is a chance that provision of overall wholesome education, better trained teachers, better education facilities and increased direct supervision by the Central government could lead to an improvement in children remaining in school and so ultimately improving the overall goal of literacy improvement in Uganda.

They also have to increase family and community participation—and eliminate gender bias that limits the demand for girls' education. These aspects are well within the governments' and Donors grasp.



In May 2004, the **Ministry of Education and Sports** together with **BEPS SUPER Project** contracted **TERP Consult Ltd**, a Ugandan Communications firm, conversant with the Universal Primary Education campaign to handle the following tasks:

1. Identify the districts in each region with the highest dropout percentages
2. Conduct a mini research study on the causes of school drop out in these regions
3. To use popular communication channels to sensitize parents, pupils, teachers and communities to take their school age going children to school. In this way, the message would empower parents and communities to become agitators of "Education for All."
4. Start the process of coming up with measures/strategies to help with retention of children in schools.

Execution of Tasks – Identification of Worst Hit Districts

Using already existent data bases from the Ministry of Education and Sports, TERP Consult Ltd was able to identify the worst performing districts in regard to child retention in primary school. At the beginning of the project, we found that these were the districts with the highest drop out rates as per the 2003 data with the 1st column showing the worst and least hit of the 10 districts:



Image 1: Children in one of the visited districts display the distributed posters



Table 1: Worst Hit Areas – Child Retention: General

	District	Total Drop Outs
1.	Arua	36,960
2.	Nebbi	14,215
3.	Lira	12,141
4.	Mbale	11,852
5.	Apac	11,295
6.	Mukono	10,546
7.	Gulu	10,288
8.	Mbarara	9,484
9.	Mubende	8,942
10.	Pader	8,569
11.	Kabale	8,066

Although these districts were given as the worst hit districts in regard to retention of children in school, TERP Consult Ltd looked at different statistics and found out that there was need to juxtapose all the relevant statistics. The above table was slightly altered (look at Column 1) and we received more information that contradicted what we had originally thought right:

Table 2: Worst Hit Areas - Child retention: Further Scrutiny

	District	Enrolled	No. Drop outs	% of Drop out	% Boys	% Girls
9.	Apac	250,052	11,295	4.5%	46.2%	54.2%
1.	Arua	362,115	36,960	10.2%	49.9%	50.1%
5.	Gulu	170,980	10,288	6.1%	48.9%	51.1%
12.	Iganga	262,182	8,243	3.1%	48.8%	51.2%
7.	Kabale	162,665	8,066	4.9%	51.9%	48.1%
13.	Kamuli	228,116	7,087	3.1%	49.2%	50.8%
3.	Katakwi	96,498	7,438	7.7%	48.5%	51.5%
6.	Lira	241,982	12,141	5.0%	46.7%	53.3%
9.	Mbale	264,726	11,861	4.5%	47.3%	52.7%
15	Mbarara	350,601	9,485	2.7%	50.0%	50.0%
11.	Mubende	208,361	8,946	4.3%	50.6%	49.4%
10.	Mukono	234,064	10,549	4.5%	50.5%	49.5%
2.	Nebbi	145,463	14,213	9.8%	52.1%	47.9%
4.	Pader	135,574	8,569	6.3%	46.7%	53.3%
8.	Tororo	177,518	8,197	4.6%	48.7%	51.3%

The information in the above tables was gotten through the following stages:

- i. Researched into the Annual School Census Data of the Ministry of Education and Sports
- ii. Used information from the UPE – Stakeholders’ Handbook of 2004
- iii. Identified 15 districts with the highest rates of drop outs (total of P1 – P7)
- iv. Juxtaposed the enrollment rates with drop out figures
- v. Attached percentages of drop out rates against the enrolled rates
- vi. Compared the percentages of drop out rates for both boys and girls



From the above, the juxtaposition between numbers of enrolment and percentage has brought in a new dimension of ranking the ten most affected districts. Looking at the sheer number of dropouts, it was thought that Mbarara was one of the worst hit districts in regard to retention. Mbarara has 9,484 pupils out of school – but has a total enrollment of 350,601 students. The side by side placement of enrollment and drop out rates has brought in a new angle to show that Mbarara is not as bad as Katakwi which has 7.7% of the children dropping out of the schools in comparison to the 2.7% of the former.

Secondly, we have also put percentages of the rates of girls and boys in the total dropouts. In general, we have found from the statistics show that girls drop out at higher rates than the boys generally – but the figures are almost equal in almost all cases. It was also interesting to find that the districts of Nebbi, Kabale, Mukono and Mubende had more boys dropping out of schools than the girls. We hope to follow these patterns with more in depth research.

For practical purposes, Arua leads the group with a total number of 36,960 children who have dropped out of primary school. This figure above completely pales out the next worst hit district by over 61% as Nebbi has only 14,213 children dropping out. This large number in Arua could be the result of the net migrations along border districts. Due to political instabilities in some neighboring countries (Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo), districts on the borders with these countries receive refugees and some children are absorbed into Uganda's education system. There is a chance that pupils at the borders of these neighboring countries cross over to Uganda to benefit from UPE. Although these pupils form part of total school enrolment, they are not included in district/national population figures and this could inflate the population based indicators of a border district like Arua, which borders both the Democratic Republic of Congo and The Sudan.



Image 2: Some of the Typical Faces we encountered at the Education Rallies May – August 2004



We were a little puzzled by the results from Arua – the large numbers of enrollment and drop out – and with the refugee question in mind, we tried to isolate the intense commercial activities peculiar to border towns as a reason for the children dropping out of school. We looked at 2 border districts – Tororo and Busia. Tororo in the last row of the Table above will show that 4.6% of the total enrollment statistics were not retained – but the figures of Busia show that of the 84,877 students who enrolled, only 3,507 (4.1%) have dropped out of schools. These figures can be compared but not to the high rates in Arua or even Nebbi at 9.8%. We hope to concretize these findings with further research.

Execution of Tasks – Research Study

A total sample of 857 respondents including 150 teachers, 50 district leaders, 25 religious leaders, 240 parents, 257 pupils and 135 others were able to share their views with the researchers. The 257 pupils were interviewed separately and gave their own account on the causes of school drop out.

The research largely concurred with findings from the **Ministry of Education and Sports EMIS Data (2003)**, **National Bureau of Standards findings (2003)** and the **Poverty Participatory Assessment Report (2002)**, that the main reasons for school drop out are mainly economic and socio-cultural - where pupils drop out of school for economic reasons like selling goods in the market, lack of meals and lack of scholastic materials like books, uniform and pens. Socio-cultural reasons include under-age enrolment, pregnancy and early marriages, lack of interest, family problems and lack of community appreciation on the benefits of education.

There were only two new major causes of drop out got from this research - **Lack of role models from within the communities where pupils come from** and **shyness** that prevents re-entry for those pupils who drop out either because of illness or any other reason. It was observed that the only available role models in communities are teachers and head teachers and most pupils interviewed said that they do consider them as role models.

A guided matrix with questions was prepared and used in 5 different regions we held the research. The districts in which the research was conducted were chosen because between May 10 and 22 2004 because the Ministry of Education and Sports together with development partners were in the process of conducting regional workshops and education rallies under the theme: **“Enhancing Universal Primary Education.”**



TERP Consult Ltd helped with the organization of these workshops and also introduced discussion on retention strategies. We also used this opportunity to interview, interact and collect views from different education stakeholders. Participants of the regional workshops included, teachers, Head teachers, Local Council Chairpersons, Secretaries for Education, District Education Officers and officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports.

It is from the above workshops that it seemed logical to move into the education rallies – which turned out to be our aspect on Execution: **Using Popular Mediums to Communicate with UPE Stakeholders**. These two aspects of research and the **Barazas** as described in the Executive Summary will be handled in the details on each of the different barazas held in the 5 regions in Uganda. The participants of the **education rallies** on the other hand included parents, pupils, teachers, district officials, religious leaders and community leaders. A combination of these participants provided a good sample for key education stakeholders who gave rich information as far as the child retention problem in Uganda is concerned.

These were the details and dates for the Research and Barazas:

Table 3: Dates, Regions and Districts: Theme - Enhancing UPE

Date	Time	Region	District
May, 12 2004	9:00 am	Eastern	Sironko
May, 15 2004	9:00 am	Central	Mukono
May, 19 2004	9:00 am	Western	Mbarara
July, 07 2004	9:00 am	West Nile	Arua
August, 19 2004	9:00 am	Northern	Lira

Baraza Participants' Profile

1. Local council chairpersons and Secretaries for Education
2. District Education Officers and Ministry of Education Officers
3. District Officials and Religious leaders
4. Community Leaders
5. Teachers and Head Teachers
6. Parents and Pupils



A combination of these participants provided a good sample for key education stakeholders who gave rich information as far as the child retention problem in Uganda is concerned. (Findings are attached at every end of each region).



Images 3+ 4: Education Stakeholder at the Barazas – May – August 2004



**EASTERN
REGION BARAZA**

SIRONKO DISTRICT

12 – MAY- 2004



Eastern Region UPE Enhancing Rally - Sironko

The Eastern region Baraza was held in Sironko district on 12th May 2004 and presided over by the State Minister for Primary Education, Hon. Geraldine Namirembe - Bitamazire who hosted the the area MP and Hon. Minister of State for Secondary Education, Hon. Beatrice Wabudeya. Like was originally planned in the invites and radio announcements that we sent out, hundreds of people fitting the profile we have given above attended:

(Show the different pictures relating to the above – *Wabudeya and Bitamazire, Children in Uniform and The Speech Scenario*)

Baraza Proceedings

The rally started at 9:00 am with all the children, teachers and head teachers taking their seats, the invited guests arrived by 9:30 am. The whole day's program was conducted in Lumasaba and Luganda. The Hon. Bitamazire, as Chief Guest, spoke in Luganda while Hon. Wabudeya together with the moderator interpreted and explained further for the local natives.



Image 5: Hon. Beatrice Wabudeya – State Minister for Secondary Education at the Sironko Rally



Table 4: Sample Program - Barazas

Time	Speaker	Topic	MC
8:30 am	Arrival of participants	Entertainment/Music	CAO
9:00 am	Arrival of guest of honour	Music/entertainment	"
	National Anthem		
9:10 am	Chairman LC 1	Welcome Remarks (5 minutes)	"
9:15 am	Chairman LC III	Welcome Remarks (10 minutes)	"
9:25 am	Headmaster of the host School	Role of parents & communities in Enhancing UPE (10 minutes)	"
9:35 am	DEO or DIS	Overview of UPE in the district (20 minutes)	"
9:55 am	Secretary for Education LC 5	Tackling absenteeism and dropout (20 minutes)	"
10:15 am	Resident District Commissioner	Monitoring, Supervision & Evaluation of UPE (20 minutes)	"
10: 35 am	Area Member of Parliament	Benefits of Education (20 minutes)	"
10: 55 am	Guest of Honour	Key note address (30 minutes)	"
11:25 am	Participants	Questions and discussion (30 minutes)	"
11:55 am	Commissioner Pre + Primary Education	Wrap up and closing remarks	"

The above days programme was drafted to guide the speakers from diverting the intended objective of educating the community on the benefits of Universal Primary Education, the advocacy to parents, and all the UPE stakeholders to implement the program, and the objective of hearing out the consumers views on what they think is retarding the progress and success of the programme to a political rally instead.

The Sironko Baraza was both educative and entertaining. School children recited poems about education and its benefits, local leaders pledged their total support to implement the programme and to set by laws which would deal with parents who don't send their school age going children to school and use the same laws to deal with those children who left school for no strong reason.

In her note of address to the participants, the area MP Hon. Beatrice Wabudeya did the following:

- a) Expressed her gratitude for their big turn up and their efforts in educating the children
- b) Noted that Mbale district is the third worst hit district in the country
- c) Further noted that parents, schools and communities contributed 80% to (b) above
- d) Commended the rally as a very important communication strategy to sensitize all stakeholders.



The Honorable Minister pointed out that the most important issues at the rally were

- a) Late coming of both pupils and teachers
- b) Absenteeism
- c) Irregular attendance
- d) Parental responsibilities in their children's education
- e) More emphasis on some subjects like mathematics, and science
- f) Parental negligence in monitoring their children's' daily performances
- g) Lack of parental follow-up
- h) The poor/teacher parent relationship.

On her own accord, Hon. Minister Geraldine Namirembe Bitamazire, who officiated at the occasion was very impressed with the big turn up of the invited community and in her speech, she advised children to use the opportunity given to them by the Government so that they don't regret it this in the future. She also called upon all stakeholders to join hands and efforts and to be strict with all children's education first before political ideologies. The Minister also took the opportunity to launch the revised and translated UPE handbook - which handbook was distributed to as many people at the rally was possible. The participants were told that the reason as to why the handbook given to them was in Lumasaba was because it was going to be easy for everyone to read it and interpret it.



Image 6: Hon. Bitamazire speaking at the Sironko Baraza



After the Ministers speech, participants were allowed time to ask the salient questions pertaining to education. These were generally the issues that came out of the questions:

- a) The increments in the teachers salaries (Sam Mafabi)
- b) The abuse of the SFG funds by high ranking officers
- c) UPE quality of education for less than that in Private schools (Juliet Nambozo)
- d) Ghost teachers and pupils in UPE schools (Mike Butesa)

Research

Table 5: Causes for Children Dropping Out of Primary School – Eastern Uganda

Sironko District 192 Questionnaires	Pupils	Teachers	Parents	Religious Leaders	LC Officials	District Officials
Lack of Interest	134	68	68	34	43	28
Lack of School Fees	33	9	84	2	7	3
Domestic Chores	58	34	89	11	14	5
Pregnancy	113	38	22	8	10	4
Early Marriages	101	34	63	15	10	5
Illness	69	37	69	10	5	5
Family Problems	58	32	101	9	8	1
Menstruation	73	25	30	2		1
Child Labour	54	25	79	7	11	7
Lack of Meals						
Insecurity	43	40	31	8	27	31
Harsh Teachers	38	79	21	6	7	9
Parental Neglect	42	36	92	13	20	10

The Eastern Region had a total of 192 respondents from Sironko and Mbale. Broken down, these included 72 teachers, 96 parents, 22 district leaders, 9 religious leaders and 07 others. The study noted that the **lack of interest as a result of under-age enrolment (134)** is the leading cause of drop out followed by **pregnancy and early marriages (113 and 101 respectively)** **Family problems came in at 101.**



It was also observed that some parents do not monitor the learning of their pupils and do not even know whether their children go to school or not on some days. Menstruation on the part of girls especially in upper primary was identified as a major cause of irregular attendance, which sometimes culminates into lack of interest and drop out.

TERP Consult's Roles and Responsibilities

For the Eastern Education Rallies, we did the following:

- a) Identified the venue at Sironko Primary School as ideal for the occasion
- b) Set up the venue, provided refreshments and sat participants
- c) Mobilized the community to attend the rally. In this, we worked with the district officials to draw up mobilization strategies, some of which included interpersonal communication, running announcements on the radio and also held radio talk shows
- d) Drove around in the branded Edutainment van with music for mobilization
- e) Used enumerators to carry out the mini research on the causes of child dropout
- f) Analyzed and interpreted the results from the survey

**CENTRAL
REGION BARAZA**

MUKONO DISTRICT

15-MAY- 2004



Central Region UPE Rally - Mukono

The Central Region Baraza was held in Mukono district on 15th May 2004 at Bishop West Primary School Mukono. This rally focused on stock taking of the achievements in the primary education sector thus far, the Challenges faced and how the sector could be improved. Hon. Edward Khiddu Makubuya, Minister for Education and Sports presided over the function which started at 10:00am with a program that was pretty much the same as the one drawn up in Sironko.

Baraza Proceedings

The LC 1 chairman welcomed all the participants in his area and appreciated their stay in the area because it was of a genuine cause. This Baraza attracted a number of speakers who all appreciated the opportunity that was given to the Ugandan child to have education and thus increase literacy in the country. In this, a number of reasons were given for child drop out from schools.

In her presentation on Monitoring Supervision and Implementation of UPE programs, the **Deputy Resident District Commissioner** of Mukono did the following:

- a) Said retention was a major problem since very few schools were being inspected
- b) Many schools had not been inspected for the last ten (10) years
- c) Advised the District Inspectors of Schools to do their work efficiently

The **Secretary for Education** of Mukono district Mr. Male for his own speech sighted that many children who dropped out of schools to get quick money through the selling and growing of Vanilla and Aloe Vera in addition to the high rampant fishing in the district which activities are all largely demanded on the international market. He further said that children have managed to get a lot of money which was another reason for them to keep away from school.

The **Area MP Hon. Lydia Balemezi** presented a paper on the Benefits of Education. She advised children therefore to consider education very important and a key to success.

The Chief Guest, the Minister of Education and Sports Hon. Khiddu Makubuya gave the keynote address laying emphasis on the benefits of education. He gave himself as an example of success

through education and then warned teachers who did not have proper qualifications and threatened to punish anyone caught in such an act. Like was allowed for the Sironko Baraza, a number of questions were asked of the Minister on the following:

- a) The status of education today
- b) How the stakeholders could help implement UPE
- c) The delayed teachers salaries
- d) The big salary gap between teachers and the head teachers
- e) Meals in schools
- f) Lack of control over primary school teacher transfers like in secondary school teachers.



Image 7: Hon. Makubuya, Minister of Education and Sports with the Deputy RDC Mukono District

In his response to the questions, Hon. Minister Kiddu Makubuya replied that the past seven years of UPE implementation were termed as UPE Phase I. He said that the Ministry is now running the second Phased (UPE PHASE II), which includes:

- a) Handling issues concerning absenteeism, drop out, and retention
- b) Advocating and Mobilization to bring more partners and stakeholders on board
- c) Sharing experiences
- d) Going to the grass root partners and strengthening that partnership
- e) Improve learning and the quality of information and data flows.



The Minister stated the following:

- a) That some things can be done with a zero budget like reading children stories
- b) Scrutinizing children's books daily
- c) Advised districts to come up with another district plan incorporate specific researched findings of their district
- d) Advised District authorities to go beyond the district head quarters and reach out to schools, Villages, parishes and set up by laws to those parents who don't send their children to schools

In his wrap-up remarks, the **Director for Primary Education**, Mr. Sam Onek said that all UPE stakeholders should be involved in the implementation of the UPE program and they should work together with the ministry in its efforts to introduce Education For All (EFA) so as to produce a massive educated population and hence national development. He advised the participants to share experiences with other districts that are performing well so that they can also adopt their strategies for better results and to identify their causes to child drop out.

Table 6: Causes for Children Dropping Out of Primary School – Central Uganda

Mukono District 205 Questionnaires	Pupils	Teachers	Parents	Religious Leaders	LC Officials	District Officials
Lack of Interest	79	78	56	6	14	7
Lack of School Fees	18	20	58		5	7
Domestic Chores	42	62	65	2	4	2
Pregnancy	70	53	20	3	5	3
Early Marriages	59	40	6	15	3	3
Illness	61	60	48	2	3	3
Family Problems	69	94	111	2	2	2
Menstruation	38	16	9		1	4
Child Labour	44	54	48	2	10	4
Lack of Meals	20	61	21		6	4
Insecurity	11	15	63		4	4
Harsh Teachers	20	59	24	7	22	16
Parental Neglect	23	64	61	8	12	4



The 205 respondents in Mukono included 103 parents, 74 teachers, 15 religious leaders and 8 district and local council leaders. These identified **family problems (111)** like hunger, orphans, step parents, family quarrels and lack of family support as the major reason for dropout. Other reasons like **lack of interest, pregnancy** and **early marriage** and **parental neglect** were also repeatedly noted. In dealing with the findings of Eastern and Central Uganda, we found that **family problems** are a major reason for the low retention in the two regions.

**WESTERN
REGION BARAZA**

MBARARA DISTRICT

19-MAY- 2004



Western Region UPE Rally - Mbarara

The Western region Baraza / Rally was held in Mbarara district on 19th May 2004 at Nyakayojo Primary School, a government aided school on the outskirts of Mbarara town. There was a big turn-up of pupils from all the nearby schools. There was also massive turn up of parents, teachers, district officials, and all UPE stakeholders in the district and the nearby districts. Hon. Namirembe Bitamazire was, once again, Chief Guest at the function which officially begun after her 10:00 am arrival. The profile of rally participants was the same as before.

Baraza Proceedings:

The Mbarara UPE advocacy rally was started with pupils marching through the school compound and by 10:00 am, all participants had taken their seats. In his welcome remarks, the LC III chairman Mbarara district Mr. Rubasimbira addressed some of the causes of school drop out in the region as:

- a) Parents don't send their children to schools because they did not believe in education
- b) These same parents preferred their children to look after cattle
- c) These same parents also preferred that their children grow matooke for money

Mr. Rubasimbira pledged to set up bye-laws that are going to be used upon all those parents who have refused to send their children to school. The L.C III chairman further informed the Minister and all the participants that the crime rate in relation to child abuse is so high and the parents of the abused children contributed highly to this because they did not forward these cases to the authorities settling for compensation of material aspects like cattle or alcohol.

The LC V for Mbarara district Mr. Fred Katamugira thanked the Ministry for coming up with the Baraza Communication Strategy which did not address political aspects but important issues like the problems all UPE stakeholders encountered in the process of implementing the programme. In his view, the advocacy rally strategy gave a chance to the people at the grass root levels to express their views as well.

He stated the following:

- a) So many parents have rejected UPE and looked at children as income generating assets

- b) This was especially in relation to the girl child who was married off at an early age
- c) These girls were married off to rich men who in return give them cows

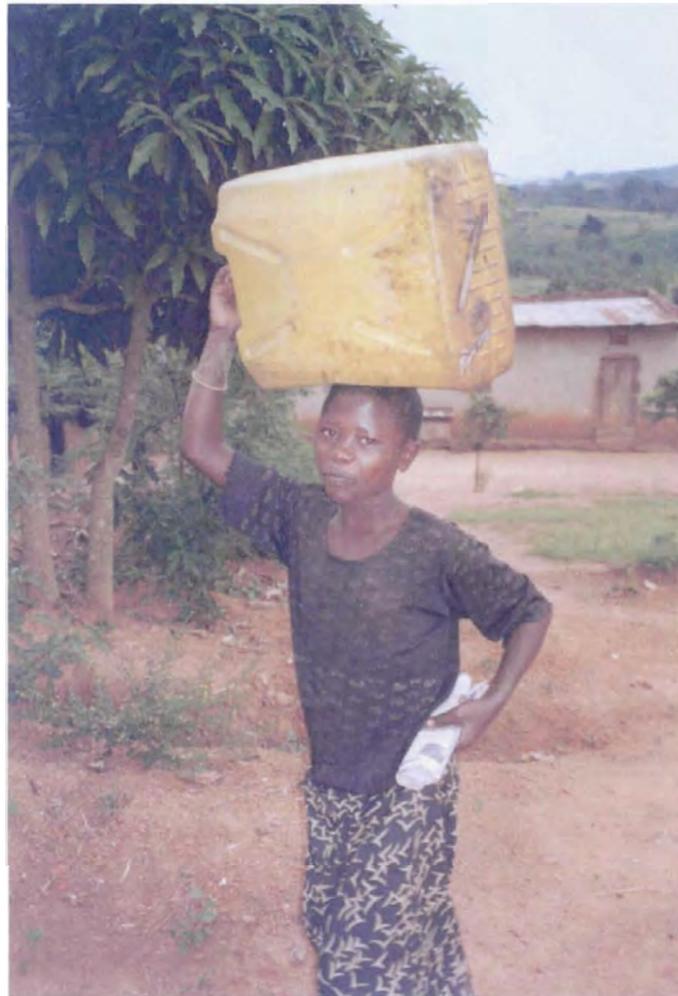


Image 8: A Girl out of School in Mbarara

The Chief Guest did the following:

- a) Gave a full and detailed profile of her life to the children
- b) Encouraged them to look at her as a role model
- c) Condemned those elderly men who sexually abused school girls
- d) Advised the girl children to reject being exploited like ripe mangoes
- e) Advised the boys to report all those sugar mummies to their parents
- f) Officially launched the revised UPE handbook written in the 4Rs



All parents, teachers, Parents Teachers Association members present, School Management Committee members present got a copy of the handbook and were advised to go through the information and spread it to those who did not send their children to school.

Table 7: Causes for Children Dropping Out of Primary School – Western Uganda

Mbarara District 85 Questionnaires	Pupils	Teachers	Parents	Religious Leaders	LC Officials	District Officials
Lack of Interest	60	20	34	3	16	10
Lack of School Fees			50			3
Domestic Chores	13	30	43			
Pregnancy	44	14	31		6	2
Early Marriages	43	2	29	9	7	4
Illness	38	23	22			
Family Problems	23	6	42			
Menstruation	34	8	11			5
Child Labour	20	14	36		12	3
Lack of Meals		33			5	6
Insecurity			13			9
Harsh Teachers	13	8	8		22	20
Parental Neglect			43	3	7	11

The same matrix was administered in Mbarara district. The district indicated that **lack of interest (60), pregnancy and early marriages (44 and 43 respectively)** and **illness (38)** are among the major causes of drop out in the region. **Lack of interest** is a result of **under-age** enrolments and **the automatic promotion** of pupils while **pregnancy** is due to the traditional practises of encouraging all adolescents, especially girls (13 – 18) to get male partners before they become barren. Illness on the other hand is due to the high prevalence of malaria in the region.

**WEST NILE
REGION BARAZA**

ARUA DISTRICT

**7-JULY-MAY-
2004**



West Nile Region UPE Rally – Arua

The West Nile Region rally was supposed to take place on the May 23, 2004 but was cancelled due to the death of the Attorney General of Uganda who hailed from the region. This was pushed to July, 7 2004. Lugbara and English were used at the Arua Hill Primary School function. The moderators of the function interpreted all the proceedings to the participants and the all the speeches made.



Image 9: The Minister at the Arua Baraza introduces Ms. Renuka Pillay of the BEPS SUPER Project

The rally started with a one hour procession with a number of schools from the district that marched through Arua town singing UPE songs. The school children were joined by other organisations like women groups and NGOs. By 10:00 am, all invited guests had taken their seats. The LC 1 Chairman of the area echoed the same sentiments of his colleagues from the other areas in saying that education was (and is) an important asset in one's life and called upon all parents to send their children to schools. He requested the district officials (together with the Hon. Minister Namirembe Bitamazire to enact bylaws to enforce sending of children to schools. The LC III Chairman on the other hand expressed gratitude for rally and compared Uganda to other developed and developing countries that could reach high levels of development because of education and the high literacy level.

The other aspects he mentioned were in line with comments made through the other rallies.

The Resident District Commissioner of Arua presented aspects on Monitoring, Supervision and Evaluation of UPE programmes and made a number of comments about the topic:

- a) Little monitoring was done in schools because the Inspectors lack facilitation
- b) The major retention problem is the lack of interest of both pupils and parents
- c) Added to this is early marriage for girls, abuse cases and parents compromise
- d) Child involvement in business at an early stage mainly in Ariwala Market
- e) The wars in the neighbouring countries like Congo and Sudan caused drop out of schools
- f) There was too much hunger and many children cannot go to schools

Hon. Namirembe Bitamazire, in an ecstatic mood, congratulated the participants upon the big turn - up and she came up with the theme of the day as **"Let us give our children their future through education."** She said that a child is **everyone's** responsibility in the community and should work hand in hand to see that the intended consumers benefit from it.



Image 10: Some of the Children who attended the Rally

The Minister made comments. These were:

- a) The economy and development were low development because of the high illiteracy
- b) The country's development was dependant on knowledge and so literacy
- c) The demand for by laws for child enrolment were appreciated



Hon. Minister said she was happy to inform all the Arua Participants that the Government has not only provided for the School Facilitation Grant funds (SFG), but has gone ahead to do the following:

1. The Ministry of Education and Sports is paying all the UPE charges so all primary seven candidates could be rest assured that they would never miss their exams
2. The government of Uganda in addition to the SFG gives away 4 billion shillings per month to all UPE schools to help in the school facilitation. She however noted with concern that its absurd that the district officials responsible have not come out to tell the
3. people about it and this has given chance to so many people to divert these funds and not even to produce accountabilities
4. On this issue she therefore directed the L.C.V chairman and his committee to spread this information on how much is received by each school for everyone to know.
5. The Minister further said that she is aware the people in Arua district have a number of challenges in their efforts to educate the Ugandan child and was surprised that she had never gotten a call for help from the district
6. Hon. Namirembe Bitamazire said that she heard about one head teacher in Arua district who had impregnated seven of his pupils but nothing was done to him and that even there was no one who came up to disclose this head master. This should be handled seriously



7. She called upon all the Arua people to support the UPE programme regardless of whether they had children or not because this was the only way to eradicate poverty in the region and the country at large.

8. The Minister pledged governments' commitment to the survival of the UPE programme as a means of reaching the intended goal of increased literacy and Education for All (EFA)

Causes of School Drop Out – West Nile

As indicated in the Table 7 below, out of the **200 respondents** from Arua, including **62** teachers, **104** parents, **20** district leaders, **7** religious leaders and **7** others, this study noted that:

- a) **Early marriage** in the West Nile region contributed to high drop out rates (**120**)
- b) **Pregnancy** in the young children by their teachers and others (**115**)
- c) **Lack of interest by the parents** with **109** responses
- d) **Lack of monitoring** by parents and teachers with **108** responses
- e) **Lack of interest of the Pupils** taking (**119**) responses

Among the other contentious issue raised by the respondents as some of the other reasons leading to children dropping out of schools before completion were:

1. Lack of teacher motivation due to very low salaries and the big salary gap - 38
2. Lack of scholastic material - 33
3. Lack of meals – 32
4. Peer pressure - 30
5. The discriminative girl child cultural beliefs - 26
6. Defilement - 25
7. High orphanage rate - 20



Table 7: Causes of Drop Out – West Nile

Major Causes	Respondents
Lack of Interest of Pupils	111
Lack of Interest of Parents	109
Lack of Interest of Teachers	45
Lack of School Fees	40
Domestic Chores	104
Pregnancy	115
Early Marriage	120
Illness	82
Early Business Involvement	98
Menstruation	50
Child Labor	98
Attending to Sick Relatives	76
Insecurity	73
Harsh Teachers	57
Lack of Monitoring – Parents/Teachers	108

**NORTHERN
REGION BARAZA**

LIRA DISTRICT

19-AUGUST- 2004

Northern Region UPE Rally – Lira

As the last Baraza for this Retention campaign, the Lira one was a little different considering the fact that there was a feeling of insecurity in the area. It was also postponed because of the death of the Attorney General. Like the other rallies, however, the participant profile was the same.



Image 10: Assistant RDC, Lira introduces some of the district officials to the Minister at the Lira Baraza

In addition to the usual category of participants in the rally, there were learning centre schools which included Olaka IDP camp, Elute Learning Center, Anai Aber Learning Centre, Lira Pentecostal Church Learning Centre, UTC learning Centre and Ireda Learning Centre. Another group of people – Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) attended the UPE advocacy rally. They came, as an interest group, to speak to the Minister about the problems they encountered in education. These came from the following camps:

1. Ireda Camp
2. Lira P.7 primary School Camp
3. Lira Sub County IDP Camp



The Rally Proceedings

The function started with a marching procession from Aki Bua stadium through the streets of the town to the venue. The procession comprised all school children from all the UPE schools, led by the Uganda Police Band Lira. Children from the learning centres and the IDP Camps mentioned above also joined the procession. All district head teachers, and teachers were called upon to attend and they came up in very big numbers. Camp leaders and their camp members attended the rally and at 10:15 am, the chief guest Hon. Bitamazire arrived at the venue.

Ms. Theresa Mary Auma, Chairperson, Head Teachers Association spoke on behalf of all head teachers and the teachers and while she was presenting her paper on "The roles of parents and communities in enhancing UPE," gave a situational analysis of education in the camps, the efforts and challenges. She stated the following:

- a) Education in the district is very badly affected by the war
- b) Most of the children who come to learning centre schools are total orphans
- c) These stay in camps and are forced to come to school without the basic education needs
- d) They do not have any meals and so retire to the camps without a meal
- e) These children walk very long distances
- f) The roads are insecure leading to increased absenteeism and irregular attendance
- g) This does not only affect pupils but the teachers as well
- h) These teachers get to the learning centres very late due to the long journeys
- i) The teachers lack accommodation near the schools
- j) These teachers do not have the facilities to eat at the school
- k) This makes them unwilling to come to school to teach

In her presentation on "The status of performance of Education in Lira district", the District Education Officer, Mrs. Joan Pacoto gave the statistical data on the number of primary schools (private and government aided) in the district, the number of teachers, the pupil to teacher ratio which she said was so high and has thus led to repetition and increased drop out. She also gave the performance changes for the last three years and the increased enrolment figures in the district but noted that all these daily increases are as a result of the displacements.

Mrs Pacoto noted that the major problems faced by all the UPE schools together with the learning centres were **the lack of water**. She said that the working conditions of the teachers



are not very friendly and such requested the Minister to consider a salary increment to them and to construct staff houses for the teachers.

The Vice Chairperson LC V Lira district Mrs. Rebecca Otengo during her presentation on **“The challenges of implementing the UPE programme and the role of communities in Conflict Resolutions,”** said that education can only be important to a person if its quality education. She said that so many children have left school because they have not realised the benefits of education at the same time as their parents.

Mrs Otenga further said that there is a high rate of defilement in the district and mainly in the camps but little is being done which leads to children falling victims of AIDS and early pregnancies thus early marriage. She called upon those parents who send their children to school without the necessary scholastic materials to start providing them so as to ease the learning process and further called upon parents to provide meals to their children while they wait for the government to intervene.



Image 11: Some of the Children from different Learning Centres at the Lira Baraza



“Maama UPE”, as Mrs. Bitamazire was now being addressed (both as Chief Guest and Minister) was very impressed with the big turn up and said that for long, the ministry has been conducting workshops, meeting a few people to talk about UPE, challenges in implementing the program, coping strategies and the like. She reassured them of her knowledge of the insecurity and government’s efforts to ensure that measures were put into place to protect the children and other stakeholders. She then added that with all these problems, parents keeping their children away from school were still not justified.

On top of the above, she assured them of the following:

- a) The children in Learning Centre Schools would get classrooms
- b) This would prevent them from being affected by weather changes
- c) The government would pay PLE funds to all UPE schools so it’d not be a bother to parents

Table 9: Causes of School Drop Out in Lira District

- a. Parent’s ignorance about their roles and the benefits of education – 17
- b. The low Teacher to Pupil ratio - 16
- c. Unfriendly school environment - 15
- d. High classroom congestion - 13
- e. Lack of guidance and counseling - 10
- f. Long distances to schools – 10

Major Causes	Respondents
Lack of Interest of Pupils	81
Lack of Interest of Parents	92
Lack of Interest of Teachers	33
Lack of School Fees	72
Domestic Chores	89
Pregnancy	108
Early Marriage	109
Illness	92
Early Business Involvement	65
Menstruation	48
Child Labor	85
Attending to Sick Relatives	63
Insecurity	117
Harsh Teachers	44
Lack of Monitoring – Parents/Teachers	77



The Lira district findings in the above table indicate that **insecurity** is the major problem in the region with **117** respondents noting it. This is in contrast to the other districts which all had an element of the children not being interested in Education. So many children have dropped out of school because of the **insecurity, displacement, and insufficient schools**.

The second most affecting reason that led to child drop rates in Lira district is the problem of **Early Marriage** with **109** followed by early **pregnancy** with **108** respondents highlighting it. This may be as a result of the poor living environments in the camps. **Lack of interest by the parents** followed this with **92** respondents stating this. This was then followed by **too much work at home (89)** which also affected children's retention in schools.

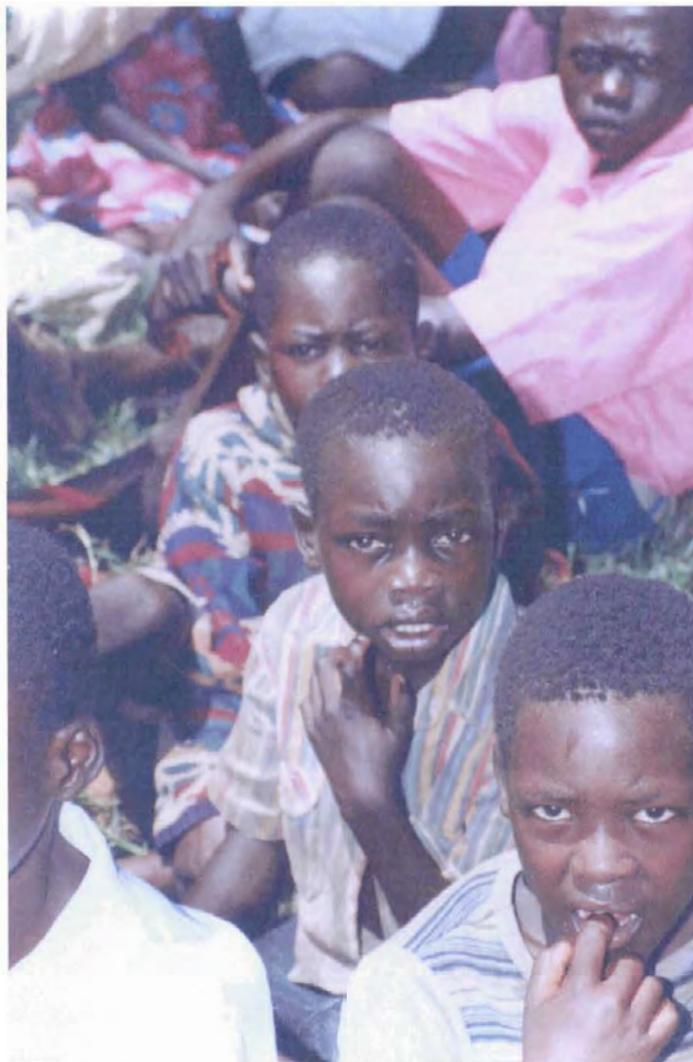


Image 12: Another section of the Children who attended the Lira Baraza



General Observations

TERP Consult Ltd, all through this research process was privileged to be privy to information outside the structured research tool; i.e. the questionnaire. Respondents were passionate enough to give extemporaneous reasons for the high drop out rates to the enumerators. These have been classified into economical reasons, political and social reasons and it's amazing that the social problems overweigh the others in all the five regions and are ranked starting with the most pressing.

Some of the reasons below may not be attached to an individual but they may be identified to a particular organization, a group, or any category of stakeholders. A great number of these reasons were almost similar – but these were the most common ones.

a) Economic Reasons

Lack of scholastic materials due to poverty the overriding factor across all districts. Out of the 600 questionnaires distributed, at least 451 respondents (75%) noted that some parents especially those from rural areas cannot afford to buy **scholastic materials** like uniform, books, pens and shoes. In areas where there is famine, the lack of meals both at home and school has compounded the problem.

The second overriding factor in our interviews was the **lack of meals/lunch** for the children and teachers. Out of the survey, 137 (22%) supported this issue urging that a child cannot concentrate on an empty stomach. To illustrate this, this study found that both pupils and teachers will break off before time to get food at home and not bother to come back to school.

This absenteeism and irregular attendance as a result of lack of meals escalates into permanent drop out

The other issue expressed by all districts was the big gap between the head teacher's salaries, their deputies and the classroom teachers. **The low salaries** offered vis-à-vis the workload demoralizes teachers and thus resorting to do business in the area during market days thereby abandoning the children. The teachers themselves expressed this fear, and at least 44 respondents mentioned it.



It was further indicated that so many children drop out of school to **do business**. In places near the lakes like in the Ssesse Islands, children drop out of school to be fishermen and fishmongers.

In Mukono district, it was noted that so many children leave school to **grow and harvest Vanilla** and **Aleo Vera**, which are highly demanded on the world market, and in Mbarara children both boys and girls drop out to graze cows.

b) Socio - Cultural Implications

In general terms, some respondents stated that there was moral decay in society and indiscipline among pupils. In specific terms, we got, from the respondents in the different areas, that there was an increasing degree of permissiveness in communities that has led the increased rate of drop out. Teachers are sexually abusing their gullible female students and it was also observed that because of the increased activism for children rights, pupils are not punished or disciplined by both their teachers and parents. **70 (12%)** of the respondents expressed this fear and suggested that parents and teachers should be allowed by all activist groups to discipline and punish children who become 'big headed'.

Ignorance and tradition among the community is another reason for retention failure. Some parents do not see the importance of education and thus do not enroll their children into schools. This can be attributed to traditional beliefs and background where the uneducated people managed to earn a living in society. 78 (13%) respondents indicated this. They noted that radio programs should be introduced that sensitize people on the benefits of education.

The issue of children having **family problems** was also raised. Illustrations here could be that a child is an orphan; the child is staying with the step parents and is being tortured at home and so, in the case of the girls, resorting to early marriage to escape from these problems.

In another case, some girls were nursing their sick mothers while their brothers went to school. 34 (7%) people noted this. They recommended that interventions to do with sensitization and counseling to communities should be put in place.

Interestingly, Lack of role models came out in some regions. In most of the communities these pupils come from do not have role models. The intervention here would be to get achievers from



education addressing these children and so become role models. There would also be a case of finding best practices being standardized and so disseminated to schools

There are other aspects here:

- a) Peer Pressure led to children dropping out with 29 (5%) respondents pointing it out
- b) Traditional seasons like circumcision in Sironko and Mbale districts
- c) These pupils, in the leap years, follow the local drum groups instead of going to school
- d) Automatic Promotion – Promotes laziness and reduces the value of education
- e) 39 (7%) respondents, who mainly included teachers, noted that, there are high rates of absenteeism, irregular attendance and later drop out because automatic promotion allows the passing of those who study even for one week in a school term. This means that children can afford to study alongside other economic activities as long as they are assured of passing
- f) Those who had stayed out of school for a long time were **too shy** to go back (overriding factor)
- g) Another category dropped out due to harsh teachers. They accused the teachers of being too harsh over their poor performance, especially in mathematics. They were beaten severely and ridiculed - which culminated in their losing interest in school and learning in general.

c) Political reasons

The political reasons largely included political differences and lack of political will especially from opposition politicians who continue to criticize the Universal Primary Education program and therefore make some communities, parents and teachers loose interest. Added to this is the abduction of the children in war ravaged areas and political instability



d) Pupil Voices

In order to get a clear understanding on the causes of drop out from the pupils themselves, the researchers interviewed 257 randomly selected pupils from the districts of Sironko, Mbale, Mukono and Mbarara. Like mentioned above, these were the areas for the recently concluded regional workshops and the researchers had a great opportunity of interacting with various education stakeholders. Most of these children from villages gathered on the road sides to see the Edutainment Van that was mobilizing people to attend the Education Rallies.

125 male and 132 female pupils interviewed gave the reasons summarized in Table 10 below for dropping out and not re-enrolling. It is interesting to note that from the tables above that the people who are not pupils, almost overwhelmingly, blame the students for the **lack of interest** in education – and yet the students that dropped out themselves tend to gravitate towards the **lack of scholastic materials** – and then of course, there is the pull to having **money** from commercial activities like becoming house girls and house boys – or even *boda boda* cyclists. Details of this are presented in the table below:

The Table below (pupil voices) concurs with the research findings from the above research findings from education stakeholders that lack of scholastic materials, lack of interest and **pregnancy and early marriage** are among the major causes of school drop out in all regions of Uganda.

Table 10: Pupil Voices

	Why Left School	Why Left School	Preventing Re Entry	Preventing Re Entry
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
Lack of Scholastic Materials (Books/Uniform)	73.7	67.1	78.3	71.2
Lack of Interest	13.8	14.5	16.7	18.2
Economic Reasons (Commercial)	84.5	54.2	84.7	47.9
Pregnancy/Sexual Harassment/Marriage	0	74.2	0.5	70.0



Generic Aspects from the Baraza's

1. We believe that the various messages delivered at the different rallies were adequately communicated considering that there was also translation into local languages
2. There was a large turn up of the local people. Like was explained in the profile of Baraza participants, there were parents, teachers and the head teachers, pupils, district leaders and other stakeholders like the business community and the faith based organization leaders. This helped in the exchange of views and ideas by the Ministry and the UPE consumers
3. We believe that, overall, these education rallies were an appropriate communication strategy considering that it was both educative and entertaining. We further hope that this mode of communication be used to communicate various messages from the central government to the local government.
4. The UPE advocacy rallies brought about collective efforts from all people regardless of their political ideology

Challenges

1. We needed to have more time to communicate with the district officials and so mobilize more people from the local communities for these rallies
2. There were instances when these rallies started late – and this meant that we had to rush through some important aspects
3. Related to the above, there was little time for all the participants to ask pertinent questions – which would have been excellent feedback from the field
4. The district leadership needs a lot of information/education. This information/education should be UPE/Education based (like the material in the UPE Handbook). This is important because these local leaders (including radio presenters) have the potential to relay the wrong information if not properly educated on UPE/Education aspects



Conclusion

The different issues affecting retention of children in primary schools in Uganda are definitely deep rooted and it may take a while to change these overnight. However, under present circumstances, a little education to stakeholders like parents on roles and responsibilities could come in handy. There are various interventions that have been mentioned all through this field study report and we recommend that these be implemented. The number of children dropping out of school because they have family problems are not happy at school and preferring to make money instead of being in school (The Pleasure Principle) can be drastically reduced – just by providing a different kind of education: A Benefits Campaign. This would be able to handle some of the problems – and so help the Government of Uganda in the struggle to acquire Education For All.