USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION COUNTRY PROFILE

Uganda

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AET	Africa Educational Trust
CC	Coordinating Center
CCT	Coordinating Centre Tutor
DEAR	Drop Everything and Read
EGR	Early Grade Reading
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
L1	First Language
L2	Second (or additional) Language
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education
LARA	The Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity
LOI	Language of Instruction
LOI1	Language of Instruction Spoken at Home
LOI2	Subsequent Language of Instruction
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MTE	Mother Tongue Education
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
O-Level	Ordinary Level
PTC	Primary Teachers College
REEP-A	Research for Effective Education Programming—Africa
SHRP	School Health and Reading Program
TDMS	Teachers Development and Management System
TIET	Teacher Instructor Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
UTSEP	Teacher and School Effectiveness Project

INTRODUCTION

Enhancing reading skills in the early primary grades is a key education priority for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Despite some improvements in access and learning in sub-Saharan Africa, literacy levels in the early grades remain low, and progress has been slow. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early grades have led to an increased focus on the role of the language of instruction (LOI). Recent research has demonstrated that mismatches between the LOI and the language that students and teachers speak and understand best can hamper effective teaching and learning (University Research Co., 2019). Thus, it is critical to understand the LOI policy and linguistic context of a country when trying to improve learning outcomes in the early grades, as this can be a potential barrier to gains in literacy and learning outcomes.

Currently, USAID supports **Early Grade Reading (EGR) initiatives in 19 countries across sub-Saharan Africa.** Many policies in these countries have recently shifted toward adopting the LOI spoken at home (LOI1) as the language for initial literacy acquisition, and then transitioning to a second or additional language, such as a regional, national, or international language, as the subsequent language of instruction (LOI2).

Government policies and strategies related to teachers and LOI reflect country priorities, approaches, and objectives for early grade literacy, and thus are crucial to the design of programs that are effectively aligned with country literacy aims and approaches. During the design-phase of donor-funded reading programs, decisions are made regarding the manner and extent to which national policies are incorporated into project design, and when alternative approaches or additional elements need to be considered. However, government policies on LOI, and other information relevant for informing design, are often difficult to find and are not easily accessible.

The LOI country profiles aim to address this need. The profiles will allow the USAID Africa Bureau, USAID Missions, and partner organizations to quickly understand the country's linguistic and policy context in order to design an approach that most effectively helps improve EGR outcomes. These profiles, designed for 18 of the countries with current or upcoming USAID EGR initiatives, aim to clearly and succinctly describe and illustrate the country's linguistic landscape and official LOI policy. This country profile in particular provides information on language policy and practice in Uganda (see Figure 1).

LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

According to *Ethnologue: Languages of the World,* published by SIL International, there are 43 languages spoken in Uganda. Of these, 41 are indigenous and two are non-indigenous. Furthermore, five are institutional, 26 are developing, six are vigorous, four are in trouble, and two are dying (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020).

The official national language of Uganda is English, with 2.5 million speakers (of a total population of 34.9 million people), all of whom speak it as their second language (L2).

Swahili (or Kiswahili) is the second official language, and the most widely spoken, with 34.1 million speakers, of whom 313,000 speak it as their first language (L1) and 33.8 million people speak it as their L2. The de facto language of national identity is Ganda (or Luganda), with 6.56 million speakers, of whom 5.56 million speak it as their L1 and one million people speak it as their L2.

Other widely spoken languages, which are considered de facto languages of provincial identity in specific regions of Uganda, are Nyankore (3.4 million speakers), Soga (2.96 million speakers), Chiga (2.39 million speakers), Ateso (2.36 million speakers), Lango (or Luo) (2.13 million speakers), Masaaba (1.65 million speakers), Acholi (1.5 million speakers), Fumbira (1.24 million speakers), Lugbara (1.1 million speakers), and Nyoro (967,000 speakers) (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020). See Figure 2 for detailed information on languages and populations that speak them.

Most widely-spoken languages in Uganda

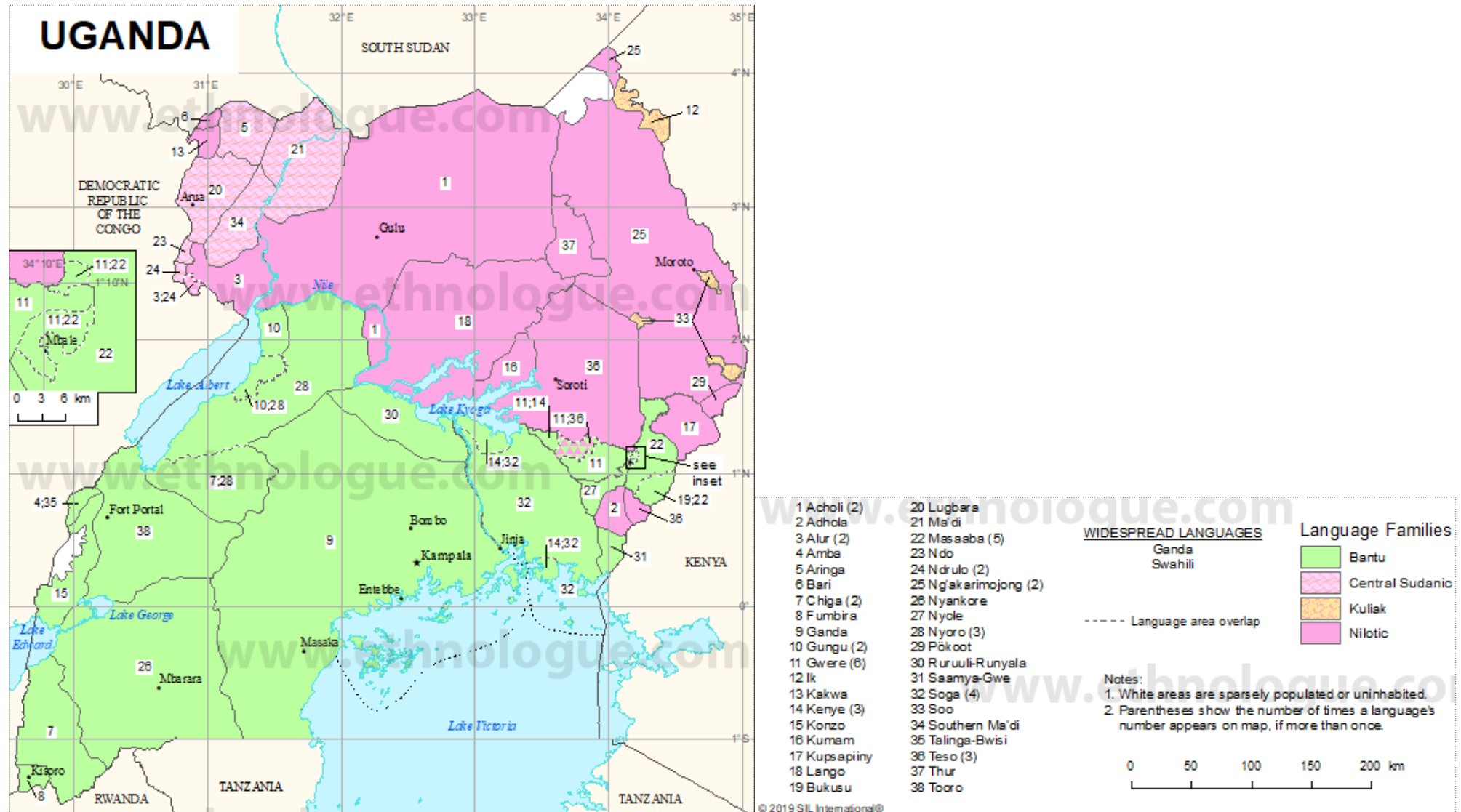| Language	Speakers
Swahili	34.1 million speakers
Ganda	6.5 million speakers
English	2.5 million speakers

Figure 1. Map of Uganda

Figure 2. Linguistic mapping of Uganda

Source: Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World.* Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: http://www.ethnologue.com.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION POLICY

In 1992, the Government of Uganda published a White Paper on the state of education, which included recommendations on increasing the use of local languages as the language of instruction (LOI) in the early grades. Specifically, the White Paper proposed that the LOI in rural areas should be the "relevant local language" (presumably the students' L1) in Grades 1 through 4, while English should be the LOI in urban areas. The Paper further recommends that English, Kiswahili, and the relevant local language should be taught as subjects throughout primary school in both rural and urban areas (Uganda Education Policy Review Commission, 1992).

Based on these recommendations, Uganda issued a new official language policy in 1992, stipulating that local languages should be used as the LOI in the early grades. However, the policy was not fully implemented until 2006-2007 when a new curriculum was developed (Ssentanda, 2014b). The curriculum is based on themes rather than subjects, and stipulates that the child should learn either in their L1 or a familiar language. The curriculum also specifically designates Grade 4 as the year that the LOI transitions from the students' L1 to English. At the beginning of Grade 4, both English and the students' L1 are used for instruction, with the aim of using the L1 only to explain difficult concepts by the end of the year (Altinyelken, 2010).

Though the introduction of the thematic curriculum was intended to facilitate the implementation of the language policy, this process has faced continued challenges. Studies have revealed that teachers have not been sufficiently prepared to teach in the local languages; there is a shortage materials written in local languages, and assessments are often not carried out in the local languages (Ssentanda, 2014b). In addition, many private schools continue to use English as the medium of instruction and only teach the local language as a subject (Ssentanda, 2014a).

CLASS TIME

In 2007, the theme-based curriculum was introduced for Grades 1 through 3, with a transition to subject-based teaching occurring in Grade 4. The lower primary curriculum aims at developing:

- **basic literacy, mathematics concepts, and life skills and values,** in a first language or familiar language, at a level that will enable the child to mature and be prepared for further learning;
- **Sufficient skills in English** to act as a basis for developing English as the medium of instruction in the Upper Primary Cycle; and
- **An appreciation of their culture** and the roles they can play in the society (National Planning Authority, 2018, p. 23).

The content of the curriculum is organized around twelve themes: our school, our home, our community, the human body and health, weather, accidents and safety, living together, food and nutrition, transport, things we make, our environment, and peace and security. Additionally, the curriculum requires 30 minutes of reading (Literacy 1) and 30 minutes of writing (Literacy 2), which constitute the literacy hour each day (National Planning Authority, 2018a).

Under this curriculum, Grades 1 and 2 have 40 lessons per week, Grade 3 has 50 lessons per week, and Grades 4 through 7 have 40 lessons per week. A lesson in the thematic curriculum (Grades 1 through 3) runs for 30 minutes, while lessons in Grades 4 through 7 run for 40 minutes. A library lesson is included on the timetable to support further development of literacy skills from Grades 3 through 7 (National Planning Authority, 2018a). Table 1 is a sample of time allocation for the Grade 3 curriculum:

PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR LITERACY

Almost all primary school teachers (93.2%) in Uganda meet the government qualification requirements to teach in a primary school. Only 6.8% of teachers were found to be teaching without a teaching qualification, and most of the untrained teachers were teaching in private schools (15.9%) compared to only 2.5% found in government primary schools (National Planning Authority, 2018b).

Table 1. Weekly Time Allocations for a Typical Grade 3 Curriculum

Subject/Learning Area	Number of Class Periods
Oral Literature	4
Mathematics	9
Literacy 1 (L1)	6
Literacy 2 (L1)	6
English	10
Creative Performing Arts: Music	3
Creative Performing Arts: Arts and Crafts	2
Physical education	5
Religious education	3
Library	2
Total	**50**

Source: National Planning Authority, 2018.

Pre-service teacher preparation in Uganda entails enrolling in a Primary Teachers College (PTC) after completing lower secondary education (Grade 11) with a minimum of an O-level (or ordinary level) school certificate. Candidates must also obtain an O-level credit in math and English, as well as two science subjects. They may then attend one of the 57 PTCs in Uganda for the required two-year period (National Planning Authority, 2018b).

The pre-service program is broken down into three terms per year, for a total of six terms over the course of the program. An academic year consists of 35 weeks of 40 periods each, spread over the three terms but translating into a trainee workload of 1,400 periods per year (National Planning Authority, 2018b). Pre-service training also includes three blocks of teaching practice (each three to four weeks long) dispersed throughout the program (Akyeampong, Lussier, Pryor, & Westbrook, 2013). Upon completion of the training program, trainees receive a Grade III certificate.

Although trainees in the PTCs have previously studied the subjects in the secondary school curriculum, a large amount of time is spent on further developing trainees subject knowledge with much less time spent on developing pedagogical skills (Akyeampong et al., 2013).

TEACHER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY/LANGUAGE SPECIFIC TRAINING

One of the biggest challenges in implementing the mother tongue language policy in Uganda is the lack of teacher proficiency in local languages of instruction. For example, of 95 new primary school teachers surveyed in Uganda, 68% expressed confidence in teaching reading only in English (Akyeampong et al., 2013).

Many teachers have not had formal training in the local language in which they are expected to teach (Ssentanda, 2014b). First, few Ugandan local languages are taught and assessed at the O-level in secondary school (Ssentanda, 2014b). Second, the time allocated for teacher trainees to learn Kiswahili and a local language is insufficient to ensure their mastery (National Planning Authority, 2018b). Finally, there is a lack of tutors equipped to train teachers in the local languages. For example, it was found that only 27% of the tutor positions for the local languages and 49% of the Kiswahili tutor positions at PTCs were filled (National Planning Authority, 2018b). Thus, many primary school teachers have very little formal training and knowledge of the local language prior to teaching.

Table 2. Time Required Per Subject in the Pre-service Teacher Education Curriculum

Subject/discipline	Total hours (both years combined)	Percent of total time
Foundations of teacher education	108	5
Special needs education	55	2.5
General methods	100	4.6
English language	220	10.1
Social studies	159	7.3
Integrated science	212	9.7
Mathematics	220	10.1
Religious education	104	4.8
Music education	102	4.7
Physical education and sports education	114	5.2
Integrated production skills	147	6.8
Early childhood education	204	9.4
Kiswahili	141	6.5
Local language	185	8.5
Agriculture	106	4.9
Total	2,177	100

Source: National Planning Authority, 2018b

TEACHER IN-SERVICE

The scheme of service for teacher education institutions in Uganda stipulates that a teacher in active service is expected to continuously upgrade their qualifications (National Planning Authority, 2018b). This upgrading can be accomplished with refresher courses to improve performance in specific areas, induction courses, workshops and seminars, and research (National Planning Authority, 2018b). In-service teacher education is offered by various agencies, including the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) through the Teacher Instructor Education and Training (TIET) department, teacher training institutions, the District Education Office, Education Service Commission, Kyambogo University, Directorate of Education Standards, donor and faith-based agencies, and community-based agencies (National Planning Authority, 2018b).

Teachers have several options for improving their qualifications, including upgrading to a Diploma in Education with two years of teaching experience and two years of in-service training at a university. Teachers can earn a Bachelor's degree in Education and/or a Master's degree with even further training (MoES & UNESCO, 2014). Another initiative aimed at strengthening teachers' competencies and qualifications is the Certificate of Proficiency in Teaching, which is a needs-based course designed to bridge existing gaps in pre-service teacher education practices.

The Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS) was put in place to address teachers' remaining skills gaps after their initial training. To accomplish this, the TDMS provides school-based professional support and outreach through the core PTCs and Coordinating Centers (CCs) (National Planning Authority, 2018b). There are 23 core PTCs distributed throughout the country and each one manages a network of CCs. The CCs are managed by Coordinating Center Tutors (CCTs), who are responsible for supporting the schools in their catchment area (MoES & UNESCO, 2014). There are 539 CCs nationwide with a total of 501 CCTs, leaving 39 CCs without a CCT to support schools in that area (National Planning Authority, 2018b).

Core PTCs offer both pre-service and in-service training, while the CCTs provide outreach and support through continuous professional development for all primary teachers, as well as support to and supervision of teachers in the field. Teachers undergo training in different areas, which the CCTs identify in consultation with head teachers and other teachers in the CC schools (MoES & UNESCO, 2014).

USAID READING PROGRAM APPROACH AND ONGOING PROGRAMS

In alignment with the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education, USAID's programming in Uganda aims to support the needs and priorities of the partner country in order to ensure that the gains from the programming are sustained. As such, USAID launched the **Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA),** a five-year (2015-2020) $41 million activity that supports MoES initiatives in Uganda to improve early grade reading and promote a positive and supportive school climate. LARA is implemented by RTI International, with World Vision as the sub-contractor, and works through existing government systems.

LARA aims to improve the reading skills of 1.3 million primary grade learners in government schools by strengthening the capacity of teachers to deliver early grade reading instruction in local languages and in English. The program also aims to improve student retention rates in Grades 1-4 through the reduction of school-related gender-based violence, resulting in safer school environments (NORC, 2017).

The EGR interventions include printing and distributing pupils' books and teachers' guides in English and in three local languages (Luganda, Nyoro, and Nyankore); providing teacher training and post-training support, supervision and monitoring; and EGR assessments. Program activities aimed at improving student retention include training teachers, community members and pupils; supporting efforts in preventing bullying, corporal punishment, and sexual violence in schools; and implementing protection mechanisms to stop the causes of children dropping out of schools (RTI, 2017).

Additionally, LARA has built upon the previous USAID-supported activity School Health and Reading Program (SHRP), which was implemented in 31 districts, by expanding to an additional 28 districts.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN USAID PROJECTS

The Government of Uganda has initiated several activities to enhance community support for children's literacy. One such initiative is the promotion of reading corners, or reading spaces, within communities and schools. Another initiative, the **Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)** campaign, aims to promote a culture of reading and love of learning on a national scale. Carried out annually, the DEAR campaign coordinates a 20-minute time period once per year in which all individuals in schools and community organizations across the country, at the exact same day and time, put down what they are doing and read.

The USAID-supported LARA activity reinforces these government initiatives by supporting schools and communities to work together in designing and implementing reading spaces. Additionally, LARA is carrying out a social behavior change communication activity that focuses on promoting parental involvement in their child's reading.

Local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are also implementing initiatives to support literacy and education in Uganda. For example, Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) provides capacity development opportunities for teachers and other adults to develop their own literacy skills as well as support their students and children in acquiring literacy skills.

OTHER DONOR FUNDED READING PROGRAMS

Alongside USAID, several other organizations are involved in implementing projects to address literacy and language issues, which are detailed below, across Uganda.

Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project

Since 2014, GPE has supported the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) through a $100 million grant to implement the Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project (UTSEP). The objective of the UTSEP is to support the government in improving teacher and school effectiveness in the public primary education system. There are three components to the project: 1) effective teachers, 2) effective schools, and 3) technical assistance and capacity building. The first component aims to improve teacher quality and performance with specific reference to instructional practices for early grade reading and use of instructional materials in teaching; it aims to scale up the early grade reading program for Grades 1 through 3, benefiting approximately 1,000,000 students from improved teacher effectiveness and 8.1 million students from new textbooks. The second component (effective schools) aims to improve the school environment in the form of enhanced school management, accountability, and learning conditions including school facilities (classrooms, offices, water and sanitation facilities, teacher housing). The third component (capacity building) aims to strengthening management of the teacher payroll system and the implementation of the scheme of service and teacher management.[1]

Africa Educational Trust's (ATE) Mother Tongue Education Project

The Mother Tongue Education (MTE) project has been implemented by AET and LABE since 2009. In response to limited implementation of Uganda's mother tongue policy, the MTE project developed a workable model for easy implementation of mother tongue education in government schools. The MTE program operates in 240 schools across six districts of Uganda and seeks to engage students, teachers and parents.

The MTE model is comprised of three key approaches: advocacy, training, and resource development. Under the advocacy component, MTE facilitates community activities to increase community and parental awareness of the value and importance of mother tongue; participates in existing sensitization activities in the project's districts, such as school meetings; and disseminates the project's experiences to education policymakers in other districts with large minority language communities in order to advocate for and strengthen national implementation of the mother tongue policy. Under the training component, MTE tutors and district education staff deliver training and refresher courses to teachers in participating schools on topics such as preparation of lesson plans in mother tongue, creation of teaching and learning aids using local materials, and use of mother tongue supplementary resources. Parent educators are also trained to support teachers in the classroom and deliver home mother tongue teaching to children and mothers outside school hours. Under resource development, LABE developed mother tongue teacher handbooks for use in both pre-service training and in the classroom. To widen mother tongue literacy, the project supports the production and use of sample children's books and magazines in five languages (Acholi, Kakwa, Aringa, Madi, Lugbara) for use in classes in Grades 1 through Grade 3.[2]

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1 1 For more information, see: https://www.education.go.ug/utsep-gpe-project/
https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/uganda
http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/915031468185036165/Uganda-Teacher-and-School-Effectiveness-Project

2 For more information, see: https://africaeducationaltrust.org/our-projects/mother-tongue-education/

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