Country Profile: Uganda

Expedito Nuwategeka, Daniel Komakech & Patricia Ajok

June 2021

About JustEd

JustEd is an international comparative mixed methods study that explores the lived experiences of secondary school learners of environmental, epistemic and transitional justice. We produce insight into how learner experiences translate into actions to advance Sustainable Development Goals 13 (Climate Action) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

The JustEd study is delivered by researchers at the University of Bath (UK), the University of Bristol (UK), Group for the Analysis of Development (GRADE) (Peru), Gulu University (Uganda) and Tribhuvan University (Nepal). JustEd is funded by the UK government's Grand Challenges Research Fund (GCRF).

For more information:

Dr Rachel Wilder (rw2031@bath.ac.uk)

or Dr Lizzi O. Milligan, Principal Investigator (emam25@bath.ac.uk)

www.bath.ac.uk/projects/justed/

Introduction

Uganda's history of state formation, as well as the conflict in the northern region has split the nation into two countries, if not identities since 1986. Uganda experienced at least seven civil wars, located mostly in the northern regions (Lindemann 2011). More than 20 militant groups have so far attempted to displace President Museveni's government both within and beyond the Ugandan borders. Probably the most conspicuously contested conflict in the media is the war in the north of Uganda against Joseph Kony's LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) since the 1990s. Between 1987 and 2007 Uganda resembled a "war with peace" model, suggesting that the government in power embraced the antagonisms of conflict (in the North) alongside peaceful coexistence and development (in the south); in one country at the same time (Shaw and Mbabazi 2007). Whereas southern Uganda emerged as a showpiece for Western donors to highlight remarkable successes in combating HIV/AIDS rates or fostering economic growth and development, on the other hand, northern Uganda's developmental progress has been challenged by two decades of war (ibid.).

In this context, recent studies on the peacebuilding process of the country identified the following regions as prone to conflict: Bunyoro (Western Uganda), West Nile (North-Western Uganda), Acholi (Northern Uganda), Karamoja, Elgon, Teso (North-East Uganda), Lango (Central Uganda), Bukedi (Eastern Uganda) and the borders to the Eastern DRC (Southwest and Western Uganda) (ACCS 2013; Knutzen and Smith 2012). Notably, the sub-region of Acholi land stands out for two main reasons. On the one hand, it is the most under-developed part of Uganda and remains extremely vulnerable to shocks (security, environmental, political, transitional justice/traditional justice or health). On the other hand, there is a very serious issue of land conflict within Acholi community and the Madi community.

More recently, issues of land rights and illegal or exploitative mining activities also threaten processes of sustainable development and peace in Uganda (Human Rights Watch 2014; Datzberger and Malagala 2015). Thus, while Uganda is no longer an immediate post-conflict state, causes of conflict at

national and regional level continue to thrive and persist. The following section explains the education system in the country, how it evolved and how it is currently organized.

The Education system in Uganda

Uganda's formal education system was introduced by missionaries at the end of the 18th century, and developed by colonialists through most of the first half of the 19th century. The colonialists developed an education system that was mainly to develop a class of clerical officers for the colonial government. The country gained independence at the end of 1962, and since then, the government has been in charge of education. The education sector has undergone numerous changes in the curriculum, funding, and eventually the involvement of the private sector in the provision of education.

Primary and secondary education (up to senior four) is compulsory for all citizens under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) which was introduced in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education (USE) programs. The curriculum and instructional materials for the primary and post-primary levels are developed by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoE&S), which has developed education policies, strategies, laws, and regulations.

As a means of increasing the number of pupils attending primary school, the government of Uganda in 1997 introduced Universal Primary Education (UPE), which has resulted in a steady increase in pupil enrolment from 3 million in 1996to 7.9 million in 2008. However, UPE created a demand for universal post-primary education as more pupils were completing the primary education level. In order to ensure equitable provision of quality education and training to all Ugandan pupils who successfully completed the primary education level, the government in 2007started implementing the Universal Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET) program. As a result, the gross enrolment rate (GER) in schools is steadily increasing, with the government putting more emphasis and funding in the education sector (Ayorekire and Twinomuhangi 2012).

Structure of the education system

The government of Uganda is responsible for education through the Ministry of Education and Sports. It supervises both public and private educational institutions. The official levels are: pre-primary education (entirely managed by the private sector) and takes three years, primary education which takes seven years, secondary education (Lower secondary or Ordinary level which takes four years, and Advanced level which takes two years). Tertiary education includes Business, Technical, Vocational Education Training (BTVET) institutes (community polytechnics, farm schools, technical colleges and vocational institutes, colleges of commerce, health training institutes, and other specialized training institutions in forestry, fisheries, wildlife, meteorology, and survey offering diploma and certificate programmes), and Universities offering diploma and degree programmes. Primary, post-primary and secondary education institutions are directly supervised by the Ministry of Education and Sports whereas tertiary institutions and universities are supervised by the National Council for Higher Education.

Image: a lower secondary school classroom.

Apart from the formal institutionalized education, the government also has legal provisions for the non-formal education. The Education Act (2008) creates a framework for the non-formal education. Two non-formal education programmes are recognised in Uganda. Firstly, the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) is a non-formal education programme targeting 6-18-year-old children of nomadic pastoral communities in Karamoja region of Uganda. The programme was conceptualized to bridge the gap between the rigid formal eduation delivery arrangement and the semi-nomadic pastoral lifestyle where household economies rest sub] stantially on role fulfilled by children (Bitamazire 2004). The programme uses aspects of indigenous knowledge and the local

environment and blends it with aspects of numeracy and literacy. Study times are flexible to allow children perform traditional tasks of cattle herding.

Secondly, the Basic Education for Urban Poverty Areas (BEUPA) non-formal education programme has been developed for the urban poor children who may not afford to pay fees and other material requirements in the formal school system. This is however being implemented in Kampala (the capital city only), excluding other cities which have children living under urban poverty. The Kampala Capital City Authority regulates this programme, and only one BEUPA centre was in operation in 2008 yet the programme was established in 1998 (Huntington 2008).

The Education sector is governed by the Ministry of Education and Sports (Government of Uganda). The Ministry governs education at the levels of pre-primary, primary, post-primary, and secondary. Tertiary level is supervised by the National Council for Higher Education. These bodies govern education institutions whether public or private.

Image: A Secondary school classroom. Authors' personal collection.

Policy decisions about the curriculum are generated by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), a government body tasked with developing curricular for primary and secondary schools. The NCDC is under the Ministry of Education and Sports. After generating policy proposals, they are submitted to the Cabinet, and if approved, it becomes operational. Legislation on the curriculum follows the same procedure, and when approved by cabinet, is submitted to Parliament to be passed into law. The curriculum policies are therefore centralized. No local governments are allowed to generate policy issues from the grassroots. Curricular for

universities and other tertiary institutions is generated by individual institutions and approved by the National Council for Higher Education.

Aims of the education system

The broad aims of the education system in Uganda are eradication of illiteracy, promotion of scientific, technical, and cultural knowledge; promotion of national unity; and promotion of moral values.

The conceptual frameworks guiding education policy are the following:

1. Pan-Africanism: The belief in a unified Africa under the same political and economic organization. Regional integration is highly emphasized and, accordingly, the East African Community (a regional bloc) is greatly emphasized.

2. Economic emancipation of the population from poverty is another philosophy. Accordingly, all curricular have an aspect of entrepreneurship education embedded in them.

Generally, the education policies have been largely driven by the political agenda of the country than the SDGs agenda. For example, the introduction of one of the secondary school subjects called Entrepreneurship has been politically promoted by the National Resistance Movement (the ruling party) with the aim of popularizing the aspect of "wealth creation", a concept developed to "eradicate poverty" and attain "economic emancipation" of the citizens. Similarly, the subject called History and Political Education has been developed in order to mainly promote the political ends of the current government where aspects of "patriotism" have been embedded in the syllabus.

The educational policies in the country have changed not because they must be aligned to the SDGs, but because sometimes there is lobbying and funds provided by development partners, the government takes advantage of this and develops the policies; and by default, SDGs end up being embedded in the policies.

Justice

Key issues or events related to evolution of environmental education in Uganda

The UNESCO implemented Basic Education Integrated into Rural Development (BEIRD) project at Namutamba Primary Teachers College in 1970s

could be regarded as the origin of environmental education in Uganda and was intended to integrate students with their physical and biological environments according to the assessment report of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD). Thereby, environmental science or science of nature was formally taught to pupils and students in schools in Uganda. Nevertheless, there was a new dawn and refocusing when the National Environment Action Planning (NEAP) originated in Uganda in the early 1980s with support from International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Thereby from 1995, Uganda continued to enact laws that support the growth of environmental management and environmental education in the country. Some of the sustainable environmental management laws enacted in Uganda include "The National Environmental Act, Cap 153 of May 1995 which parts of its policy thrust included the promotion of public awareness through formal, non-formal and informal types of education on issues pertaining to the environment and ensuring that environmental awareness should be an integral part of education.

Whereas in Uganda at present the involvement of learners in issues of ecological sustainability, social justice and good governance in primary and secondary school could be regarded as poor, most of the tertiary institutions in have creditable environmental protection and management courses for the development of environmental professionals, researchers, and practitioners.

The main issue related to environmental degradation is wetland and natural forest encroachment by settlements and industrial developments. Over 80% of the people living adjacent to wetland areas in Uganda directly use wetland resources for their household food security needs. In addition to supporting food and water security, wetlands also support income generation and employment (UBOS 2010).

Peace building and education

Since independence in 1962, there have been several attempts to reform the education sector in Uganda. The 1989 Education Policy Review Commission Report in conjunction with the 1992 Government White Paper on Education in Uganda laid the foundation for education reform over the last two decades. Uganda's educational reforms concomitant with curriculum change have to be placed in the wider political-economy context pertaining in Sub-Saharan Africa from the 1990s. Forces of globalisation including international pressure to introduce multi-party elections led states to commit, rhetorically at least, to the concepts of liberal democracy and market openness. In this endeavour, education came to be seen as an essential ingredient for economic and social development - and only recently also as an integral part of sustainable peace. The Integration of Peace building into Education Policies and Programmes.

As in many other conflict-affected countries, education in Uganda was initially seen as an essential ingredient for economic and social development. Only recently have policies been drafted to address the integration of peace building into the education sector even to some extent. To give a few examples, the Ministerial Statement (2012-13) acknowledges the need for clearer dissemination of policies related to disadvantaged and conflict-affected areas. At the same time the MoES (Ministry of Education and Sports) created a careers guidance and counselling department with a mandate that includes the provision of counselling services in schools as well as the training of teachers to handle issues of conflict. In addition, Uganda's school curriculum incorporates themes on conflict and peace. More recently, the UNICEF Peacebuilding Education and Advocacy (PBEA) programme also played a serious role in integrating aspects of peacebuilding into future education sector policies. These positive achievements notwithstanding, the role of education in peacebuilding continues to be challenged by slow and weak policy implementation in areas such as: teacher training and capacities, infrastructure, socio-psychological support for both teachers and students, and education and livelihood generation for youth.

Image: A secondary school building.

The current national curriculum incorporates aspects of peacebuilding to some extent. Great emphasis is placed on inter-personal relationships, attitudes of peace at the individual level, or within school and community environments. Peacebuilding is approached and used as a pedagogical tool towards conflict prevention but not as a means of coming to terms with a conflict-shattered past.

Groups who are excluded or overlooked in policies and services

The Government has set up an Equal Opportunities Commission to address issues of exclusion and marginalization, mainly targeting small indigenous communities and disparities in pay for civil servants across the public service sector. However, the Commission has not yet concluded its work and there is no report produced yet. In order to attain economic inclusion of the people who have been affected by war, there are a number of government-funded economic programmes in northern Uganda. There are on-going economic recovery programmes for the northern Uganda region which was affected by a twenty-year civil war (1986-2006). There is the government programme called the Peace, Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP) which encompasses both social and economic aspects of post-war recovery. Aspects of justice and reconciliation are, apart from using the mainstream formal justice system of the government, handled using the traditional Acholi Mato Oput alternative justice system.

References

Bitamazire N, J. 2004. *Strengthening the delivery of services contributing to the realization of the human rights: The case of Alternative basic education for Karamoja*. Paper presented at the CRHR and UNDP seminar on good governance for the promotion of human rights from 14th to 15th September 2004, Seoul.

Biziouras, N. and Birger, N. 2013. Peacebuilding through education in post conflict Northern Uganda: The importance of placing war-affected youth in community-oriented schools. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review,* 3(2), 47-68. doi:10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.3.2.47.

Datzberger, S., McCully, A., Smith A. 2015. *Education and Peace building in Uganda: Country Report.* Ulster University.

Human Rights Watch. 2014. *How can we survive here? The impacts of mining on human rights in Karamoja.* Kampala. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/02/03/how-can-we-survive-here/impact-mining-human-rights-karamoja-uganda.

Huntington, E. 2008. *Educating the forgotten: Non-formal Education in Urban Kampala*. School of international training, Kampala.

Knutzen, A. and Smith, A. 2012. *Uganda conflict analysis.* Advisory Consortium for Conflict Analysis, Kampala.

Kuhari, C. W., Bettingeri T. L., Lehnhardti K., Tracy O. and Cox D. 2010. Evaluating for long-term impact of an environmental education program at the Kalinzu forest reserve, Uganda, *American Journal of Primatology* 72: 407-413.

Lindemann, S. 2011. Just another change of guard? Broad-based politics and civil war in Museveni's Uganda. *African Affairs*, 110(440), 387-416.

Ayorekire, J. and Twinomuhangi, R. 2012. Uganda: Educational reform, the rural–urban digital divide, and the prospects for GIS in schools. In *International perspectives on teaching and learning with GIS in secondary schools*, 283-289. Springer, Dordrecht. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226371710_Uganda_Educational_Reform_the_Rural-Urban_Digital_Divide_and_the_Prospects_for_GIS_in_Schools [accessed Jan 04 2021].

Shaw, T. M. and Mbabazi, P. K. 2007. Two Ugandas and a liberal peace: Lessons from Uganda about conflict and development at the start of a new century. *Global Society*, 21(4), 567–578.