

COMBATING CHILD LABOUR THROUGH EDUCATION IN UGANDA

A POLICY BRIEF



International
Labour
Organization

The challenge of child labour

The challenges of reducing child labour and ensuring all children receive education are closely linked. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics a total of 2 million children - approximately 16% of all children - are involved in work classed as child labour.¹ Only limited progress has been made in recent years in reducing the rate of children's employment, it decreased by just 1.4% in the period 2006-2012.²

Over the past years Uganda has made important progress in expanding education provision. The introduction of Universal Primary Education saw a boost to education enrolment for younger children, and the more recent efforts to establish Universal Secondary education have also been very important. However at the same time major challenges remain with Uganda experiencing the highest rate of school drop-out in Africa. A recent monitoring report on EFA said that in Uganda fewer than one in three children were expected to reach the last grade of primary school.³

A recent study in Uganda by UNICEF and other organisations reported.

“Child labour is also a significant factor that leads to school dropouts. It is noted that most children after reaching the age of 10 and above prefer making money other than going to school. This is a very serious issue cross cutting in all the regions of Uganda, children are engaged in activities like farming, quarrying, pretty business among others in order to earn a living....”

If child labour is a significant factor in school dropout, it follows that national and local efforts to improve education participation need also to take account of, and respond to, the child labour challenge.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKING CHILDREN IN UGANDA

- Among children of primary education approximately 30% are working as well as attending school.
- Children in rural areas are three times more likely to be in employment than their peers in cities and towns (34 % against 11 %)
- There are substantial regional differences. In Kampala only 3% of children are in employment compared to 30% in Eastern region and 45% in the Central region.
- Working children are mostly unpaid family workers (87%). Only 2% are in paid work.
- 96% of working children aged 6-13 are in agriculture.
- Children's employment rises steeply with age, reaching more than 49% at age 13
- Children's involvement in employment does not differ appreciably by sex in the younger age group. Girls aged 6-13 years are as likely to work as boys..

Source: Understanding Children's Work (UCW) and Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS): *Understanding children's work and youth employment outcomes in Uganda* (Kampala, 2014).

¹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS): *The National Labour Force and Child Activities Survey 2011/12*. (Kampala, UBOS, 2013). Available at: www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_IPEC_PUB_26415/lang--en/index.htm.

² Understanding Children's Work (UCW) and Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS): *Understanding children's work and youth employment outcomes in Uganda*. (Kampala, 2014). Available at: www.ucw-project.org/attachment/Uganda_report_child_labor_youth_employment20141016_154929.pdf.

³ EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013-14, page 58.

National policy

The government of Uganda has established a legal framework to address child labour. The Employment Act No. 6, 2006 says that no child below 14 shall be employed other than in light work supervised by an adult. Light work is permissible from age 12. The Employment (Employment of Children 2012) Act further elaborates provisions on employment of a child.

Uganda has also established a National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst forms of child labour which includes a strong focus on education as the key strategy to tackle child labour, carrying the sub title “making schooling the principal occupation of children”

The Plan details a range of factors which have generated child labour in Uganda, including issues of poverty, high population growth, the impact of HIV/AIDS on poor households and internal conflicts.

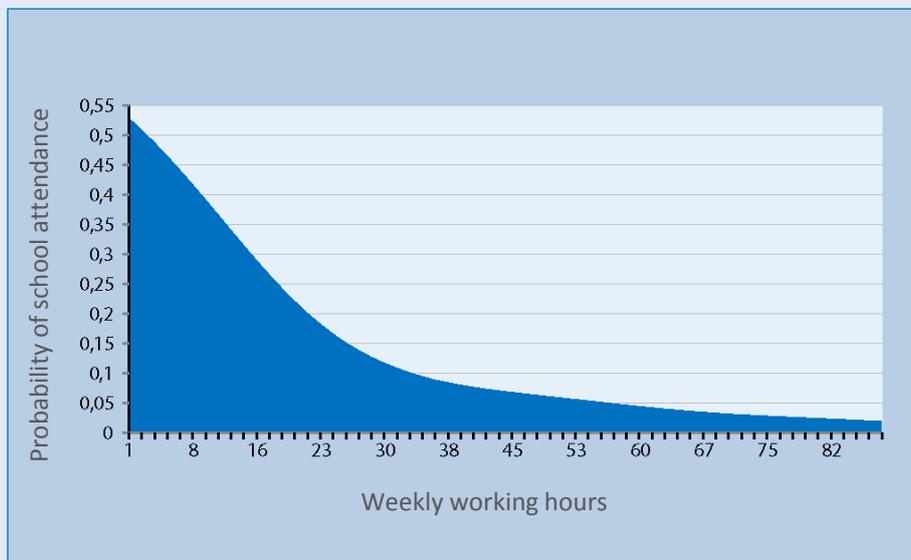
The Education sector plan for the period to 2015 put priority on improving quality of primary education, developing in schools the skills and competencies which would enable young people to join the labour force or continue education, and increasing access to post primary education. Discussions are now taking place on a new Education Sector plan which is again likely to reflect concerns with both quality and access and at both primary and secondary levels.

The recently developed National Strategy for Girls Education (2015-2019) identifies child labour and domestic work as key issues in acting as a barrier to girls’ participation in education and calls for action to address such barriers.

How does children’s work act as a barrier to education?

The school attendance rates of working children are often significantly lower than those of non-working children. In Uganda this is particularly the case as children grow older, from age 13. This is particularly relevant in the context of efforts to expand secondary education as it could present a significant obstacle. Data suggests the likelihood of a working child attending school falls off sharply as the number of hours he or she works increases.⁴

FIGURE 1. School attendance is negatively correlated with the time children spend actually working



Source: UCW calculations based on Uganda National Labour Force and Child Activities Survey 2011/12 (2013).

⁴ Understanding Children’s Work (UCW) and Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS): *Understanding children’s work... (2014)*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

ILO experience

The ILO has for some years cooperated with the Government, social partners and civil society to build awareness of the challenge of child labour and has supported a range of local level programmes to provide services to children in or at risk of child labour.

Most recently in 2011 the ILO project on *Combating child labour through education* has supported various programmes which included:

- Working with community based partners to provide services to children in or at risk of child labour and to their families
- Working with civil society partners to monitor the impact of these programmes, identifying lessons learned, and discussing the issues in the Education Sector review process
- Working with MGLSD and MoES to develop institutional capacity and to strengthen linkages between the Ministries on child labour and access to education issues
- Working with Employers' and workers' organisations on awareness raising campaign to reduce child labour through education.
- Working to improve the knowledge base, supporting work of the inter agency Understanding Children's Work project, FENU and UWEZO in various work which has contributed to developing knowledge and awareness of the need to tackle child labour.

Policy implications

During the 2013-2014 the inter agency UCW project (ILO, UNICEF, World bank) together with UBOS made a major assessment looking at child labour, education and youth employment challenges in Uganda. Some of the key issues identified as requiring action are summarised below.

- Continued efforts are needed to remove access barriers to schooling for all children, within the framework provided by the National Development Plan and the Education Sector Strategic Plan. Increasing school coverage remains a challenge, particularly in outlying areas where child labour rates are particularly high.
- Among the factors which hinder children's access to and participation in education are the direct costs that parents must bear in the form of non-tuition dues and levies, school books, uniforms and other items.
- The need to improve the quality of education is recognised in government plans. There are concerns regarding the declining quality of education owing, to large class sizes, and lack of appropriate skills by teachers. There are particular challenges in rural areas.
- Second chance learning opportunities through transitional education need to be scaled up to reach former working children and other out-of-school children
- The importance of social protection in reducing child labour is well-established. The government has prioritized social protection expansion and if tailored correctly can boost school enrolment and attendance.
- Awareness-raising is needed as part of efforts to build a broad consensus for change. Public awareness about what constitutes child labour and its cost to children and society remains limited. Communication efforts are needed at both national and local levels.
- Social mobilisation - Social mobilisation is critical in engaging a broad range of social actors in efforts against child labour. Social actors, including, for example, trade unions, employers' organizations, NGOs, faith-based organisations, teachers' and the mass media also have important roles to play in a broader societal effort against child labour at both national and local community level.



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