Understanding children’s work and youth employment outcomes in Uganda

Executive summary

June 2014
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Overcoming the twin challenges of child labour and youth employment will be critical to Uganda’s progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Estimates presented in this report indicate that over 2.4 million children aged 6-13 years are in employment. At the same time, most young people in the 18 to 30 years age range remain trapped in informal sector jobs offering little prospect for advancement or for escaping poverty and exploitation. The effects of child labour and poor youth employment outcomes are well-documented: both can lead to social vulnerability, societal marginalisation and deprivation, and both can permanently impair lifetime patterns of employment and pay.

2. The report examines the related issues of child labour and youth employment in the context of Uganda. Guided by observed outcomes in terms of schooling, work activities and status in the labour market, the report considers the economic as well as the social determinants of child labour and youth employment. The 2011/2012 Uganda Labour Force and Child Activities (NLF&CAS) survey is the primary data source for the report. Data from this survey permit a comprehensive and nationally-representative picture of the child labour and youth employment situation. The report builds on previous research cooperation in Uganda involving the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, ILO-IPEC and UCW in 2008, and on the range of smaller-scale non-representative surveys addressing the situation of Ugandan children and youth.

Children’s involvement in work and schooling

3. Children’s involvement in employment remains very common in Uganda. Thirty-one percent of children aged 6-13 years, about 2.4 million children in absolute terms, are in employment according to NLF&CAS 2011/2012. Most of these children are also in child labour in accordance Ugandan legislation and as many as three-quarters are exposed to hazardous conditions in the workplace. Only limited progress against children’s employment has occurred in recent years. Children’s involvement in work and schooling from the age of five years are provided in in the Statistical Appendix.

---


2 Children in employment is a broad concept covering all market production and certain types of non-market production (principally the production of goods for own use) (see also Panel 2). It includes forms of work in both the formal and informal sectors, as well as forms of work both inside and outside family settings. For reasons of comparability across countries, the employment definition used in this Report does not include the collection of firewood and water fetching.

3 The Report focuses primarily on children aged from six years, rather than from five years, as six years is the age at which compulsory schooling begins in Uganda. The lower bound of six years therefore permits assessing the interplay between employment and schooling. Statistics on children’s involvement in employment from the age of five years are provided in in the Statistical Appendix.
employment decreased by 1.4 percentage points in the period 2006-2012, accompanied by an almost equivalent increase in the school attendance rate.

Table 1. Child activity status, 6-13 years age group, by sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity status</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only employment</td>
<td>9,861</td>
<td>133,332</td>
<td>82,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only schooling</td>
<td>852,836</td>
<td>4,020,687</td>
<td>2,384,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment and schooling</td>
<td>95,822</td>
<td>2,185,291</td>
<td>1,127,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither activity</td>
<td>40,083</td>
<td>473,124</td>
<td>278,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in employment</td>
<td>106,027</td>
<td>2,334,643</td>
<td>1,225,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total in school</td>
<td>956,211</td>
<td>6,234,311</td>
<td>3,656,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total out-of-school children</td>
<td>50,665</td>
<td>608,793</td>
<td>362,059</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (a) Refers to all children in employment, regardless of school status; (b) refers to all children attending school, regardless of employment status; and (c) refers to all children out of school, regardless of employment status.


4. There are several important characteristics of children’s employment in Uganda of relevance for policy. First, children’s employment is mainly, although not exclusively, a rural phenomenon. Children in rural areas are three times more likely to be in employment than their peers in cities and towns (34 percent against 11 percent). Second, there are substantial regional differences. In Kampala, the largest city and capital of Uganda, only three percent of children are in employment against 30 percent in Eastern region, 31 percent in Western region and 45 percent of children in the Central region. Third, the percentage of children in employment rises steeply with age, reaching more than 49 percent at the age of 13 years. Numbers of very young children in work are nonetheless far from negligible. Already at the age of six years, almost one in ten children is involved in employment.

5. Working children are concentrated primarily in family agricultural work. Nearly 96 percent of employed children aged 6-13 years work in agriculture. The small remaining fraction of children in employment (four percent) are distributed across commerce, manufacturing and services. The predominance of agriculture is a particular concern in light of the fact that this sector is one of the three most hazardous in which to work at any age, along with construction and mining. The overwhelming majority of children in employment (88 percent) work for their families as unpaid labourers. Around ten percent of children in employment are self-employed and only two percent work for a wage.

6. Hazardous conditions are alarmingly common in the workplaces where children are found in Uganda, posing a direct threat to their health and safety. In all, 75 percent of 6-13 year-olds in employment, 981,000 children in absolute terms, are exposed

---

to dangerous conditions such as dust and smoke, insect or snake bites, and used dangerous tools. Exposure to dangerous conditions is highest among those in construction, mining and quarrying and for those in agriculture. A significant share of children – 13 percent of all 6-13 year-olds in employment – also report experiencing some form of verbal or physical violence in the workplace. Younger (6-13 year-old) children do not appear more protected in the workplace than their older counterparts - they face a level of exposure to hazardous work conditions similar to that of adolescents.

7. As a consequence, Ugandan working children face a very high risk of ill-health and injury related to work. Working children face about a 47 percent chance of suffering ill-health related to work over the course of a 12-month period. Younger children are at much greater risk (70 percent) of work-related illness and injury than their older counterparts (39 percent). The risk of ill-health among child workers appears to depend on the type of work they are involved in: incidence is highest for the agriculture sector (57 percent) and, perhaps surprisingly, for unpaid work within the family unit (61 percent).

8. Children’s employment is associated with compromised education, especially in terms of the transition to secondary (i.e., to non-compulsory) education. An attendance gap opens up from age 13 years favouring children attending school exclusively. The gap increases from five percentage points at age 13 years to almost 30 percentage points at age 17 years. Ugandan working children also have lower school life expectancy (SLE). At each age up to the age of 16 years, the difference in school life expectancy is of about one year. Data on average grade-age show that children in employment also lag slightly behind their non-working counterparts in terms of grade progression.

9. There are large numbers of out of school children in Uganda, in part due to the demands of work. Some 193,000 (almost five percent of) children in the 10-13 years age group are out of school. Around 78 percent work in some form of productive activity, i.e., in employment, household chores or both, again underscoring the close link between getting children out of work and getting them into school. Learning needs for out-of-school children are very significant: 40 percent of out-of-school children suffer what UNESCO terms “education poverty”, i.e., possess less than four years of education, the minimum amount of school time considered by UNESCO as necessary for acquiring basic literacy skills. It is likely that the education poverty indicator actually underestimates the second chance learning needs of out-

---

6 The general ill health variable reflects illnesses (such as skin problems, eye problems, breathing problems, stomach problems, diarrhoea, fever, extreme fatigue, or other illnesses) or injuries (such as superficial injuries or open wounds, fractures, dislocations, sprains or stains, burns, corrosions, scalds or frostbite back/muscle pain or other injuries) in the last 12 months. The work-related ill-health variable reflects illnesses/injuries in the last 12 months and, that, in the opinion of the respondent, occurred because of work.

7 We consider the narrower group of 10-13 year-olds to eliminate most potential late entrants.

8 We consider the 10-17 years age group to provide a more complete picture of second chance learning needs of children.
of-school children, as basic literacy skills alone are less and less an adequate skills floor for successful entry into the labour market.

10. Econometric evidence\(^9\) points to some of the factors influencing household decisions to involve their children in work or school:

- **Household wealth.** Children from poorest households are more than eight percentage points less likely to go to school exclusively and almost three percentage points more likely to participate in employment exclusively compared to children from richest households. The results underscore that children’s earnings or productivity can play an important role in household survival strategies among low-income families in Uganda.

- **Household ownership of livestock.** Children belonging to household owning animals are more likely to be in employment and less likely to be exclusively attending school. One reason for this is that when a household owns livestock there is an increase in the demand for labour within the family unit, outweighing the income effect associated with livestock ownership.

- **Household head education.** Higher household education levels make it more likely that a child attends school and less likely that he or she is in employment.

- **Internal migrants.\(^10\)** Migration has a negative impact on children’s time use. Migrant children aged 6-13 years are about four percentage points less likely to attend school than non-migrant children and at the same time are about two percentage points more likely than non-migrant children to work in employment.

- **Illness of mother and/or father.** The parents’ temporary or permanent unavailability for work due to illness appears to push children out of school and into work to support the family income or alternatively to keep children from going to school to take care of the sick.

- **Household composition.** The presence of elderly household members significantly increases children’s risk of employment and denied schooling. This result suggests that in multi-generational households, the social vulnerabilities associated with aging (e.g., loss of the ability to earn income, declining physical health) can increase the social vulnerability of the household as a whole, and can force families to rely on child labour as a coping strategy.

- **Access to basic services.** Access to basic services has a dramatic impact on the likelihood of children working and attending school. Electricity access is particularly important in this regard. Access to electricity reduces the likelihood of involvement in employment among 6-13 year-olds by almost 22 percentage

---

\(^9\) For detailed information on the model, see Cigno, A.: Rosati, F.C. 2005, *The economics of child labour* (New York, NY, Oxford University Press). The analysis carried out in this section is, obviously, conditioned by the information available. Notwithstanding the extensiveness of the survey utilised, potentially important variables are missing. In particular, information on the relative price of child work is difficult to capture: indicators for returns to education, work and household chores are not easily available (for a discussion of the role played by unobservables refer to Deb and Rosati, *Determinants of Child Labour and School Attendance: The Role of Household Observables*, December 2002).

\(^10\) Due to data limitations, migration refers to internal migration.
points while making it two percentage points more likely that a child attends school. Access to tap water is also very relevant. Children aged 6-13 years from households with tap water are five percentage points less likely to work and more than four percentage points more likely to attend school.

- **Household employment benefits.** Children in the 6-13 years age range belonging to households where the head is an employee with social security and/or medical benefits are almost six percentage points less likely to work in employment compared to children from other households.

11. Parents’ decisions concerning whether to involve their children in school or work do not appear influenced by *gender considerations* in Uganda. Similarly, orphan status does not appear to affect the risk of employment or denial of education when other child-, household- and community-related background characteristics are controlled for.

### Child labour

12. **Child labour is a narrower concept than children’s employment or work, and refers to work that is injurious, negative or undesirable to children as set out in national legislation and international labour standards.** Lower-bound estimates of child labour based on national child labour legislation suggest that child labour is very common in Uganda. Some of 1.5 million children below the age of 12 years are in employment, 500,000 children aged 12-13 years work in excess of 14 hours and/or are in hazardous work and one million children aged 14-17 years are in hazardous work. Summing these three groups yields a total of almost three million children aged 5-17 years in child labour, accounting for more than 24 percent of all children in this age range.

---

11 Three main international conventions – the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms) and ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age) – define child labour and provide a framework for efforts against it.

12 And following the global guidelines for child labour measurement (Global guidelines for child labour statistics are set out in Resolution II (2008) of the Eighteenth International Conference of Child Labour Statisticians (ICLS)).
Youth employment outcomes (age 18-30)

13. **Ugandan young people face a number of challenges entering the labour market.** Levels of human capital remain low for many Ugandan young people, compromising their future prospects. A high proportion of urban youth are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and therefore at risk of social marginalisation. Unemployment is high in urban areas and in the capital Kampala, particularly when discouraged workers are taken into account. Unemployment spells are very long for many youth without jobs, leading to the risk of skill depreciation and making it more difficult to ultimately find work. Youth employment is dominated by poor quality unremunerated work concentrated in the agriculture sector. Almost all youth jobs are in the informal sector and therefore have limited access to social or job security. Educated young people face greater difficulty securing jobs, but the quality of the jobs they eventually do secure is typically better.

14. **Labour force participation is very high among Ugandan youth and education participation is relatively low.** More than four of every five 18-30 year-olds are economically active. Among this group, most (68 percent of all youth) are in employment exclusively while percent are attending school; only a relatively small proportion continues their education while working (11 percent) and an even smaller share (three percent) is unemployed.
15. While labour force participation is similar male and female youth, female youth are more likely to leave school earlier and to be engaged in household chores. Those female youth who are economically active face a higher unemployment rate than their male peers. Gender differences increase when taking into consideration discouraged workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population category</th>
<th>Labour mkt. participation (% pop.)</th>
<th>Education participation (% pop.)</th>
<th>Inactive and out of education (% pop.)</th>
<th>NEET(%) (% pop.)</th>
<th>Employment rate (% active)</th>
<th>Unemployment rate (% active)</th>
<th>Relaxed unemployment rate(%) (% expanded active)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>93.5</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>95.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrated</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>93.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not migrated</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampala</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>84.8</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (a) NEET refers to youth who are not in education or employment. It is a measure that therefore reflects both youth who are inactive and out of education as well as youth who are unemployed. (b) Relaxed unemployment considers both unemployed workers and all individuals who are not working and are available for work. The relaxed unemployment rate is the sum of unemployed workers and not working individuals available for work expressed as a percentage of the expanded active population. The expanded active population, in turn, comprises not working individuals available to work and the active population.
Source: UCM calculations based on Uganda Labour Force and Child Activities Survey (NLFS/CAS) 2011/2012

16. Trends over the course of the last six years indicate that young people are staying in school longer. Between 2006 and 2012, school attendance increased by eight percentage points and labour force participation decreased by four percentage points.

17. A number of factors appear to influence finding a job upon leaving education. A regression model was estimated to assess the link between the probability of youth employment and a set of individual and household characteristics. Key results are summarised below.

- **Youth age, sex and marital status.** The probability of employment rises with age. Female youth have a lower probability of employment, owing to the fact that many more female youth transition from education to domestic work in their own homes while more male youth transition from education to the labour force. Married youth are more likely overall to be employed, but the opposite pattern prevails for married female youth. Again, the result reflects the culturally-driven tendency for females to remain at home to undertake domestic responsibilities.

- **Place of residence.** Youth living in urban areas are less likely than their rural counterparts to be employed, again reflecting underlying differences in the rural and urban labour markets for youth. However, it is worth recalling...
that in rural areas one major issue is underemployment, which is not captured by the regression model.

- **Household composition.** Young persons with more 6-13 year-old siblings are more likely to work. These results suggest that young persons play an important role in helping maintain dependent children within their households.

- **Migration status.** Migrant status does not have a significant impact on the likelihood of employment when other individual and household factors are controlled for.

- **Education level.** Higher education levels do not increase the probability of employment. However, although more educated youths may face more problems securing jobs, the quality of their jobs is likely to be better.

- **Vocational training.** Youths who have learned a trade or technical skill at a vocational school/course (or from a friend or family member or from an NGO or community organization) are more likely to be employed.

- **Local labour demand.** Local labour demand has a strong positive impact on the chances of youth securing employment, underscoring that youth employment is driven in important part by the state of the broader labour market. Labour supply, on the other hand does not appear to have a significant impact on the likelihood of youth employment.

18. **About four percent of young people in the labour force are without jobs.** But this low overall unemployment rate disguises important differences by sex and residence. Unemployment rates are much higher in urban areas than in rural areas – almost 12 percent versus two percent. In the capital city Kampala the unemployment rate is as high as 16 percent, while in other regions it varies from five percent in the Central region to one percent in the Western region. Within urban areas, the female youth unemployment rate is ten percentage points higher than that of males in the same age range. Levels of “relaxed” unemployment, which also include discouraged workers are much higher. The relaxed unemployment rate stands at almost seven percent for the 18-30 years population as a whole, rising to 24 percent in the capital city of Kampala and to 27 percent for females in urban areas.

19. **A variety of measures suggest that the quality of jobs held by Ugandan young people is generally low.** Youth underemployment, sometimes referred to as “hidden unemployment”, affects 12 percent of employed youth in Uganda. Only about one

---

13 The “relaxed” youth unemployment rate is a more complete measure of the youth unemployment problem because it also captures discouraged workers, i.e. those available to work but who have given up actively seeking work. Relaxed unemployment considers both unemployed workers and all individuals who are not working, but would accept a job if offered. The relaxed unemployment rate is the sum of unemployed workers and not working individuals available to work expressed as a percentage of the expanded active population. The expanded active population, in turn, comprises inactive individuals available to work and the active population.

14 A person is considered in a situation of under-employment, in turn, if he or she works less than 40 hours a week and would like to work more hours than he or she actually does.
in five rural youth work off the farm. A wide body of evidence indicates that the productivity and profitability in non-farm enterprises is generally better than in the farm sector, as are average wages and working conditions. Finally, 98 percent of all youth jobs are informal in nature. The formality of employment is perhaps the best proxy for job quality, associated with more job stability, higher income and access to job benefits.

20. **The timing and length of youth transitions to working life vary considerably.** Two-thirds of youth that have transited to a first job found that first job immediately, with no intervening period of unemployment, inactivity or involvement in household chores. This share is third-highest of the seven SSA countries where data are available. This high share of “direct transiter” should not, however, be interpreted as positive per se, as it is likely driven in important part by poverty and by the consequent inability of many young persons to “afford” a period of unemployment or inactivity. The average transition time is 31 months for those who do not find a job immediately upon leaving school, 3rd longest of the seven countries included. The variation around this mean, however, is large. The duration for the 25th percentile of the distribution is eight months but rises to 37 months for the 75th percentile.

21. **Levels of human capital remain low for many Ugandan young people, compromising their future prospects.** Almost 13 percent of young people not currently in education have no schooling and 56 percent have primary education or less. Female youth are particularly disadvantaged in this regard – the share of female youth with no education is eight percent higher than the share of male youth. Low human capital is more pronounced in rural areas, where 15 percent of youth not currently in education have no schooling and 62 percent have primary education or less. A number of regions also lag behind national averages in this regard. In the Northern region, for example, one quarter of all youth have no education.

22. More educated young people appear to face greater initial difficulty securing jobs but ultimately have a better chance of securing quality employment. Unemployment is highest among youth with the most education, a reflection in part of mismatches between the skills produced by the education system and those needed in the labour market, and of the need for better mechanisms for bringing together young skilled job seekers and employers. Level of education is nonetheless clearly linked with job quality. The likelihood of paid work and of work in the tertiary sector both rises consistently with more education. Successive levels of educational attainment are also associated with higher earnings. The moves from primary to secondary and from completed secondary to tertiary education are associated with especially large jumps in earnings. More educated youth are more likely to enjoy

---

Informality is defined as including unpaid family workers, employees with no social security, paid leave or paid sick leave in case of illness or injury. This category also includes self-employed whose business is not registered for income tax and is not organized in the form of an incorporated enterprise.
formal sector employment, although even youth with more than secondary education are heavily concentrated in the informal sector.

Policy priorities for addressing child labour and youth employment concerns

23. Child labour and youth employment are closely linked, underscoring the importance of addressing the two issues hand in hand, following a lifecycle approach. The figure below illustrates key components of an integrated response to child labour and youth employment concerns. A set of child-centred policies is needed to promote schooling as an alternative to child labour, and, following from this, to ensure that children enter adolescence with the basic and life skills needed for further learning and practical living. This foundation is in turn crucial to the success of active labour market policies for promoting improved youth employment outcomes, and to ensuring that youth successfully transition from education into decent work in the labour market. This causal chain also works in the opposite direction: successful youth labour market outcomes can increase household incentives to invest in children’s education earlier in the lifecycle. The specific set of policy priorities for responding to child labour and to youth labour market concerns is discussed below.

Figure 1. An integrated response to child labour and youth employment problems

- Improving school access and quality
- Extending social protection
- Awareness raising and social mobilisation to build societal consensus against CL
- Strengthening policy and legislative frameworks as a foundation for action
- Strengthening child labour monitoring and inspections
- Skills development and technical and vocational education activities to address job-relevant skills constraints
- Entrepreneurial support to address constraints to business start-up and self-employment
- Job search support
- Public works programmes to help youth gain an initial foothold in the labour market
Policy priorities for addressing child labour

24. Five policy areas are especially relevant as part of an integrated response to child labour – education and second chance learning, social protection, public awareness, social mobilisation and inspections and monitoring – building on the foundation provided by adequate political commitment and institutional capacity. These policy areas are discussed in more detail below.

Education and second chance learning

- **Promote early childhood development (ECD).** Evidence from a range of developing countries suggests that early childhood education programmes can promote learning readiness, increase school enrolment and school survival, and help children away from work in their early years. In Uganda, expanding the coverage of ECD programmes remains an important challenge, particularly among children from poor households. While the government’s release of a National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (IECD) is a positive step, there is need for an accompanying action plan for resource mobilisation and for promoting implementation.

- **Promote equal access to education.** Continued efforts are needed to remove access barriers to schooling for all children, within the framework provided by the National Development Plan\(^{16}\) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan.\(^{17}\) Increasing school coverage remains a challenge, particularly in outlying areas and at the secondary level. Many rural secondary schools also lack basic school facilities such as desks, blackboards, chairs, drinking water, and toilet facilities. Among the other 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,\(^{18}\) school books, uniforms and other school items.

- **Address the quality of education.** There are concerns regarding the declining quality of education owing, inter alia, to large class sizes, teacher absenteeism and lack of appropriate skills by teachers particularly in rural areas. Improving quality education in Uganda will entail introducing reforms that gradually reduce large class sizes and improve teacher-pupil ratios, teacher training to strengthen their knowledge and skills and introducing methods of learning that encourage questioning and children’s participation. Again, these reforms are outlined in the government plans and the priority in moving forward is to effectively implement them across the education system.

---

\(^{17}\) ESSP, 2004/05-2014/2015.
\(^{18}\) UNESCO 2005 , UBOS 2006a
• **Support second chance learning opportunities through transitional education.** “Second chance” policies are needed to reach former working children and other out-of-school children with educational opportunities as part of broader efforts towards their social reintegration. Existing second chance programmes, including the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) programme, the Basic Education for Urban Poor Areas (BEUPA) programme and the Child Centred Alternative Non-formal Community-based Education (CHANCE), are limited in coverage, lack coordination and are not uniformly successful in terms of learning outcomes. There is a clear need for an expanded national second chance education strategy for children focused on transitional education.

**Social protection**

25. The importance of social protection in reducing child labour is well-established. Social protection instruments serve to prevent vulnerable households from having to resort to child labour as a buffer against poverty and negative shocks. The government has prioritized social protection expansion and in this context initiated a social protection programme known as the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) in 2011. SAGE, comprised of a Senior Citizens Grant and Vulnerable Families Grant, is being piloted in 14 districts. A recent evaluation of SAGE indicates that it is linked to improved household livelihoods and increased school enrolment. The programme offers an important basis for extending the social protection floor available to vulnerable households in the country.

**Public awareness**

26. Awareness raising is needed as part of efforts to build a broad consensus for change. At present, public awareness about what constitutes child labour and its cost to children and society remains limited in Uganda. Communication efforts are needed at both national and local levels. A mix of conventional (e.g., radio, television and print media) as well as of non-conventional communication channels (e.g., religious leaders, school teachers, community theatre, health care workers outreach) is important in order to achieving maximum outreach. Baseline information on local knowledge and cultural attitudes towards child labour is needed to tailor communication messages, and to evaluation changes in awareness and attitudes following communication activities.

**Social mobilisation**

27. Social mobilisation is critical to engaging a broad range of social actors in efforts against child labour. Social actors, including, for example, NGOs, faith-based organisations, teachers’ organizations, the mass media, trade unions, employers’ organizations, also have important roles to play in a broader societal effort against child labour. Care providers in direct contact with children, including teachers and health workers, are in an especially good position to identify and refer child
labourers, and therefore constitute particularly important allies in protecting children from child labour

**Labour inspections and monitoring**

28. While the Employment Act No.6 (2006) requires districts to appoint labour officers to provide technical advice to employers, the government’s actual capacity to monitor formal workplaces is limited, and the informal sector of the economy is largely outside formal inspection regimes. The current capacity for labour inspection and child labour follow-up therefore needs to be significantly strengthened, through both additional training and additional manpower, so that district labour officers and other specialised personnel can effectively enforce labour legislation and workplace safety standards, and follow-up on child labour infractions. Community monitoring systems also have an important role to play. These systems involve labour officers joining hands with local groups (e.g., community volunteers, religious leaders, women and youth groups, teachers, workers, employers, local leaders and district staff) to form broad-based child labour monitoring systems at the local level.

**Political commitment**

29. A political commitment at all levels is also needed to ensure that child labour reduction elimination occupies a prominent place in the national development agenda and is accorded adequate budgetary resources. In this context, the government released a National Child Labour Policy in 2006 and a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour 2012/13-2016/17. These documents, the product of consultations with NGOs, government institutions and other stakeholders, reflect the government commitment to eliminating child labour and provide a framework for national efforts towards this goal. The total budget for the NAP is 510.1 billion Ugandan Shillings for five years. However, limited funding from the government and lack of a clear resource mobilization strategy undermines its effective implementation.

**Institutional capacity**

30. While the National Child Labour Policy, the National Action Plan and other development plans provide solid bases for action, these frameworks are unlikely to be implemented effectively in the face of capacity constraints. Institutions require strengthening in a number of areas, including using data for strategic planning, policy and programme design, programme monitoring and evaluation, programme coordination, and the mainstreaming of child labour in broader development plans and programmes. Local governments are charged with initiating and implementing programmes for preventing child labour, and effectively building their capacity to play this role is therefore especially important to broader efforts against child
labour. Child labour committees exist in some districts, although with limited functionality. Most districts, however, have not integrated child labour concerns in their development plans and lack the financial and human resource capacity to effectively do so.

Policy priorities for addressing youth employment concerns

31. The many challenges facing Ugandan young people entering the labour market point to the need for active labour market policies aimed at improving youth labour market outcomes, building on the knowledge foundation acquired during childhood through improved basic education and preventing child labour. Four policy pillars are particularly relevant in this context, two addressing supply-side constraints to employment arising from inadequate or mismatched job skills or inadequate labour market information, and two addressing demand-side constraints to employment arising from low labour demand and limited entrepreneurial opportunities. Active labour market policies are designed to improve labour market outcomes for young people within existing institutional and macro-economic constraints; the broader structural economic reforms needed to reduce youth unemployment in the long run are beyond the scope of this Report.

32. It is worth highlighting that the Government is developing a National Action Plan (NAP) for Youth Employment within the overall framework of the National Employment Policy. However, the draft NAP has not been finalized and launched by the government, thus hindering effective planning, implementation and coordination of youth employment initiatives. Limited government commitment to funding youth employment activities is another key barrier to realizing the goal of youth employment in Uganda.

Skills development

33. Continued investment is needed in strengthening the capacity of the business technical vocational education and training (BTVET) system to effectively meet the skills requirements of Ugandan young people. The BTVET system is hampered by inadequate resources to provide the training most in demand by the labour market. Training consequently often focuses on low-cost skills mismatched to current and emerging labour market needs. Indeed, less than 40 percent of large and medium firms regard courses offered by BTVET institutions as relevant. The BTVET system also has insufficient programmes for agri-business development and informal sector employment, the two most important sub-sectors of the Ugandan labour market for

---

19 Rakai, Wakiso, Mbale were supported by ILO-IPEC in 2012 and integrated child labour concerns in the district development plan and budgets. Lira district was supported by International Rescue Committee to integrate child labour concerns in the district development plan and budget (ILO-IPEC 2012).

20 IYF, 2011.

21 MoES, 2011.
the foreseeable future. Insufficient engagement of employers, a rigid supply structure in the formal BTWET provider system and the lack of a systematic labour market information system are among the major challenges to increasing the demand-responsiveness of the BTWET system. The BTWET Strategic Plan (2011-2020) has prioritized improving youth employability by increasing the quality of skills provision. Ensuring the effective implementation of the Plan will therefore be critical to progress moving forward.

**Job search support**

34. One of the key challenges hindering effective transition of youth to the labour market is lack of labour market information. Labour market information is currently not systematically and regularly collected in Uganda. Available information is scarce and sketchy, especially on skill requirements. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) runs a manual labour market information system, but this system is not widely used or easily accessed by youth. The National Employment Policy contains plans to strengthen the capacity of MGLSD as the national and regional depository for labour and employment management information, but does not make clear how in practice labour market information will be shared with the job seekers. This points to the need for a full-fledged employment agency operated by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development responsible for providing timely and accurate information to job seekers about the available employment opportunities and the skills required. The agency would help increase the quantity and quality of job matches, reduce the spells and duration of unemployment and generally increase the efficiency of the labour market. Such an employment agency should be part of a broader package of employment services, guidance and career advice to help students, first job seekers and unemployed young people to make informed choices about their education and working lives.

**Public works programmes**

35. The large number of youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) points to the need for demand-side measures to improve employment opportunities. Labour-intensive public works programmes targeting young persons represent one important policy option in this context. Such programmes can provide both qualified and unqualified young people with an entry point into the labour market within broader efforts to reduce poverty and develop rural services infrastructure. Experience from public works programmes targeting youth outside Uganda indicate that adding mandatory technical, behavioural skills, financial literacy, or job search training to the public works initiatives can further increase their impact. There is lack of collaboration between Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Ministry of Transport and other ministries that implement public works programmes, meaning the potential of public works as a targeted employment measure for youth is under-exploited in Uganda. This is a policy area that merits further exploration within the context of the National Employment Policy and the draft National Action Plan (NAP) for Youth Employment.
Youth entrepreneurship and self-employment

36. Youth entrepreneurship represents an important strategy for expanding youth employment opportunities. A lack of adequate entrepreneurship skills and experience combined with poor access to financial services hinder youth entrepreneurship and self-employment. As a result, the role of youth entrepreneurs in the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has thus far been limited in Uganda. Rather, self-employed youth are concentrated in low-productivity and survival-type activities in the informal economy. Many policy measures for expanding entrepreneurial opportunities for young people in Uganda are spelled out in the National Employment Policy (NEP) and the draft National Action Plan (NAP) for Youth Employment. The NEP calls for support to young people, particularly female youth, to make transition from informal to formal employment through improved access to training, business development services, and access to low interest microfinance. The government has also made available a venture capital fund of Uganda Shillings 25 Billion to support growth of viable and sustainable small and medium enterprises by the youth in the private sector. In addition, the Youth Entrepreneurship Facility (YEF),22 supports small-scale youth entrepreneurship development projects implemented by youth-led organizations. These efforts provide an important basis for scaled-up efforts aimed at providing entrepreneurship opportunities for youth.

22 The Youth Entrepreneurship Facility is a three-year initiative undertaken with the support of the Africa Commission and the Youth Employment Network (YEN).