

## National Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda

### Policy Briefing Background

September 2014

This brief summarizes the revised edition (2013) of the *National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE)*, prepared and led by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in collaboration with UK-AID and the UN Joint Program on Gender Equality (UNJPGE).

### Girls' Education

Education for girls is a basic human right and should be interpreted as such by all stakeholders and duty bearers. In addition, it is established that there are many social benefits accruing from sustained improvements in girls' education. These include, but are not limited to, higher family incomes, greater economic productivity, better nutrition, delayed marriage, improved maternal outcomes and infant survival rates, together with overall improvements in education outcomes for children. Investing in girls' education therefore yields high returns and directly contributes to economic development.

### Strategy Background

The National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE 2004) aims to articulate Uganda's strategy to achieve the national goal of narrowing the gender gap in education by addressing the most pressing barriers to girls' education. Clustered in four essential dimensions, namely social & cultural factors, school related factors, political & economic factors as well as administrative factors. The strategy also acts as a plan of action, highlighting the role of different stakeholders in the sector, for a more coordinated promotion of girls' education.

Over the years, a number of emerging issues have been identified that prompted the revision of the strategy in 2013. These include: renewed emphasis on girls' education (nationally and internationally); emphasis on the quality of education; promotion of science & maths education; Skilling Uganda; and the persistence of barriers to girls' education. The revision was also intended to create a framework within which critical challenges such as gender based violence (GBV), teenage pregnancies and early marriages are decisively addressed. Finally, this revised version is expected to widen the coverage to all education sub-sectors, beyond primary and secondary.

### Situation Analysis

Uganda has made significant progress in promoting girls' education in areas of policy, programme design, strategic partnerships, retention and completion. There has been an increase in the number of girls accessing education, particularly for primary schooling. The introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) and Universal Post Primary Education Training (UPPET) in 2007 increased secondary school enrolment by 25% from 2006 to 2008, with girls constituting 46% of the increase (National Development Plan, 2010). In the same period, enrolment of girls in BTVET increased by 46%. At university level, there has been an increase in girls' enrolment partly due to the affirmative action scheme of 1.5 additional points to girls in public universities. This enrolment reached its peak in 2004 when female enrolment was as high as 48% (NDP, 2010).

### Key Facts

- The goal of the National Strategy for Girls' Education (NSGE) is to promote girls' education as an integral part of Government's efforts to create gender equity and equality in the education system
- NSGE timeframe: 2015-2019 (5 years)
- Persistent challenges to girls' education: gap between policy and practice; persistent gender gaps at critical points of access; persistence of low value attached to girls' education; teenage pregnancy; inadequate gender capacities among key actors; sexual abuse; early sexual engagement; lack of child friendly school environment
- Key areas of policy intervention: effective policy implementation framework; harmonized education sector programmes; requisite resourcing; institutionalized research; capacity utilization and enhancement



## PERSISTENT CHALLENGES TO GIRLS' EDUCATION

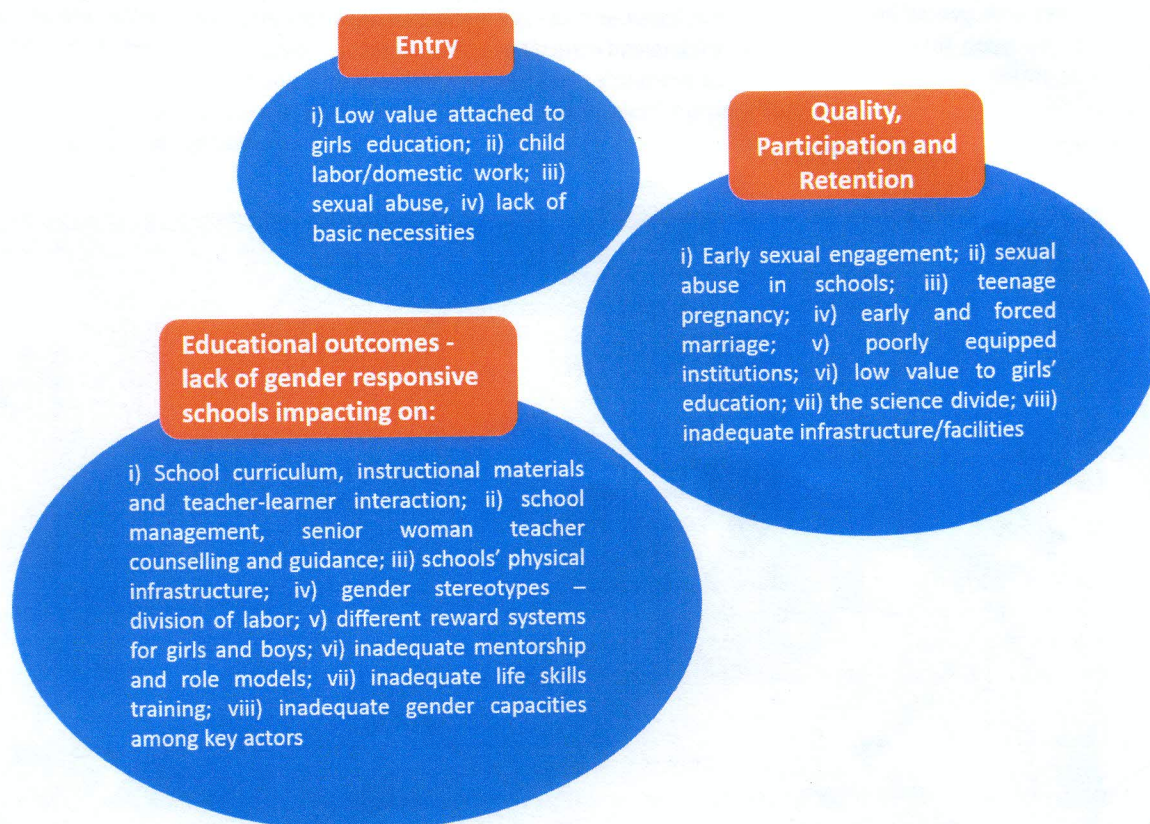
Despite significant progress in promoting girls' education at national level, key challenges include entry, participation and educational outcomes.

### Gap between policy and practice

Consultative discussions conducted with key stakeholders indicated a very limited level of awareness about the existence and application of the 2004 NSGE to guide the promotion of girls' education in Uganda. The majority of national level actors recounted hearing about the strategy but never utilizing it to guide their activities. District level responses indicated that initiatives to support girls' education at district level were independent of the existing strategy on girls' education.

### Persistent gender gaps at critical points of access

Notwithstanding several gains, women and girls continue to experience severe challenges in accessing quality education services. While pre-primary and primary enrolment rates indicate relative gender parity, a growing body of evidence for secondary, tertiary and BTNET display critical barriers to entry. More specifically, despite the implementation of USE, girls' enrolment in secondary schools stood at 45.7% by 2012 (Education Management Information System, 2012). In BTNET, the implementation of the Universal Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET) program which started in BTNET institutions only accounted for the successful registration of 29.8% and 18% of girls in 2010/2011 and 2011/12, respectively.



### Persistence of low value attached to girls' education

Cultural norms placing low value on girls' education severely constrain girls' attendance, participation and the full realization of their capabilities. This phenomenon is reflected in the unequal burden of domestic responsibilities placed on the girl child.

### Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy has been reported as one of the underlying drivers of high-school dropout rates for girls. Data from the 2006 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) indicates that 25% of teenage girls were reported to have had children. Similarly, according to data from the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE, 2011), 35% of teenage girls are either pregnant or have already had their first child. Additionally, a survey on the re-entry of pregnant girls in primary and secondary schools in Uganda found that in 2012, 34% of girls dropped out of school due to early pregnancy and 11% due to early marriage (FAWE, 2011).

### **Inadequate gender capacities among key actors**

There is limited capacity for implementing gender related programmes for a gender responsive education system. The review process established that although schools recorded gender disaggregated education statistics, education officials are neither able to draw out existing inequalities, nor utilize the available data to address these inequalities. As a caveat, some of the functions such as counselling and guidance by senior women teachers remain voluntary and constitute as additional burden on the regular teaching duties.

## **Revised NSGE**

The revised NSGE aims to promote girls' education as an integral part of the Government of Uganda's efforts to create gender equity and equality in the education system in Uganda. To this end, the strategy's objective is to establish a clear framework for identification, implementation and coordination of interventions designed to promote girls' education in Uganda. During the five year lifetime of the revised NSGE (2015-2019), a mid-term evaluation of the strategy is expected to be carried out within the third year of implementation.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- To ensure that the NSGE is utilized as an effective policy implementation framework to promote girls' education.
- To harmonize Education Sector Programmes on girls' education for effective coordination, monitoring and evaluation.
- To ensure adequate commitment of requisite human and financial resources by the GoU and other education stakeholders for the promotion of girls' education.
- To institutionalize research on girls' education to inform policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- To strengthen the capacity of education actors for their meaningful participation in addressing gender concerns in girls' education.

## **NSGE Interventions**

Strategic interventions of the NSGE are arranged into five key areas of focus. These are: effective policy implementation framework; harmonized education sector programmes; requisite resourcing; institutionalized research; and capacity utilization and enhancement. These strategic areas of intervention were systematically identified based on the findings of the NSGE review. The review found that in spite of the existence of policies, programmes and even a strategy on girls' education, implementation suffered from low levels of awareness, inadequate coordination among education actors, limited resource commitments as well as limited availability of information in schools.

### **EFFECTIVE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

The effective policy implementation framework in this strategy refers to the level of quality, adequacy and appropriateness of the NSGE as a tool to guide the promotion of girls' education in Uganda. Although sectors may have policy frameworks in place, such frameworks might be under-utilized as guides to influence planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Priority interventions include wide dissemination of the strategy, a central unit for coordination, and decisive efforts to monitor and evaluate its effective implementation.

### **HARMONIZED ACTIONS ON GIRLS' EDUCATION**

Harmonization is essential for maximizing financial and human resources. Interventions identified in this area of focus include joint planning and coordination of activities on equal access to education, equal chances and retention, as well as activities on equal education results and gains at all levels.

### **REQUISITE RESOURCING**

Committing requisite resources (both financial and human) is central to the implementation of this strategy, which to date remains fully unfunded. Interventions identified in this area of focus include activity-based planning, and the commitment of a specific budget line in the education sector for the implementation of the NSGE.

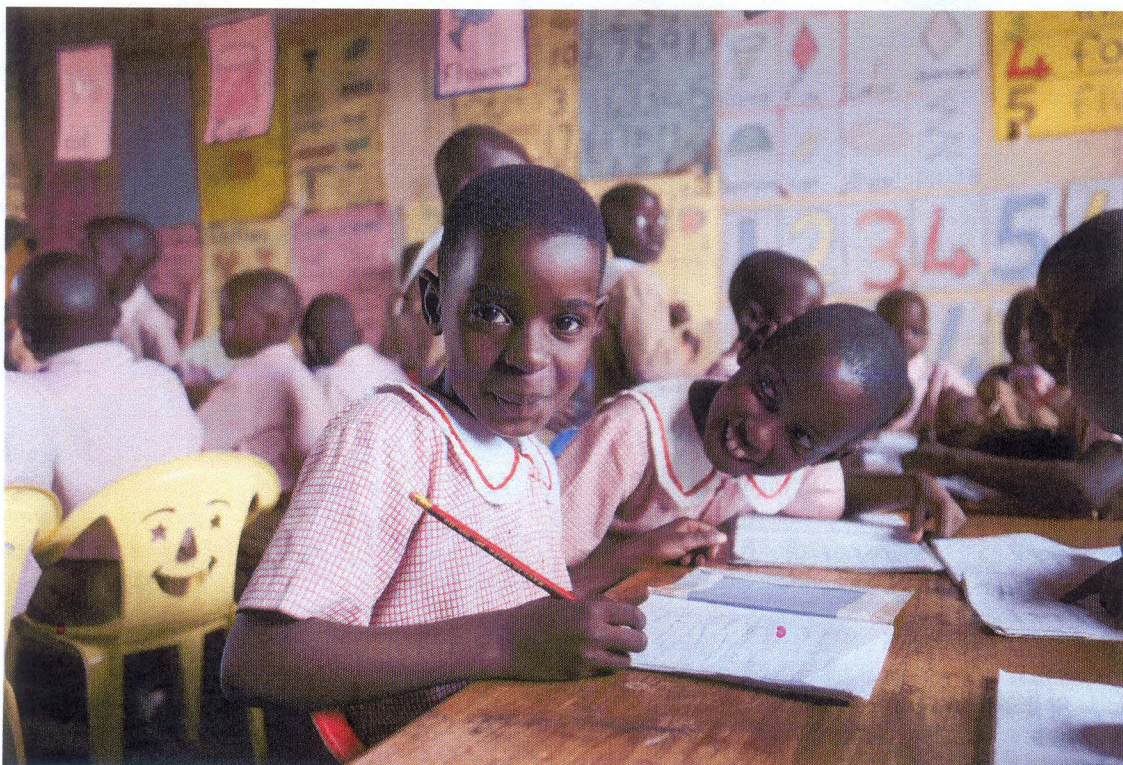
## INSTITUTIONALIZED RESEARCH

Institutionalizing research implies making research in girls' education regular, routine and a deliberate effort. Interventions in this area of concern include documenting trends in girls' education across all education sub-sectors, capturing emerging issues in girls' education, utilization of gender disaggregated data to inform programming for girls' education and documenting success stories/lessons learnt.

## Implementation of the NSGE

Implementation of the NSGE strategy is guided by the following principles:

- Promoting girls' education is an integral part of the core function of the education sector rather than a stand-alone intervention.
- Promoting girls' education will require partnerships between public and private sector actors in education.
- Successful implementation of the NSGE will require a commitment of requisite resources (human and financial) to facilitate harmonization, coordination, dissemination, popularization, and implementation of interventions to promote girls' education.
- Regular upgrading of data and knowledge to inform programming for girls' education should be supported.
- Continuous capacity building of key actors in education to consciously support girls to enroll, remain, complete and benefit from the education system is of paramount importance.
- Girls are central to their own development and self-actualization, and hence there is a need for emphasis on transforming girls' identity and self-esteem to create a positive mind set.
- Girls are not a homogenous category: Girls' education vulnerability worsens in specific situations, requiring targeted interventions. Vulnerability is increased in situations such as disability, orphan hood, residence in hard-to-reach areas, post conflict situations and in specific production systems such as pastoralism and plantation agriculture.



Children in the classroom at Railway Children Primary School, Nsambya. © UNICEF/UGDA201200684/Ramson

This research briefing is part of a series of research and evaluation summaries produced by UNICEF Uganda and its partners. For more information, please contact Maricar Garde, Head of Research, Evaluation and Advocacy UNICEF at [mgarde@unicef.org](mailto:mgarde@unicef.org).