



RESULTS: EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE PEAS NETWORK IN UGANDA (2015-17)

2018 Summary Report



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PEAS has been working to provide equitable access to good quality secondary schooling in Uganda, and has been a partner of the Government of Uganda since 2011. Between 2015-2017, the PEAS model was evaluated in comparison with a sample of government and private schools over three years, with these questions being investigated:

- What is the effect of PEAS schools on **equitable access** to secondary education?
- What is the impact of PEAS schools on **education quality**?
- How **financially sustainable** is the PEAS approach?



OVERALL EVALUATION FINDING

The evaluation documents that PEAS is providing high-quality education in the most cost-effective manner, and reaching more poor, disadvantaged students than any other school type.



ACCESS

Compared to government and other private schools:

- PEAS schools educate more disadvantaged students.
- Nearly two-thirds are from the poorest 40% of the population.
- More PEAS students are girls.
- PEAS admits more students who failed to perform well on the Primary Leaving Examination.



EDUCATION QUALITY

- PEAS schools are successful in raising the learning levels of those who performed poorly in primary school.
- They are more effective than government or private schools in this area, and also when comparing the performance of children from similar backgrounds: PEAS schools come out on top.



SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MODEL

- The cost to households is for the most part lower at PEAS schools than at other schools, helping to enable more poor students to attend.
- The unit costs are lower than government schools, even taking into account the costs of the high quality training and support received from the PEAS organisation.
- In conjunction with learning levels, this indicates that PEAS are highly effective.

HOW PEAS IS PROVIDING BETTER QUALITY AT COMPETITIVE COST

School leadership and vision, and strength of the management approach

The organisation runs its schools according to its clear vision and mission to provide high-quality education, as equitably as possible. School management is not distracted by the drive to create a profit margin, and remains focused on the PEAS mission. PEAS schools are substantially better-managed than other schools (correlated significantly with more learning), with school leaders and teachers receiving high-quality training and support from the PEAS organisation. This training is put into practice in schools.

Teacher motivation and support

PEAS teachers are much more motivated than teachers at other schools, reporting greater satisfaction with pay, benefits and working conditions. They receive support and have clear goals and targets. They have higher regard for the schools they work in and believe them to be of better quality than other schools.

Child protection

There is strong emphasis on child protection, with PEAS schools able to provide evidence that policy is put into practice. Students feel safer at PEAS schools and child protection practices are far better-documented than at other schools. Students also report getting the help they need from teachers rather than having to look elsewhere, such as with classmates.

Issues Need To Be Addressed

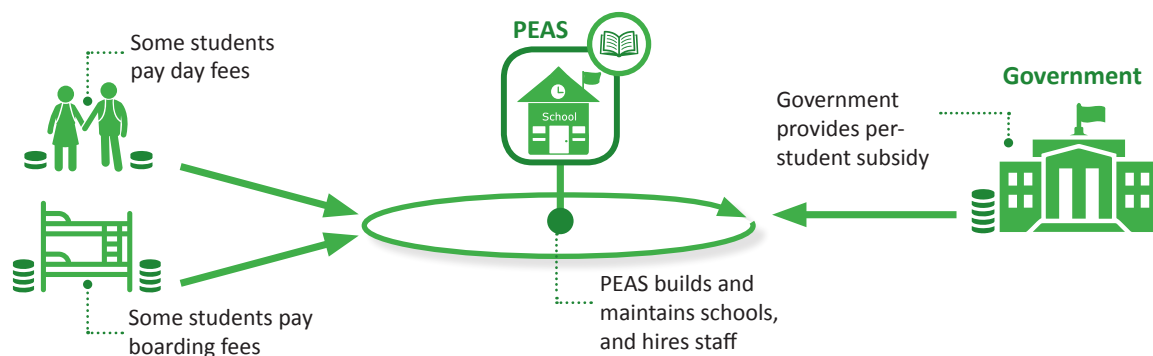
PEAS schools have the highest pupil-teacher ratio of any school type; however, at 25:1 this is not unacceptable. PEAS schools face an important challenge with resourcing: some classes have unacceptably high student-textbook ratios; few schools have laboratories and many lack the necessary lab equipment; few schools also have libraries. There is also a challenge of costs to households proving a barrier to participation and cause of school drop-out.

INTRODUCTION

There is an urgent need for more good-quality secondary school places in Uganda, where the net enrolment rate has only climbed to 28%. PEAS has been working to help fill this need since 2008 through the Government of Uganda's Universal Secondary Education public-private partnership (PPP). This report provides highlights and key findings from a three-year evaluation of PEAS schools, looking specifically at how PEAS has impacted on access to secondary education; quality of learning outcomes; and sustainability of the delivery model, including the cost to educate a child for a year.

PEAS is a non-profit network of schools that is mission-driven to contribute to the Government of Uganda's commitment to extend equitable access to good-quality secondary level education. The PPP entails private schools accepting a government capitation grant of UGX 47,000 per student per term in lieu of school tuition fees, and the programme was meant to incentivise schools to operate in poorer, under-served areas of the country. Despite the claims to universality, the government stipulated a score that young people must achieve on the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) in order to qualify for a USE capitation grant. This barrier, combined with the continuing imperative to pay certain fees and costs, has meant that many students are still not able to transition to secondary level.

The PPP has attracted criticism surrounding the quality of education on offer at partner schools, and the efficiency of providing education in this way. An evaluation was needed to establish whether PEAS schools have proven worth the subsidy and are achieving their stated mission.



PEAS schools have come to be one of the few well-regarded partners in the PPP, with this evaluation providing a foundation of fact for this reputation. PEAS schools have also been providing education to those ineligible for a capitation grant.¹

METHODOLOGY

The Economic Policy Research Centre in Kampala was contracted to conduct the three-year evaluation of the effectiveness of PEAS as a participant in the PPP. The first round of the study took place in 2015, the second in 2016, and the final round in 2017. For each round, the same 28 total schools were visited (11 PEAS, 8 government and 9 private schools), with interviews taking place with 25 students per grade in Senior 1-3 (the first three years of the lower-secondary level). Lesson observations were also carried out in English and mathematics lessons. English and mathematics teachers (168 in total) and Head Teachers (28) were interviewed about the management practices of the school; their training; child protection policy and practice; and levels of satisfaction.



The 75 students per school (2,100 in total) were tested by Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC) staff using the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) assessments, and were interviewed about their feelings about their schools and regarding mathematics and English specifically. They were also asked about their families' assets to establish their economic levels. Students' PLE results were also recorded and schools' lower-secondary level examination results were used to triangulate the information from our study.

WHAT WAS INVESTIGATED:

- What is the effect of PEAS schools on **equitable access** to secondary education?
- What is the impact of PEAS schools on **education quality**?
- How **financially sustainable** is the PEAS approach?

1. 2018 Update: Since the conclusion of the evaluation, the Ministry of Education & Sports has decided to discontinue the USE PPP. Per pupil payments are gradually being phased out over four years, with students enrolling in the first year of secondary from 2018 no longer able to access a bursary.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS



ACCESS



PEAS serves more poor students: 58% come from the lowest 40% in terms of wealth



PEAS accepts lower achievers who need the most support

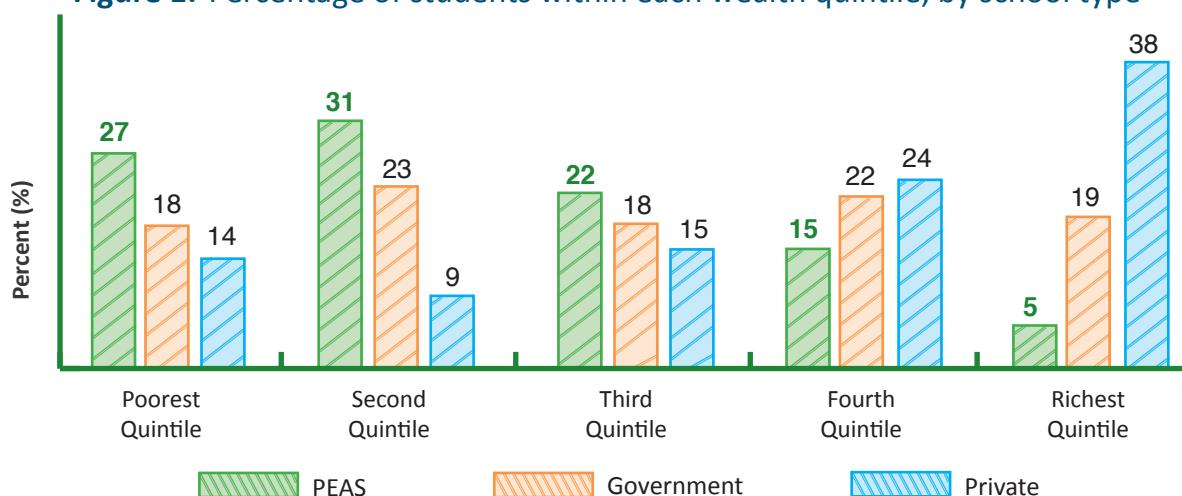


PEAS has the highest proportion of female students of any school type

ACCEPTING DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS AND ENROLLING MORE GIRLS

Expanded access to school places was one of the key motivators of the PPP, and specifically to make schools available in sub-counties where secondary education was previously unavailable. The PEAS organisation has met this challenge with a policy to establish schools in under-served and disadvantaged areas. Figure 1 shows that **PEAS students are much poorer than their peers**, particularly those attending private schools.

Figure 1: Percentage of students within each wealth quintile, by school type



Poor students are more likely to be lower-achievers at the primary level and are more likely to have repeated a grade and/or been enrolled late. **PEAS schools allow a more generous PLE score requirement than other schools**, meaning that PEAS schools are more inclusive, but as a consequence, start with a larger challenge in terms of raising learning levels. PEAS schools also have a better gender balance in enrolling students in O-Level. Half of enrolments are girls, and PEAS schools have larger shares of female students than government schools.

However, there continue to be far fewer girls attending school at the upper secondary level, completing secondary school, and achieving the highest examination scores. PEAS schools have a significant issue with drop out, especially for girls starting their A-level studies. The costs of schooling were cited most often for drop-out overall, but for girls, becoming pregnant is also a leading cause. This means that there are still issues with aspects of access and equity that need to be addressed. Difficulties meeting the costs of schooling disproportionately affect PEAS schools because they make the most effort to reach the least advantaged.



EDUCATION QUALITY



PEAS helps the lowest achievers at primary school to catch up



Comparing students with similar socio-economic backgrounds, those at PEAS schools score higher than students at government and private schools



Girls score significantly worse at all 28 study schools; PEAS has yet to devise a strategy to reverse this trend

ACHIEVING LEARNING GAINS DESPITE DISADVANTAGES

Students were assessed in all three years of the evaluation using the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE), administered by staff of the Uganda National Examinations Board. This rich data was used in conjunction with students' scores on the PLE to examine how well PEAS students are doing now in comparison with their government and private school peers, but also to see how far they have come in relation to their prior achievement. 'Raw' scores tell us only so much – because children with different backgrounds have different levels of prior advantage, we also compare test scores looking only at students who come from similar or 'matched' backgrounds. This lets us show how students with similar backgrounds do at PEAS schools compared with other schools.

PEAS schools are achieving the greatest learning increases for the students that need the most support. PEAS schools take in much less-advantaged students in terms of prior learning attainment, and students who scored poorly on the PLE go on to do better at PEAS schools than their peers with similar scores who transition to government or private schools (Panel B of table 1).

PEAS schools effectively level the playing field by bringing up average attainment to the same level as more advantaged students at government schools. However, there is still some gap between students with low prior achievement and the top performers.

Table 1: Students' average 'raw' NAPE scores, disaggregated by school type

	PEAS	Government	Private
Panel A: All Students			
English Score (%)	56.6	56.9	61.9
Math Score (%)	38.9	38.6	41.0
Average Scores (%)	47.7	47.7	51.4
Observations	824	600	673
Panel B: Students who scored within the last two grades (3rd and 4th) at PLE			
English Score (%)	48.4	47.0	47.9
Math Score (%)	31.8	31.2	27.3
Average Scores (%)	40.1	39.1	37.6
Observations	256	173	105

The top half of table 1 (Panel A) shows that, in terms of 'raw' NAPE scores, PEAS students do virtually the same as government school students, while private school students do better. But when we take the student's background into account, and **when only similar students are compared, going to different schools, PEAS schools perform better than government and private schools:** they achieve 2.4 to 3 points higher English test scores, and 2.6 points higher mathematics scores.

Girls achieved statistically significantly lower test scores on the NAPE assessment in all study schools, PEAS, government and private. The gaps were similar, and persisted over the three years of the evaluation. While PEAS schools have been working well in boosting learning for the lowest achievers in general, there is still work to be done to close the learning gender gap.



SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MODEL



For most students, PEAS schools are the most affordable option



Unit costs are lower than at government schools, while learning levels are higher



Cost of education is a barrier, causing absenteeism and drop out

THE COST TO HOUSEHOLDS

At the lower-secondary level, **PEAS schools are cheaper for a student to attend** whether boarding or not, and whether receiving a USE grant or not. At the upper-secondary level, PEAS schools are mostly cheaper to attend, except in the case of Universal Post “O” Level Education and Training (UPOLET) grant-recipients, for whom government schools are somewhat cheaper. For those ineligible for a grant, PEAS schools are the most affordable at the upper-secondary level. This calculation takes into account all schooling fees and costs that parents must pay, including for books, uniforms and any other costs, irrespective of whether these are paid to the school or outside the school.

Yet despite lower costs at PEAS schools, the need to pay is a problem for many students’ families. PEAS schools have the largest problem amongst surveyed schools with student absenteeism, with the key reason being inability to pay school fees. Missing school, if this happens enough, is likely to impact on children’s learning, and it may be that PEAS schools could see even greater learning levels if absenteeism was reduced. In addition, **fees were cited as the key reason leading students to drop out of secondary school.** The reason these fee-related problems affect PEAS schools the most is that PEAS effectively brings in the most disadvantaged students, who are most likely to face financial challenges.

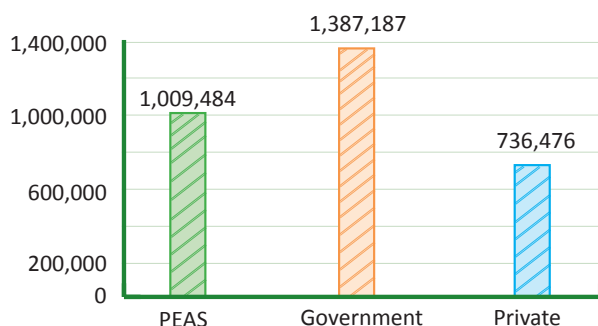
THE QUESTION OF FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

This is a key issue, with the government having instituted the PPP partly in order to save on the cost of establishing new secondary schools and paying civil service teacher salaries. We calculated unit costs – what a school spends per student per year in providing education – based on school financial records and head teachers’ estimates of the value of all support received by the school.

Due to higher salary and infrastructure costs, government schools spend the most at nearly 1.4 million Shillings (370 USD) per student per year, with no greater learning gains to show for the greater expenditure. Private schools have the simplest financial situations – they are usually autonomous and responsible for their own financial survival, so tend to keep costs as low as possible with the intention of at least covering all costs. Private schools spend the least, at 736,476 Shillings (196 USD) per student per year. **PEAS schools spend just over 1 million Shillings (about 269 USD), and provide the greatest learning gains for the students most in need.**

If raw test scores and expenditures alone were taken into account, private schools would appear to be the winners in terms of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. However, PEAS schools are achieving the most with previously low-attaining students, while private schools are working with students from more advantaged backgrounds who are relatively easier-to-teach. Some of the effects of children’s poor backgrounds are being compensated for by the PEAS model, which is a significant achievement.

Figure 2: The unit cost in UGX per child, by school management type



In terms of sustainability, in the interests of equity, poor and rural students require significant subsidisation of costs, if not the removal of all costs, to access secondary schooling. This is likely to need to come from government budgets, but might also come from cross-subsidisation from more advantaged students attending the same school (irrespective of school type). **The PEAS organisation has been striving to make their schools as self-sufficient as possible**, though they are not yet independent of the PEAS organisation. **The training and support received at PEAS schools is crucial to the achievements of the model**, meaning that these inputs should not be sacrificed in order to achieve a unit cost similar to that of private schools. It is well documented that **the least advantaged are often the most expensive to reach, and yet PEAS schools are doing better in this role than government schools, and for a lower unit cost.**

HOW PEAS ACHIEVES IMPACT

THE KEY ELEMENTS UNDERLYING THE PEAS ADVANTAGE



School leadership and vision

The goal of the PEAS organisation is to provide high-quality education at the lowest cost and highest degree of sustainability possible, for under-served and disadvantaged communities. A 'clear vision' for the school is essentially a proxy for effective school management and leadership, entailing careful oversight, planning and support to staff. PEAS schools were significantly more likely to have clear targets for helping students to learn better (80% of PEAS schools as opposed to 30% and 50% of government and private schools respectively), and also specific targets for learning in each class (90% of PEAS schools as compared with 60% and 40% of government and private schools).

PEAS schools were able to supply evidence of these positive practices being carried out far more often than other schools. This clear vision and purpose are able to remain the absolute focus in the absence of conflict of interest caused by a profit motive that could dictate corner-cutting and undue emphasis on the bottom line. **Having a clear vision is associated with about 6 to 10 percentage points higher test scores.**



Teacher motivation and support

PEAS teachers are all qualified teachers, however, fewer have studied to degree level than at other schools. PEAS **teachers receive better in-service training, support and management** and feel prepared to teach the curriculum. More teachers (43%) in PEAS schools reported that they receive good support from the school management, compared to those in government (24%) and private (30%) schools. Teachers are paid fairly but also receive other benefits. They also receive training in child protection. They are motivated, and have a high regard for the schools they work in, which tend to be within their home community, cutting down on any social distance between them and their students.

Most PEAS teachers feel that their school has a better reputation within the community as compared with other schools: 88% of PEAS teachers believed this compared with just 35% of government and 52% of private school teachers. The complete compensation package and professional training and support in the workplace are translating into better relationships with school management and this is correlated with higher student learning outcomes, particularly for prior poor performers.



Child protection

Child protection is integral to the PEAS model. PEAS teachers were much more likely to know about the school's child protection policy and to have received training on its implementation than at other schools (76% of PEAS teachers, versus 26% of government and 33% of private school teachers). **PEAS schools are significantly more likely to have evidence of child protection incidents being reported and addressed**, and PEAS teachers were by far the most likely to report their schools were doing a good job of protecting children (92% of PEAS teachers versus 47% and 55% of government and private school teachers respectively).

Students' reports of their experiences with teachers indicate that **teachers are more proactive in supporting student learning in PEAS schools than at other schools**, far more often noticing declines in students' performance that may need attending to. PEAS **students are more likely to seek help with their learning from teachers rather than from their peers** (the latter is a common practice at other schools); and they are more comfortable asking questions in class than government school students. PEAS students were also by far the most likely to report never facing abuse at school.

Likely to be a significant factor in students' comfort levels as well as the quality of education, is that **there is little or no 'social distance' between PEAS teachers and their students** due to the policy of local recruitment of teachers. **Both PEAS students and staff are less wealthy than their counterparts at government or private schools**: 63% of PEAS teachers are drawn from the bottom two asset wealth quintiles (the proportion of students is 58%), while this is 38% and 15% for government and private school teachers respectively.



Management

PEAS schools are substantially better managed than other government or private schools, using their autonomy to greater effect. The difference for PEAS schools arises out of the full package of support given by the PEAS organisation, which includes regular quality assurance visits from PEAS organisation staff. This support has helped PEAS head teachers and teachers to fully implement best practices in schools. In many respects schools are autonomous, however they are also accountable to the parent organisation. The package of support to and supervision of school management that comes with clear goals, and continuous support throughout the school year, is translating to better learning outcomes.

Oversight from within the organization proves important: **an increase in the number of inspections** (by PEAS staff, not by government inspectors) by 1 in 2016 is **associated with 6 to 8 percentage points higher test scores**. Students do better at schools that could show evidence of regular school performance reviews: these students achieved 2 to 4 points higher compared to their counterparts attending schools that did not have that evidence.

ISSUES TO ADDRESS



PEAS schools have a pupil-teacher ratio of 25:1, higher than at other schools



The student-textbook ratio is too high and needs to be addressed



Secondary schools require laboratories and libraries, both are in short supply at PEAS schools

PEAS schools had the highest pupil-teacher ratio of the three school types surveyed, although at 25:1 (that of private is 21:1, and government 18:1), this was far from unacceptable. **The ratio of pupils to textbooks is too high and was reported by teachers as being a problem during teaching**, with some classes having up to five students for every textbook – a situation that is observed to have become worse since the midline survey. In addition, **PEAS schools do not have enough laboratories**, and only around half were moderately stocked for carrying out science practical lessons. Lastly, there are also **few stocked libraries**.

Textbooks, functional laboratories and libraries are essential inputs at the secondary level and efforts should be made to improve these areas of provision. In addition, challenges already noted above, such as the persistent gender gap in learning and the role of pregnancy in drop-out, require mitigation strategies. What may prove equally challenging is tackling the role that continuing fees and other costs have in denying full and continuing access to schooling to the least advantaged students.

CONCLUSIONS

The achievement of PEAS schools in expanding access to the least advantaged and supporting them to make the greatest learning gains, while spending less than government schools, is evidence that PEAS schools are delivering their mission. This means that public-private partnerships can work – however selection of the non-government partner is a crucial aspect of the partnership.

The challenges of successfully educating the most difficult to educate must not be underestimated; nor should the importance of finding ways to do this. The PEAS model of charging fees which are kept as low as possible, and looking to establish other means of income-generation, means that the schools are not dependent on aid for the bulk of their costs, and with the model directing schools down a pathway to self-sufficiency, means that these schools are likely to be as efficient and sustainable as any schools for poorer and remote communities can be.



The three-year evaluation of PEAS schools' participation in the Uganda Universal Secondary Education Public-Private Partnership was conducted by the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) in Kampala. EPRC was established in 1993 as an autonomous, not-for-profit organisation to fill voids in economics research, policy analysis, and capacity building for effective, in-country contributions to Uganda's policy processes. Today, it is Uganda's leading think tank in economics and development policy research.

For the third and final year of the evaluation, Dr Joanna Härmä, a specialist researcher on non-state provision of education, acted as Lead Academic Advisor and is the author of this summary version of the report.

This evaluation and summary report was supported by:



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