


Options for improving girls' access to sec sch educ in Uganda

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Options for Improving Girls' Access to Secondary Education in Uganda

Mildred Barungi, Ibrahim Kasirye, and Gemma Ahaibwe

- Despite the advent of Universal Secondary Education (USE), only 25 percent of girls supposed to be in secondary school were enrolled in 2011.
- Only one out of every three girls that join secondary are still enrolled by the age of 18 years; the rest would have dropped out.

Uganda was among the first African countries to initiate a large-scale Universal Post- Primary Education and Training (UPPET) program in 2007. As result of this program, the student population in secondary schools increased by 25 percent, while the population in business and vocational schools increased by 46 percent. The focus on post-primary education led to a reorientation of the education budget, with the secondary subsector accounting for 19 percent of public education resources in 2007–08—up from 14 percent prior to the introduction of UPPET.

Secondary school enrollments remain very low

Although the share of education sector in the Uganda national budget reduced from 25% in 2000/1 to 15% by 2011/12, the education sector still commands the largest share of the national budget.¹ Despite the successful introduction of UPPET in 2007, overall secondary school enrolments have remained very low, especially for girls. Figure 1a and 1b shows the trends in both the net and gross secondary school enrolment rates for children aged 13 to 18 years during 1992–93 and 2009–10. It is evident that the enrolment rate for girls remained unchanged after the introduction of USE in 2007, while that of boys increased by only 3 percentage points. The figure also shows widening gender gaps in secondary school attendance. Furthermore, only one third of girls that graduate from primary school are still in school by the age of 18 years—compared to 50% for boys.² Consequently, policymakers are examining alternative ways to increase overall secondary school enrolment, especially for girls. For instance, the current NDP 2010–15 calls for the

provision of targeted bursaries for girls in order to improve gender equity in secondary school enrolments.

Figure 1a : Trends in secondary Net school enrolments by gender, 1992/93 to 2009/10

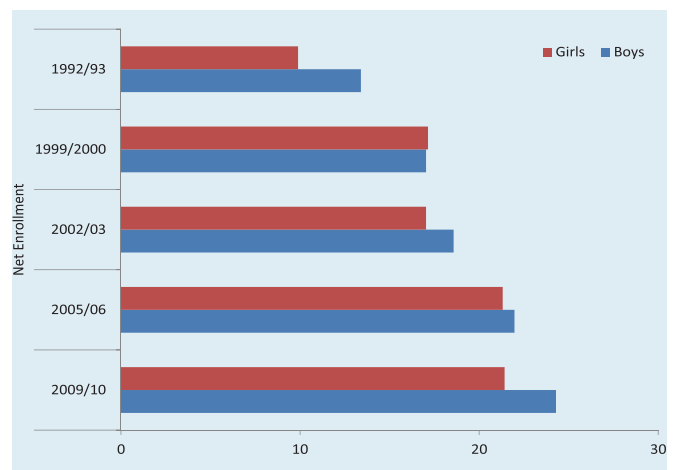
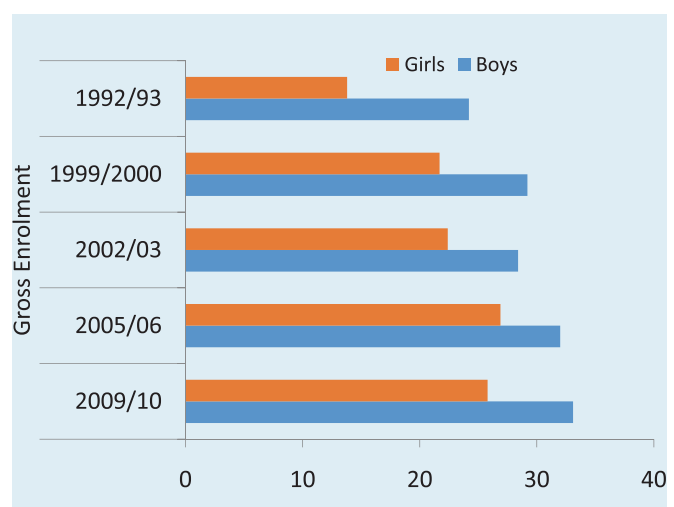


Figure 1b Trends in Gross secondary enrolments by gender school, 1992/93 to 2009/10



Analysis from the National Service Delivery Surveys of 2004 and 2008 reveals that high cost of schooling remains a major reason why children cannot access secondary education in Uganda. Despite the availability of the USE program, most secondary schools charge tuition and other fees. Unlike the case under the UPE program where 75% of the primary schools are public and as such do not charge tuition fees, only 31% of the available secondary schools are owned by government.³ Furthermore, not all public secondary schools are under the USE programme. With free secondary education limited to few public and private secondary schools, majority of Ugandans continue to pay to access secondary education. Because of the traditional preference for boys over girls and low incomes, girls are less likely to stay in secondary schools. Consequently, there is need to address the socio-economic barriers children continue to face in accessing secondary schooling in Uganda.

Programmes targeting girl's education

Uganda, has implemented a number of programs targeting girls' education. The country managed to attain gender parity in primary education by 1999 through the UPE program.⁴ The focus then shifted to secondary education with the introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2007. One of the main projects targeting secondary education for girls is the Post-Primary Education and Training Expansion and Improvement project supported by the African Development Bank. This project intends to increase the share of female secondary school enrolment to 50 percent by 2015 through the expansion of school infrastructure and the introduction of a double shift school system in some parts of Uganda. Nonetheless, a recent assessment of the cost-benefit analysis of the project revealed that not all the intended project goals will be achieved due to insufficient funding from the government's side.

Demand-side financing interventions are not new in Uganda. Indeed, the country has experimented with schemes such as food for education in Northern Uganda and school fee grants for orphans of HIV/AIDS patients. Previous research shows that the provision of take-home rations to primary school children in Northern Uganda increased girls' morning attendance by as much as 30 percentage points.⁵ More recent evaluations also showed that interventions such as school feeding programs and take-home rations can impact positively on children's cognitive development.⁶ Other examples of previous demand-side interventions in Uganda include the Community HIV/AIDS Initiatives (CHAI) project—operational during 2002–7—that provided cash transfers to communities affected by HIV/AIDS which could be used to pay school fees for secondary school children.⁷ Overall, both these schemes are geographically restricted and operated as projects for a defined duration.

Options for increasing girls' enrolment

This brief reports the results of a research simulation that examined various options to increase girls' secondary school enrolment over the next 8 years (2013 to 2020). The overall goal is to increase access to secondary schooling by enrolling at least 50 percent of the girls of secondary school going age (13 to 18 years) who are currently out of school.

The research considered two policy alternatives, which can complement the existing Universal Secondary Education program. The alternatives are:

- 1) Providing stipends to girls to pay for tuition fees in public day secondary schools (hereafter referred to as policy I).
- 2) Providing stipends and transport vouchers to girls to attend public day secondary schools (hereafter referred to as policy II).

Selection of the policy options

The choice of policy I is based on the fact that the Universal Secondary education (USE) programme is not sponsoring all pupils who have completed primary schooling. Apart from the fact that the programme is implemented in a few public and private secondary schools, it is restricted to only those pupils who scored 4 – 28 aggregates in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Therefore, Policy I would target poor girls who qualify to join secondary school but are not covered by the USE program.

The choice for policy II is guided by the reasons cited by parents for not taking their girl children to secondary schools. Besides the high tuition fees, one other reason that prevents some parents from enrolling girls in secondary schools is that unlike primary schools, secondary schools in Uganda are more distant. Previous research indicates that this would mean girls walking very long distances in un-safe environments.⁸ Consequently, the provision of stipends and free transport is held as one of the ways of addressing the cost and safety concerns of parents.

Eligibility criteria and policy implementation arrangements

Eligible persons for the two policy options should be: 1) females aged 13 to 18 years who successfully completed primary education and have a Primary Leaving Certificate; 2) girls under the guardianship of households headed by persons considered disadvantaged - children, females or persons with disabilities; and 3) currently out of school because of financial constraints.

Under policy I, each beneficiary will receive a stipend of 130,000 UGX (50 USD) per year to cater for tuition in a Day school. The policy will be implemented by transferring funds

from Government to Day schools where the beneficiaries will be enrolled. Under policy II, each beneficiary will receive a sum of 195,000 UGX (75 USD) per year to cover tuition and transport. Transport vouchers will be given to beneficiaries to be used to access free transport from Government contracted transporters. The transporters will claim payment from participating schools on a monthly basis by submitting authentic vouchers to the management committees of participating schools.

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) will retain the power to select schools to implement the proposed programs. Among other criteria, the school should: be located in an area where official statistics indicate that secondary school enrolment rate for girls is very low (below the national average) and the number of girls aged 13 to 18 years and are out of school is very high; entirely be day or have a day section; not be charging tuition of more than 43,300 UGX (17 USD) per term.

Selected schools will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the MoES. Funds for program implementation will be deposited on the Bank Accounts of participating schools by the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Implementation of the policies

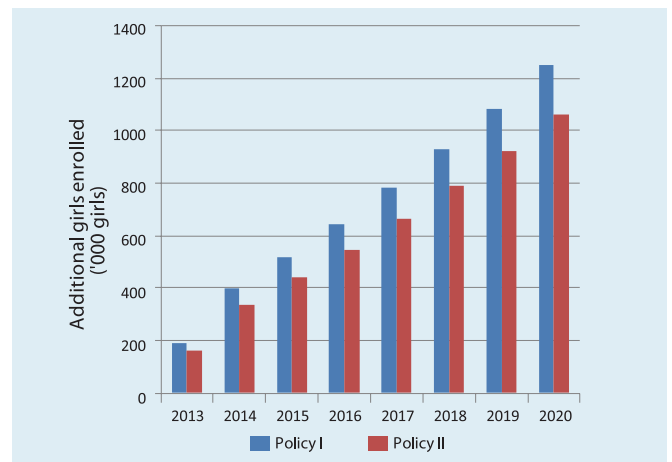
We investigate the costs and benefits that would accrue to the two policy options based on data synthesized from different sources including: the 2009/10 Uganda National Household Survey, The 2008 Gender and Productivity Survey (GPS); Uganda Education Statistical Abstracts; Abstracts produced by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics; and the Background to the Budget and Ministerial Policy Statements of the Ministry of finance, Planning and Economic Development.

Projected benefits of policy I & II

Results obtained from the policy simulation indicate that by 2020, Policy I will lead to enrolment of 1,249,985 girls in secondary schools. This translates to 50% of the girls of secondary school going age who are currently out of school. On the other hand, Policy II will lead to secondary school enrolment of 1,062,487 girls (Figure 2).

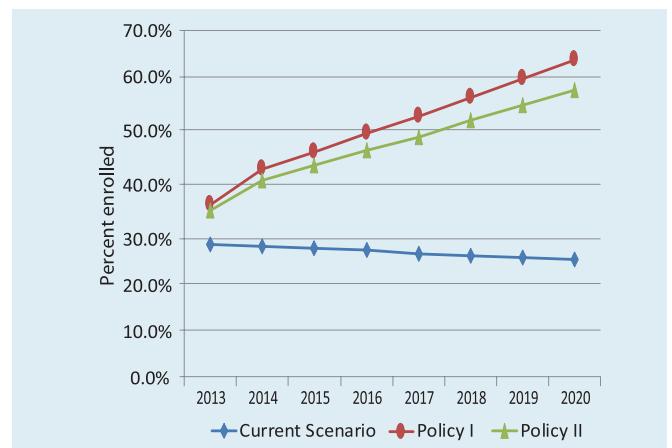
According to the results presented in Figure 2, by 2020, secondary school enrolment ratio for girls is expected to stand at 26% only, in the event that none of the policy alternatives is implemented. Operationalization of Policy I increases enrolment by 34% to 63% while policy II increase enrolment by 28% to 57%.

Figure 2: Additional enrolments accrued to policy options I and II



Source: Authors' calculations

Figure 3: Enrolment rates by policy option



Source: Authors' calculations

Other benefits of the policies

According to the Gender and productivity survey of 2008, the annual wage difference between females who have completed Ordinary level (O'level) secondary education and those with lower academic qualifications is about UGX 960,000 per year. Assuming that this wage gap is maintained and considering the current completion rate of 65%, we computed the additional earnings that accrue to each of the proposed policy options.

The findings presented in Figure 3 indicate that overall policy I leads to more incremental earnings than policy II. By 2020, policy I will have led to additional earning of UGX 10,733 billion for the girls that will have actually completed O'level (over the 2013-2020 period). Policy II on the other hand, will lead to additional earnings equivalent to UGX 9,123 billion.

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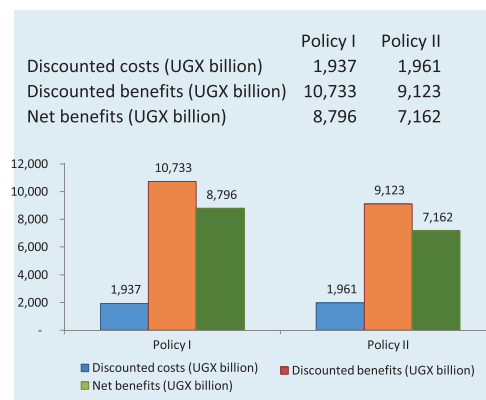
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Figure 4: Present values of the total costs and benefits of policies I and II



Source: Authors’ calculations

Conclusions

Unless GoU adopts at least one of the policy options, the rate at which girls enroll and remain in secondary education will remain very low. Adoption of either policy I or II will remarkably increases girls’ enrollment for secondary education. Moreover, the net indirect benefits that would accrue to any of the two policy options, far outweigh the total costs enrolling girls and keeping them in school until they complete Senior Four. Thus, we recommend that funds permitting, both policies should be implemented. Stipends for tuition fees only (policy I) should be given to

girls living reasonably close to day secondary schools; while a combination of stipends for tuition fees and transport (policy II) should be given to girls living far away from participating schools.

If the Government of Uganda is to implement Policy I, the normal education sector budget will have to increase annually by an average of 26 percent, from UGX 1,715 in 2013 to UGX 4,690 billion shillings in 2020. As a share of GDP, the education sector budget would increase from 7 percent (in 2013) and about 13 percent (in 2020) of GDP. In 2011–12, the approved budget allocation for education as a percentage of GDP was 6.2 percent⁹, but this needs to increase by about 10 percentage points annually to support implementation of Policy I. Moreover, in the recent past, the Ministry of Education and Sports has been able to mobilize additional resources targeting specific interventions. For instance, the UPPET project supported by the African Development Bank has constructed a number of new secondary schools. Consequently, it is possible that external donors could finance additional interventions targeting girls without necessarily affecting the current resources for the secondary school budget.

Endnotes

- 1 Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (2012) Background to the Budget 2011/2012: Priorities for Renewed Economic Growth and Development.
- 2 Government of Uganda (2010). National Development plan 2010/11 – 2014/15. National Planning Authority.
- 3 Ministry of Education and Sports (2010). Education Statistical Abstract 2010.
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- 6 Alderman, H., G.O. Gilligan and K. Lehrer (2012). “The Impact Food for Education Programs on School Participation in Northern Uganda.” Education Development and Cultural Change Vol 61. No.1: 187-218.
- 7 Uganda AIDS Commission (2007). UGANDA HIV/AIDS CONTROL PROJECT: Progress Report of the CHAI Component for the Period October to December 31, 2006.
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- 9 Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (2012). Background to the Budget 2011/2011: Priorities For Renewed Economic Growth and Development. Kampala: MFPED.

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