NGOs, Millennium Development Goals and Universal Primary Education in Uganda: a Theoretical Exploration

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Abstract

Faced with poverty in many parts of the world, global stakeholders came together to charter ways of addressing it, thus the Millennium development goals. Universal Primary Education (UPE) is one of the trajectories for effective MDGs, and in countries such as Uganda, the results have been remarkable. Note however that the government cannot go it alone, faced with huge political and public administration challenges. NGOs performance has been exhilarating under the UPE. But NGOs alone are not a "magic bullet" that cannot miss the mark. Government needs to clarify the role of NGOs as actors in UPE and also delve deep into partnership with them to ensure quality UPE. This could be done through policy revaluation and inclusion of such stakeholders at every point of the scheme.

Introduction

World over, there has been renewed attention to poverty eradication as a millennium development goal (MDG) purpose with a particular thrust on Universal Primary Education (UPE) as a human resource development strategy for nation-states. Article 26 (1) of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that:

> Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Over the last 50 years part of this declaration has been addressed through leaps and bounds based on prevailing socio-economic and political situations in specific countries. However faced with numerous political, social and economic problems: lack of capacity by governments to implement and monitor; the debt burden; corruption; brain drain and poor retention capacity in schools, many of the developing countries are implementing UPE within a multi-sectoral approach developed by the United Nations-the Millennium Development Goals. MDGs are perceived as a holistic model that can address poverty eradication by refocusing nation-states on ensuring that all boys and girls have equal access to education.

In Uganda, through the Castle Commission (1963) on education, government laid emphasis on quality and opportunity to education for all as a guide to educational policies and programmes. This was further extended in 1992, 39 years later when the Educational Policy Review Commission report (EPRC) was completed with the Government White Paper on Education (commonly referred to as the Kajubi Report) and proposed among other issues that Primary Education becomes universal for every child of school going age. UPE become a national policy under the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) Pillars 4 and 5[1]

respectively in 1997.

The overall objective of this paper is to highlight the role of NGOs as Actors in UPE as Millennium Development Goal 2 in Uganda. The paper is based on available literature and discussions with some of policy stakeholders. The purpose is to enlist the role of NGOs in the policymaking and implementation process of UPE so as to enhance current knowledge and influence policy directions. The paper does not delve into other issues of given the expansiveness of the topic and scholarly contribution provided elsewhere.

As a gateway to the issues, this paper starts off by locating NGOs within international and local contexts. MDGs are later highlighted and their linkage to UPE as an evolutionary process in Uganda. Subsequently NGOs and development actors are put in general perspective and specifically in their role as Actors in UPE. The paper ends by looking at the Government-NGO Relations and the way the relationship can enhance UPE in Uganda.

NGOs: the Concept, Definition and Historical Conspectus and General Considerations
The Concept
Lack of conceptual clarity about what constitutes NGOs has meant that NGO definitions are broad and sometimes remain enigmatic even to scholars. Worse still, a combining conceptual lens remains distant given the plethora of actors in the NGO sector. Qin Hui (2004) discusses the notion of NGOs as the Third Sector. This is after Public (First Sector) and the Private/Business (Second Sector).

Scholars and institutions define NGOs differently. For instance the World Bank defines **NGOs** as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development" (Operational Directive 14.70).

Similarly, the working definition for **NGOs** in Uganda is: 'an organisation established to provide voluntary services including religious, educational, literacy, scientific, social or charitable services to the community or any part of the community' (NGO Registration Statute 1989).

NGOs are known by various names elsewhere e.g. Private Voluntary Organisations (PVOs) in the United States or Non-Profit (NFPs).

This should be contradistinguished from another related set of organisations, the Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

Community Based Organisations (CBOs) are normally membership organisations made up of a group of individuals who have joined together to further their own interests (for example, women's groups, rotating savings and credit schemes (ROSCAs) and farmers association). These tend to be recipients of goods and services but also help in supporting other agencies (Srinivas, undated). Narayan (2000) further states that members on behalf of members manage CBOs. In Uganda, these types of organisations operate at a local level, rather than national. The district or sub county authorities usually register them.

Important also is the term Civil Society.

According to the London School of Economics, Civil society refers to "the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values". In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil

society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups. Therefore its is prudent to note that NGOs belong to this wide array of actors in the Civil Society movement. Many African scholars have blamed failures of development project in Africa on government incompetence and on the irrelevancy of development theory and strategy. Dalfovo (2006) critically analyzes the role of the state in development, given contemporary changes and challenges. He points out that current challenges in sub-Saharan Africa reflect a failure of theories of development to have "sufficiently queried the wider political context of development." He feels that development theories have collapsed one after the other, because theorists erroneously assumed that the matrix of the developing state itself was sound. He indicts that the crisis of development in sub-Saharan Africa ultimately is a crisis of the state. He explains his thesis by pointing out that whereas development is an endogenous process that should be carried out by individuals themselves, the state has usurped that role, which it is not qualified to carry through. In turn, the state has become an obstacle to, rather than a facilitator of, development. Dalfovo (2006) concludes that there will be no short cuts to growth; it cannot be forced. Spontaneous development and operation of civil society remains the key by which contemporary society will be able to meet the challenges of the time. Tusabe (2006) also highlights the problematic relationship between the African state and the development effort. Like Dalfovo earlier, Tusabe points out that the African state has taken on the task of developing society, creating for the purpose a bloated bureaucracy and strongly centralised leadership. With that kind of structure three decades of independence leave Africa by and large still underdeveloped.

Although Tusabe, also sees the potential of civil society for a positive role in directing African development, he remains cautious, and in fact emphasises that ethnicity and religious bigotry in pluralistic societies could turn "civil society" into a problem rather than a solution to Africa's problems. Tusabe's concern gains force when we recall what has taken place in the 1990s in Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi. The various negative elements could use civil society as a cover not only for self-aggrandizement and enrichment, but also and more dangerously for sowing civil discord. Tusabe (2006) argues that the state in Africa needs to continue to play an important role in the regulation and co-ordination of civil society, ensuring basic justice for all and facilitating the operation of a morally motivated and guided civil society. More fundamentally he carries out a most insightful analysis of the importance of ethics and of its metaphysical foundations for the dignity of the free human person. Upon this he builds the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity by which the various levels of society can co-operate in the achievement of human fulfilment (Wamala, 2006).

Chapter IV by A.R. Byaruhanga, "Ethnicity, Culture and Social Reconstruction," attempts to elucidate the concepts of culture and ethnicity and how these relate to the issue of social reconstruction. Byaruhanga stresses the need to examine the nature of social reality before thinking of its reconstruction.

In his elucidation of the key concept, "ethnicity", Byaruhanga makes a distinction between "*ethnos*" referring to the broad racial groupings of man, and "ethnic" referring to the smaller cultural groups into which one is born, and which shape one's consciousness and value system. It is this latter sense of ethnicity that he treats in his paper.

Elucidating the concept of culture, Byaruhanga first provides the etymological meaning of the term highlighting both its explicit and implicit aspects. The former is exhibited in physical artifacts while the latter is exhibited in the *ethos* of the people. For Byaruhanga, culture is related to ethnicity which is its identifying factor.

Byaruhanga's central idea in this paper is that although the existence of ethnicity presupposes the existence of other ethnic entities, nevertheless, ethnic entities tend to exult their individual cultures over those of their neighbors. This sows the seeds of civil discord and leads to outright confrontation. For an increasingly globalized society, Byaruhanga underscores the need for genuine recognition of ethnic and cultural differences as the viable starting point of mutual recognition and consequent acceptance of one and all.

Chapter V by E. Wamala, "Cultural Elements in Social Reconstruction in Africa," argues that rather than trying to explain development issues in the tradition of grand theories after the manner of Weber or Fukuyama, we should look for particular elements within cultures that either foster or hinder, encourage or discourage, development.

To make good his point, Wamala cites Max Weber's theory concerning the Protestant ethic and the development of capitalism, and Fukuyama's social trust theory. He shows that in all these theories there are generalizations which cannot withstand scrupulous empirical examination.

Wamala proposes that theorists interested in culture and development would do well to look for the particular positive and negative elements within all cultures, and see how the positive elements within those cultures could be enhanced, even as the negative ones are rejected or discouraged.

Social reconstruction, according to Wamala, will be possible only after identifying the particular negative elements within cultures, and then reconstructing those elements. Only thus will it be possible to reconfigure the social, cultural and political structures which those presently subconscious negative elements support. For Wamala, this social reconstruction is first and foremost to be carried out at an intellectual level, before being extended to the empirical realm.

Chapter VI by S.A. Mwanahewa, "Modernization and Social Reconstruction: Africa at the Crossroads," is rather less hopeful than the previous studies about the possibility for effecting social reconstruction in Africa.

First, Mwanahewa sees Africa at the crossroads between the Occident and the Orient, on the one hand, and between the Africa's traditional past (which remains latent) and its future, on the other. Given that crossroads situation, modernization, the aspect of social reconstruction upon which Mwanahewa dwells at great length, may not easily be realized in Africa.

To make good his point, Mwanahewa examines the political and economic situation in Africa and shows that a careful reading of the situation reveals some very fundamental problems which could mar any modernization effort. Particularly, he points out the wholesale transplantation of development theories and paradigms to Africa. Such wholesale implanting of development theories, according to Mwanahewa, could deter modernization by denying Africa the opportunity to develop her own indigenous capacities, thereby making her forever dependent.

Implicit in Mwanahewa's paper is the view that Africa will be able to effect social reconstruction only if she can develop her own categorical framework for social and economic development.

But Chapter VII by Byaruhanga Rukooko Archangel, "Social Identity and Conflict: A Positive Approach," brings the investigation to the issue of unity and diversity among people, namely, the classical issue of the one and the many as found among personal and social identities. He suggests that we need to begin with the notion of identity as implying conflict and then build toward reconciliation, especially on the basis of Paul Ricoeur's view of "self" and "other" as appealing mutually to each other. The chapter is rich in examples of recent frightening Central African conflict between peoples bound in a spiral of mutual fear.

Chapter VIII by George F. McLean, "Globalization as Diversity in Unity," suggests a further possibility opened by new possibilities of seeing oneself and one's people in terms of a larger whole as suggested originally by Nicholas of Cusa. In this horizon the other is not contrary or conflictual, but a fellow participant in a larger reality and hence complementary to oneself. This vision becomes increasingly vivid as globalization proceeds, but at the same time reflects the basic sense of African cultures whose creation stories were always cosmogonic in character.

Through the process of mutual critique described above these studies have come to constitute the considered view of a team of scholars. They constitute a platform for further research, reflection and writing as a contribution to the people of Uganda in their effort to construct an effective path to a future worthy of both ancestors and posterity.

Historical Conspectus of NGOs and General Considerations
NGOs emerged on the global scene to address the deficiencies that governments faced in addressing the basic needs of their population. Initially, NGOs were relief–oriented and dealt with complex emergencies resulting from political, social and economic disruptions as well as natural disasters. This was evident with the past wars and also during the economic decline of the 1970s (Maslyukivska, 1999), which inhibited nation-states from availing social welfare to their populations. Salamon (1994) point out that NGOs arose due to the following four revolutionary crises:

1. The collapse of modern welfare state;

2. 0il shock of the 1970s;

3. The need for assisted self-reliance of NGOs coupled with the two revolutionary changes in information, communication and technology (ICT) that made flow of information timely;

4. The bourgeoisie revolution in the developing countries that forced the well-to-do to form associations especially in South America to address their own needs due to the inability by nation-states.

These agencies concomitantly tried to address the needs of the more vulnerable populations in their own countries. Further possible causes for growth of the NGO sector, Salamon notes, are pressures from "above"(Government) "below"(grass root mobilisation), and "outside" (Actions of private and public institutions: development partners). Salamon (1994) further notes that the four crises and the two revolutionary changes converged both to diminish the hold of the state and to open the way for the increase in organised voluntary action. One of the earliest NGOs in the world is the Red Cross and Red Crescent by Henry Dunant in 1863.

The emergence of NGOs in Uganda is recorded much earlier than the formal government system of independence in 1962. Many services were previously offered by the voluntary sector. The faith-based organisations being among these, offered health and education services e.g. hospitals (Mengo and Lubaga). In the education sector, schools such as Namilyango College, Kings College Budo, Busoga College Mwiri, Gayaza Girls School and St. Mary's College Kisubi) were started on a non-governmental basis sixty years earlier than independence. The emergence of government in the education sector is registered only after 1910 (16 years after Uganda became a British Protectorate).

The history of formal NGOs in Uganda is however short but episodic. In view of the global forces that prevailed in the 1970s coupled with the complex political situation in the country made NGOs presence difficult save for the church related and religious related missionary activities. However, after 1985, there was a broadening of the nature of NGOs in the country. This was because of the collapsing state that could not address even relief and welfare needs of the population given the prevailing civil strife then. NGOs then attempted to contribute their efforts to relief and welfare. These included among others Oxfam, Red Cross, and World Vision Uganda. From that time on the NGO movement in Uganda took root with the organisations taking on different dimensions of service delivery. This was not to be a honeymoon for long. The government became uncomfortable with the diversification of these agencies, some of which had been deemed as political conduits for external forces. The government came up with the NGO Registration Statute of 1989 that spelt out clearly the roles and responsibilities of NGOs. The statute created the NGO registration board as the statutory body that registers all the NGOs, and is housed in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA).

There are two broad categories of NGOs in management literature. There are the Northern NGOs and Southern NGOs. The Northern NGOs are mainly based in the *developed* world. Examples of these are: OXFAM (Oxford farmers, founded in 1942), CARE (Co-operate Agency for Relief Everywhere, founded 1945, and Plan International, founded 1937 after the Spanish Civil war). Their presence in the developing countries ranges from support to other agencies to direct participation in activities. Southern NGOs are found in the *developing* countries.

The general roles of NGOs vary just as the services they offer. Some of their roles include: advocacy and lobbying; research, information dissemination and sensitisation on issues; service delivery due to the receding nature of the state; implementation on behalf of governments; capacity building; and watch dogs on behalf of the masses.

Because the nature and quality of individual NGOs varies greatly, it is extremely difficult to make generalisations about the sector as a whole. Despite this diversity, some specific strength generally associated with the NGO sector include the following: strong grassroots links (grass root mobilisation), field-based development expertise; the ability to innovate and adapt; process-oriented approach to development; participatory methodologies and tools; long-term commitment and emphasis on sustainability; and cost-effectiveness (Brinkerhoff, 2004).

Noted earlier that sometimes the strength of NGO is over exaggerated given that they try to address the weakness of the private and public sector yet they suffer their own weaknesses. Some of the limitations they face include: lack of sustainability, donor dependence, tarmac bias (failure to go deep into the rural setting in preference of the urban), not being altruistic to beneficiaries and being formed stereotypically along gender or faith biases (Narayan, 2000). The public sector has always challenged NGOs to show what their constituency is (whom they represent), and also their level of accountability and legitimacy (Bates, 2000). Some NGOs

have faced allegations that they are formed and operate at the behest of government officials who are certain of funding through government coffers. Some of these have been branded Government owned NGOs (GONGOs). Some government officials have been known to collocate their time within NGOs.

NGOs' performance in Uganda has been however remarkable given that they are mainly operating within a global framework that is meant to eradicate poverty - the Millennium Development Goals.

Millennium Development Goals
On the 8th of September 2000, 189 member states of the UN adopted the UN Millennium development Declaration, detailing to eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that needed to be addressed so as to possibly eradicate poverty world-wide by 2015 (Brinkerhoff et al, 2003). This momentous occasion represented the first concerted and comprehensive efforts by all key global stakeholders (The United Nations, bilateral and multilateral development actors, and Civil Society organisations) to come together and map out poverty reduction strategies.

The advantages accruing out of this multi - sectorial and multi-stakeholder approach are five-fold as follows: direct consultation with the poor especially in the developing countries; multiple stakeholder involvement from the public, private and civil society sectors; holistic synergies from partners on development targets; increased resources from rich countries to the poor ones; and cross-sectoral partnering to support development efforts (Brinkerhoff et al, 2003). The goals are driven by certain values considered essential for safeguarding freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility in the 21st century. It can then be argued that for all the development goals to be achieved, countries need to address all the targets as a cluster and not on piece-meal basis.

The eight goals agreed upon include the following:

- ❖ Eradicating Poverty and Human Hunger

- ❖ Achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE)

- ❖ Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women

- ❖ Reducing Child Mortality

- ❖ Improving Maternal Health

- ❖ Combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases

- ❖ Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

- ❖ Developing Global Partnership for development (Millennium Campaign, Voices against Poverty)

Some of the actors in the Millennium Development Initiative include such as Governments, Bilateral agencies (e.g. SIDA, USAID, DFID, DANIDA, JICA) and Multilateral Agencies (WTO, OECD) and Civil Society organisations (in their multitude) and Trade Unions.

To date, documenting progress on MDGs has not been easy from a global point of view. What come out are country specifics about some sectors of the development goals. Progress in

countries' income such as China and India has been registered. There is also commitment of resources by the corporate e.g. Bill and Melinda Gates to a tune of US $ 4.9 Billion in Global Health programmes. Countries such as Uganda have made significant progress in the area of universal primary education.

Some of the challenges that have beset the MDGs to date include: decline in average income of some countries; lack of knowledge on MDGs by one-third of respondents in 75 countries (World Federation of UN Associations); government suspicion of CBOs on the level of their commitment to the people they serve. DFID Report (2006) notes that unfortunately, while some significant progress is being made towards meeting some of the targets in some of the affected countries, in many cases progress is patchy, too slow or non-existent. Although improvements have been made in many areas in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the number of people living in poverty there is still greater now than it was in 1990.

The rest of the developing world has outstripped Africa in most if not all areas. The World Bank report (2004) notes the following challenges: Regional trends show the greatest progress in East Asia and the Pacific, but malnutrition rates remain high in South Asia and are rising in Sub-Saharan Africa. Three regions –East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean – are on track to achieve the goal. But the other three regions, the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, which have 150 million children of primary school age, are in danger of falling short. Sub-Saharan Africa lags farthest behind, with little progress since 1990. South Asia also has chronically low enrolment and completion rates eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005- and at all levels of education by 2015. Progress has been particularly slow in Sub-Saharan Africa, where civil disturbances and HIV/AIDS have driven up rates of infant and child mortality in many countries. But in Africa, where skilled attendants and health facilities are not readily available, it is very high. The MDG Progress Report (2005) sub Saharan Africa is lagging behind on many of the goals and targets. Maternal morality outcomes are difficult to measure, and the lack of reliable data across countries and over time limits the ability to track progress towards this goal. But current trends suggest that the goal will almost certainly not be met. According to UNAIDS (2006) Report today, an estimated 38.6 million people world-wide are currently infected with HIV, with roughly 4.1 million new cases reported in 2005.

Most African countries have taken on the MDGs as conduits to addressing extreme poverty within their populations, although the performance is varying depending on the specific goals they are trying to address. This is a significantly positive shift in Africa's quest for development with 90% of its population enmeshed into deprivation trap[2]. Some Goals such as Universal Primary Education, as with Uganda have been undertaken with remarkable resilience.

Universal Primary Education (UPE) as a Millennium Development Goal
Universal Primary Education is second Goal among the MDGs. The target is to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The indicators for progress of UPE are: net enrolment ratio in primary education; proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5; and Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds (UNESCO).

However these commitments arise against the current background of statistics, some of which remain gloomy: one in four adults in the developing world - 872 million people are illiterate.

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[2] Robert Chambers, 'Rural Development: Putting the Last first', Institute of Development Studies

More than 100 million children remain out of school. Forty six percent of girls in the world's poorest countries have no access to primary education. No more than 1 in 4 adults cannot read or write: 2/3 are women; universal primary education would cost $10 billion; young people who have completed primary education are less than half as likely to contract HIV as those missing an education. Universal primary education would prevent 700,000 cases of HIV each year - about 30% all new infections in this age group.

It is important to discuss UPE in Uganda first by addressing the triggers for change toward the initiative. Notable among the many include:

1. Strong political commitment and buy-in by all public service agencies;

2. Establishment of an effective strategic partnership between domestic and international players;

3. Sound macroeconomic policies that ensured expansion into education sector; policy of transparency and accountability in education sector;

4. The move from General to Directed budget Support financing modalities that ensured predictable aid and financial flow to support the education sector (UBOS - Education statistics, 2000).

However in examining the drivers for change, it's also important to note the policy and legal framework that has in concert influenced the UPE Process in Uganda. UPE as a national policy did not arise in a vacuum. It arose against the backdrop of other policy and legal frameworks in the country that have evolved over time.

• The Castle Commission (1963) Report

• The Republic of Uganda Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) 1992 paper and the Government White Paper on Education, 1992

• The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) Process, 1995

• The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995)

• The Children's statute of 1996

• Vision 2025, 1997

• The Local Government Act, 1997

• Revised school management committee regulations, 2000

• Education Bill, 2000

Internationally, Uganda has also encompassed other declarations:

• The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 (1), 10th December 1948

• Convention of the Rights of the children, 1989

• Education for All (EFA) Forum, Dakar, Senegal, April 2000

• UN Millennium Development Goals, 8th September, 2000

Background and objectives to UPE

With education for all underway, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) had to develop objectives for the programme. These objectives were developed slightly after 2 years after the policy implementation of UPE. They include the following:
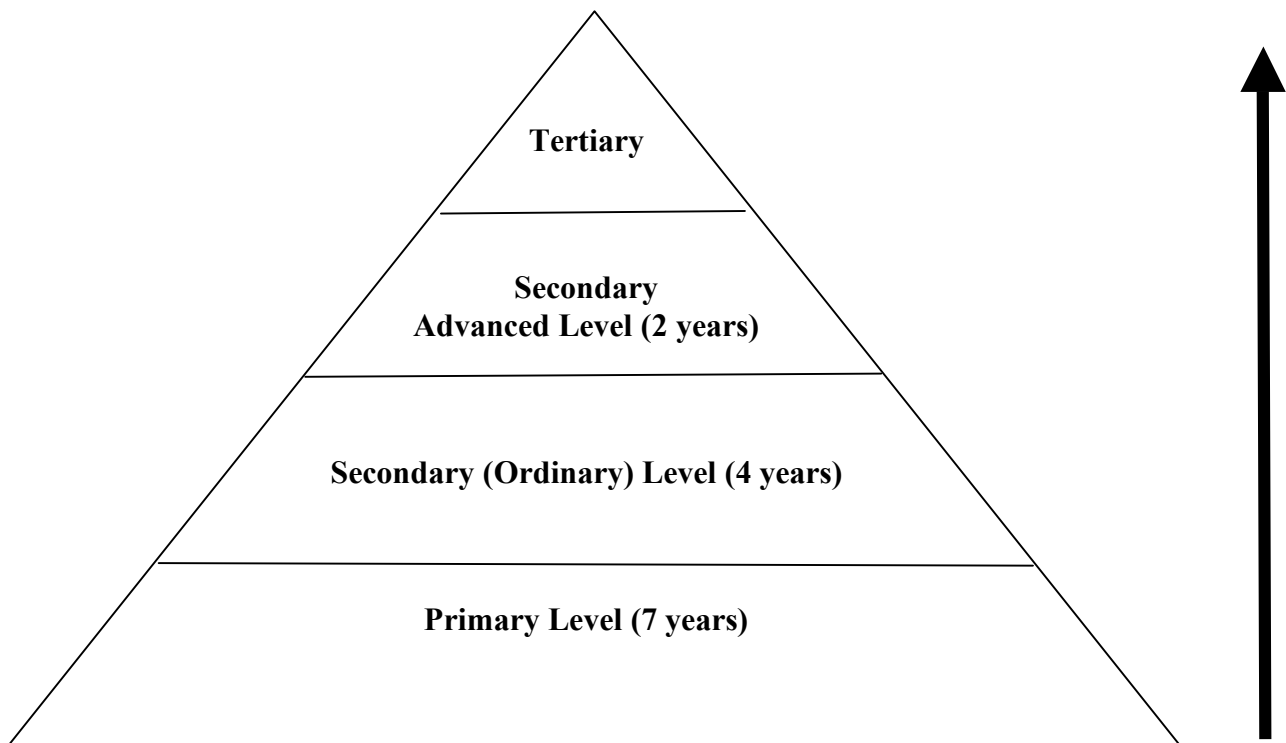
- Making basic education accessible to the learners and relevant to their needs as well as meeting national goals;

- Making education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities;

- Establishing, providing and maintaining quality education as the basis for promoting the necessary human resource development;

- Initiating a fundamental positive transformation of society in the social, economic and political field; and

- Ensuring that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans by providing, initially the minimum necessary facilities and resource, and progressively the optimal facilities,

- Enable every child to enter an remain in school until they complete the primary education cycle (MoES website, 1999)

Since the launching of UPE in February 1997, statistics indicate that primary school enrolment increased from about 3 million in 1997 to 7.6 million in 2003. In 2004, total enrolment in primary school decreased slightly (by 300,000) to the 2002 level of 7.35 million. Enrolment of children with special needs also increased from 20,000 in 1997 to 218,286 in 2002, with 54% boys and 46% girls. Key education indicators are showing improvement over the period 2001 to 2004, with a decrease in the pupil classroom ratio from 134 in 2001 to 85 in 2004; and a decrease in the pupil teacher ratio from 58 in 2001, to 56 in 2003, to 54 in 2004 (USAID 2005).

The preceding statistics are indicative of UPE as a millennium development goal that is widely acceptable and on track.

Uganda's education system is blended alongside that of the British system given the integrated political history of the two countries from 1894 onwards. The school system is pyramidal moving vertically upwards. It is commonly referred to as the 7-4-2-system: seven years of primary school, 4 years of secondary (Ordinary Level), and 2 years of secondary (Advanced level). An additional 3 years of university is usually the case. It is an intensively exam based system, which uses the merit and elimination method to sort those academic elite who qualify for government higher education scholarships from those whose parents have to pay the fees for.

Structure of the educational system in Uganda

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                    Tertiary

                Secondary
            Advanced Level (2 years)

        Secondary (Ordinary) Level (4 years)

            Primary Level (7 years)
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The primary seven-year Education in Uganda provides the basic education leading to the Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) Certificate in four Core Subjects, which include English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. There are two categories of primary schools namely; private primary schools under the management of non-government Agencies and Government Aided schools. Presently, over 7.7 million of the primary school age-going children attend primary school out of a population of 26 million. This compares with about 48 million children going to US school (both Primary and Secondary) annually, out of a population of 281,421,906 as of 1st April 2000. The Ministry of Education and Sports controls primary and other levels of Education in Uganda. It trains registers and supplies all required teachers, prescribes a national curriculum and provides textbooks, administrators and inspectors. In addition, constructs schools, teachers' houses, sanitary facilities and furniture. There is also an active involvement by the NGOs. The community and parents have a significant role such as providing bricks, land and labour. In addition, they provide scholastic materials. There are 11,850 Government aided and 1,521 Private primary schools (Namirembe, 2005).

Government of Uganda and the external donor support under the umbrella organisation called the Education Funding Agencies Group (EFAG) finance education in Uganda. The Donor support in Uganda takes the form of either budget support or project support. Budget support is a reference to external financial support that is extended to the Government through Ministry of Finance.

In the early years of independence, government expenditure on education averaged around 4 percent of GDP. By the early 1980s this had plummeted to barely 1.0 percent. In view of the above, the Education's percentage of the national budget has grown from 25.3% in 1998/99 to 27.5% in 1999/2000 (Hallak, et al. 2000 P.13). Currently, Uganda's public spending on Education, both as a share of GDP and as a share of total public expenditure, is relatively high.

However, the share allocated to primary education is high. The concentration on primary education as a bottom-up developmental approach was justifiable within the overall context of poverty eradication. In the F/Y 2005/6 budget, the Education Sector was allocated 17.2% of the national budget or 3.96% of GDP.

Some of the actors in UPE in Uganda include Governments, the Private sector and NGOs (Local and International). All these actors in one way or the other receive support from Bilateral and multilateral partners.

It is important to address some of the prospects of UPE in its first decade. Some of these include:

1. Access to education increased;

2. Increase in trained teachers;

3. Increase in school facilities due to the School Facilities Grant (SFG) in the Ministry of Education.

4. Further more there has been granting of aid to primary schools, payment of PLE fees by government, promotion of special education for children with special needs, and offering of alternative basic education, especially in the pastoral community of Karamoja.

In the bid to improve the welfare of teachers in Primary School, government on 15th June 2006 increased the basic salary from UG Shs. 140,000- (US $ 75) to 200,000- (about US $ 108) per month. This is a 70% increase in the salary.

On the other hand however, UPE has been beset with challenges and some of these are:

1. Quantitative inputs such as textbooks, teachers, and classrooms was challenge until 2001 when it improved;

2. Qualitative inputs-Teacher Development Management Scheme; Repetition and drop out rates; low achievement levels; differentials between urban-rural, private-government aided performance (UBOS, 2000).

Significantly, of the two million primary students that enrolled in primary One in 1997 when UPE was introduced, only 406,000 sat for primary Leaving Exams in 2003, reflecting a serious retention problem. The delivery of education services in the war-torn northern districts has been significantly disrupted (USAID Report, 2005). Other challenges are occurring at the macro level where general population increase is making planning difficult in the educational sector.

Enter NGOs into UPE
For the past 20 years, Uganda has been hailed as successful in several ways. The pinnacle to this is said to be the economic and human development changes coupled with other political and policy considerations.

From the human development point, Uganda has made remarkable progress towards attaining Millennium Development Goals in Primary Education Enrolment now more than 90% of all school going age children. Education consumes the highest amount of the Government budget. It has a Universal Primary Education programme that been particularly successful and most

advantageous to children from poor households and girls (Uganda National NGO Forum website).

For many years, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) acted as the principal agent in the education sector. Given the weak nature of the state then, involvement of other actors such as NGOs in the sector was not only crucial but also timely. NGOs have been key instruments in Uganda, for bolstering government efforts to achieve UPE objectives.

The need for the involvement of NGOs in education lies within the social economic facts pertaining to Uganda as a county.

These include:

- Population has grown to 26.9 million (15th June 2006 Projections) from 12.6 million in 1980.

- Population growth rate of 3.37% (2006 Estimates) (World fact book) Uganda's population increases by one million people every year

- Projected population will be 51.9 million in 2025 and 118.3 million by 2050

- Each year pregnancies claim the lives of over 6,000 women

- Infant mortality stands at 120,000 per year

- About 20 newborn deaths occur for each maternal death (New Vision newspaper of 21st October 2005)

- The current National Literacy rate is estimated at 68% of which 76% is for males and 61% is for females. The population age group 6-12 is estimated at 22%, which is about 53% of the total population. At primary level, less than 71.1% of the children aged 6-15 years are enrolled in schools. (Namirembe, 2005).

- Between 1999 and 2003 enrolment increased from 6.9 million pupils in 2001 to 7.4 million pupils in 2004 representing an increase of 7 percent.

- In the same period the number of primary schools and teachers increased by 9 and 11 percent respectively.

The Human Development Report 2005 report notes that as the result of the government policy on Universal Primary Education (UPE) many children have enrolled in primary schools, creating demand for universal secondary education that is eminent in 2007.
The Report further notes that financial and other resources will be needed to cater for additional teachers as a result of continued high fertility rates and rising school enrolment coupled with the need to improve the quality of education through lowering the teacher student ratio. (New vision, 21st October 2005)

NGOs have been key players in the education field of Uganda and have contributed over 30% of the educational services. Their involvement comes as what Fowler (2002) refers to as the change from Development as delivery to Development as leverage. This has required NGOs to transcend from being mere conduits of resources for emergence and relief situations toward sustainable development programmes such as education that requires strategic leadership and thinking. NGOs have committed huge resources to the Ugandan educational sector-Plan International, OXFAM, World Vision, Redd Barna, and AOET, Uganda Child Rights NGO

Network, CCF Uganda and Action Aid Uganda. They offer services along side governments, as partners on local and specialised issues (Umoh, 2003).

NGOs Roles in UPE have been felt in areas as enlisted below:

1. **Policy influencing, lobbying and Advocacy**:
   Some NGOs e.g. Forum for Educational NGOs in Uganda (FENU) have addressed policy on the disadvantaged children in Uganda, the internally displaced. This has led to design of specific interventions for UPE in the war-ravaged north that is conventionally different form that elsewhere in the country.

2. **Monitoring disbursed funds and watchdogs for prudent resource utilisation -Agents of Accountability:**
   Monitoring of funds disbursed to districts and schools. NGOs such as Uganda Debt Network (UDN) have assumed the mantle on this issue. UDN is presently leading a process to establish a Community Based Monitoring System and a National Network to monitor the utilization of the savings from debt relief in Uganda so that debt relief resources can benefit the poor people directly. The agency has spearheaded the Grassroots Anti-Corruption Campaign in Uganda to establish open and transparent systems for public accountability by Public Officers at local and national levels. Some of the funds utilised under the UPE programme include the Schools Facilities grants (SFG).

3. **Service Delivery**:
   NGOs such as CCF have been at the forefront of service delivery. To ensure the opportunity for all children to receive quality education, NGOs such as CCF provide uniforms, scholastic materials and tuition assistance. CCF-assisted projects have built and furnished classrooms that provide remedial teaching for enrolled students. Additionally, CCF-Uganda supports girl child programs that focus on the rights of women and girls by promoting education for girls. This has been recorded in operational areas: Mayuge, Jinja and Busia (Buhehe Sub county) Districts. The provision of services to schools by NGOs such as water and sanitation by plan international –Uganda helps on the retention of especially the girl-child. Other NGOs such as Redd Barna have been involved in school construction, World Vision Uganda and plan international –Uganda in Child Sponsorship. Plan Uganda under the auspices of Plan International offer services such as textbooks and furniture to schools in the districts of Luweero, Kamuli and Tororo.

4. **Implementation of government initiated programmes through joint planning:**
   Given that the local government act 1997 empowers districts to manage primary schools, where UPE is based, the same act empowers the district Technical planning committee to involve other stakeholders. In the case of UPE, NGOs such as Plan international-Uganda are offering technical services to districts in the area of funding and implementation of school construction. These, they hand over back to districts after they are commissioned.

5. **Quality control of UPE**:
   CCF works with various country governments to lobby for quality education and to provide educational services for young people. CCF offices develop minimum standards and utilize best practices to ensure quality education for all the children in the programmes. In other instances, Plan Uganda offers textbooks as a way of pulling to par the UPE pupils' quality of education in rural areas to that of their peers in urban setting.

6. **Alternative Basic Education:**
Some NGOs have addressed the issue of mobility of masses and insecurity in Northern and Eastern Uganda due the cultural, political and ecological situations obtaining in these areas. The Alternative Basic Education For Karamoja (ABEK) is a case in point where NGOs have tracked pupils to attend classes given that the conventional classroom is not possible. This has gone along way in complementing the UPE initiative in these areas. The most pronounced of these NGOs is Redd Barnet.

7. **Capacity building through Training**
NGO have been known to build capacity of UPE schools as in the case of Plan Uganda. Plan Uganda boosts the capacity of existing schools by adding on classroom blocks, furnishing them with furniture and a toilet and water catchments place. This though is done for existing government schools. In some instances, Plan Uganda support children through sponsorship programmes and note that some of the sponsors are the employees at local level. Through their school improvement projects, Plan Uganda undertakes to train children in schools in HIV/AIDS awareness, Agriculture in schools, drama and on the rights of the child.

8. **Research, Information and dissemination**
Several NGOs undertake studies concerning the state of UPE in Uganda. Some of this information has been used to inform the policy making and implementation process. FENU, an education NGOs was active in 2003 in influencing the Education Sector Review (ESR) and processes that were fed into the Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) II and the education elements within the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) - Uganda's Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan. Some of the issues FENU researched on were the disadvantaged children in non-formal education (NFE) and those in camps for the Internally Displaced. FENU document especially successes, best practice and challenges and the issues were raised to the respective parliamentary committees for consideration.

The Iganga Case

Background Information

Iganga Female Headteachers (Principals) Association is a non-profit organization that brings the female headteachers together to provide a platform for the girl child articulate critical issues that affects her socially, economically and morally as a result of the rigged cultural rules of the area. The organization further provides assistance to the abused girl children.

IGAFHA was founded to articulate and address cultural issues that hinder women's educational advancement. Iganga district has 400 primary schools but only 100 of those are headed by female teachers. Reason being that in Iganga district it is believed that women can not manage leadership positions and this is a cultural belief. Men have to believe, because if you go down to the ground, women are the best administrators. The few of us who have made it up to the top positions have gone through a number of huddles. This should not be the case with the young girl child. IGAFHA has started a revolution and there is hope for the girl child to access quality education that could cause equal employment opportunities and a bigger say in the family decisions.

It is a taboo to reintegrate an adolescent mother into school in Iganga district because marrying off young girls in the area is the order of the day. Education for girls in Iganga is not a priority. The rate of the girl child drop out from school is becomingly alarming particularly in primary (Elementary) schools

Statistics carried out by the Ministry of Education in 2001, indicate that;

- 45% girls complete primary seven

- 18% girls complete secondary education

- 8.7% girls complete Advanced level education

- 2.5% girls complete University and college education

Men believe that when one marries an illiterate woman, he has landed the opportunity of having a donkey, tractor, cook, cleaner and servant in a home. IGAFHA wants to see a highly educated woman who can compete in the job market. She could contribute to the family income by not acting the role of a donkey, but providing cash from her pocket.

IGAFHA'S mission is to raise the status of the girl child in society. There are many groups in Uganda that have come up to advocate for equal opportunities for the women but that is done at the national level where seminars are organized for the elite women whose effect on the rural woman is negligible. IGAFHA has come up to fill the gap where the rural women have not been seriously addressed. The rural woman is a prisoner to the cultural norms. For fear of losing a marriage she can not oppose a husband, but to adhere. We have therefore found it appropriate to start with the young girls because they will grow up with a culture of knowing their rights and would not be intimidated by men. As we pursue our philosophy of empowering the girl child, the rural woman is put on board because she is the mother to that child we are targeting.

Organizational Principles

IGAFHA has an executive board in place. It is the responsibility of the board to implement the decisions of the general assembly. The Link Secretary is faced with the challenge of making the out side world aware of the plight of the women head teachers and rural girl child in Iganga

IGAFHA uses the existing organizational structures in schools to reach the grass root girl child. There is a senior woman teacher in every school whom we use to mobilize the girls for us to address. IGAFHA has not made much progress because of lack of logistics.

We intend to have programs for Out of School girls. They are to be organized at sub county levels.

Despite the impressive record of NGOs as actors in UPE and being thought of as a "magic bullet" that cannot miss the mark, they are riddled sometimes with challenges beyond their

efficacy. These include: Political problems due to civil strife and rebellion in northern Uganda hampering their efforts as noted by World Vision Uganda; and allegations that they by-pass local authorities in districts by concentrating development in one core urban area other than the adjacent rural ones. This causes pocket developments around areas rather than spontaneous development.

The preceding discussion highlights the important role that NGOs play in the primary education sector of Uganda. To achieve this however, NGOs cannot go it alone without a proper sibling relationship with government, which holds elective and discretionary power.

Government-NGO Collaboration-a critical mass for quality UPE
The history of Government-NGOs relations in Uganda was chequered not until the mid-1990s. The relationship swung in pendulum form between direct co-option of NGOs by government to outright contradictions. The dialectical clashes between NGO and Government stemmed from *Space* and *Roles*. In Uganda this clash became more glaring in 1992 when government cancelled the permit of Foundation for African Development (FAD) on the premise that it has no moral authority to question government yet it was utilising donor resources. FAD pulled back the trigger by asking government, which of the two, government or FAD was benefiting more from donor resources. That ended the confrontation by what seemed a rapprochement.

By and by, government and NGOs have improved on their working relationship. The issue of space and roles seems clear now than before, despite the new NGO Act of 7th April 2006. The strategy may be that NGOs are winning on what they want to do. However, the political issue is that of aid and SAPs as conditionality. Since May 1987, Uganda has been largely implementing structural changes in its bureaucracy. This has led to privatisation of public assets, liberalisation of the economic regime and decentralisation of power from the central government to the peripheral districts. The argument to this was that government was not able to offer services efficiently. Be the case as it was for the districts and private sector takeover of some of the services from government, the same became feasible for NGOs, especially where they had capacity to perform better than government in service delivery and resource garnering from donors. The government warmed up relations with NGOs from 1995 onwards. The government as a representative of the people still regulates and superintends over the performance of the NGOs, so that they don't have mandates that are tangential to the people's interest.

NGOs have now become an integral and important component of educations systems in Africa in general and Uganda in particular. Miller-Graiudaux *et al* (2002) affirm that this is not cheaply achieved given the perceptive difference between government and NGOs. Scholars further note that the main point of departure between the government and NGOs is that the former believe that education provisions are an affair of government. The latter perceive government as a sector that has failed and it's the NGOs' moral responsibility to attend to education. The author believes that cooperation between the two will facilitate education even better.

Brinkerhoff (2004) aptly points out that the role of government is that of creating an enabling environment through which NGOs can supplement government's efforts in offering UPE. Najam (2004) develops a conceptual framework for NGO-Government relations. This includes four types of relationships: cooperation, where government and NGOs share similar ends and means; confrontation, where the ends and means of both actors differ; complementality, where the ends are similar, but the means differ; and co-optation, where the means are similar, but the actors have different ends in mind.

Similarly, Fox et al (2002) develop a framework or roles for which government can foster an enabling environment for which NGOs outputs are more coherent. These roles include: mandating, facilitation, resources, partnership and endorsing. These roles are however vertically linked to functions of NGOs.

Government's Roles in Enabling NGO Contributions to UPE

NGO Functions	Mandating	Facilitating	Resourcing	Partnering	Endorsing
Service Provision	NGOs Registration and laws Laws permitting provision of educational Services by NGOs	NGOs contracting out educational services to NGOs as public service contractors Public procurement and disposal of assets regulations	Government funding of service contracts	Formulation of educational service delivery partnerships with NGOs Availing information to NGOs about Funding	Recognizing the Contributions of NGO service Providers.
Interest aggregation and representation	Laws and regulations annual reports for Procedures for government and citizen involvement in NGO activities	Functional Adult literacy programmes Capacity building for public officials to foster citizen participation	Funds for NGOs to compete for	Supporting creation of NGOs Involvement of NGOs in policy making for a of UPE	Reinforcing societal values of equity, inclusiveness, &justice. -Promoting civic education.
Policy Advocacy and Monitoring	-Laws & regulations for access to information on UPE programmes in Government. - Laws on freedom of expression. -NGO accountability	-Establishing social accountability mechanisms Demystifying policies & budgets.	Public funding of NGO participation in policy monitoring of UPE.	Creation of public arenas & forums for shared policy dialogue on UPE.	Encouragement of media reporting on NGOs role in advocacy & accountability of UPE. -Support for reporting on NGO policy research results &findings concerning UPE

	& reporting requirements (often linked to registration).				

NGOs need to take advantage of this enabling environment to offer services at all fronts either as service delivery, policy advocacy and lobbying, and or capacity development in schools. Equally they can offer the same services at the same time. However given the myriad of problems, both institutional and macro, NGOs need to take on UPE in agreement with government and other development partners if they are to remain effective. Communication is easily established if there is an established mechanism of control and, if the two are familiar with each other's work. Anything besides this can affect quality of the initiative and create clusters of development among the country's human resource base.

The Way forward
As Jagannathan (2000) notes, the following points will be vital to ensure that NGO perform their roles properly in UPE:

- The government could support the efforts of NGOs to bring out-of-school children into schools through timely supply of teachers, classroom space, and other resources. Targeted action is needed to reach different types of out-of-school children - those who work, those who live in slums, those on the street, who live in places without schools such as in parts of Bundibugyo district.

- To encourage young, first-generation learners to stay in school require a supportive and nurturing environment. To help make learning interesting and worthwhile for such children, teachers in government schools could receive special training in new methods developed by NGOs. These new methods should improve on the already existing pedagogy.

- Enhancing quality through collaboration with NGOs. NGOs and the government could collaborate in developing appropriate and flexible learning assessment tools, in line with innovative teaching and learning methods.

- Government should through NGO-Public Partnerships support NGOs to address the problem of access and usage of primary education in remote rural areas where location and poverty affect quality UPE. Gulu district e.g. has the highest density of schools in Uganda and half of them are seldom used.

- The ultimate inclusion of NGOs on District Technical Planning Committees (DTPC) will help harness plans and avoid concentric development in some areas while leaving out others by NGOs. Districts and NGOs will be able to strategize and it will also be a communication tool concerning each party's roles and performance.

- UPE is a means and not an end in itself. The end is holistic human development and poverty eradication. Therefore inputs into the UPE process should be focussed on human development and poverty eradication, the vision of the MDGs in 2015.

Conclusion

The contemporary state, challenged by new forces both from without (forces of globalization) and from within (forces, for example, of ethnicity), needs to de-modernise and post-modernise, by reconsidering the role of civil society. Only such a state will be able to meet the challenge of contemporary society. As Dalfovo (2006) concludes, "there will be no short cuts to growth; it cannot be forced. Spontaneous development and operation of civil society remains the key by which contemporary society will be able to meet the challenges of the time."

The perception that UPE is in the best interests of Poverty Eradiation is well established in development literature. Be the case as it may in the literature, rarely does it interrogate what some of the primary actors are doing and whether it's effective. An understanding of some of these actors, who are here with us to stay, and how they can innovate and improve on quality of UPE, is principal if we are to achieve the third MDG in nine years to come.

Acronyms

CBOs	Community Based Organisations
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
EFA	External Funding Agencies Group
EFAG	Education For All Group
EPRC	Educational Policy Review Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GONGOs	Government Owned Non governmental Organisations
JICA	Japan International Co-operation Agency
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PEAP   Poverty Eradication Action Plan

ROSCAs   Rotating Savings and Credit Schemes

SAPs   Structural Adjustment Programmes

SIDA   Swedish International Development Agency

UN   United Nations

UNAIDS   Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UPE   Universal Primary Education

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

WTO   World Trade Organisation

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