



CSBAG BUDGET NEWS BRIEF



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Advocating for a People Centered Budget that Dignifies Humanity



Government scores on UPE numbers but what is at stake!

This week the Minister for Education released results of 621,401 candidates that sat the 2015 Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) exams 478,585(77 %) of whom were UPE pupils.

A look at the PLE performance for the last 3 years reveals positive aspects about the 2015 performance which include the rising number of primary schools that registered candidates to 12,673 primary schools in 2015 down from 11,904 in 2014 and 11,506 in 2013. The other positive trend was the growing number of pupils sitting their PLE exams which has continued to grow since 1997 and the number of candidates whose exams were withheld by the Ministry of Education due to malpractice and other factors also continued to decline since 2013 where 1,424 candidates had their exams withheld in 2013, declining to 1,344 in 2014 and only 909 in 2015 and its believed with even more stringent measures these numbers will continue going down.

Despite the positive elements, the overall 2015 PLE performance was rated poor compared to the last 2 years and this was confirmed by the Minister for Education Hon. Jessica Alupo who informed the nation that 7,028 schools of the 12,673 in 2015 did not have any candidate passing in first grade as compared to just 5000 in 2014. Furthermore the number of PLE candidates that failed increased by 24,973 from 58,000 in 2014 to 82,973 pupils 2015. Worse still the number of pupils that failed their PLE grew by 1,053 pupils between the two years of 2015 and 2014. It is noted that of the 82,973 that failed in 2015, about 80,000 were UPE pupils which is very worrying considering that majority of Uganda's children are beneficiaries of this system.

Government policy of free Universal Primary and Secondary Education and liberalization of the education sector drastically increased access to education since its introduction in 1997. According to the UBOS statistical abstract, 2015 Primary School Enrolment was at 8.7 million in 2014 showing an upward trend from 1997 to date. This increase in the number of school children paused a set of new challenges to Uganda's education system which among others include quality and management, disparities in quality especially between urban and rural schools and gender leading to unequal outcomes.

There are also issues of low staff pay, insufficient infrastructure such as classrooms, sanitary facilities and teacher houses, inadequate supervision, low access to quality science and technical education and inadequate facilities for special needs schools and uneven teacher to



The Minister of Education released the 2015 PLE exams for 12,673 primary schools. Majority of which were UPE schools.

to pupil ration. For example, by 2014 the number of primary school teachers by 2014 was 191 in 18,408 primary school teaching 8,773,000 in 2014 (UBOS Abstract,2015).

All this contributes to the high levels of poor performance in UPE schools for example according to the UWEZO report for 2015, in P.3, nine out of ten children (or 88%) are unable to both read and solve division at Primary 2 level, while in Primary 7, almost three out of ten pupils (or 26%) are unable to complete the same tasks. Furthermore, according to the UNICEF, country statics for Uganda, the primary school participation and survival rate to the last primary grade is 24.8% net attendance ratio for male and female from 2008-12 was noted to be 16.2% and 18.7% (http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/uganda_statistics.htm) respectively.

In as regards financing for Education, despite the recent trends (bloating of the public administration budget), over years the education sector is among the sectors that receive highest national resources in the national budget with an average of above 40 per cent of the entire sector resources spent on primary education. However, there are concerns that the sector is putting less emphasis in terms of funding on skills development in that technical and vocational training are only getting only 2.2 per cent of the sector budget. This is contrary to the Government focus on employment creation through skills development. In fact there is an increasing unemployment rate in Uganda, due to the education System that does not equip students with critical skills required for quick absorption in to the labor market.

Whereas NDP II projects an allocation of UGX 3,919.4bn for Education in FY 2016/17, the sector in the NBP FY 2016/17 proposed only UGX 2,479.665bn which translates to a 36.7% points off the NDP II target. There has to be a clear alignment of the sector budget with the NDPII and what it envision for the sector, not only in policy but in the funding commitment from government through the NDPII.

Funding for School inspection is wanting as its allocation at local government level has averaged at UGX 2.4 billion (see Table 1). If apportioned evenly across the 134 local governments (including Municipalities) it amounts to UGX 17.9 Million for the entire financial year. This translates into UGX 940 only to monitor a primary school per FY. Failure to fund school inspection has resulted in unacceptably high Head teacher absenteeism estimated at 20% lowest in hard-to-reach and hard-to-stay areas.

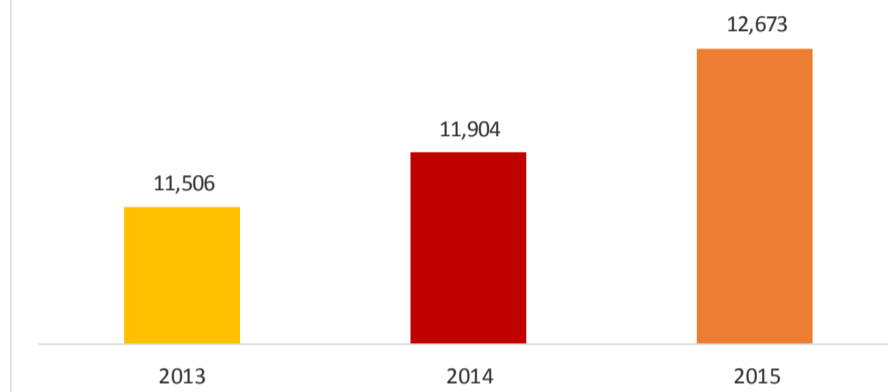
In her remarks, the Minister for Education, reiterated Government's special focus to strengthen its support to Special Needs Education in Uganda although CSBAG has reservations. A total of about 160,444 children with special needs were enrolled in primary school in 2014,, whereas the number of children with special learning needs have been increasingly enrolling, there is inadequate instructional materials, equipment and capacity building and awareness on special needs. In FY 2016/17, the sector proposes to invest only UGX 3.683bn in the FY 2016/17 yet the sector requires at least UGX 5bn as to consolidate existing efforts to teach the special children and to cover gazetted SNE schools in the Local Governments.

Under decentralization, implementation of education programmes is a responsibility of various local governments. However for some time the UPE implementation has been marred with a number of challenges ranging from weakness in management and accountability of UPE funds resulting into a weakened involvement of parents in the management and running of schools, as most parents seem to relegate the responsibility of educating their children entirely on teachers; most of whom do not care whether children attend school. Furthermore, although the Senior Management Committees (SMCs) and Parents and Teachers Association (PTAs) are supposed to actively participate in education planning and budgeting processes, this has not been the case. Due to apathy, communities have found it extremely difficult to monitor schools and how they are managed while few SMCs know their roles and responsibilities. Since parents of late contribute less to the education of their children, they continue to play a limited role in determining the standard and quality of the education

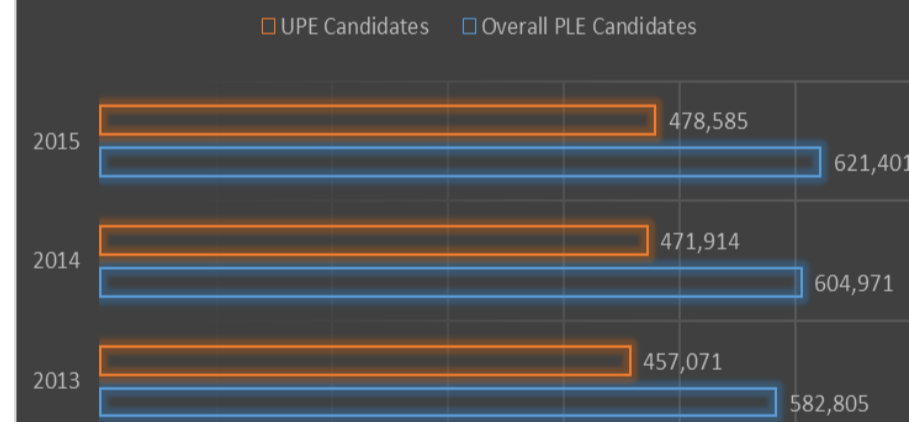
Government efforts to eliminate ghost pupils and teachers, deal with late release of funds by introducing direct transfer of funds to schools and releasing of funds according to the school calendar are good measures in the right direction. Same Government effort is required for government to focus on the quality of education being offered in this country rather than just numbers.

3 YEAR PLE PERFORMANCE TRENDS

Primary schools registering PLE Candidates 2013-2015



UPE candidates compared to total PLE candidates by Year (2013-2015)



Failure by number of schools and candidates over the years

