



**FEMALE SCHOOL DROP OUTS IN POST PRIMARY EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS IN RURAL DISTRICTS OF UGANDA**

STUDY REPORT

JUNE 2019



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RURAL DISTRICTS OF UGANDA**

FINAL REPORT

PREPARED BY

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JUNE 2019

Executive Summary

Funded by Gateway Research Centre (Kampala), the study on Female School Drop outs in Post Primary

Education Institutions was conducted in four districts namely; Luweero (Central), Namayingo (Eastern), Dokolo (Northern) and Kiruhura (Western). It was intended to find out the major causes of school drop outs among female students in those schools and what practical policy recommendations can be made to avert such. It was found out that there have been several interventions by the government, humanitarian and international agencies in addition to school management and boards to curb down the female school dropouts but less success has been registered so far for example, despite the existence of Universal Secondary Education and Universal Post O level Education and Training, there are still drop outs arising from factors like lack of school fees, pregnancies, early marriages, orphanage or loss of parents, mishandling of students by teachers, need to work, lack of facilities for girls, family misunderstandings among parents among others.

It was found out that it is the lack of school fees arising from rampant poverty that contributes most highly to the female school drop outs with 27% drop outs registered and pregnancies of 16% as well as lack of facilities for girls among others in the period considered by the study; that is between 2015 and 2018. During the study, many girls were requesting for assistance in form of money and sanitary pads from the research team and many argued that the government of Uganda promised them pads to use during their menstrual periods but this had not been done by the time the study was conducted. The study thus recommended that the government should continue constructing schools in hard to reach areas, sensitize parents and the communities on the role of keeping girls at school without dropping out, encourage girls to learn craftsmanship so as to earn some income during holidays to avoid the challenge of school fees, undertake punishments or penalties for those who defile young girls leading to pregnancies, ensure regular counseling and guidance among others. It was also recommended that girls be checked for pregnancy (pregnancy tests) before, during and after the course of each term of study at school so as to reduce on the rate of pregnancies at school. Parents should not make their children to suffer in case there are misunderstandings between the mother and father at home and that lastly, girls who stay with male guardians should always report to their

local authorities and school administration in case of sexual harassment.

The study was funded by Gateway Research Centre in 4 districts i.e. Luweero (Central), Namayingo (Eastern), Kiruhura (Western) and Dokolo (Northern)

Despite several interventions by government and humanitarian agencies, the female school drop outs are still high.

Major contributing factors;

- *Lack of school fees 27%*
- *Pregnancies 16%*

During the study, many girls were requesting for assistance in form of money and sanitary pads from the research team

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	African Development Bank
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FY	Financial Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRC	Gateway Research Centre
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NRM	National Resistance Movement
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UNHS	Uganda National Household Survey
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPOLET	Universal Post Ordinary level Education and training

UPPET Uganda Post Primary and Education training Program

USA United States of America

USE Universal Secondary Education

Part 1 Introduction

This chapter explains an overview of female school dropouts in Uganda, the key interventions, role played by Gateway Research Centre, scope of the study, Methods of data collection, study limitations and the ethical considerations.

1.1 Overview of female school drop outs in Uganda

Education is indiscriminate, irrespective of gender. However developing countries like Uganda are still registering high school dropout rates among females particularly in the rural districts/localities.

Female school dropout refers to a situation where a girl child is unable to continue or complete her education due to economic, social-cultural and school level factors or other factor that may force her to drop out of school.

The development of a society can be judged by measuring the issues that extend educational inequality prevalent in the society. The prevalence of unequal distribution of education in male and female students hinders the development at every stage of a nation. All children particularly girls, must have access to and complete quality education¹.

A growing body of literature shows that girls' dropout rates are higher compared to boys in most parts of the world for instance, the dropout rate is higher for girls in 49 countries compared to boys². Though the enrollment in school is almost the same for girls and boys, boys have a higher likelihood of continuing school compared to girls³. It should be also noted that girls overall attain less education and tend to drop out earlier as compared to boys⁴.

Thus, when the dropout rate varies by gender and if girls tend to drop out earlier compared to boys, it manifests that there are some unique factors contributing to the increase in the dropout rate, particularly for girls.

Similarly, some social-cultural factors highly impact girls' dropout rate in post primary institutions⁵. Therefore we can argue that some particular factors produce poor educational outcome which consequently increases the dropout rate for girls.

¹ World Conference of Education (2001)

² UNESCO (2012)

³ Chimombo (1999)

⁴ Holmes (2003)

⁵ Holcamp (2009)

From this point of view therefore, the main objective of this research report is to clarify which factors contribute to the increase in the female dropout which are not quite elaborate and clear in the earlier studies, dropout rate does not occur through a single factor, it is a multiplicity of several factors based on regions, societies and cultural perspectives across the country.

In this report, we spell out the various causes of female school drop outs and provide recommendations for curbing them down.

The report demonstrates this in economic, social-cultural and school level factors as key contributing factors to school dropouts in rural districts of Uganda particularly among girls.

1.2 Key Interventions

Several interventions have been conducted to moderate the rate of female school dropouts in Uganda. These have been undertaken by the government, Humanitarian and international agencies in addition to the school management/ board.

- The government initiative to introduce USE in secondary institutions was indirectly intended to reduce dropout rates and enable children attain minimal education in addition to increase the literacy levels in Uganda. This has been one of the good initiatives undertaken by the government.
- Extension of education institutions to far areas mostly in the rural districts of Uganda as well providing incremental remuneration to facilitators/ teachers.
- In an initiative to reduce female school dropouts, Humanitarian and international agencies have worked together with the community through raising funds to foster institutional establishment in areas that had few or limited academic institutions. These have also provided free education to children in addition to other necessities that enable girls stay in school.
- School level factors have been identified by earlier scholars as contributing factors towards female school dropouts. In this regard, school managements try to offer scholarships to best performing students including girls and vulnerable ones as a way of curbing down the increasing dropout among female students.

1.3 Gateway Research Centre Added Value

Gateway research center is a non-profit making organization which operates national wide. Its major objective is to undertake evidence based research studies to inform policy to both public and private sectors. GRC focuses on quite a number of areas including education, Health, Gender and women empowerment, poverty and youths, food security and environment.

Basing on the increasing rate of female school dropouts in Uganda particularly in the rural districts, GRC took an initiative to explore the major causes of female dropouts by selecting one rural district in each of the four regions of Uganda that is; Central, Eastern , northern and Western. The findings from the study will help policy makers and implementers to come up with workable remedies to the rising female school dropouts in rural districts of Uganda.

Prior to the reading and implementation of the budget for the financial year 2019/2020, GRC will release the policy brief regarding what should be done to reduce the female school dropouts in rural districts of Uganda and this is based on grounds that there are no other research organizations that have come out at this very time of the year.

Most of the Civil Society and Non-governmental organizations only advocate and in most cases provide facilities that would reduce the female school drop outs in Post primary education institutions but do not provide sustainable solutions to these drop outs. GRC will prepare a policy brief to provide evidence-based sustainable solutions to the female school drops in these academic institutions or schools.

1.4. Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in four selected rural districts of Uganda one from each region that is; Central, Northern, Eastern and Western region.

It was conducted between 15th March and 25th April 2019. The study was essentially targeting female students across the selected rural schools in addition to local communities, school administrators, district and local government levels. However, there was participation of also male students as these were deemed to also have an understanding of the causes of school dropouts of their female counterparts and hence could not be ignored in the study.

The post primary institutions which were involved were secondary schools which are summarized in the table 1 below;

Table 1: Secondary Schools which participated in the study

S/N	Name of school	Location	Region
1	Ndejje High school	Luweero district	Central
2	Ndejje s.s	Luweero district	Central
3	Bishop's girls	Kiruhura district	Western
4	Sedes Saplentices ss	Kiruhura district	Western
5	Syoka SS	Namayingo district	Eastern
6	Dede SS	Namayingo district	Eastern
7	Buswale	Namayingo district	Eastern
8	Fortune Ss	Namayingo district	Eastern
9	St. John Bosco S.S	Dokolo district	North
10	Dokolo Girls	Dokolo district	North
11	Bata Modern	Dokolo district	North

Source: Field data, March 2019

1.5. Methods and Materials

While collecting data, the study involved both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected from the field by use of focus group discussions which were composed of representatives members of groups whose beliefs, practices or opinions were sought by asking oral questions involving probing of participants.

The study involved 11 focus group discussions each comprising of between 25-52 participants and these were particularly girls in 11 selected secondary schools. The school headteachers aided in the selection of participants and moreover the participation was voluntary. Also, there were 18 key informant interviews including class teachers, headteachers, Directors of studies and senior women teachers. On the other hand, there was also desk review for the literature gathered from documentary information relating to female school dropouts in Uganda for the period 2015 to 2018. Copies of the FGD and KII guiding questions have been attached in annex 1. In total, the study involved 481 participants as shown in table 2 below;

Table 2: Study participants

Category of participants	Number of Participants	Females	Males
FGDs	463	463	0
KIIs	18	11	07
Total	481	474	07

Source: Field data, March 2019

1.6 Challenges experienced during the study

- Some girls were asking for assistance directly from the research assistants. Many of them complained of going to school with no money for breakfast and lunch as well a lack of pads to use during their menstruation periods. The research assistants were able to request them to stay patient as means will be improvised by government, humanitarian agencies and any other potential sympathizers upon recommendation by Gateway Research Centre.
- The research assistants were inconvenienced by dusty roads linking to most of the academic institutions sampled. So, they had to carry cardigans with to prevent the dust.
- In view of finances, the team had limited finances to radiate in more than one district per region. In addition, most of the rural districts are far from Kampala which led to high transport costs.
- On the side of respondents, some couldn't be got in their offices for some information while others were not in position to give out information relevant to the study but the research assistants were able to ask various questions to probe the relevant responses from them.

1.7 Ethical considerations during the study

The study followed the informed consent while conducting research. The respondents in both key informant interviews and focus group discussions knowingly, voluntarily and intelligently participated in the study. The research assistants were able to explain the rationale for the study to the respondents and that it was intended purposely to aid in social and development research which Gateway Research Centre engages in to inform policy. The researchers provided sufficient information and assurance about taking part to allow individuals understand the implications of participation and to reach a

fully informed, considered and freely given decision about whether or not to do so without the exercise of any pressure or coercion.

Respect for anonymity and confidentiality, the team respected respondents privacy especially in instances where the subjects identified cannot be linked with personal responses.

Acknowledgement of works of other authors used in any part of this report to avoid plagiarism and to promote originality of the study since GRC engages only in evidence-based research studies.

The language applied was not discriminative neither offensive in the formulation of focus group questions and interview guide questions and this eased the study to a larger extent.

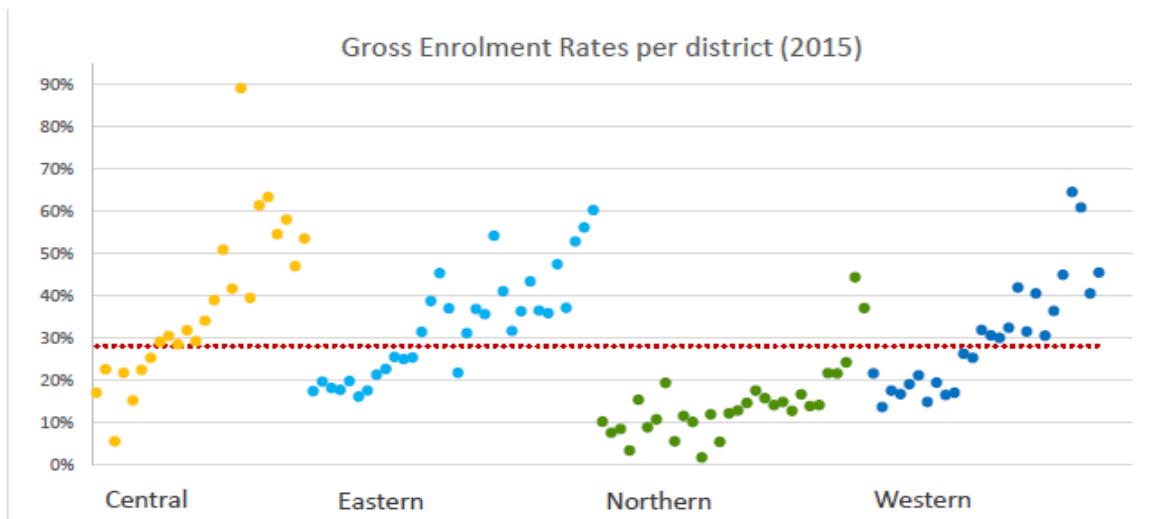
The team also got permission from the Ministry of Education and Sports allowing to conduct the study in the selected districts of Uganda in the stipulated time frame.

Part 2: School Dropout in Uganda, prior studies

In the year 2007, Uganda introduced Post Primary and Education Training (UPPET) Program as a mechanism or initiative to increase access to secondary education and also to sustain the gains of the universal primary Education (UPE). In 2012, the government of Uganda extended the universal education program to upper secondary i.e. Universal Post Ordinary Level Education and Training Program (UPOLET) all in the name of increasing access to education. However, the number of students who join 'A' level on this program is still low and at the same time the dropout rate is high including dropouts for girls.

In fact, with a low enrollment rate in many rural schools for example the North having an access to secondary education which is below 10% and yet the national average enrolment for Uganda is also as low as 28% which implies that it is difficult to have a large number of girls in school. The gross enrolment rates per region and district is shown in figure 1. The report also indicated that girls' secondary education experience is characterized by lower access, higher dropout and lower transition rates compared to boys.

Figure 1:



Source: WB based on UBOS and own data

Public spending for education in Uganda, as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) compared with countries with similar GDP per capita is slightly above expectations for primary education, but well below expectations for secondary education. Education expenditure as a share of national budget has decreased from 15% to 11% over the last few years despite the introduction of the Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy in 2007⁶. Hence the effect affects both boys and girls as they all are equally affected by any government decision regarding any sector whether educational or any other sector. The low expenditure implies that so many school facilities are likely to lack such as library and laboratory equipment at the same time lower capacity to recruit teachers including female teachers and providing guidance and counseling services to girls. Moreover, there are little or no guidance and counseling services in secondary schools especially government owned schools and hence girls are susceptible and vulnerable to any form of juvenile challenges and other problems arising from lack of counseling services for girls. So many girls in rural areas also lack facilities necessary for a conducive livelihood of girls or females such as lack of pads for usage during their menstrual periods and this forces many of them to drop out of school.

⁶ The World Bank (2018)

2.1 Education as a right for all

Like other human rights, education is a right for all humans in the present day world and hence all children regardless of their gender or sex are entitled to free education no matter which family background they have. It is also emphasized in international treaties and several declarations such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷ as well as the Millennium Development Goals⁸. Uganda has also already ratified the CRC and hence also believes that all children are entitled to education. While long ago, much of the efforts were dedicated to educating boys, the current trend is that both boys and girls must have similar treatment in all spheres of life including education. Thus anything or any challenge that could force girls to drop out of school should be avoided by all stakeholders including parents, government, girls themselves, and international agencies among others.

Similarly, the constitution of Uganda emphasizes non-discrimination, participation and equality as the major principles around which human life should be centered. It should be noted that so many girls are able to join secondary education or post primary education studies but are not able to complete successfully due to a number of challenges ranging from family challenges, school related and society predicaments.

2.2 Why keep girls in schools?

Studies indicate that keeping girls in schools is highly related to their future trajectory as well as the wellbeing of society and societies' overall development. When girls stay in school, there are fewer chances for exposure to sexual initiation, early marriages and child bearing⁹. Moreover, educated women are more likely to invest in the education and health of their children. The educated mothers are believed to be able to value schooling more than their uneducated counterparts and are less susceptible to domestic violence. Also, educated mother easily respond to all aspects and initiatives aimed at improving the wellbeing of their children such as easily responding to immunization programmes of the government, educational initiatives, guidance and counseling among others and the school enrollment of children of the educated mothers is much higher than that of the uneducated ones. Hence, by having well-educated girls or females, it is quite easy for any country or economy to have an educated population in future.

⁷ CRC (1989)

⁸ MDGs (2000)

⁹ World Bank (2014)

2.3 Factors contributing to school drop outs

Both local and international contenders argue that “there is no single risk factor that can be used to accurately predict who is at risk of dropping out of school¹⁰. The gist is that, school drop outs are as result of long term disengagement, a cumulative, multi-dimensional process worsened by interplay of a number of factors over time¹¹ although various societies and groups of people are forced with different school dropout factors. It should however be noted that these factors range from individual to institutional factors.

Family related causes

Many children drop out of school as a result of deficiencies in their families especially caused by rampant poverty levels. Some of the families stay far away from schools and cannot afford transport costs. However, there are schools which are nearer to people’s homes but parents cannot afford provision of scholastic materials like stationery such as books, pens, geometry sets among others. 65% of the children drop out of school due to lack of access to social grants and yet their parents and grandparents also never had access to them.

Individual factors

Some of the children including girls drop out of school due to persona issues such as the negative attitude towards education, poor grades in terms of classroom performance where some children could even be past the school-going age after repeating classes for so long¹² and they lose the love for education. For girls, by the time they reach 18 years, they suffer a lot of sexual harassment as they are highly attracted to opposite sex and cannot easily concentrate at school. Others have low educational expectations¹³ and see no reason as to why they remain at school. This is worsened by the child’s failure to fight peer pressure which exposes them to high levels of juvenile delinquency which sometimes result into teenage pregnancies and high school drop outs for girls¹⁴.

¹⁰ Hammond et al (2007)

¹¹ Branson et al (2013), De Wite et al (2013), Dockery N.D; Hammond et al (2007), Sabates et al (2010)

¹² Entwistle et al (2004;2005)

¹⁴ Gustafsson (2011), Spaul (2015), Mnguni 2014

Community/broader factors

International literature, majorly from USA, on community-related factors mostly focuses on factors like neighbourhood characteristics including high dropout rates for people from poor neighbourhoods with little social amenities, poor housing, crime, low levels of education in society among others¹⁵, positive or negative influences of peers groups (high achieving and motivated peers versus peers involved with crime, drugs and violence)¹⁶ the pull of early employment opportunities (especially in poor households where the opportunity cost of schooling is high) and social discrimination and prejudice, especially that aimed at minority or underprivileged learners. Therefore, girls are also faced with similar community challenges which propel them to drop out of school.

School related factors

Many children including girls drop out of school due to inefficiencies at school such as lack of caring teachers or school counselors, bullying at school among others. In Uganda Today, there is also pressure to perform well at school as school fight for good grades and hence children find it hard to stay at school. Some are even punished for performing poorly. Similarly, teachers have tended to discourage students about the changing labor market (Spaull 2015) and young people including girls have lost faith in school qualifications as a key to a better future due to the rampant unemployment.

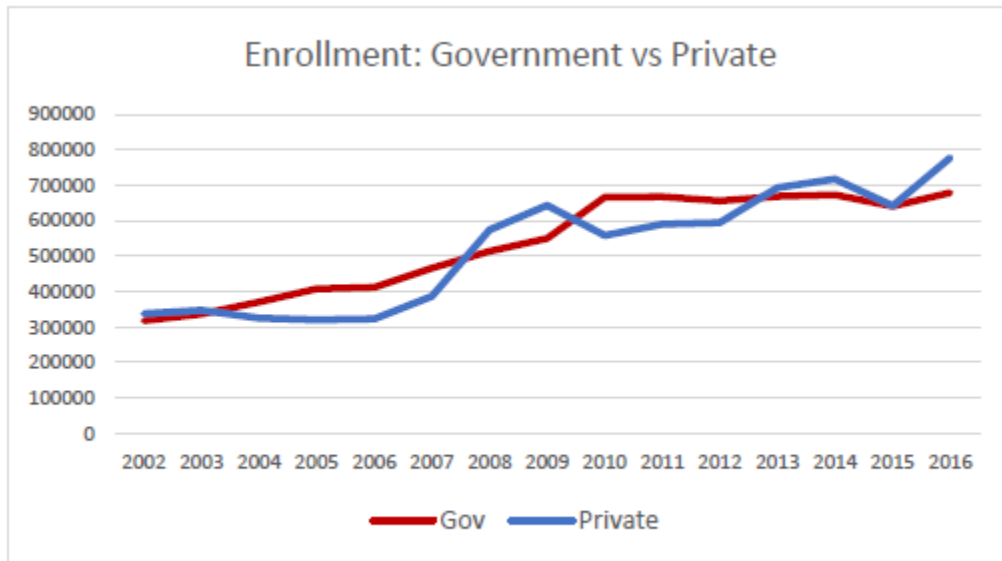
At national level, the major reason for a girl dropping out of school is mostly pregnancy, where 40% and marriage at 28% (ibid) of the girls leave school due to pregnancy. Most of the girls are thus not able to complete secondary education since they are impregnated when they are between 18-2 years. The level of child marriage in Uganda is even above expectation due to the low level of income (Education and sports sector Annual performance Report, FY16-17) although it does not imply that those that get pregnant all get married.

Some schools pay higher amount of fees which the government has failed to regulate due to pressure from private school's owners. Figure 2 shows that private schools in Uganda have a higher enrollment than government schools and yet school drop outs are inevitable due to the high school fees charges.

¹⁵ De Witte et al. 2013; November (2010)

¹⁶ Ekstrom et al. (1986) Hammond et al. (2007);

Figure 2



Source: WB based on data from ESSAPR FY16/17

Uganda's poverty profile reveals that at least 45% of the country's population lives below the poverty with the vast majority of the poor living in the northern part of the country.

In a study conducted by UNHS 2016/17, it was found out that 12% of the school-going age children have never attended while 48.2% have dropped out of school.

In the global perspective, it's undisputable that education is one of the major if not the most contributing factor towards a country's development especially in poverty alleviation. Thus all individuals should enjoy this fundamental human right to education.

Part 3 Government intervention

The government of Uganda decided to introduce USE in 2012 such that access to post primary and "O" level education would be increased but still the dropout rates is high. One of the causes of this is that, the USE schools also charge higher fees, some charging above 160,000/= which is unaffordable to many poor parents.

Similarly, the government of Uganda has set up seed schools mostly in hard to reach areas but a few parents are willing to educate their children from there.

There is an unwelcome mentality that as the education in such schools is cheap, so are the poor services. This could mean that the general public is still lacking civic education to understand the government's contribution in the education sector and other sectors. In fact the government white paper of Education (1992) and the National priorities indicate five major objectives of secondary education as;

- Provide equitable access to secondary education
- Improve quality of secondary education
- Ensure efficiency and improved management
- Enhancing the public private partnership
- Addressing all cross cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS, citizenship, environmental issues, gender among others.

The government has constructed these schools in various sub counties and promises to construct more but the beneficiaries need to be encouraged to always take advantage of the education services brought nearer to them.

There has been ADB education II project funded by Government of Uganda and ADB majority focusing on gender equality in secondary education targeting increased participation of girls in sciences.

However, it should be noted that most of the schools are still wanting since they need school facilities especially teachers and science laboratories that must be equivalent and commensurate with the number of students in each school established so as to avoid compromising quality of secondary education in the name of free education. Speaking during a plenary sitting on 15th May 2018, Hon Johnson Muyanja (NRM, Mukono south constituency) noted that the only secondary school on Kome Island has only 11 teachers out of the 29 promised by the government with none of them teaching English. He added that the students' grades were poor due to lack of adequate qualified teachers with schools having part-time teachers who were students that failed to continue with secondary education as lamented by Hon. Henry Kibalya (NRM. Bugabula south)¹⁷.

¹⁷ <https://www.parliament.go.ug/news/1458/support-seed-schools-better-performance-mps>

Missing Gaps:

- Training of school counselors to encourage both boys and girls to remain at school.
- Civic education in rural communities to encourage parents to take their children at school.
- Sensitization of the public on their role in provision of education to school going children.
- There is still a small number of staff in the established seed schools and hence need to be increased.
- Provide menstrual cycle materials like sanitary pads to girls freely as these are expensive to many and poor girls are inconvenienced with going to school during menstruation periods. This affects their grades and some end up dropping out of school. This should be done as this was one of the campaigning tools for president Museveni in 2015 in preparation for 2016 elections. Moreover these should be reusable. Mr. Mark Meassick, a director at the US mission in Uganda said Uganda should critically look at girls as they comprise the majority of the population and are the ones producing the highest number of children without any planning. He added that, for every 100 girls starting primary one, only 6 finish secondary school and hence there is need to ensure that girls complete secondary education by finding solutions such as the provision of reusable sanitary pads and other services at school¹⁸.
- Encourage young girls to engage in small projects in holidays or after classes so as to obtain funds to supplement on what their parents offer to them. This would help to reduce on the too much dependence on handouts from their leaders and the much pressure on the central government for help.

For USE schools, it was found out that students who do not proceed to next classes not necessarily drop out but on average 45% of them transfer to other schools (USE and non-USE), 35% repeat classes and hence cease to be eligible for USE and 20% actually drop out of the formal education system. The report added that, there should be sensitization of the communities on the USE program to help in eliminating the dropout caused by lack of interest in education by learners and parents, early marriages,

¹⁸ Ministry of Education and sports, the department of secondary education, the secondary sub-sector (January, 2013).

pregnancies and involvement of learners in business at an early age¹⁹. The 1995 constitution enshrines education as a human right in article 30 and 34 (1995 Uganda's constitution)²⁰.

4.0 Findings from FDGs and KIIs

The findings from the study comprised of responses from focus group discussions and the key informant interviews. This was conducted in all the schools across the four regions of Uganda that is central, eastern, western and northern.

As stated in the methodology, responses were mainly got from female students across all post primary institutions and a few key informant interviews who provided relevant information about the study like school administrators, head teachers and local community heads.

4.1. Contributing factors to female school dropout in rural district in Uganda.

The contributing factors to increasing school dropouts were grouped into Economic level factors, school level factors and the social-cultural factors as revealed below.

4.1.1. Economic level factors

Inefficient finances. Direct and indirect schooling costs especially school fees are central reason for early dropouts in rural schools in Uganda. Related research shows that schooling costs are sometimes linked to the gender of children as they dropout. Reason being sometimes parents become unwilling to pay fees for their daughters.

School distance, the distance from home to school is an important determinant of school dropout among female students. Young girls tend to dropout due to vulnerability to sexual harassment which arises as a result of long distance. Parents are afraid of safety of their children when they have to travel long distance to school.

There higher possibility of a female student who move shorter distance to school to continue and complete their studies compared to those that intend to travel long distance. One female student said the length of time and energy needed to cover the distance with empty stomach discourages them from schooling and the parental anxiety about sexual safeguard of their daughters hence school distance gives the motivation to girls to stay in school.

¹⁹ Dropout study in Universal Secondary Education-USE (May 2012), Education planning and policy Analysis Department (Statistics section, Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES)

²⁰ 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda

4.1.2 School level factors

There are several evidences that show participation in extra-curricular activities varied by gender and girls are usually less participative than boys. For instance, Ainembabazi Praise said there are significant differences in the proportion of participation in extra-curricular activities of male and female students. she said, approximately 76% of male students participate in extra-curricular activities compared to only 48% of female students. Girl's low participation is sometimes constrained by lack of facilities in school. Therefore students that would have discovered there talents are not catered for thus forcing them to look for another alternative elsewhere.

Again some societies consider sports as a male activity for example Muslim schools do not permit some kit requirements of sports or outdoor games like wearing short skirts and tee-shirts including public changing and showering.

Inadequate sanitation facilities in schools massively affect girl's dropout because this inadequacy indicates that schools are not safe for girls.

Inadequate sanitation facilities in schools massively affect girl's dropout because this inadequacy indicates that schools are not safe for girls.

Though lack of facilities and poor hygiene affect both girls and boys, sanitation in schools has a strong negative impact on girls. Parents expect safe and separate sanitation for their daughters in schools. In fact especially for girls, entering adulthood, they need to have separate and adequate facilities for their menstruation time in school. Without proper facilities, it would discourage them from being in school and consequently they tend to drop out of school.

During my periods, I mostly use rags and sometimes toilet paper, but am more comfortable when I do not go to school. Says praise Atuhaire of Bishop Girls secondary school in Rushere Kiruhura district

Teacher's attitude towards female students is yet another contributing factor towards female school dropout.

Teacher's attitude and their teaching practices have foremost impact in sustaining girls in schools. Most teachers tend to view boys as academically active compared to girls. They view girls as less intelligent to those of boys hence they tend to favour of boys to girls in terms of academic performance and achievement which led to dropout.

4.1.3 Socio-Cultural factors

Regarding the effect of early marriage on girls, it was found out that in rural areas girls dropout rate become higher because parents consider girls schooling as of no benefit when they leave their own family after getting married. It was thus discovered that early marriage is the foremost cause of early school dropout in Luweero and Kiruhura districts among other districts. Research shows that girl's age and education especially when reach puberty, parents consider it is time for them to be married and they tend to arrange the marriage instead of continuing schooling. Studies show that early marriage of girls is associated in societies where girls leave parental households after marriage; girl's dropout might be higher in that society.

In circumstances where girls have higher education but have lower parental socio-economic background, they face difficulties in getting a husband because the pattern in which parents needs to pay a higher amount of dowry to marry their educated daughters to similarly educated grooms thus resulting in early dropout among girls.

Pregnancy, from the study that was conducted, it was found out that teenage pregnancy is a significant cause of school dropout for girls. Studies argue that there are some specific characteristics of girls with dropout status which are poor school performance, girls who have experienced temporary dropout previously, low economic status, family migratory life style and the consequent vulnerability of girls.

Though some schools permit girls after getting pregnant to return to school, research found that the re-entry rate is not much higher. Re-entry to school after pregnancy depends on some circumstances such as if they can get a caregiver for their child and if they are able to share or relinquish child care responsibilities.

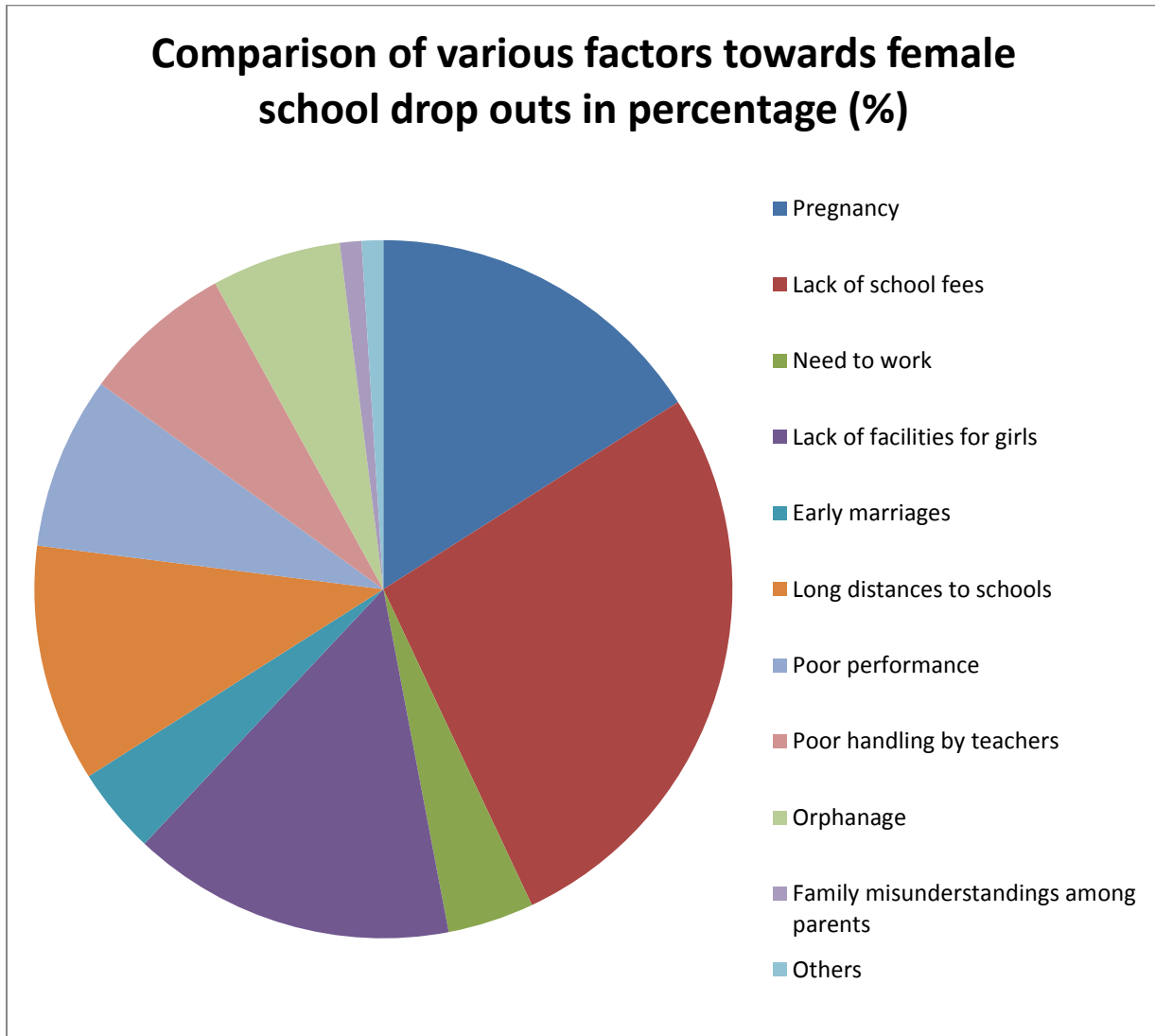
Household work, there substantial evidence regarding how a child's work impacts on educational outcomes regardless of the gender of the children. Studies observe that girls sometimes begin working at an earlier age than boys especially in rural areas and they tend to do more work in the households than boys. From the study, it was revealed that some females dropout of school to take care of their young siblings at home. Also in instances where a mother work and get wage outside of the home, female children take some responsibilities of the household which causes them to drop out compared to girls in urban related settings.

Table 3: Summary of the major causes of female school drop outs in post primary institutions

S/N	Cause of female school drop out	No of female drop outs between 2015 and 2018	Percentage (%)
1	Pregnancy	96	16
2	Lack of school fees	159	27
3	Need to work	22	4
4	Lack of facilities for girls	89	15
5	Early marriages	24	4
6	Long distances to schools	64	11
7	Poor performance	47	8
8	Poor handling by teachers	39	7
9	Orphanage	34	6
10	Family misunderstandings among parents	4	1
11	Others	6	1
	Total	584	100

Source: Field data, March 2019

Figure 3



Source: Field data, March 2019

Table 4: Comparison of Female school Drop outs between 2015 and 2018

Cause of female school drop out	Female School drop out between 2015 and 2018							
	2015	Percentage	2016	Percentage	2017	Percentage	2018	Percentage
Pregnancy	19	13	22	17	24	20	31	17
Lack of school fees	16	11	49	38	32	27	62	34
Need to work	5	3	3	2	4	3	10	5
Lack of facilities for girls	44	29	12	9	11	9	22	12
Early marriages	6	4	10	8	3	3	5	3
Long distances to schools	13	9	16	12	9	8	26	14
Poor performance	15	10	4	3	11	9	17	9
Poor handling by teachers	22	14	5	4	9	8	3	2
Orphanage	9	6	7	5	11	9	7	4
Family misunderstandings among parents	1	1	0	0	3	3	0	0
Others	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Total	152	100	129	100	118	100	185	100

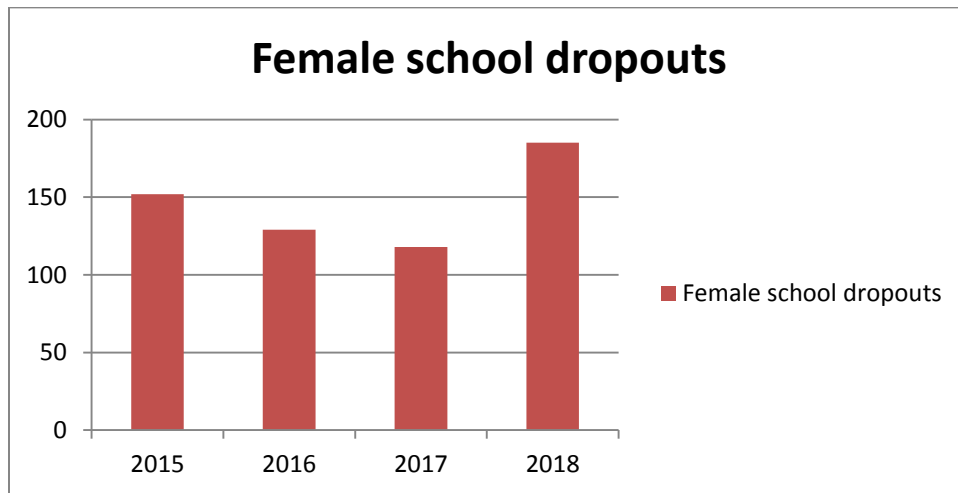
Source: Field data, March 2019

Table 5: Comparison of Female school drop outs per year between 2015 and 2018

Year	Female school dropouts	Percentage (%)
2015	152	26
2016	129	22
2017	118	20
2018	185	32
Total	584	100

Source: Field data, March 2019

Figure 4:



Source: Field data, March 2019

4.2. Who have been most vulnerable to school dropouts?

The cost of dropping out of high school can have a profound effect on a young person's life. The relative earnings of high school dropouts are lower than those for students who complete high school/college.

Similarly, high school dropouts experience more unemployment during their work careers. Females who drop out of high school are more likely to become pregnant at young ages and more likely to become single parents.

There are sobering statistics when contrasted with the reality of a workplace that continues to require increased literacy, more education, enhanced technical skills and the ability to embark on careers that require lifelong learning. Without the skills and training that schooling should provide, those who do not complete their education face a lifetime of limited opportunities or even possibly a life of delinquency.

The study found out that children from very poor families are highly vulnerable to dropping out of school compared to their counterparts from well-to-do families.

It was of great surprise to find out that girls from uneducated families are able to fight harder to remain at school compared to their counterparts from families with educated parents.

Girls who stay with their relatives always face sexual harassment but they do not want to speak out. The perpetrators are usually their male guardians who usually ask and force them into playing sex. Upon

getting pregnant, they fear to tell local authorities and instead drop out of school. Some even get sexually transmitted diseases.

It was yet another surprise to find out that girls who pay school fees for themselves strive harder to stay in school than their colleagues whose parents or guardians pay fees for them. Box 1. Summarizes the vulnerability of different categories of students to school drop outs;

Box 1: *Who have been most vulnerable to school dropouts?*

Different categories of girls are affected by dropouts differently as shown below;

1. **Girls from poor families:** The study revealed that girls from poor families easily drop out due to lack of school fees even with the existence of USE and UPOLET.

“My sister left school so that me I could remain to study and help the family. Our uncle who is taking care of us cannot manage to pay school dues for both of us and yet he also has his children”, one of the girls at Dokolo Secondary School cried out.

2. **Girls from educated families:** As noted prior to Box 1, it was surprising to note that there are girls from educated families who do not want to remain in school and yet those from uneducated families strive harder to remain in school.

“I am 16 years old and in senior four. I come from an uneducated family but love schooling and I will remain in school to become a nurse in future. My friend whose father is a Clinic Officer instead dropped out of school because for them they are rich and educated. I want to continue with my studies to challenge her in future”, lamented one of the girls at Dede S.s with confidence.

Although to a larger extent, those from educated families stand higher chances of remaining in school since they have role models in their families, it was surprising to see that there are many girls from educated families but also drop out of school due to laziness.

3. **Other categories vulnerable girls:** Other categories that are vulnerable include orphans, girls who move long distances to schools, those who stay in trading centers and are disturbed by men for sexual purposes and those who stay with relatives other than their parents. It was also noted that girls from single schools are highly vulnerable to sexual harassment compared to those in mixed sex schools. There is too much curiosity among the adolescents.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study reveals that though several inter-related social, economic, school and cultural factors affect school dropout outcome regardless of the gender of the students, among some particular factors increase the dropout rate particularly for girls. These particular factors produce lower educational outcomes for girls in general. The financial factors constrain parents more especially those who have lower socioeconomic status compared to those who have higher status. Parents with lower socio-economic status face difficulties to bear the expenses of their daughters' education. In addition, parents sometimes use the gender of their children to decide who gets more education so that children can give benefit in the future; in these circumstances male children eventually get more priority compare to female children. Besides these, girls also experience disadvantage for the unequal labour force participation in the world. Female usually experience less opportunities especially in productivity in the labour market and earn less compared to males which discourage parents from continuing the education of their daughters.

Some school level factors insufficiently affect the increase in dropout rate of girls. However, most of these factors are allied with school resources and an unequal distribution of school resources markedly linked to the geographical location of schools. Schools in urban regions facilitate more for girls compared to schools in rural regions. For instance, sanitation facilities, equipment of extracurricular activities, quality female teachers and other resources and environmental factors which are less available in rural schools. In these respect literature has found out that girls' dropout rate is significantly higher in rural schools compared to urban schools. Inequalities in school resources exist much especially in developing countries compared to developed countries and this is because dropout rates of girls are higher in the developing parts of the world. Cultural reasons also play an important role in high incidence of early dropout of girls. Sometime it depends on parents on how to perceive girls' education. On the one hand, there are human perceptions formed by several factors such as education, socio-economic status, religion and environment of the community where they live in. These perspectives constrain girls' education especially in rural districts. Some traditional cultural practices and beliefs of a particular religion or

community massively affect as barriers to girls' education, especially in the male-dominated societies/communities.

5.2 Recommendations

1. In order to prevent teenage pregnancy, teenagers need to have a comprehensive understanding of abstinence, contraceptive techniques, and consequences of early pregnancy. Regular pregnancy checkups must be done at the beginning, middle and end of the term to ensure that children are safe. Parents and teachers need to educate their children about birth control and sex. Sex education should be extended to students on the challenges associated with early sex and pregnancy.
2. Awarding bursaries or scholarships to students who have challenges of school fees and leave the parents to cater for the remaining requirements. The government should also extend SEED and USE programmes to areas that lack education facilities and USE initiatives respectively. Gateway Research Centre itself has already started partnering with various institutions to offer scholarships to both girls and boys particularly at tertiary level especially where technical courses are offered.
3. Children should also engage in extra income generating activities during holidays to enable them have an income to cater for other school needs.
4. There should be an initiative to provide sanitary pads to a girl child to enable them continue with their education. In addition, there should be provision of reusable sanitary pads which could cut the costs of buying every time students go in their menstrual periods. There should be a separate collection system for the menstrual wastes without affecting the privacy and dignity of a girl child. Specific sanitary dispensers to collect menstrual waste should be installed.
5. Distribution of menstrual cycle facilities should be subsidized or be free of cost in schools and educational institutes. In schools, teachers can make the school environment for girl/women friendly to manage menstruation with dignity.
6. Parents need to be sensitized on the value of educating a girl child instead of preparing them for marriage. There should be mind set change on how parents look at a girl child as

a source of wealth in form of dowry. This will eventually enable them to stay in school and complete their studies without the pressure of early marriage. If the government can afford giving free condoms, why not sanitary pads? This is based on the concerns of the parents the researchers interacted with.

7. In order to improve students' performance, regular assessment should be conducted as well as making a follow-up on the student performance to tap those who missed lessons or any other class ongoing activity.
8. There should also be provision of other necessary scholastic materials which impact on the performance of a girl child. These should be given to them to save them from being lured into sex for money.
9. Teachers should lay a favorable environment good enough to allow girls stay in school not only to bright pupils but also to the low learners. Teacher's ethics must be practiced to make the school be like a home for these pupils and eventually their stay.
10. To keep students from dropping out, a proactive method needed to identify those students at risk. Warning signals of student disengagement, failing grades, poor attendance, and other warning signs most closely linked with dropping out. Early identification and systemically monitoring those who are most likely to drop out is a key to the solution. Schools should implement early warning data systems that promptly notify appropriate school staff that should be trained in spotting these red flags. Student support advocates should intervene quickly to provide appropriate interventions and become a voice for them, who will fight to ensure they receive the support they need and halt otherwise disengagement misconduct.

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Annex 1:

1a) Focus Group Discussions Guiding Questions

S/N	Thematic areas	Guiding questions
A	Economics factors	1. What activities do you engage in to obtain school fees?
		2. Are the school fees charged favorable to you or too high?
		3. Do the children/students themselves engage in mobilizing school/college university fees?
		4. What do you think are other economic factors that make many girls leave school?
		5. How can such economic barriers to girls' stay in higher institutions of learning be overcome?
B	School level factors	6. Does the school(s)/college/university offer guidance and counseling services to encourage girls stay in education till completion of a Bachelor?
		7. Does counseling and guidance have a clearly designated time on the school/college/university time table?
		8. How many female teachers/instructors or lecturers are there to act as role models for students?
		9. Is the school database usually checked to find out the dropout rates?
		10. Are the school rules adequate to protect girls from being forced to drop out of school? Mention some if there any.
		11. Are there girls who have left school because of poor academic performance?
		12. What incentives are there to motivate girls stay in school?
		13. Are there ways to help girls who fail to raise tuition or school fees? If so, mention some of them.
C	Socio-cultural factors	14. How do you perceive the notion of girls studying in higher institutions of learning?
		15. Do you experience challenges of pregnancies among students? If so, what could be the average number of girls that get pregnant per term/semester in your institution?

B	School level factors	<p>7. Do you organize counseling sessions for students? If so, what is the frequency per week/month/year?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>8. What do you think are the major social challenges forcing females/girls to drop out of school?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>9. How do you think parents, academic heads and owners can help overcome the dropout rates of female students?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
C	Socio-cultural factors	<p>10. What can the government do to reduce female dropout rates?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>11. Why do you think many female students are not able to complete college or University education?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>