

## **YVID Report on SD Goal Four: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”**

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### **The Entry Points for Achieving this Goal in Uganda:**

A major obstacle to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of education, is access to education. If access is limited, then so is a child’s opportunity to learn. In Uganda, accessibility is a greater issue in the rural areas and this is a key starting point. Schools may not be available, or they are a far distance to get to. On Lake Bunyonyi where I am located, transport to school is a major determinant in a child’s education. Many children have to canoe or take a motor boat across the lake to school. This can be time consuming, costly, and largely dependent on the weather. If it is stormy the number of children that show up to class that day is probably cut in half. With more available schools in rural areas, transport time and cost would significantly decrease, and households would have much greater access to education.

Another accessibility issue is the cost of school fees. Many households simply do not have the ability to pay for their children’s education. Uganda has some free primary schools, but others require payment, as well as most (if not all) secondary schools. Many of my co-workers have stated that their entire monthly salary will be used to pay for their children’s school fees.

Parents play a critical role in determining a child’s education. Some parents may lack the finances or the understanding of the importance of school, especially for girls. There are many cases where a son’s education is prioritized over a daughter’s. For this reason, another key entry point should be targeted towards the adult population in Uganda and more widespread knowledge on gender equality. The education of girls is a major factor and entry point in reaching “inclusive and equitable education” for all.

### **Recommendations for Achieving this Goal in Uganda:**

For stronger quality education, I think Uganda needs to address the infrastructure problems of schools. From the schools I have visited, there has been seventy-plus children put in one small classroom. All ranging in different ages and education levels. There is also very few classroom resources. Teachers need more support and access to lesson materials. Investment in training teachers would also be a significant step forward. Teachers around the rural communities of Lake Bunyonyi are not highly qualified. Many are recent graduates of secondary school themselves and do not go through any type of training in education.

To obtain SDG#4 in Uganda, I would recommend more assistance and education for the adult population. A child’s learning opportunities is greatly influenced by their parents. As mentioned previously, if parents do not see the importance of school, or are unable to pay school fees then the children will stay home. In some rural households, the only source of income they have comes solely from their land. The average plot of land is only 0.5-2 hectares in the villages around Lake Bunyonyi. For many families it may be the only option, or seem like the wiser choice, to keep the children at home to work in the field. Especially if keeping the children at home is contributing to household income, while sending them to school is only seen as an expensive expenditure. A child can help take care of their younger siblings and work in the field to produce food for the upcoming month, and this may be

viewed as much more valuable than education. There are also many cases around Lake Bunyonyi where children are only able to attend school if they are being sponsored by an outside supporter. I think there needs to be more government assistance for free or lower-cost education. An increase in available scholarships and opportunities for students to seek higher education is also necessary. Adults need more support for the financial burden of school fees. This could also be subsidized by creating more income generating activities and educating the adult population.

### **How Goal Four Relates to Goal Five, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"**

Goal 4 and goal 5 go hand in hand. One cannot be achieved without the other. A main entry point into achieving gender equality is education on gender equality. People need to be educated on women's rights and the benefits of equal opportunities. Teachers need to be trained on gender issues, as well as sexual reproduction and health, so they can pass these concepts down to the students and break the cycle of inequality. Girls getting married or pregnant at a young age is a common reason for dropping out of school early. Schools can also be a problem for girls when it comes to the washroom facilities and stigma around menstruation. When girls are on their menstrual cycle they most likely do not attend school, especially if there is not appropriate washroom facilities. Gender inequality is both a cause and result of lack of education for girls. So evidently education plays a major role in obtaining SDG #5. Likewise, for "inclusive and equitable education" both genders need to be equally present in school and have access to equal opportunities.

### **In Sum**

Reflecting on the education system and my experience so far in Uganda, I am reminded that talent is universal, but opportunity is not. To achieve learning opportunities for all, access to education must be addressed. More girls and other disadvantaged people, like those in rural areas, need better access to schooling and these are key entry points. In Uganda, there needs to be more assistance for school fees, teacher training, and education of the adult population, and in turn this will help create more avenues for children to succeed and reach their full potential.