

# Uganda Non-State Schools Assessment

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ACCESS THE FULL REPORT at <https://doi.org/10.7274/pz50gt5853h>

## Assessment Purpose

The study assessed Uganda's non-state urban pre-primary and primary schools' quality, access, oversight regulation, and financial sustainability. The assessment also explored changes in financial sustainability, access, and quality of non-state schools (NSSs) following 22 months of COVID-related school closures.

## Data Collection Methods

### SCHOOL SURVEYS

A nationally representative sample of 642 NSSs (320 pre-primary, 322 primary):

- One parent, one school proprietor, and one teacher were surveyed at each school.

### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

27 KIIs, including speaking with:

- National and local education officials.
- International NGOs, financial institutions, and private school association representatives.

## Findings

### FACTORS THAT ENHANCE QUALITY

- Prioritization of academic achievement to attract students.
- High level of school-based support and oversight.
- Responsiveness and engagement with parents.

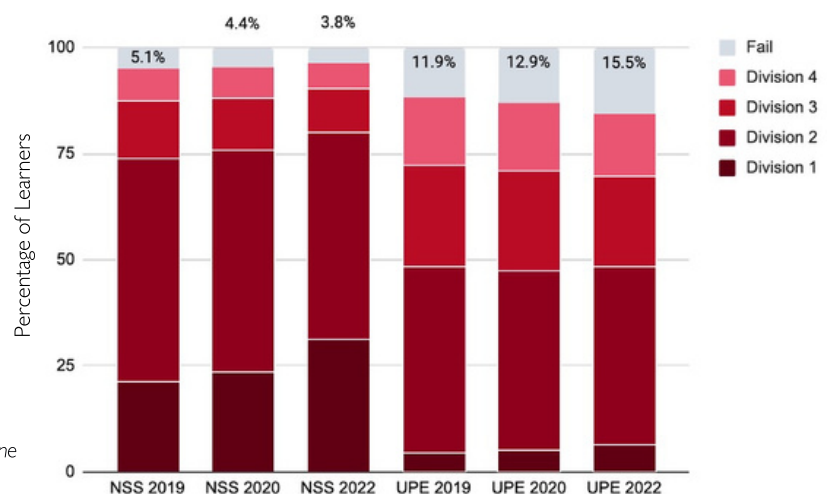
### FACTORS THAT INHIBIT QUALITY

- On average, 10 percent of teachers lack the necessary qualifications and 30 percent have less than three years of experience.
- More than 75 percent of learners lack math and English textbooks in 50 percent of the schools sampled.
- It is difficult to retain qualified teachers.

### COVID IMPACT ON SCHOOL QUALITY

- Learning loss and gaps in learning.
- Learners struggling with mental health problems and inadequate psychosocial support at school.
- Loss of teaching staff, many of whom found other employment during school closures.
- Challenges related to covering a wide range of subject-learning areas in a short time.

Primary Leaving Exam scores for NSS and UPE schools by year



From 2019 to 2022, the Primary Leaving Exam **failure rate decreased at Non-State Schools**; however, the failure rate increased at Universal Primary Education (State) Schools.

## Findings, cont.

### BARRIERS TO ACCESS

- School fees were a barrier for learners from low-income families, especially at the pre-primary level. COVID reduced parents' ability to pay fees.
- Boys and girls enrollment declined after COVID.
  - Girls left due to pregnancy and marriage.
  - Child labor was a barrier for boys.
- Barriers for learners with disabilities included:
  - 70 percent of schools lack handicap-accessible infrastructure.
  - 50 percent of schools lack accessible learning materials.
  - Only 20 percent of teachers trained in inclusive education.

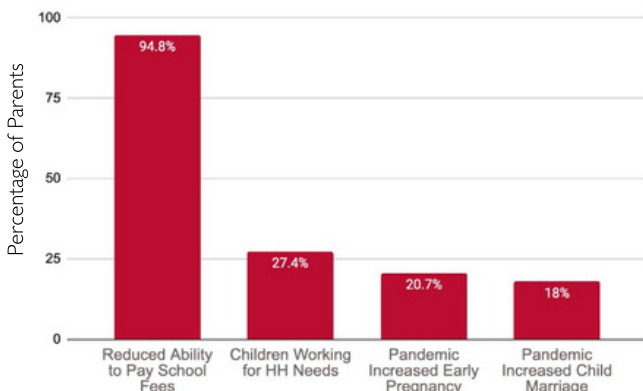
### ENABLERS OF ACCESS

- Faith-founded schools subsidized significantly more learners (60 percent) than other types of NSSs (30 percent).
- 95 percent of schools had adequate WASH infrastructure to support girls' attendance during menses.
- Donor support for select schools specializing in education for learners with disabilities.

**“Post-COVID, most parents now are not able to afford,** and as a result, they have been moving from private to public (schools).”

— Local Education Official

COVID's impact on parents' ability to send children to school



### BARRIERS TO OVERSIGHT AND REGULATION

- Inadequate funding, staffing, and transportation and lack of attention to non-state schools.
- Lack of mechanisms to enforce education standards and policies.

**“At times, we have political interference.**

We came up with a list of schools that were supposed to close, but you find the mayor has some political something with those owners. So you can't take action, because the mayor said, 'You hold on.'”

— Local Education Official

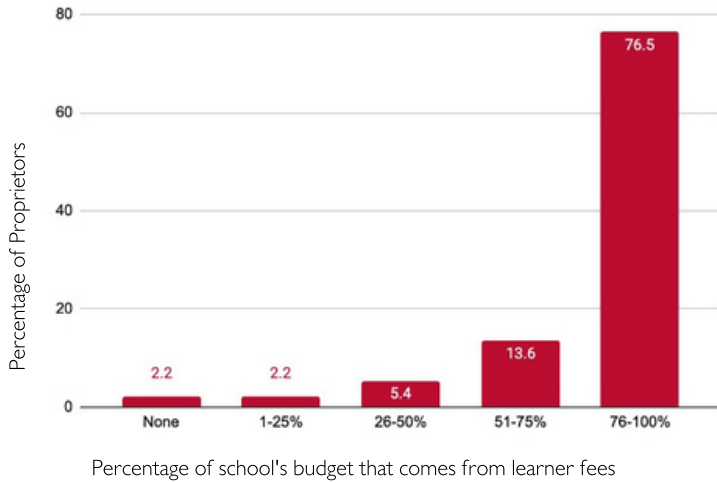
### ENABLERS OF FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Schools with diverse funding sources were more financially sustainable.
  - Faith-founded schools received support from their religious bodies.
- 70 percent of schools prepared annual budgets and financial statements, deposited cash in a bank, and had a school accountant.

### BARRIERS TO FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

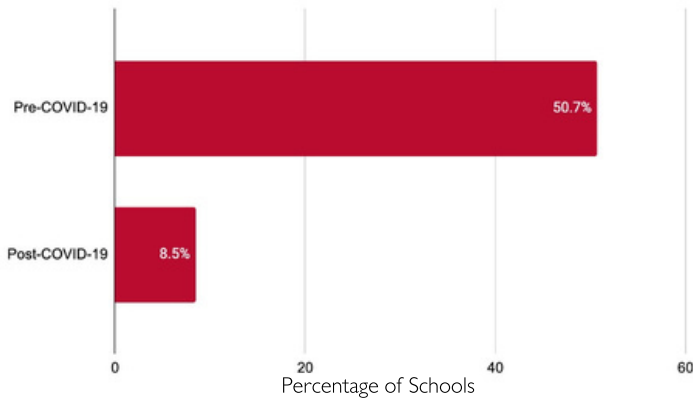
- Most NSSs are dependent on learner fees as a source of funding.
- All NSSs pay the same taxes regardless of size, tuition, and for- or non-profit status.
- Schools with loans, renting property, and individually-owned were more likely to close.

Percentage of NSSs that primarily depend on learner fees



“We only depend on school fees.  
**When parents don’t pay, you will not have money.**”  
— Private School Association

Schools able to save money and earn a profit before and after COVID



Proprietors indicated **COVID led to a decline in profits**, difficulty collecting fees, and a reduction in enrollments.

## Key Recommendations

### Quality

- Provide teaching and learning materials for NSSs.
- Train teachers on how to address learning loss and education gaps.
- Provide school-based social-emotional learning interventions to support mental health.

### Access

- Pass and implement the Early Childhood Care and Education Centre policy to subsidize preschools.
- Use social and behavior change communication strategies to support re-enrollment of child mothers.
- Offer accelerated or alternative education for children who dropped out during the pandemic.

### Oversight

- Address inadequate funding and staffing for school inspection and oversight by providing:
  - Additional funding and personnel.
  - Coordination of oversight and support among education officials, PSAs, and School Management Committees, especially through improved digitization of education data.
- Complement existing punitive enforcement mechanisms with incentive-based mechanisms to support NSS adherence to policies and standards.
- The Inspectors' Office should pay equal attention to NSSs and government schools.

### Financial Sustainability

- Train NSSs to diversify funding sources in order to reduce dependence on fees.
- Mitigate taxes, especially for not-for-profit institutions.

