



THEME

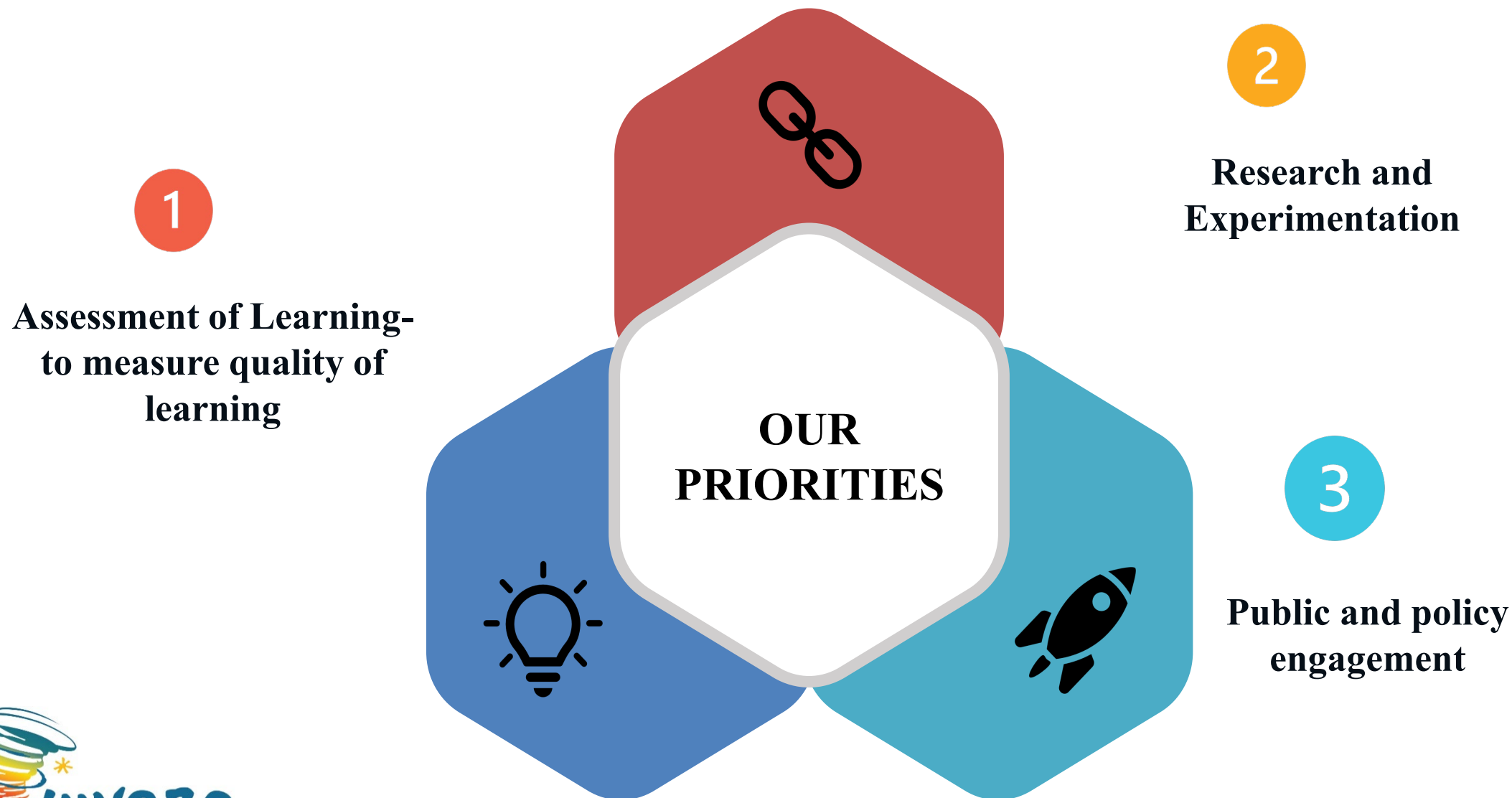
**Transforming Education in East Africa:
From Commitments to Impact,
Fostering Resilient and Future-Ready Systems
for Sustainable Development**

**Beyond Enrolment: What Uwezo Uganda Evidence Reveals
About Uganda's Foundational Learning Crisis and the Case for
Targeted Reform**

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What We Do at Uwezo Uganda



Why this paper, the policy question?

The paper's argument

Uganda's challenge is better understood as a foundational learning and equity crisis than as an access deficit alone. Household-based assessment shows who is being left behind, where learning is weakest, and why enrolment cannot be treated as a proxy for learning.

Why citizen-led evidence adds value

EMIS is essential for planning, staffing and facilities. Uwezo complements it by directly assessing what children can do in households and communities, including realities that school-based reporting can partially hide e.g. *excluding non enrolled*



Research questions

1. How severe are Uganda's current foundational learning deficits?
2. Which inequalities are most visible in the 2024 evidence and where?
3. What policy directions follow if Uganda is to move from high enrolment to stronger learning outcomes?

Analytic contribution

- Reframes participation without sufficient learning as the core problem.
- Uses household assessment to expose inequities hidden by averages.
- Links learning outcomes to the geography of school provision.

Methodological approach



3. School-condition lens

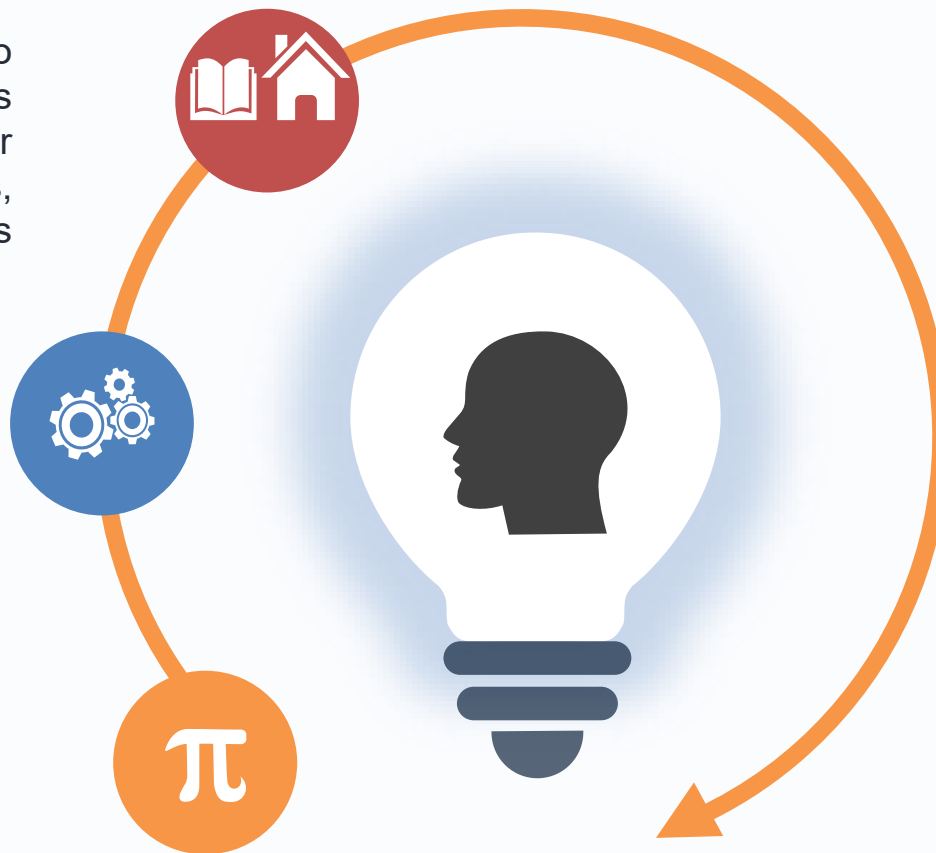
Uses the 410-school survey to examine whether learning gaps align with attendance, teacher availability, classrooms, sanitation and textbooks

2. Comparative lens

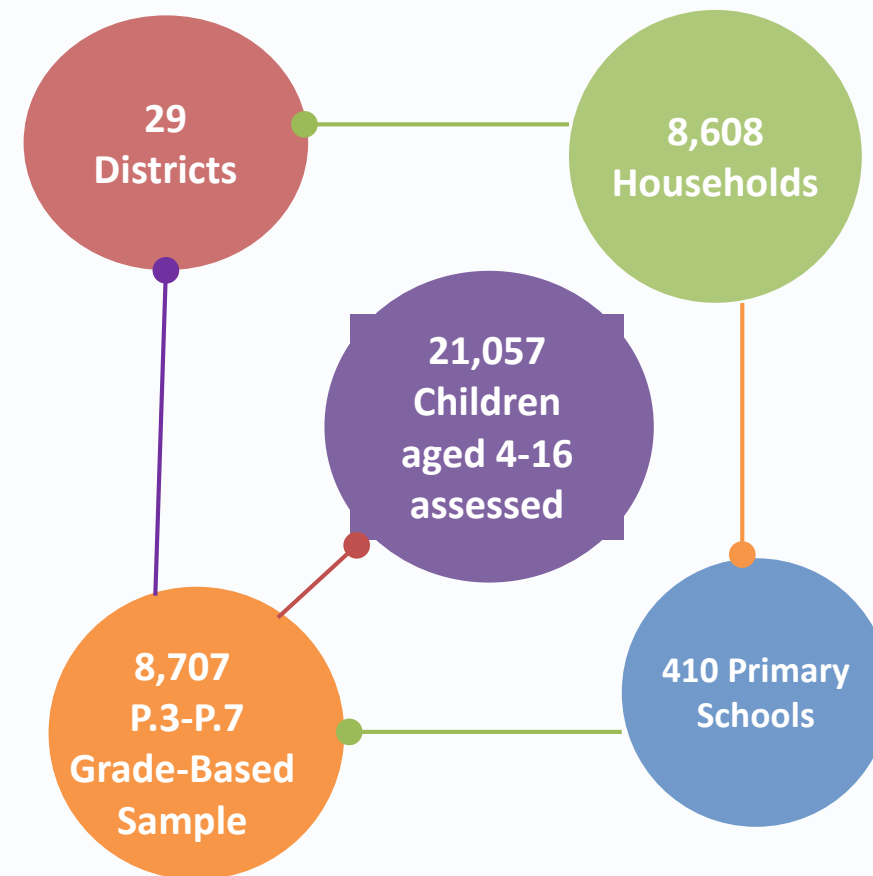
Synthesises headline trends and compares 2024 with 2021 where Uwezo reports directly comparable indicators.

1. Core design

Structured secondary analysis of published Uwezo 2024 evidence; descriptive and interpretive rather than re-estimation from raw microdata.



Sample and Data Scope

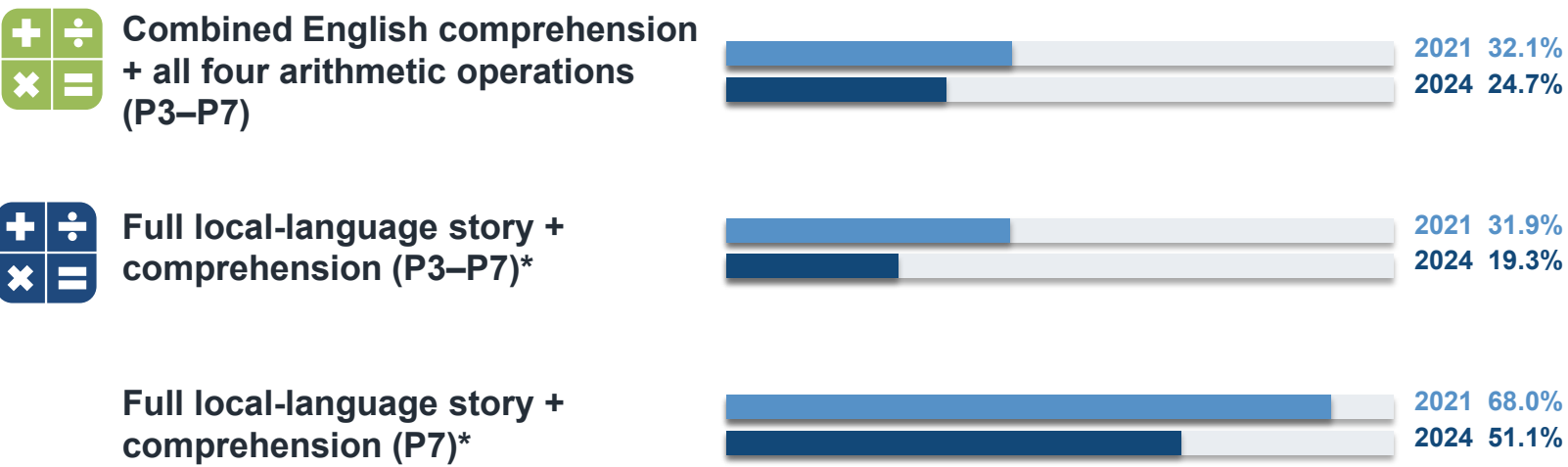


Important Caveat

The analysis identifies patterns and associations, **not causal effects**. Local-language grade results use a 3,513-learner sample from 12 districts and are therefore interpreted separately from the full 29-district grade sample.

Finding 1: Participation is not translating into foundational learning

Selected national indicators



18.5%

of children aged 10 could read and comprehend a Primary 2 English story in 2024.

Age-based benchmark

Only about 1 in 4 P3–P7 learners met the combined literacy–numeracy benchmark in 2024, down from nearly 1 in 3 in 2021.

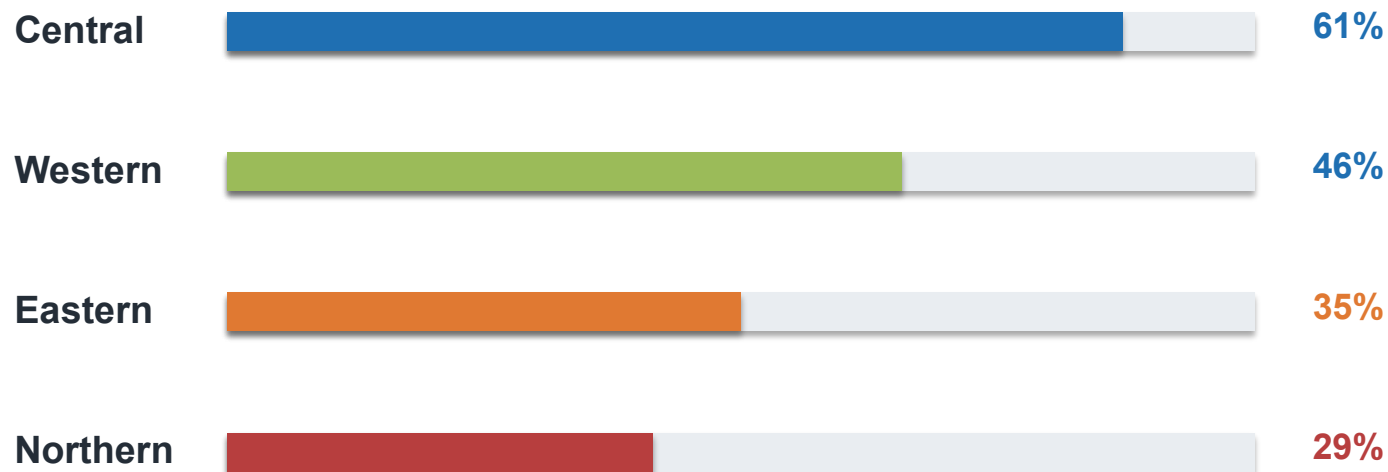
The signal

Foundational competence is too low, too late, for too many learners. Literacy, especially reading with comprehension, remains particularly fragile.

* Local-language grade results are from the 12-district sample.

Finding 2: There is a regional inequality in reading in Uganda

English reading competence at word level or above, children aged 4–16

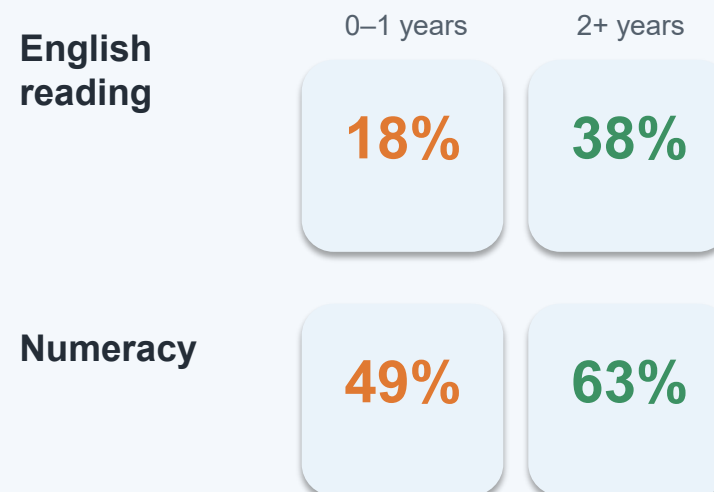


A 32-point gap separates Central and Northern Uganda.

Equity is not a secondary issue: children enter schooling with unequal preparation and continue to experience unequal support.

Pre-primary exposure is another factor of inequality

P3–P7 learners reaching P2-level competence



Finding 3: There geographical disadvantages in learning and school conditions

Regional reading, attendance and school conditions point to the same geography of disadvantage.

Region	Reading word+	Pupil attendance	Pupil–teacher ratio	Pupil–classroom ratio	Pupil–toilet stance ratio
Central	61%	85%	34.0	53.0	65.9
Eastern	35%	72%	58.5	113.0	100.6
Northern	29%	66%	79.2	154.7	176.4
Western	46%	84%	40.4	65.4	80.3

Northern
Uganda
29%

reading word+

66% attendance
PTR 79.2
PCR 154.7
Toilet ratio 176.4

Policy
meaning

Disadvantaged regions face a double burden: weaker learning outcomes and weaker material and institutional conditions for learning. This strengthens the case for targeted rather than undifferentiated reform.

Discussion: What the evidence means

1. The central problem is learning, not participation alone

Access is still important, but large numbers of enrolled children are not acquiring foundational literacy and numeracy within the years when these skills should be established.

2. Recovery is uneven and incomplete

Some numeracy recovery is visible, but reading with comprehension remains weaker. Local-language results suggest that early reading may have suffered more lasting disruption.

3. Inequality is part of the crisis itself

Regional contrasts, pre-primary exposure and household resources shape learning opportunities. Universal reforms will underperform if spatial and socio-economic disparities remain untouched.

4. Direct learning assessment completes the evidence picture

EMIS shows enrolment, teachers and facilities. Household assessment shows whether children can actually read, understand and calculate. The value of data lies in changing priorities.

Policy implications: A targeted reform logic

INSTRUCTION

Re-centre lower primary

Strengthen early-grade instruction, frequent low-stakes assessment and reading support before deficits harden.

Institutionalise catch-up

Build remedial support into school improvement, especially for upper-primary learners carrying unresolved foundational gaps.

EQUITY

Expand equitable pre-primary

Reduce cost barriers and strengthen public stewardship and partnerships so readiness does not depend on household advantage.

Deploy teachers and inputs by need

Treat recruitment, teacher deployment, classrooms, sanitation and learning materials as equity questions, not national averages.

EVIDENCE → ACTION

Integrate the evidence architecture

Link administrative data, direct learning assessment and district-level dissemination so evidence points clearly to where action is needed.

Target the geography of disadvantage

Prioritise regions where weak learning coincides with weak attendance, staffing and infrastructure rather than relying on uniform reform packages.

For East Africa, the broader lesson is simple: the best data systems are those that make inequity visible and help governments retarget reform accordingly.

Conclusion: From commitments to impact

1

Foundational literacy and numeracy remain weak for the majority of learners; age-appropriate reading is especially low.

2

The crisis is not evenly distributed. The weakest learning outcomes coincide with lower attendance and weaker school conditions.

3

A credible reform agenda must combine stronger early-grade instruction with catch-up support, equitable pre-primary access, fairer deployment of teachers and inputs, and evidence that drives targeting.

The policy test
**Are children learning
early enough, well
enough and equitably
enough?**

Limitations

Secondary analysis of published results; associations rather than causal effects; local-language grade evidence covers 12 districts.

From commitments to impact means changing the real learning opportunities children experience — not simply the number who are enrolled.

Thank you



Accessing Uwezo Uganda Reports & Research Resources

Website:



X-Handle:

