



Kyambogo University  
Knowledge and Skills for Service  
School of Education



## National Conference on "What Works in Girls' Education"

**Theme:** *"Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence & Action for Girls' Education"*

**Dates:** 1st – 3rd October 2025

**Venue:** Hilton Garden Inn (Opposite the British High Commission), Kamwokya, Kampala, Uganda

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

### Introduction

In the lead-up to this year's International Day of the Girl Child that will take place on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2025, Uwezo Uganda, in partnership with Kyambogo University's School of Education, the University of Cambridge's Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, and the Uganda Chapter of the Regional Education Learning Initiative Africa (RELI-Africa) is organising a National Conference on what works in girls' education. This conference that will be held under the theme, *"Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence & Action for Girls' Education"* is scheduled for **1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2025**, at Hilton Garden Inn, Kampala, Uganda. It will focus on effective strategies for advancing girls' education in Uganda and beyond. While national in scope, the conference holds regional and global relevance, aligning with Uwezo Uganda's strategy 2025-2028 to promote support for quality education for all, as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality). It provides an important platform to accelerate girls' education and foster quality, lifelong learning opportunities for all children. We invite actors at all levels to submit papers and contribute to this timely dialogue.

### Background and Context

Education is a fundamental human right and a powerful catalyst to personal, social and economic growth. Uwezo Uganda's 2025-2028 strategy prioritises support for quality education for all children irrespective of gender, location or socio-economic status. Despite global progress, girls in Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa in general, face significant barriers to education, including poverty, cultural norms, child marriage, gender inequality, and unsafe social and school environment. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, with 354,736 teenage pregnancies reported in Uganda in 2020, and 196,499 in the first half of 2021 ([Songa, 2021](#)), exposing girls to risks like sexual violence, exploitation and early marriage. Uganda continues to face significant challenges with alarmingly high rates of teenage pregnancies and child marriages, which hinders the country's social and economic development. [United Nations Population Fund \(2022\)](#) estimates that one in four (25 percent) girls in Uganda aged 15-19 years have had a child or are pregnant and that 34 percent of Ugandan girls are married by 18 years. Worldwide, [UNESCO \(2024\)](#) reports that over 130 million girls, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, remain out of school, despite girls' education being a cost-effective tool for reducing poverty, improving health, improving gender equality and fostering sustainable development.

In Uganda, though more girls than boys enroll in and complete primary education, with 52.5% of girls sitting for the 2024 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), boys outperform girls in top grades, with 12.9% of boys achieving Division One compared to 9.46% of girls, and a higher percentage of girls (8.75%) failing the exams compared to boys (7.5%) ([UNEB, 2024a](#)).

At lower secondary level, the 2024 Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) results show girls excelling in subjects like English and Art but trailing boys in sciences and mathematics ([UNEB, 2024b](#)). Similarly, at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education level, girls outperform boys in arts and Biology but lag in mathematics and all other science subjects (New Vision, March 7, 2024).

In higher and tertiary education, female enrollment and graduation rates are arising. At Makerere University, women accounted for 53% of graduates in 2024 and 2025, up from 50.5% in 2020 ([Muvunyi & Jumba, 2025](#)). However, girls remain underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, with significantly lower enrollment in programs like Medicine, Pharmacy and Electrical Engineering compared to humanities, where female enrollment reaches up to 70% in some programs. This persistent gender gap in STEM highlights the need for targeted interventions.

Uwezo Uganda's 2024 learning assessment reveals that while girls and boys perform similarly in foundational literacy and numeracy, girls in northern Uganda underperform compared to boys and their peers in other regions ([Uwezo Uganda, 2024](#)), a trend consistent with previous assessments ([2018, 2021](#)). Economic, social and cultural factors likely contribute to these disparities, necessitating localised evidence to inform solutions. To contribute to addressing these challenges, Uwezo Uganda in partnership with Kyambogo University's School of Education, the University of Cambridge's Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre and RELI-Africa (Uganda Chapter), will convene a Girls' Education National Conference on 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> October 2025, to share evidence and strategies for improving education outcomes for all children, with a special focus on girls.

### Conference Objectives

The conference seeks to achieve **five** objectives, namely;

1. To create a platform for government, civil society, funding partners, the academia and independent researchers to spotlight issues and deepen understanding of existing barriers and enablers to girls' education.
2. To foster dialogue on effective contextualised practices for implementing evidence-based, innovative, and sustainable solutions to improve girls' education in Uganda and the East African region.
3. To generate tangible recommendations and actionable steps to address gender-based barriers in education in Uganda and the East African region.
4. To amplify the voices of girls and organisations championing girl education in Uganda
5. To document what works in girls' education, which could also work to improve all children's learning outcomes, boys and girls, irrespective of gender.

### Anticipated Conference outcomes

1. A call to action directed to different duty bearers on what is needed to enhance engagement of girls and boys
2. An out-come document or communique that consolidates promising practices, research priorities, funding opportunities, policy priorities to inform coordinated efforts on education of girls and boys in Uganda [and beyond]
3. Contribution to global knowledge through publication of a book edition based on some of the outstanding papers that will be presented at the conference

### Conference Sub-themes

Individuals undertaking research or interventions relevant to girls' education in Uganda and beyond are invited to submit abstracts for paper / workshop / poster presentation at the conference. Below are suggested sub-themes to guide potential abstract submissions relevant to the conference theme, "Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence & Action for Girls' Education":

1. **Innovative Pedagogies, Assessments and Learning Approaches for Girls:** This sub-theme focuses on evidence-based teaching, learning and assessment methods/environments that enhance girls' [and boys'] educational outcomes. Paper submissions may explore gender-responsive pedagogies, STEM education for girls, digital learning tools, and inclusive classroom practices that address cultural and social barriers to girls' academic success.
2. **Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers:** This sub-theme examines strategies to address systemic obstacles such as poverty, early marriage, gender-based violence, and cultural norms that limit girls' access to education and and/or retention in school. Papers may highlight successful interventions, community engagement models, or policy frameworks that empower girls to stay in school and thrive.
3. **Technology and Digital Inclusion for Girls' Education:** This sub-theme explores the role of technology in expanding access to education for girls, particularly in hard-to-reach or remote areas. Submissions may cover e-learning platforms, mobile education solutions, digital literacy programs, or initiatives to close the gender digital divide.
4. **Health, Well-being, and Education for Girls:** This sub-theme addresses the intersection of girls' health, mental well-being, and educational attainment. Papers may relate to programs tackling issues like menstrual health management, nutrition, mental health support, or safe school environments that enable girls to focus on learning.
5. **Policy and Financing for Gender Equity in Education:** This sub-theme focuses on policies and funding mechanisms that promote equitable access to education for girls. Submissions may analyse national education policies, public-private partnerships, scholarship programs or cost-effective interventions that scale up girls' education.
6. **Empowering Girls through Leadership and Life Skills:** This sub-theme highlights programs that equip girls with leadership, decision-making and life skills to navigate educational and professional pathways. Papers may explore mentorship initiatives, extracurricular programs, or curricula that foster confidence and agency in girls.
7. **Transitioning to Work; Preparing Girls for Future Careers:** This sub-theme examines how education systems prepare girls for economic opportunities and career success. Submissions may cover vocational training, entrepreneurship programs, career counselling, or partnerships with industries to align education with labour market needs.
8. **Data and Evidence Generation for Informing Interventions or Scaling Impact:** This sub-theme emphasises the role of research, data generation and evaluation in designing effective interventions for girls' education. Papers may present rigorous studies, learning assessments, impact evaluations, or innovative methodologies to measure and scale what works in girls' education.

These sub-themes are designed to align with the conference theme, encouraging submissions that combine evidence, practical solutions, and forward-looking strategies to advance girls' education in Uganda and globally.

**Target Audience/Participants:**

This conference will bring together policymakers, educators/teachers, independent and university-based researchers, graduate students at Masters and Doctoral level, civil society, and youth advocates to share evidence-based solutions, foster partnerships, and commit to actionable strategies for advancing girls' education.

## Call for Abstracts Submissions

The Organising Team of this National Conference on What Works in Girls' Education is now inviting submissions for paper / workshop / poster abstracts that are relevant to the conference theme **'Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence & Action for Girls' Education'** and aligned to any of the eight sub-themes.

### A) Abstract submission guidelines

#### i) Individual paper abstracts

We invite submissions for individual paper abstracts that present original research, case studies or tested/evidence-based practices to advance girls' education. Papers should align with the conference theme and selected sub-theme(s) and contribute to the conference' goal of identifying barriers and proposing actionable solutions for quality education for all children. Individual paper submission guidelines are as follows:

- Abstract length: 250-300 words
- Content: Include the paper's title, research question(s) or objective(s), sub-theme alignment, methodology, key findings or proposed outcomes, and relevance to the conference theme
- Format: Microsoft Word (.doc/.docx), Calibri, 11-point font, single-spaced
- Paper Title: Bold, centred, title case, 10-15 words
- Author details: Name(s), affiliations, country, contact information for the main/corresponding author. Include a 50-100-word bio per author (2-3 recommended)
- Keywords: include 3-5 key words related to the sub-theme
- Presentation format: Accepted papers will be presented in 15-20 minutes, including Q&A.

#### ii) Workshop abstracts:

We invite submissions for interactive workshop proposals that address innovative, evidence-based, and actionable strategies to advance girls' education. Workshops should engage participants through hands-on activities, discussions, or collaborative exercises and align with the conference theme and sub-theme(s). They should be interactive and suited to engaging diverse participants (e.g. educators, researchers, policy makers, CSOs, practitioners, etc). Submission guidelines include;

- Abstract length: 300-500 words
- Content: Include the workshop's title, objectives, sub-theme alignment, description of interactive activities, target audience, and expected outcomes
- Format: Microsoft Word (.doc/.docx), Calibri, 11-point font, single-spaced
- Workshop Title: Bold, centred, title case, 10-15 words
- Author details; Name(s), affiliations, country, contact information for all facilitators (2-3 recommended). Include a 50-100-word bio per facilitator
- Keywords: include 3-5 key words related to the sub-theme
- Workshop format: 60-90 minutes, specifying structure (e.g., presentation, activities, Q&A)

#### iii) Posters

We welcome traditional academic posters, as well as other visual representations of work suitable for display in our exhibition space. Ensure clarity on how your work aligns with the main conference theme and the specific sub-theme you're addressing. Poster proposal submission guidelines are as follows:

- Abstract length: 250-300 words
- Content: Include the poster's title, research question(s) or objective(s), sub-theme alignment, methodology, key findings or proposed outcomes, and relevance to the conference theme
- Format: Microsoft Word (.doc/.docx), Calibri, 11-point font, single-spaced
- Poster Title: Bold, centred, title case, 10-15 words

- Author details; Name(s), affiliations, country, contact information for the main/corresponding author. Include a 50-100-word bio per author (2-3 recommended)
- Keywords: include 3-5 key words related to the sub-theme
- Presentation format: Accepted posters will be displayed in our exhibition space. One hour will be allocated to poster/exhibition tour and presentation in the afternoon of Day 3.
- Poster authors will be responsible for producing their own posters and displaying them in the allocated spaces.

#### B) Abstract review and selection criteria

Abstracts will be reviewed by at least two members of the Conference Committee, based on the following criteria:

- **Originality:** Does the submission offer new thoughts, arguments, findings, methodologies, or approaches to the topic?
- **Clarity** of objectives and methodology.
- **Relevance:** Does the paper directly address the conference theme and chosen sub-theme and its relevance to girls' education in Uganda/global south context?
- **Rigour** of evidence for research-based submissions.
- **Potential for impact** for practice/policy submissions.

#### C) Key Dates

- **Deadline** for submission of abstracts: **23:59 (EAT time) 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025**
- Notification of **Acceptance: 30<sup>th</sup> August 2025**
- Copies of PowerPoint Presentations for selected paper presenters (up to 12 slides including the cover and back slides): **20th September 2025**
- Presenters of selected research papers and tested interventions will be invited to submit their full papers **two months after the conference** for peer review and possible inclusion in an edited book to be published by a credible publisher

#### D) Abstract and Bio submission instructions

- Please email abstracts and bios to: [info@uwezuganda.org](mailto:info@uwezuganda.org) with a subject line: *"Abstract Submission – [Your Name] – [Topic]"*
- Please clearly indicate in the subject line the format under which you're submitting the abstract - **Example:** *"Individual Paper Abstract Submission – Susan Ayikoru – Menstrual Health & School Attendance"*

#### E) Other Notes

- Individual papers will be organised by the Conference Committee into sessions spanning 60-90 minutes. Sessions will typically consist of 3-5 presentations, with each presenter allotted 10-15 minutes for their presentation. Following the presentations, there will be approximately 25-30 minutes designated for discussion within each parallel session.
- The organisers will cover costs of the conference materials, lunch and break teas for the main presenters of each accepted paper/workshop/poster.
- There are no conference registration fees for authors of the selected abstracts.
- The selected abstracts and authors' bios will be published in the conference booklet

**For abstract submissions or any further inquiries about the conference, please email the Conference Chair at: [info@uwezuganda.org](mailto:info@uwezuganda.org). Submit your proposal and contribute to breaking barriers and building futures for girls' education! Deadline: 15th August 2025**