

The National Conference on “What Works in Girls Education” 2025

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

Communiqué

Kampala, Uganda
October 1-3, 2025

1. Introduction

From October 1-3, 2025, 237 participants, 55% of whom were female, from 22 countries and 111 organisations met to discuss *What Works in Girls' Education* in Uganda and beyond. The Conference aimed to share evidence and strategies for improving education outcomes for all children, with a special focus on girls. With only five years left until the expiry of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2030, this conference served as a timely call to accelerate progress on quality education and gender equality (SDGs 4 and 5) through stronger local leadership, strategic collaboration, and increased investment.

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) organised the conference. The event was further supported by over 25 volunteers from 20 organisations.

2. Shared Understanding

As a result of over 100 presentations and three keynote speeches with panel discussions, participants recognised the barriers that uniquely affect girls' educational outcomes, as well as actions needed to address these barriers. They reaffirmed their commitment to collaborating to strengthen educational opportunities and outcomes for girls and boys in Uganda and beyond.

3. Main Outcomes and Commitments

The Conference produced several key takeaways and recommendations. We invite stakeholders to commit to advancing these recommendations together:

- i. We commit to working together across government, academia, and civil society to **holistically address the challenges** that prevent girls from achieving their potential through education. These include early marriage, poor menstrual hygiene, mental health challenges, low access to reproductive health services, cultural gender norms, gender-insensitive teaching and learning approaches, and more.

- ii. We commit to increasing our attention to fostering girls' agency, enhancing their capacity to learn, and strengthening supportive environments so that they may **transition to higher levels of education**, an area in which girls face significant challenges. This is particularly the case for girls facing intersecting disadvantages, whether related to poverty, disability, where they live, or other factors.
- iii. We commit to supporting **Global South and African-led research, and, in particular, women-led research**, on girls' education. Global South and African-led research on girls' education remains a small percentage of the global knowledge production. Yet it is imperative that this research, regardless of the methodological approach, be grounded in the lived experiences, realities, and needs of girls in all their diversity.
- iv. We commit to ensuring girls and boys have **positive female and male role models** to uplift them and encourage them to productively approach girls' issues. This is particularly important for girls navigating social interactions and excelling in areas in which they are underrepresented.
- v. We commit to working to **shift mindsets** so that girls and boys can equally access and engage with education and opportunity. **Mindsets** critically affect the ways in which societies understand the role of girls and women, as well as boys and men. Changes in mindsets, and ultimately in behaviour, are necessary at all levels of society, but particularly within households, schools, and communities.
- vi. We commit to strengthening girls' meaningful participation in **science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)**. We must invest in strengthening teacher training in STEM, support schools in their delivery of STEM, and challenge gender norms about girls in STEM.
- vii. We commit to supporting girls to develop **agency, leadership, life skills and values** throughout their education. These skills matter for girls and boys to be successful at school and beyond.

4. Moving Forward

The Conference's success is evidenced by the knowledge shared and practice focused on girls' education from participants from over 22 countries. The Uganda Minister of State for Primary Education and Sports, along with several participants, proposed holding the conference annually as an international event. Thus, the conference organisers propose to hold the conference biennially to allow time for organisations to act on and learn from Conference recommendations before reconvening again in 2027. In the intervening years, we will continue to engage and meet to advance girls' education in Uganda and beyond.

Conference organisers will release a full report of conference proceedings and learning, and include links to the book of abstracts and the conference programme in late October/early November 2025. Furthermore, the conference organisers are committed to publishing a book of selected papers from the Conference after an additional selection and peer-review process.

Several participants expressed appreciation to the Conference organisers for convening the conference and many emphasised their commitment to girls' education in Uganda and beyond.