OUTCOME HARVESTING
FINDINGS REPORT

For Uwezo Uganda
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Introduction

This report presents the findings of an Outcome Harvesting (OH) review of Uwezo Uganda's current strategy (2020-2023). The purpose of this review is to reflect on Uwezo Uganda's current strategy and use this reflection to develop the new Uwezo Uganda strategy 2024-2027.

The review is based on the results of a participatory Outcome Harvesting workshop held in November 2023 in Kampala. Participants of the three-day workshop included representatives of Uwezo staff, trainers affiliated with Uwezo, partner organisations, and district officials and was facilitated by Nele Blommestein, author of this report. After being trained in the Outcome Harvesting methodology, the participants were guided to harvest outcomes that they were aware of, document and categorise them, and share preliminary conclusions and recommendations for the next strategy.

This report starts with a brief explanation of the methodology and analysis. This is followed by a findings chapter that contains an explanation of the types of outcomes achieved by Uwezo, how the harvested outcomes relate to the desired outcomes (as formulated in Uwezo's current strategy), and which guiding principles were adhered to during the actions that led to the outcomes. Then conclusions and recommendations are presented, including those shared by participants of the November 2023 OH workshop. Finally, Annex A contains the Theory of Change puzzle that was made as a result of the emerging outcome types and can serve as a starting point for creating an improved ToC for Uwezo Uganda.

Methodology

Outcome Harvesting[1] is the identification, formulation, analysis, and interpretation of outcomes. The methodology was inspired by the definition of an outcome as a "change in another actor". The full definition of an outcome used for this review states: "An outcome is when a social actor – an individual, organisation, institution – makes an observable, verifiable change in behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, agendas, policies or practices that was influenced, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally by Uwezo Uganda."

During the Outcome Harvesting workshop participants were asked to describe an outcome in three parts: the outcome description, the significance of the outcome, and Uwezo's contribution to the outcome. They were then asked to document these outcomes online and to answer a few closed questions about these outcomes: the type of actor that was influenced, the level at which the outcome took place, the best fitting desired outcome category (as formulated in Uwezo's current strategy) and which of Uwezo's guiding principles was primarily adhered to in relation to the outcome.

Both the outcome and contribution descriptions were used to understand what had happened factually. The significance descriptions provided by the participants were used to get a deeper understanding of the context and importance of the outcome at the respective level (district, national, international).

During the analysis, the consultant added a new categorisation: 'outcome type'. Also, minor adjustments were made to some outcomes and categories to increase the quality of the outcomes, and some others were deleted that were identified as being descriptions of activities instead of outcomes. This resulted in a set of **62 harvested outcomes** that are analysed in this report.

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[1] Wilson–Grau, R. (2019). Outcome Harvesting, Principles, Steps and Evaluation Applications.

This review clearly does not cover all outcomes achieved by Uwezo in the last four years and is therefore not exhaustive. Rather, the set of harvested outcomes is representative for the types of outcomes achieved by Uwezo and should be seen as exemplary for Uwezo's work.

Findings

## What types of outcomes were harvested?

In total, 62 outcomes were harvested by the participants of the Outcome Harvesting workshop, of which several form a chain of related outcomes. These outcomes are of various types and involve different kinds of social actors operating at all levels (local, district, national and global). Eight types of outcomes could be distinguished, as depicted in Table A.

TABLE A. Types of outcomes achieved

Outcome type	Description
Policy outcome	Policy actors approve policy changes in support of quality learning.
Practice outcome	Local actors such as parents, teachers, schools, community groups and local leaders change their educational practices.
Commitment towards policy or practice outcome	Policy actors at all levels commit to take action towards practice or policy changes.
Increased funding outcome	Donors and policy actors financially support interventions towards the delivery of quality education.
Strengthened organisations outcome	Uwezo partners and other organisations implement new or adapted interventions and/or advocacy actions to improve learning.
Enhanced reporting and new research outcome	Social actors such as policy actors, international organisations and research institutions use Uwezo's data for publications, reporting and new (non-Uwezo) research.
Request for Uwezo expertise outcome	Social actors such as international organisations, CSOs and research institutions request for the participation, contribution and expertise of Uwezo staff.
Media exposure outcome	Media broadcasts messages in support of quality learning.

The next four paragraphs contain descriptions of the effects of Uwezo on social actors, the effects of partner organisations on social actors, the effects of Uwezo on (partner) organisations, and finally the effects of Uwezo on affiliated trainers (see graph 1).

GRAPH 1. Types of outcomes achieved by Uwezo and partners
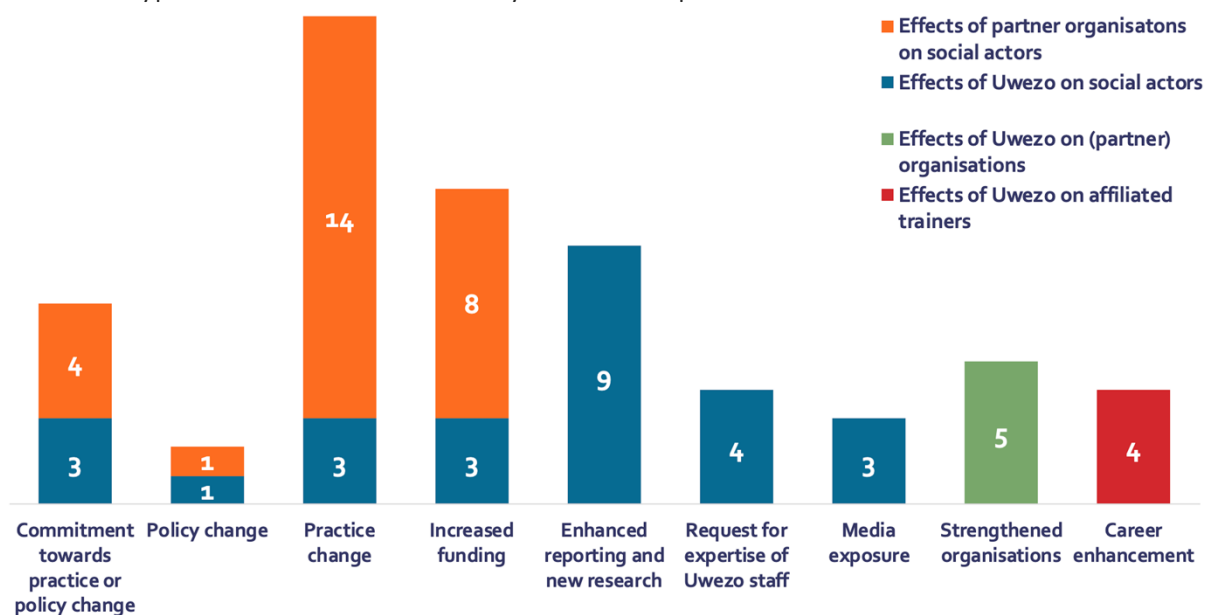
Uwezo's staff and resources influence social actors at all levels

The attending Uwezo staff and trainers harvested 26 outcomes during the OH workshop, all achieved through the use of Uwezo resources by social actors at all levels: school/community, district, national and global level. Either these resources were obtained through Uwezo's website or communication channels, or through direct contact with Uwezo staff or their advocacy actions. The types of outcomes include (non-Uwezo) reporting and new research, donors funding initiatives, media exposure and requests for the expertise of Uwezo's staff.

- The most outcomes achieved by Uwezo (9 outcomes) describe how actors such as policymakers, international organisations and research institutions used Uwezo's data for **enhanced reporting and new research**. More concretely, those social actors developed new tools, made publications that present Uwezo data, presented Uwezo data for their own audience, created reports that cite Uwezo data and started (non-Uwezo) research. Harvested outcome 51 provides an example of a published paper[2]:

"In November 2022, the Ministry of Education and Sports through the Teacher Education Training Department published a comprehensive paper on repurposing teacher Education and Training in Uganda for improved teacher Education training and development in Uganda."
(HO#51)

- The three **increased funding** outcomes achieved by Uwezo, describe how donors used Uwezo evidence to financially support large education initiatives.

- **Media exposure** outcomes happened at three levels: UBC radio aired in a district, at least five media houses published at national level, and the New York Times referenced Uwezo at global level.

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[2] The Department of Teacher Education, Training and Development (TETD), Ministry of Education and Sports. (November 2022). A comprehensive paper on repurposing teacher education and training institutions in Uganda for improved teacher education training and development.

- The **requests for the expertise of Uwezo's staff** are described in four outcomes, and demonstrate how Uwezo's staff is respected and recognised for their know-how. The following is an example of such a request:

"On 28 January 2022, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), UNICEF and the World Bank in Uganda invited Uwezo Uganda to be present and share experiences at the launch of the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel Report (GEEAP) on prioritising learning during Covid-19." (HO#32)

Uwezo also contributed to practice and policy outcomes, and commitments towards practice and policy outcomes. These are complimented by those achieved by advocacy actions of partner organisations (see below).

- Most **practice outcomes** were achieved by partner organisations, but Uwezo as an organisation also directly contributed to three considerable practice outcomes through partnerships with external actors and involvement of Uwezo staff. They describe how parents re-enrolled their children, a school started to assess life skills and how district authorities use Uwezo data as standard practice in their yearly budget cycle. The latter is included here as an example:

"Each year since 2012, in Kamwenge District, the district education stakeholder's forum makes reference to Uwezo findings in making decisions on annual education priorities." (HO#47)

- One **policy outcome** was reported describing that a resolution was passed at district level.

- Three outcomes describe the **commitment of policy actors to take action**, which often precedes practice or policy outcomes. See for example the following harvested outcome:

"On the 13th of April 2023, the district planner of Butambala local government committed to table the report to the wider district committee to ensure more resources are devoted to ICT education." (HO#57)

Diverse and real changes through partners' work

The participating partner organisations harvested 27 outcomes describing outcomes at district level, as well as the level of schools and communities. Due to their participation in Uwezo's activities, partner organisations were able to form a bridge between district officials and schools, teachers, parents and communities. The Uwezo report dissemination meetings have been a key starting point for partners' advocacy actions. The types of outcomes include practice and policy outcomes, commitments towards practice and policy outcomes, and increased funding outcomes.

- Many **practice outcomes** (14 outcomes) occurred through the advocacy actions of partners, involving communities, parents, teachers, schools, local leaders and policymakers. These practice outcomes describe how these actors address a wide variety of topics: the engagement of parents, teacher training in educating reading skills, teachers for special needs children, teacher absenteeism, school inspections, bullying, child abuse, students repeating classes, remedial classes, practical studies in agriculture, entrepreneur skills, life skills, a community library, building classroom blocks and toilet units, and safe drinking water. Harvested outcomes 16 is provided here as an example of practice change:

"In February 2023, schools in Oyam district began taking children to the community library for learning, aiming to enhance low learning levels and boost motivation among pupils." (HO#16)

- One **policy outcome**, namely the passing of a child protection ordinance, was reported.

- All of Uwezo's partners closely collaborated with district officials, resulting the **commitment of those policy actors to take action** (4 outcomes) towards practice or policy changes. An example of such a commitment is provided here:

"In October 2022, during Mpigi district budget conference, the District Education Officer committed that the district will recruit teachers for special needs in primary schools to teach learners with disabilities in the near future." (HO#26)

- Partner organisations harvested outcomes describing how both donors and district authorities **provided funding** (8 outcomes). Donors either funded the district to advance policy changes, made donations to schools, or granted concept notes of Uwezo partner organisations. District authorities also allocated funding to advance policy changes, and made recommendations for funding for Uwezo partner organisations. An example is provided by Citizens Initiative for Democracy and Development Uganda (CIDD-U), who participated in an Uwezo Uganda national assessment in August 2021. Afterwards, CIDD-UG organised a joint stakeholder education review meeting based on the published Uwezo report, which they organised together with the Pallisa district with support from UKAID, for improving the performance of University Primary Education (UPE) schools in the district. This led to the following funding outcome:

"In October 2022, Action Aid Uganda decided to support Pallisa district local government to facilitate the discussion of children's learning outcomes." (HO#7)

Effects on (partner) organisations often indirect but substantial

Four outcomes were harvested that describe a direct **effect on organisations' programming**, including two partner organisations of Uwezo, and two other organisations. After their participation in Uwezo's activities, one partner organisation adapted an Uwezo tool for their own assessments (see Harvested Outcome 17 provided below), and the other expanded their area of work to the whole district instead of only two sub-counties. See for example the following harvested outcome:

"Since 2015, FICH has been engaged by Uwezo Uganda and participated in several assessments using a household assessment tool. This involvement led to adapting the Uwezo assessment tool, specifically designed with P.2 items, to evaluate the children's' learning levels." (HO#17)

A non-Uwezo partner requested and received training support from Uwezo for the application of Uwezo Uganda Young Persons' assessment. The other, a Rotary Club, provided learning materials to two schools and a community library after being educated voluntarily by an Uwezo trainer and rotary member.

Even though not documented as specific outcomes, the data shows that all attending partner organisations benefitted from their participation in Uwezo's activities. Their harvested outcomes describe how they adjusted and extended their programming and advocacy actions after their participation in Uwezo activities. In one case, the use of Uwezo data in a concept note resulted in increased funding.

Side-effect: career opportunities of Uwezo trainers enhanced

The participating Uwezo trainers reported four outcomes describing how their participation in Uwezo activities as trainers, positively affected their careers as consultants. The trainers now more easily qualify for other assignments because of their strengthened research skills and association with Uwezo. They also reported to benefit from knowing how to use mobile and online data

collection tools, such as Kobo, instead of the usual paper questionnaires. This doesn't influence the educational sector directly and can therefore be seen as a side-effect of Uwezo's work.

Uwezo operates in a complex dynamic environment

Given the wide variety of actors, levels and topics that are touched by Uwezo's work, it can be said that Uwezo operates in a complex dynamic environment[3]. 'Complex' refers to the wide variety of actors and levels in the educational system that Uwezo interacts with, while 'dynamic' refers to the ever-changing context whereby nothing stays static and uncertainty and ambiguity are the constant. The harvested outcomes demonstrate that Uwezo has an influence on how organisations behave, on policy decisions that are made, on how resources are spent, and even on addressing cultural norms (such as tabling child abuse to avoid student absenteeism), and can thus be regarded as an actor that contributes to systems change[4] in the educational sector in Uganda. Embracing this level of complexity requires adaptive management and putting continuous learning at the centre in its next strategy and MEL approach[5].

How do the *harvested* outcomes relate to Uwezo's *desired* outcomes?

In this section, the harvested outcomes are compared with Uwezo's desired outcomes[6] to investigate which of these desired outcomes were achieved (to a more or lesser extent) and whether they are (still) relevant for Uwezo's programme logic. Table B presents the matching between the harvested outcomes and Uwezo's desired outcomes.

TABLE B. Harvested outcomes matched with Uwezo's desired outcomes

Desired outcomes	Harvested outcomes
1.1: **Policy actors**, **practitioners** and **the public** have increased knowledge, awareness and understanding of children's learning outcomes and their distribution.	• **Media exposure (3 outcomes)** • **Request for expertise of Uwezo staff (4 outcomes)**
1.2: The evidence is used to improve **resource allocation** and the delivery of education.	• **Increased funding (11 outcomes)**
2.1: As a result of the research work of Uwezo, policy actors and practitioners have **increased knowledge** and awareness of interventions that could improve learning outcomes and make them more equitable.	• **Strengthened organisations (4 outcomes)**
2.2: The findings from the research work are used to improve educational policies and practices.	• *See Desired outcomes 3.1 & 3.2*
3.1: **Policy actors** and **practitioners** use the evidence from the assessments, research of Uwezo to inform decision making and educational practices.	• **Practice outcomes** involving local leaders and policy actors (5 outcomes) • **Policy outcomes** (2 outcomes) • **Commitment towards practice and policy outcomes** (7 outcomes)

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[3] Patton, M.Q. (2019). Blue Marble Evaluation, Premises and Principles.

[4] Abercrombie, R., Harries, E., Wharton, R. (2015). Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it.

[5] Valters, C., Cummings, C., Nixon, H. (2016). Putting learning at the centre–Adaptive development programming in practice. ODI report.

[6] Promoting Equitable Quality Education in East Africa. Uwezo Strategy (2020–23). Pages 14–19.

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	• **Enhanced reporting and new research** (9 outcomes)
3.2: **Parents** and **communities** become stronger partners of **schools** at the local level to improve learning.	• **Practice outcomes** involving parents, teachers, schools and community groups (12 outcomes)

Table B shows that all of the harvested outcomes were matched with the desired outcomes, but coming to a perfect one-on-one match between the desired and harvested outcomes was challenging. The categories of types of outcomes are more specific than the formulation of the desired outcomes. Some desired outcomes overlap in their meaning and others don't contain a reference to actors (for example desired outcome 2.2). However, in general, it is not surprising for different intervention strategies (described in the current strategy as "strategic goals") to lead to the same outcomes. For example, both 'assessment of learning' and 'engagement' can lead to a desired outcome such as 'policy actors making use of evidence to inform decision making and improve educational policies and practices'.

All of the harvested outcomes could be matched in some way with all of Uwezo's desired outcomes, so all the desired outcomes can be regarded as achieved (to a more or lesser extent) and thus relevant for Uwezo's programme logic (Theory of Change), but sharpening the formulation of the desired outcomes would be helpful.

What principles were applied during Uwezo's actions to influence outcomes?

During the Outcome Harvesting workshop, the participants were invited to reflect about Uwezo's guiding principles. For each harvested outcome they were asked: "Which principles were adhered to, during the actions that led to the outcome"? To allow participants to select *all* the principles that were adhered to for a specific outcome, the question was supposed to be multiple choice, but due to an error the question was single choice, resulting in the selection of the *primary* principle which was adhered to for a specific outcome. Graph 2 shows for how many outcomes each primary principle was selected.

GRAPH 2. Principles adhered to during actions to achieve outcomes
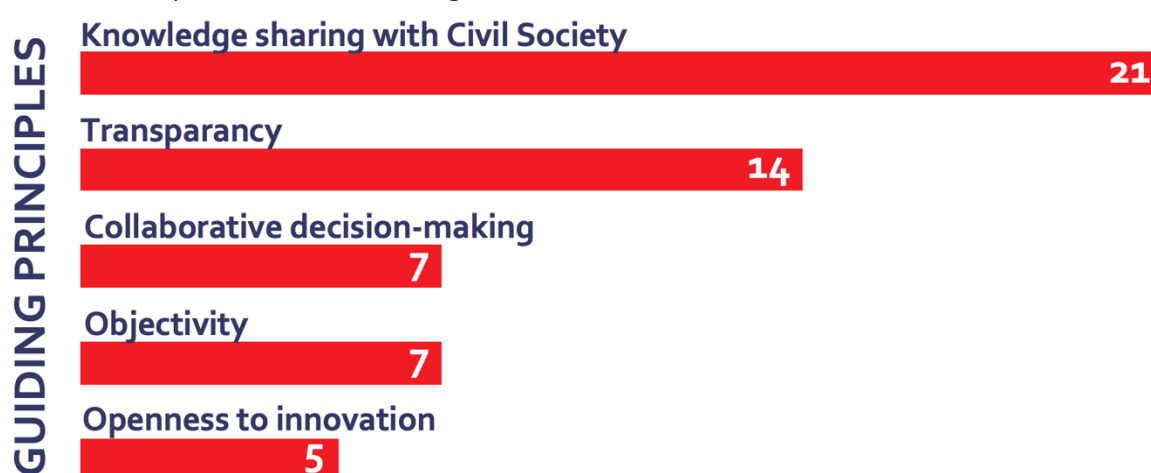
- The guiding principle that was selected the most (21 outcomes) is: '**knowledge sharing with civil society**', whereby Uwezo aims to interact widely with concerned citizens and to be accessible to them. All participants apparently felt that the outcomes were achieved

through knowledge that was shared with civil society. Thus, the participants value 'interaction' and 'knowledge sharing' as an important value for Uwezo's work.

- The guiding principle '**transparency**' was selected mostly for outcomes achieved by Uwezo (12 outcomes), and only for two outcomes achieved by partner organisations. This principle states that Uwezo has a duty to inform stakeholders about the methods and results of their work and have an open source data policy and encourage further data usage by both policy formulators and the academia. Uwezo staff, during their actions that lead to outcomes, apparently felt a strong responsibility to inform stakeholders about the methods and results of their work and thus adhered to this principle.

- Interestingly, the guiding principle '**collaborative decision making**' was selected mostly for outcomes achieved by Uwezo's partner organisations (6 out of 7 outcomes). With this principle Uwezo intends to base strategic decisions on wide consultations and treat them as a collective responsibility of senior staff members. Partner organisations felt that they were part of consultations, pointing to a sense of shared responsibility and adherence of Uwezo to this principle.

- '**Objectivity**' as a guiding principle, whereby Uwezo says their findings are based on evidence and they distinguish between fact and opinion, was selected for outcomes achieved by Uwezo's partner organisations, as well as by Uwezo (7 outcomes), and include the two policy outcomes. Apparently, participants felt that these policy outcomes were achieved through adherence to the principle of objective evidence presented by Uwezo.

- The guiding principle '**openness to innovation**' was selected the least, but paints an interesting picture nonetheless. With this principle Uwezo wishes to consider new ideas on their merits and to make room for experiments, and organisational learning is also encouraged. It was selected for outcomes that had an effect on partner organisations (2 out of 5 outcomes), which probably points out that partner organisations achieved these outcomes through adhering to the principle of organisational learning. Remarkably, this principle was also selected for two 'increased funding' outcomes, suggesting that donors and policy actors were open to support innovative programming.

In sum, the principles that were primarily adhered to cover *all*[7] guiding principles of Uwezo. This implies that these guiding principles were meaningful and have led to outcomes[8]. This helps in realising that principles can be more than a nice list in a frame on the wall; they can actually lead to results and that principles-focused programming works well in complex dynamic environments.

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[7] One principle was not selected at all: 'protection of respondents and sources.' This was to be expected, because the review did not focus on activities that fall under Uwezo's control, such as assessments and research, but only on other social actors that were influenced by the results of the assessments and research.
[8] Patton, M.Q. (2017). Principles-Focused Evaluation, The Guide.

Conclusions

The analysis shows that Uwezo's staff and resources influence social actors at all levels from local to global. Diverse and real changes are achieved through partners' advocacy actions, which were undocumented until now. Uwezo has a considerable effect on (partner) organisations' programming and advocacy actions and contributes to the strengthening of those organisations, although often indirect. As a side-effect, also the career opportunities of Uwezo trainers are enhanced due to their affiliation with Uwezo.

Given the wide variety of actors, levels and topics that are touched by Uwezo's work, it can be said that Uwezo operates in a complex dynamic environment and contributes to systems change in the educational sector in Uganda.

All of the harvested outcomes could be matched in some way with all of Uwezo's desired outcomes, so all the desired outcomes can be regarded as achieved (to a more or lesser extent) and thus relevant for Uwezo's programme logic (Theory of Change), but sharpening the formulation of the desired outcomes would be helpful.

The principles that were primary adhered to during the actions that contributed to the harvested outcomes, cover all guiding principles of Uwezo. This implies that these guiding principles were perceived as meaningful and have contributed to achieving outcomes. This helps in realising that principles can be more than a nice list in a frame on the wall; they can help to improve the quality of implementation and contribute to results.

On the last day of the OH workshop in November 2023, participants were invited to share their preliminary reflections on the rough set of outcomes that was harvested on the previous days. The group appreciated the rich harvest. They thought that the right actors were reached at the different levels and noted great potential for achieving more, especially at the district and lower levels. They concluded that Uwezo's principles were adhered to, which they thought reflected the core of Uwezo's business: knowledge sharing with civil society.

Recommendations

Embrace **complexity and systems thinking** as fundamental for the next strategy. To think systemically means recognising the inter-relationships and multiple-perspectives in Uwezo's environment. It implies recognising that change for Uwezo doesn't happen in a linear way, and the relation between cause and effect can often not be predicted. An indicator framework, which assumes linear connections, will therefore not be suitable for monitoring, but luckily there are alternatives.

For its next strategy, it is recommended to start with a problem definition and a context description. Continue to develop a **flexible Theory of Change**: align the strategic goals, desired outcomes and actors, and make use of the outcome types presented in this report. An adjusted ToC should be regarded as a living document and regularly revisited in order to support on-going learning.

Annex A provides a **Theory of Change puzzle** containing the types of outcomes that emerged in this report, that can be used as a starting point for the development of an adjusted ToC.

Sharpen Uwezo's current **principles** and make them actionable (and make sure they are actually principles and not rules or assumptions). Later on, evaluate these effectiveness principles in terms of how well they are understood by Uwezo's staff and partner organisations, whether Uwezo's practice is consistent with them, and whether they are contributing to Uwezo's desired outcomes (as formulated in its new ToC).

Develop a **MEL approach** that is based on learning and adaptation, whereby the aim is to continuously find ways to improve Uwezo's actions and adjust its ways of working accordingly. After developing the problem definition, the context description, Theory of Change and effectiveness principles, look into participatory methodologies such as Outcome Harvesting, principles-focused evaluation and set up a robust learning cycle that allows for inclusive and participatory in-depth dialogue.

After reflecting on the rough set of outcomes on the last day of the OH workshop in November 2023, the participants also shared recommendations.

- Participants recommended a more continuous engagement with partners as a strategy to achieve more outcomes.
- Some desired to see more outcomes at the lower levels in the district and suggested that in the next strategy more focus should be given at levels such as the village, parish and sub-county, and equal attention should go to actors such as school managers and teachers.
- Others argued instead that there is a great need to work from top-to-bottom, as they said that the Ministry of Education has much deeper reach than Uwezo or any other organisation.
- With regards to guiding principle 'openness to innovation', some participants suggested that more room for innovations should be included in the next strategy.
- It was strongly recommended to explore possibilities of more intense collaboration with the media at all levels, but particularly at the lowers levels such as working with local radio stations to spread the message about learning outcomes to people in the local communities.