



**RESEARCH REPORT ON,  
'DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE MODELS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED  
PRESCHOOLS IN UGANDA'**

**September 2021**

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## List of Researchers

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role in the project</b>	<b>Employing organisation</b>
Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo	Principal Investigator	Uwezo Uganda
Dr James Urwick	Co-investigator and General Coordinator	Uwezo Uganda
Ms Faridah Nassereka	Co-investigator and Researcher	Uwezo Uganda
Associate Professor Godfrey Ejuu	Researcher	Kyambogo University
Ms Daphine Karungi	Researcher	Uwezo Uganda
Ms Judith Adongo	Researcher	Uwezo Uganda
Ms Kandi Alum	Coordinator for Oyam District and Researcher	Foundation for Inclusive Community Help
Mr Peter Ekiikina	Coordinator for Tororo District and Researcher	Foundation for Open Development
Ms Harriet Victoria Anyango	Research Assistant	Foundation for Inclusive Community Help
Ms Christine Amajong	Research Assistant	Foundation for Open Development

## Abbreviations

BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CMC	Centre Management Committee
CSO	Civil society organisation
ECCE	Early childhood care and education
ECD	Early childhood development
DIS	District Inspector of Education
DEO	District Education Officer
FICH	Foundation for Inclusive Community Help
FOD	Foundation for Open Development
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
YOPDIDA	Youth and Persons with Disability Integrated Development Association.

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## Executive Summary

This report describes and compares in detail four examples of preschools in Uganda that are managed by local communities at low cost and identifies practices that can help to make such preschools sustainable. The term, 'preschools' here describes institutions that provide care and education for children aged 3-6. The report is based on evidence from management committee members, head teachers, teachers, household heads and educational officials. Members of the research teams were provided by Uwezo Uganda, by the Foundation for Inclusive Community Help (FICH) and by the Foundation for Open Development (FOD)

The context is one in which a growing body of evidence from low-income countries shows the benefits of attendance at preschool for children's cognitive, social and emotional development. Equitable and inclusive delivery of early childhood care and education (ECCE) is advocated in the Fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4). In Uganda, however, the provision of ECCE is left to non-government bodies, the role of the government being limited mainly to regulation and supervision. The service is therefore beyond the financial reach of some families and its quality is extremely varied.

In this situation, management of preschools by local communities has potential for mobilising self-help, for making the service affordable to most households, for providing public accountability and for seeking external assistance where needed. This research seeks ways of maximising these benefits. Drawing on previous social research, we see the task as one of mobilising social capital through civil society action. There is potential for the service to be 'co-produced' by the community and other agencies.

The research was designed to identify structures, practices and resources that can contribute to five goals for the preschool: community control, affordability, acceptable human and physical resources, sound professional practices and linkage with other local services. In the event, our evidence about the last two goals is limited, as the closure of institutions during the pandemic prevented the direct observation of activities in classrooms and playgrounds. We have nevertheless provided accounts of the origins of the selected preschools, their management systems, staffing, physical facilities, costs and incomes, as they existed in 2019.

The research focuses on Oyam and Tororo Districts, where community management and ownership of preschools has some popularity (Cambridge Education 2017). Within each district, two examples (one rural and one urban, of similar size) were selected for study, with the agreement of the managers and the district authorities. To protect informants, we use pseudonyms for these cases: Tuyiga and St. Mathew's in Oyam District and Happiness and New Look in Tororo District. Before the main research began, pilot studies of a rural and an urban example were conducted in Kayunga District. For each preschool, interviews were held with one management committee member and the head teacher, one other teacher and two household heads (i.e. parents or guardians). These interviews explored management structures, preschool-community relations, household costs and institutional resources, costs and income (see Annexes I to IV). Interviews were also held with selected national and district officials (see Annex V).

The four preschools studied were all clearly products of local community initiative and exemplified community control to some degree. But, in three cases, their independence was constrained as a result of using a classroom block allocated by a primary school. In two of these cases the 'nursery school' shared a management committee with the primary school and in the third case it shared the head teacher, although having its own management committee. The fourth case (Happiness) was a rural, stand-alone ECD centre and had the greatest independence.

A general contrast was found, in costs and social accessibility, between two preschools with trained staff on regular employment and two (both in Tororo District) which depended entirely on volunteer teachers. The volunteer preschools had substantially lower fees and lower feeding contributions (one had no feeding programme). The examples of households studied show that the annual cost to a household for a child at the 'professional' preschools was typically about UGX 300,000, whereas the cost at Happiness (a volunteer institution) was about one-third of this. All households reported increased time available for parents to work while children were at preschool, which implied some cost recovery.

It was challenging for local communities to provide adequate staff and physical facilities. Even the qualified teachers (holding a Nursery Teaching Certificate) were on low salaries and paid for only nine months in the year, while the volunteer teachers were unqualified, had only some in-service training and received only small, ad hoc payments. The primary school classrooms being used generally allowed enough space per child, but their design was not age-appropriate. At Happiness, the local community had built small classrooms, but they were overcrowded.

Where feeding programmes existed (in three of the cases), they accounted for 60-70% of all the institutional turnover. The feeding was generally well supported and economical, while parents at New Look provided a packed meal at higher cost.

The non-feeding institutional costs per child (including elements contributed in kind by parents) ranged from UGX 87,000 per annum, at St. Mathew's, to about UGX 11,000 per annum, at New Look. The estimated capital costs per child ranged from just over UGX 20,000 per annum, at Tuyiga, to below UGX 1,000 per annum, at Happiness where the community had built the premises. Containment of the capital costs is an important, long-term issue.

From the interviews with educational officials with responsibility for ECCE, district officials appeared to be more aware of the efforts being made by local communities to create and sustain preschools, while national officials were more interested in the preschools supported by large NGOs. The district officials saw a need for government funding of tuition in order to increase participation. There was a general agreement that the qualifications and training of teachers / caregivers for ECCE needed much improvement.

Tentative conclusions for models of good practice in community-based preschool provision are as follows:

1. Preschool feeding programmes are useful, in urban as well as rural areas, and economical for households.
2. A preschool should have its own head teacher and centre management committee and be independent in its financial management, even if it shares facilities with a primary school.
3. All preschools should have trained and qualified staff, but volunteer teachers and assistants are also an important resource for meeting demand. There should be a system for volunteer teachers to be mentored by qualified teachers.
4. National regulations should include norms for space per child in classrooms and play areas. Limits should be placed on class size and a preschool should have at least one full-time teacher per class.

5. Low-cost and age-appropriate preschool building designs are needed. These would help local communities to contribute to the process of construction.

Lastly, we note that, because of the prolonged closure of educational institutions during the pandemic, in 2020-21, local communities need support from the educational authorities to re-staff and re-equip their preschools.



## 1. Introduction - scope of the report

This report provides general perspectives from the data of Phase I of the research project, 'Developing sustainable models for community-based preschools in Uganda', obtained in the period from December 2020 to April 2021. It also contains tentative proposals for the models that we wish to advocate.

'Preschools' is a general term that we use to describe institutions that provide for the education and care of children aged 3-6 and are often described as 'early childhood development (ECD) centres' or 'nursery schools' in Uganda. In this phase we obtained data on management structures, staffing, enrolments, facilities, costs and income, together with opinion from practitioners, managers, household heads and educational officials on various issues. Because of the prolonged closure of preschools in Uganda, we have been obliged to report without completing Phase II, in which we planned to observe examples of the activities during a typical day and evaluate the learning environments that our examples provide. Nevertheless, this report includes tentative proposals for models of community-based preschool organisation (the intended Phase III), in which we keep in mind issues of access, quality and accountability and the case for public subsidy.

The research approach used, explained in the section on methods below, is one of qualitative case studies. With the help of educational officials in two districts, we selected four examples of preschools that exemplify initiatives by local communities. Initially data were obtained in December 2020, through semi-structured interviews with members of management committees, head teachers, teachers, parents and district education officials. In February – March 2021, further enquiries were made on particular aspects of the cases and to obtain missing information. Lastly, interviews were held with two national officials who had responsibilities for early childhood education and a facilities specialist was consulted (April-May 2021).

In this work, Uwezo Uganda has been ably assisted by two partner organisations in the districts concerned. These are the Foundation for Inclusive Community Help (FICH) in Oyam District and the Foundation for Development (FOD) in Tororo District. The local insights we have gained owe much to them.

## 2. Context

The relative neglect of early childhood care and education (ECCE) in public service provision and in international aid continues to affect many low-income countries, Uganda being one of them. In the period 2000-2015, a politically driven focus on the Millennium Development Goals of UPE and gender parity in education tended to marginalise ECCE, despite its recognition in Education for All Goal 1 and in the work of UNICEF. SDG Goal 4 calls for an equitable and inclusive delivery of ECCE, but it is only recently that World Bank research has started to recognise the vital part to be played by ECCE in responses to the 'learning crisis' affecting primary education (Bashir et al. 2018, 100, 439).

For East Africa and comparable settings, there is compelling evidence of the benefits to children from attending ECCE programmes, including ones with relatively limited resources. Recent analysis of learning outcomes based on the Uwezo assessment data of 2018 shows that children aged 6-14 in Uganda who have attended preschool for two years or more are 1.8 times more likely to be able to read and comprehend a short story in English and 1.6 times more likely to be able to perform division at Grade 2 level than other children, when other relevant factors are controlled (Uwezo Uganda 2020). This is consistent with findings from elsewhere. A quasi-experimental study in East Africa

demonstrates children's cognitive gains from attendance at low-cost preschools, as well as ones that benefit from external support (Mwaura et al. 2008). A study of an improved preschool programme in Bangladesh (Moore et al. 2008) supports the view that more interactive learning methods can be implemented at low cost and result in important cognitive gains for children in a low-income setting. Case studies of transition to primary school in low-income urban settings by Margetts and Phatudi (2013) illustrate gains in children's social competence and emotional development that were attributable to preschool attendance. These are a few examples among many. A large body of relevant research on developing countries, showing the potential benefits of ECCE of various kinds, has been reviewed by Rao et al. (2017).

Uganda's Early Childhood Development Policy of 2007 (Government of Uganda 2007) attempted to regulate the pre-primary sub-sector and provided guidance on curriculum and pedagogy, but specifically avoided any commitment to public funding of the service. The Education Act of 2008 states that early childhood education is a responsibility of private agencies (Government of Uganda 2008, 15). This consignment of ECCE provision to market forces and occasional philanthropy was made more likely by a policy environment which had been influenced by neo-liberal assumptions and favoured privatisation and commercialisation of services, including parts of the education sector (Collier and Reinikka 2001, 37-38; Openjuru 2011). Professional limitations of the provision were discussed by Ejju (2012). In 2016 the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) launched an action plan for integrated early childhood development from birth to the age of eight, with the support of UNICEF (MoGLSD 2016). But this has not fundamentally changed the dependence of preschools on private or community management and fees charged to parents.

The popular demand for ECCE is strong in Uganda and participation has increased considerably in recent years, but it remains unaffordable for many households. The Uwezo national assessment data of 2018 (Uwezo 2019) provides estimates that, while 49% of children aged 6-14 had attended preschool for two years or more, 38% had not attended at all. There have been calls on the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to reconsider its policy on ECCE, but it has maintained the same position. Within Uganda, increasing numbers of under-age children are being enrolled in primary schools by parents who cannot afford preschool fees (Brunette et al. 2017). An external review of the 2007 Policy (Cambridge Education 2017) helped to show that the complex patchwork of early childhood services was very inequitable, both in quality and in accessibility, that regulation was weak and that the training of teachers and carers had little coordination. This led to the drafting by MoES in 2018 of a revised policy document for ECCE, which, however, has not resulted in more funding for children's learning, but only in more support for government regulation of private providers. Meanwhile, neighbouring countries have moved towards increased public support for ECCE. Notably, the Kenyan Government is now funding public centres with a free two-year programme, targeting children aged 4-5 (Republic of Kenya 2018).

### 3. Policy rationale

There are strong grounds for believing that, even in the absence of public subsidy, preschools owned and managed by local communities can be organised in such a way as to expand access to ECCE through low-cost models and a graduated fee structure. In Uganda, preschools that are owned or managed by local communities (about one-fifth of the total nationally) are reported to be relatively popular in rural areas and in poorer districts and to have some effective results (Cambridge Education, 2017, pp. 18, 30). The supporting evidence from Kenya is equally significant: even before the Kenyan government's recent reform, enrolment in ECCE had increased rapidly (from 1.1 million in 2000 to 1.7 million in 2008) and one of the key factors was 'community involvement and ownership' (Okengo, 2011, p. 33).

Community management also has the potential to provide stronger public accountability than private providers would offer. Such accountability is important for maintaining acceptable standards of pedagogy and care and for linking preschools with health and social development services. It also has advantages for public subsidy, whenever that becomes available. However, different approaches to subsidy, such as institutional grants, fee payments on behalf of children, and payment of trained teachers, merit consideration.

We consider that the limited resources available for ECCE nationally, both from public and from private sources, are better focused on expanding and improving the network of preschools, rather than establishing one-year reception classes in primary schools. Support for preschools would use existing resources more effectively, through the kind of 'public-private partnerships' that are advocated in the MoGLSD (2016) Action Plan. It would embed preschools in the wider community context, benefit a wider age range of children and help to establish positive learning dispositions early in life. Reception classes, on the other hand, might have a restricted coverage, as the examples of South Africa and Lesotho suggest (Atmore 2013; Urwick and Griffin 2012) and so add to existing inequities.

## 4. Conceptual framework

In considering the capacity of communities to manage and fund ECCE for the benefit of their children, we employ the concept of 'social capital', which is defined by Michael Woolcock (1998) as 'the information, trust and norms of reciprocity inhering in one's social networks' (p. 153). In his study of government-community partnerships as they affected primary schools in Nigeria, Paul Francis (1998) found that, owing to the greater economic stratification in urban areas, urban schools tended to experience more difficulty than rural schools in mobilising social capital for community support. We expect to find the same difference with respect to preschools in Uganda and recognise that spatially defined communities are not invariably the most effective basis of social support for preschools, especially in urban areas.

Social capital can be mobilised through 'civil society' action. A variety of non-profit associations with potential for supporting ECCE can be described as part of civil society, occupying a space between government, private business and households. Some associations, however, are on the boundaries of these sectors (Evers and Laville, 2004). A producers' cooperative, for example, is on the boundary between civil society and business. Some preschools themselves are in this position, while home-based ECCE centres project the household into civil society.

The concept of 'coproduction' (Ostrom, 1996) is also relevant for situations where the users of public services (in our case households) contribute to their production. In the situations we study, however, the Government will, at least initially, have minor role, mainly limited to curriculum guidance and monitoring. In advocating public subsidy, we are concerned with the potential for coproduction of ECCE. In many respects the pre-primary sub-sector of education in low-income countries is repeating the past history of the present 'compulsory' sub-sectors as it struggles for public recognition and funding. As an element in coproduction, community financing and participation in education has been a popular idea since the 1980's, embracing a variety of types of community and of contributions, many of which are relevant to the context of this study (Bray and Lillis 1988; Uemura 1999).

## 5. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to identify and refine models of ECCE provision which can help to increase its availability and enhance its quality in the context of Uganda. It is intended that these models should involve community ownership and management as far as possible and should be suitable for public subsidy in the future.

The main research questions are as follows and will apply to a variety of cases selected for in-depth and comparative study:

1. What structures, practices and resources can enable the preschool to be controlled by, and accountable to, representatives of a local community or other relevant community?
2. What structures, resources and system of funding can help to make the preschool accessible and affordable to all or most households in the locality? How far can these elements be sourced within the community?
3. What are the essential human and physical resources for the preschool to be of acceptable quality and how should the standards for these be stated for purposes of management and evaluation? How far can the community provide these resources?
4. Given the existing provision of resources, what should be the priorities for improving leadership, teaching and care in the preschool?
5. How can the preschool best be linked with schools, health and social welfare services and existing demand-side interventions?

## 6. Methods of data collection

### 6.1. General approach

The research approach is qualitative, using exploratory and comparative case studies of preschools in their community settings. Data collection was guided by the research questions that have been stated, but, within the general framework that they provide, many issues emerged from the data both during and after the field work. In the best tradition of qualitative research, the research teams have been ready to learn from the perceptions of the managers, teachers and other stakeholders and give due attention to these in interpreting the data.

### 6.2. Research teams

For each district with the main cases, there was a research team consisting of two researchers provided by Uwezo Uganda and two research assistants provided by the partner CSO in the district. The research assistants will be drawn from Uwezo's partner CSO at district level. Some members of each research team will be competent in the main local languages of the communities concerned and able to use this as necessary in the interactions. One of the research assistants in each district acted as district coordinator, in charge of all local arrangements for the research.

### 6.3. Selection of districts and of preschool cases

The main field work took place in two districts, selected for (1) relatively high poverty ratings, (2) the known prevalence of preschools that are owned or managed by local communities and (3) the availability of a partner CSO) with capacity to assist in the research. The districts selected were Oyam

in the Northern Region and Tororo in the Eastern Region. Within these districts, four preschools were sampled in a purposive manner, two per district, one in a rural and one in an urban area, for detailed study. In addition to location, the criteria for selection were that each preschool should have a high level of community control, should be financially self-supporting as far as possible, should be at least five years old, have at least two grades and be successful in attracting enrolment.

Estimates of numbers of preschools by district are not very reliable, as many are not registered: but district sources have indicated about 175 in Oyam District and 60 in Tororo District. Information from the survey by Cambridge Education (2017) led us to expect that at least one-quarter, in these districts, would be owned or managed by local communities, giving some scope for choice.

To protect informants, we use pseudonyms for the four selected cases, as follows:

- (1) Oyam, District, rural case: Tuyiga Preschool
- (2) Oyam District, urban case: St. Mathew's Preschool
- (3) Tororo District, rural case: Happiness Preschool
- (4) Tororo District, urban case: New Look Preschool

The real names contain various descriptions such as 'child development centre' and 'nursery school', but these did not signify organisational differences and in the pseudonyms we use the general term, 'preschool' instead.

The selection of the cases and access to them was arranged by our partner CSOs in the districts, after they had consulted district educational officials. Our criteria were not satisfied perfectly, but well enough for the purposes of the study.

#### **6.4. Informants and sources**

The informants consisted of head teachers, members of centre or school management committees (CMCs or SMCs), teachers (caregivers)<sup>1</sup>, household heads (usually parents) and relevant education officers at district and national level. At each preschool, interviews were held with the head teacher and one CMC or SMC member (jointly where possible), one teacher and two household heads (a total of four interviews). The instruments are in Annexes I, II and IV. Household heads were selected for higher and lower levels of household wealth in each case. In addition, interviews were held with officials who had responsibilities for early childhood education: three at the district level<sup>2</sup> and two at national level (see Annex V). There were therefore a total of 16 interviews in the communities and five with officials. Additional information was obtained informally from a specialist in educational facilities at national level.

The intended observation of teaching and learning during a typical school day had to be omitted because of the Covid-related closure of all preschools. We hope that this task can eventually be accomplished so that a fuller evaluation of each case is possible.

#### **6.5. Preparation and pilot studies**

The interview schedules for managers, teachers and household heads were given initial trials on 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> September 2020, with individuals representing a preschool near Kampala who agreed to attend

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<sup>1</sup> The term, 'teacher', is used in this report for any 'caregiver' whose duties include teaching.

<sup>2</sup> In each selected district, the District Inspector of Education was interviewed. But only one District Education Officer was available for interview.

at the Uwezo Uganda offices. The instruments were revised after these trials and again after the pilot studies.

An orientation meeting of both research teams, held virtually on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020, allowed for some guidance on research priorities and for discussion of the current challenges for ECCE both generally and in the selected districts. Pilot studies, for both teams, were then held in Kayunga District on 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> December, with the help of a local CSO. The preschools selected there, a rural and an urban example, were both rather better resourced than our main cases, but were sufficiently suitable for the piloting of the procedures.

### **6.6. Data collection strategy**

As the research questions indicate, the main types of data needed relate to (1) management, (2) history and existing community linkages, (3) social patterns of access, (4) physical resources and staffing, (5) professional practices and standards, (6) linkage with other services and (7) the costs to providers and users. An important aspect of the qualitative approach is triangulation: the use of data, on each aspect, obtained from a range of sources. We use information and opinion from different kinds of stakeholders, direct observation of facilities and in some areas written records. The members of the CMC or SMC who were selected for interview tended to be people with a long-term knowledge of the preschool and local community.

At each preschool visited, the researchers measured the floor areas of the classrooms and the play area and noted some basic details of the material composition and layout of the physical facilities.

### **6.7. Methods of cost and income analysis**

As far as possible we use a 'grounded' approach to cost analysis, constructing costs to institutions and to households from the data that our informants provided (see Annexes I, III and IV). In the area of capital costs, for which the informants could not provide complete data, we make some use of 'replacement costing', with help from the facilities specialist and from other sources. In cases where staff or facilities were being shared with a primary school, the preschool's share of the cost is based on its share of the combined enrolment.

All categories of cost and income are stated in annual values as for the year 2019. Where capital costs incurred in previous years are available, they are adjusted to 2019 values by reference to a retail price index. The annual capital costs of buildings are based on depreciation over the expected lifespan of buildings and an assumption that 5% of the value can be recovered from scrap on demolition. A similar approach is used for furniture.

The institutional costs of a preschool are assumed to be its entire turnover, or consumption of resources. Therefore, feeding contributions and other materials provided by households are recorded both as part of the preschool's recurrent expenditure and as part of its income. This approach makes it possible to estimate the per-pupil unit cost of preschool attendance and shows how far the preschool is depending on non-fee contributions by households.

The examples of costs of preschool attendance to households can be related to their income and other characteristics. These examples can be placed in the national context by reference to household survey findings.

### **6.8 Instruments**

For information from CMC members, head teachers, teachers, household heads and officials, semi-structured interviews with standard schedules were used (see Annexes I, III, VI and VII). However,



interviewers were free to add questions to probe emerging issues and, in the case of officials, to suit their areas of expertise.

## 7. Comparative Analysis of the Preschool Cases

### 7.1. A general contrast: professional versus voluntary approaches

The four selected cases of preschools have common elements of community initiative in their histories and had comparable enrolments in 2019 (in the range 109 to 138). But there is general contrast in their modes of service delivery. Tuyiga and St. Mathew's Preschools (both in Oyam District) represent an approach in which trained teachers are paid regular salaries, while Happiness and New Look Preschools (in Tororo District) relied on volunteer teachers only, with correspondingly lower costs to households. Each approach has its advantages and limitations. In considering various aspects of the service, we shall show that some other variations are associated with these two modes of service delivery. We are also aware that a mixed mode of delivery is possible, in which volunteers are mentored by qualified teachers.

### 7.2. Community linkage and control

Initiatives by local communities were important in the establishment of all these preschools: all were clearly cases of 'non-market' and humanitarian approaches to the provision of early childhood education. Private owners and managers had no part in them. Tuyiga Preschool (the rural example in Oyam District) was established in 2016 at the request of parents of the primary school. St. Mathew's Preschool was the result of wide demand in the community, which similarly caused the primary school management to allocate one classroom block to the preschool (in 2018). In the case of New Look Preschool (the urban example in Tororo District), demand from parents resulted in the allocation by the primary school of an old classroom block (dating from 1999), which was then rehabilitated (in 2018) by the NGO, Plan International, at a very modest cost. These three cases, therefore, all benefited financially from the provision of premises by government-aided primary schools and from some sharing of facilities with those schools.

In contrast, Happiness Preschool was a rural, stand-alone ECD centre, whose buildings were gradually completed through the persistent efforts of community members over the period 2008-18. They obtained an initial small grant from the sub-county authorities and thereafter continued the work through a combination of small donations and voluntary labour. Members of the Parish Development Committee provided leadership, but many community members supported the work through voluntary labour and through small contributions in cash or kind. An informant reported that 'the entire community made a contribution either by giving cash, chicken, goats or cows to ensure the construction work proceeds'. This was a notable case of social capital at work. Two classrooms, a kitchen and a toilet block were built, the total cost of the materials being about UGX20 million. But this preschool still needed a third classroom. The community also managed to find volunteers to work in the preschool, including a head teacher with some informal training for ECCE.

In all the selected cases the district educational authorities had given encouragement. Except for the small grant at Happiness Preschool in 2008, no direct public funding was provided. But the allocations of classroom blocks by the primary schools represented significant public investments in ECCE.

The preschool management structures varied in the extent to which they allowed for community participation. To some extent there may be a trade-off between community control and linkage with

primary schools. Tuyiga and St. Mathew's Preschools did not have separate management committees but had representatives in those of the primary schools (an arrangement contrary to regulations). New Look Preschool, however, did have a separate Centre Management Committee (CMCO). On the other hand, there were separate head teachers for Tuyiga and St Mathew's preschools, whereas New Look Preschool shared the head teacher of the primary school. Happiness, as a stand-alone centre, was the most independent, having both a CMC and its own head teacher. The position of Chair of St. Mathew's School Management Committee (which managed both the preschool and the primary school) was controlled by the Anglican Church,<sup>3</sup> but other positions were open to any candidates from the community and a range of denominations was represented. The committees varied in the frequency of their meetings: nine times a year at St. Mathew's; quarterly at New Look; termly at Tuyiga. Happiness had both termly parents' meetings and an annual CMC meeting.

The researchers did not learn of any complaints about the performance of the management committees, but some informants in one of the pilot cases revealed that an idea of 'motivating' the CMC members was being considered – meaning that they might be paid something. It is probably an oversight in the official guidelines that they do not specify that CMC work should be entirely voluntary, as failure to adhere to this principle could lead to many problems.

### **7.3. Social accessibility and costs to households**

The preschools studied here were in principle open to all children of suitable age (3-6), provided that the termly fees were paid and the required contributions for feeding and hygiene were made (usually in kind). From the interviews with managers and household heads, it is evident that the management committees were flexible about the age of admission and about the size of contributions and not very strict with parents who defaulted. But we did not find any instance of a management committee systematically graduating fees according to household wealth.

The social accessibility of preschools in Uganda does nevertheless depend critically on the levels of fees and food contributions required and not many households benefit from external sponsorship. Among our cases, the volunteer institutions (both in Tororo District) had the widest accessibility, the fees being only UGX 10,000 per term at Happiness and UGX 20,000 at New Look. Happiness required food contributions of just UGX 8,000 per term (bags of maize and cash for grinding) and hygiene materials worth UGX 5,500 per term. In contrast, the two 'professional' institutions (in Oyam District) had fees of approximately UGX 50,000 per term and feeding programmes that required contributions of UGX 30,000 – 40,000 per term.

Details of costs of preschool attendance for the eight examples of households, restricted to one child in each household, are shown in Table 1. Some indicators of household wealth and of parental levels of education are also shown. For each preschool, there is an example of a household with a relatively high income (of more than UGX5 million in all cases<sup>4</sup>) and another with a relatively low income in the context, marked 'High' and 'Low' in the table. Incomes are calculated from the combination of payments received for work and the value of agricultural produce that was either consumed or sold. Most of the households had a few livestock, but there were no cases of major herding.

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<sup>3</sup> This was a minor deviation from the government guidelines, which require only that the foundation body should be represented in the CMC (Ministry of Education and Sports 2010, 29).

<sup>4</sup> UGX5 million had an exchange value of about \$1,350 at the time, but at purchasing power parity it was equivalent to ...



**TABLE 1. EXAMPLES OF HOUSEHOLD COSTS PER CHILD OF PRESCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

Values are in Ugandan Shillings (UGX)

District	Oyam				Tororo			
Type of location	Rural		Urban		Rural		Urban	
Preschool and household	Tuyiga, A	Tuyiga, B	St. Matthew's, A	St. Matthew's, B	Happiness, A	Happiness, B	New Look, A	New Look, B
Relative income level	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
<b>Cost items:</b>								
Fees (incl. registration)	150,000	0 (sponsor)	150,000	150,000	30,000	30,000	65,000	65,000
Feeding (maize & grinding)	90,000*	135,000	120,000	75,000	26,000	20,100	0 (no programme)	0 (no programme)
Uniform & shoes	21,000	135,000	28,000	35,000	10,000	4,000	55,000	32,000
School bag & learning materials	4,200	29,000	14,000	37,200	16,000	5,000	18,000	7,500
Hygiene items	0	0	In feeding cost	21,000	13,500	13,500	0	0
Containers	0	0	0	0	7,000	0	2,000	2,500
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>265,200</b>	<b>299,000</b>	<b>312,000</b>	<b>297,200</b>	<b>102,500</b>	<b>72,600</b>	<b>140,000</b>	<b>107,000</b>
Packed lunches	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	578,000	377,000
<b>Characteristics:</b>								
Income in UGX million (cash & produce)	7.024	1.000	7.495	4.700	5.850	0.500	7.250	1.950
Father's education (age)	Above sec. (34)	Some sec. (54)	Some sec. (35)	Compl. prim. (28)	Some sec. (31)	No information	Compl. prim. (40)	Some sec. (36)
Mother's education (age)	Compl. prim. (29)	Some prim. (40)	Some sec. (30)	Compl. prim. (28)	Some sec. (27)	Compl. prim. (23)	None (38)	Some sec. (31)
TV in house? (Y/N)	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Mobile phones in house	2	1	2	1	2	0	2	2
<b>Opportunity benefit:</b>								

Whether work time gained (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
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As the Table 1 shows, for households using the professional preschools (Tuyiga and St Mathew’s), the total costs were consistently close to UGX300,000. The costs for Happiness households are much lower, as expected. The required costs for the New Look households appear low too, but no feeding programme was available and the estimated cost of packed lunches raises the totals above those of the other cases. These examples show that the feeding programmes are economical as well as convenient.

The higher charges in Oyam District no doubt represented a barrier for some households in the rural context of Tuyiga, but the effect was mitigated by an unusual feature: the sponsorship that Compassion International was providing, in paying the fees of 35 children (32% of the enrolment). One of our parent interviewees (Tuyiga, Household B) was a subsistence farmer whose child was being sponsored in this way. The tuition fees were paid for the child, but the household still contributed for food and hygiene.

The sponsorship extends to other levels of education as well. A limitation, however, is that the support was administered by the pentecostalist Victory Outreach Church and was only offered to families that were members of its congregation. The selection of beneficiaries was thus outside the control of the preschool and its community – and gave inordinate power to the leaders of the church concerned. In an advertisement we have seen, Compassion International appeals to donors in North America on the grounds of Uganda’s poverty and says that sponsored children will receive ‘safe recreation and learning opportunities in a church-based program’, but it does not explain that the scheme is restricted to members of a religious denomination.

The example of greatest poverty was not the sponsored household at Tuyiga, but Happiness Household B. In this case the child’s grandfather was struggling to meet the costs (the father being absent), on an income derived from subsistence farming. He could not provide the uniform, learning materials or the money for grinding maize, but did meet other requirements. Such a household would be a good candidate for fee remission or other targeted support.

The costs of preschool attendance are mitigated by ‘opportunity benefits’ in the form of increased time for work, especially for mothers. This factor is important, but difficult to measure. All the informants, when asked about it, confirmed that they gained time. The range of responses was from two to eight hours and in some cases they had more than one child attending the preschool. Preschools do not generally keep children for more than five hours per day, so some responses were implausible. We can, however, construct an illustration from Happiness Household A, where the mother gained about four hours per day during term time, apparently had no younger children to look after and grew produce to the value of UGX850,000 p.a. Assuming that she was able to work for 24 hours per week for 36 weeks in the year and 20 hours per week for the other 16 weeks, her work time was 13.8% higher as a result of the preschool attendance. Allowing for other agricultural inputs, her produce value was perhaps 10% higher as a result: a gain of UGX77,000.

To see how far these cases are representative in the national context, we can refer the household characteristics recorded in Table 1 to findings of the Demographic and Health Survey of 2016, the most recent available (Government of Uganda 2016). For the household possessions mentioned, all but one of our examples had at least one mobile phone – and this applied to 74.3% of households in the survey. Only one of the urban examples had a television, which applied to 44.3% of urban households 16.9% of all households in the survey. Parents’ levels of education in the examples are

generally in the range from 'some primary' to 'some secondary' and this also applied to most young adults in the survey. Among men in the 25-29 age range, at least 63.8% had completed primary school and the figure for women was 56.3%. For the 30-34 age group, the proportions were lower, at 60.8% (men) and 44.6% (women), while 40.9% of women just had some primary education. In short, the selected households were typical, in the national context, in their levels of wealth and education.

#### **7.4. Staffing and physical facilities**

There were clear differences in the standards of provision in the professional and volunteer cases. All the teachers at Tuyiga and St. Mathew's Preschools had a Nursery Teaching Certificate, as well as being on monthly salaries. The cooks were also on regular salaries. At Happiness and New Look, however, none of the volunteer teachers, other than the head teacher, had a teaching qualification. One in each case had received some short-term training (arranged by Plan International in the case of New Look). New Look Preschool also had insufficient teachers – two for three classes – and so had to be assisted by a Grade 1 teacher from the primary section.

Although the professional teachers received monthly salaries, these were limited to the nine months of the year in which the preschools were open, yielding a very limited income. The teacher interviewed at Tuyiga, for example, had an annual salary of UGX 1,080,000, less than one-quarter of the pay that a typical primary school teacher would receive. She depended on farming for about 60% of her income. The volunteer teachers did not receive any regular pay, but a little pocket money at the end of each term.

The classroom space available was generally larger in the institutions housed in primary school buildings than in the stand-alone ECD centre (see Table 2). All classes at Tuyiga, St. Mathew's and New Look, with one exception, had more than one square metre (1 m<sup>2</sup>) per child, but the space at Happiness was below 1 m<sup>2</sup> in all cases and the lower class at Happiness had no classroom but used a 'tree shade'. Space norms vary by country and by age group, but the norm of 1.4 m<sup>2</sup> per pupil used for primary classrooms in Nigeria is useful for reference (National Primary Education Commission 1990). Countries with more generous budgets for education have space norms of more than 2 m<sup>2</sup> per child for ECCE.<sup>5</sup> The overcrowding at Happiness, which showed its popularity, was not acceptable from a health perspective and was criticised by one of the household heads interviewed. On a more positive note, all these preschools had latrines available and designated for boys and girls: but those adjacent to primary schools had to share them with the primary sections and they were insufficient in number (for example 9 stances at Tuyiga for 1,737 children in the primary and nursery sections combined).

A limitation of the use of primary school buildings is that neither the classrooms nor the latrines are appropriate for children of preschool age. The windows, chalk boards and display boards tend to be positioned too high. Suitable and more affordable designs for preschool facilities are needed – an issue to which we shall return.

#### **7.5 Institutional costs and financial viability**

Using data from managers and households, we have been able to estimate both the recurrent costs of the four preschools and their incomes. The values of parents' contributions, whether in cash or kind, are treated as part of the recurrent expenditure and also as income. We have also estimated capital costs, but more tentatively. As some historical costs of buildings were not available, we have

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<sup>5</sup> For example, a space norm of 2.3 m<sup>2</sup> per child is used for preschools in England (United Kingdom 2021, 30) and Belize uses the same norm for day care centres (Government of Belize 2006).

used replacement costing in such cases, with standard assumptions about depreciation. We first present the components of recurrent costs, then we show the balances between total recurrent costs and incomes. Lastly, we present the capital costs.

**TABLE 2: ENROLMENT AND SPACE BY CLASS**

Preschool	Class	Enrolment	Classroom area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Space per child (m <sup>2</sup> )
Tuyiga	Lower	34	54.34	1.60
	Middle	35	42.96	1.23
	Upper	40	41.46	1.04
St. Mathew's	Lower	80	53.31	0.67
	Middle	28	52.31	1.90
	Upper	22	53.31	2.42
Happiness	Lower	46	Tree shade	N/A
	Middle	54	30.00	0.56
	Upper	48	42.00	0.88
New Look	Lower	35	46.9	1.34
	Middle	41	46.9	1.14
	Upper	33	46.9	1.42

Table 3 (on the next page) shows all the significant components of recurrent costs that were reported by managers and accountants. Background information is provided at the top of the table and per-child unit costs at the bottom. In addition to the items shown, the researchers did ask about health supplies, utilities and electronic services, but nothing was reported for these.

For the three preschools that had feeding programmes (limited to breakfast), the feeding costs are shown separately in the lower part of the table. In these cases, the feeding costs account for between 60% and 70% of the turnover. From the evidence of the interviews with household heads, the provision of the daily meal was economical for households and rural parents were evidently willing to provide both food items (mainly maize and sugar) and cash for grinding the maize. At New Look, however, which lacked a feeding programme, the managers reported problems of inadequate provision of food by parents.

In addition to providing food items, parents provided hygiene materials termly at the first three preschools, consisting of soap and toilet paper. The quantity required, however, varied widely from one preschool to another. At the Happiness ECD centre, parental self-help went even further, as parents provided some home-made toys for use in the classroom and playground and the necessary mats for the classrooms.

In general, most kinds of recurrent costs were much lower at the volunteer institutions. They provided very few educational materials at all. Happiness managed to run a feeding programme at much lower cost than those of Tuyiga and St. Mathew's. When the per-child non-feeding unit costs are compared, the general contrast is clear: those of the volunteer institutions are extremely low, reflecting a paucity of educational resources, both human and material.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The figures for New Look may be slightly too low, as one of the primary school teachers provided occasional help to the preschool and we were unable to measure or cost this element.

**TABLE 3: INSTITUTIONAL RECURRENT COST COMPONENTS**

Values are in Ugandan Shillings (UGX) and are annual. All details are as for 2019.  
Items contributed in kind or cash by parents are shaded with yellow.

Preschool	Tuyiga	St. Mathew's	Happiness	New Look
District	Oyam	Oyam	Tororo	Tororo
Location type	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Enrolment	109	130	138	109
No. teachers	3	5	3	2
Teacher type	Professional	Professional	Volunteer	Volunteer
No. cooks	2	1	1	0
Attached to primary school?	Shared SMC	Shared SMC	No	Shared head teacher
<b>Recurrent cost components:</b>				
Teachers' pay	3,240,000	5,850,000	220,000	180,000
Share of head teacher's pay	N/A	N/A	N/N	749,000
Cleaners' pay	None reported	None reported	45,000	None reported
Educational & office materials	900,000	1,092,000	160,000	150,000
Mats for classrooms (est.)	60,000	72,000	72,000	60,000
Hygiene	315,000	1,365,000	1,449,000	None reported
Sanitation & maintenance	108,000	192,000	None reported	40,000
Meetings/events	None reported	2,740,000	None reported	None reported
<i>Non-feeding sub-total</i>	<i>4,623,000</i>	<i>11,311,000</i>	<i>1,946,000</i>	<i>1,179,000</i>
Cooks' pay	360,000	900,000	270,000	N/A
Food	9,810,000	13,650,000	2,691,000	N/A
Food preparation	Included in food cost	240,000	621,000	N/A
Teachers' meals	0	2,700,000	0	0
<i>Feeding sub-total</i>	<i>10,170,000</i>	<i>17,490,000</i>	<i>3,582,000</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<b>Total recurrent</b>	<b>14,793,000</b>	<b>28,801,000</b>	<b>5,528,000</b>	<b>1,179,000</b>
<b>Per-child unit recurrent</b>	<b>135,716</b>	<b>221,546</b>	<b>40,058</b>	<b>10,817</b>
<b>Per-child non-feeding unit recurrent (US\$)</b>	<b>42,413 (\$11.46)</b>	<b>87,008 (\$23.52)</b>	<b>14,101 (\$3.81)</b>	<b>10,817 (\$2.92)</b>

We cannot properly judge the quality of the service without evidence from direct observation of teaching and learning, as planned for Phase II of this project. But we can comment on financial viability. The income components and the balance between income and recurrent costs at each institution are shown in Table 4. As we were told that many parents failed to pay fees as and when due, the fee income for St. Mathew's and New Look is estimated at 75% of the amount officially due. In the case of Tuyiga, this collection rate is applied to the unsponsored children.

The balance figures show four, very different, scenarios. Tuyiga Preschool, which benefited from the indirect patronage of Compassion International, achieved a healthy balance, while St. Mathew's, which provided slightly better remuneration to staff, just broke even. Of the two volunteer institutions, Happiness seems to have run at a slight loss, even though very little was paid to its teachers (a mere UGX 220,000). On the other hand, New Look seems not to have provided a fair deal to parents, as it obtained a positive balance but had insufficient teachers. The case of New Look seems to illustrate the risk that, in a case of shared facilities and staffing, the primary section may exploit the 'nursery section'.

**TABLE 4: INSTITUTIONAL INCOME AND BALANCE**

Amounts are in Ugandan Shillings (UGX).

Category	Tuyiga	St. Mathew's	Happiness	New Look
<b>Income components:</b>				
Fees	13,575,000*	14,625,000**	138,000	4,905,000**
Hygiene contributions	315,000	1,365,000	1,449,000	None reported
Play materials contributed	0	0	160,000	0
Mats contributed	0	0	72,000	0
Feeding contributions	9,810,000	13,650,000	2,691,000	N/A
Produce from school land	500,000 (assumed)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total income	24,200,000	29,640,000	4,510,000	4,905,000
Total recurrent cost	14,793,000	28,801,000	5,528,000	1,179,000 (no feeding)
Balance (income minus total recurrent cost)	9,407,000	839,000	-1,018,000	3,726,000

\*Assuming full payment for 35 sponsored children and 75% of the payments due for unsponsored children.

\*\*Assuming 75% of the payments due for all children.

Capital costs are relatively difficult to estimate, as we could not obtain historical construction costs in most cases and there is little evidence on which to base assumptions about depreciation. However, Table 5 provides tentative estimates. For buildings, Happiness was the only case in which historic construction costs were available. In the other cases, the preschools were using classrooms of government-aided primary schools and so we use standard construction costs for 2019 as stated

by a specialist of the Ministry of Education and Sports. This source put the 2019 cost of a government-funded three-classroom block (unfurnished) as just under UGX 106 million, with an estimated 50-year lifespan. The cost of a five-stance latrine block was given as just over UGX 23 million and we assumed a 12-year lifespan for latrines. For the buildings constructed by the local community at Happiness, the costs of different elements were not disaggregated and we assumed a general lifespan of 25 years.

**TABLE 5: INSTITUTIONAL CAPITAL COSTS**

Values are annual, as for 2019, in Ugandan Shillings (UGX).

Preschool	Tuyiga	St. Mathew's	Happiness	New Look
<b>Capital cost components:</b>				
Classrooms	2,011,000	2,011,000	99,881	1,335,651
Remarks	Standard block of 3 primary classrooms	Standard block of 3 primary classrooms	2 classrooms, kitchen & toilets, all built by the local community (lifespan of 25 years assumed)	Old block, rehabilitated in 2018
Toilets	235,427	297,289		233,897
Remarks	Preschool share of 9 stances	Preschool share of 12 stances		Preschool share of 10 stances
Furniture	7,533	76,048	None	None
Remarks	For teachers, perhaps bought locally	1 table & 2 chairs per classroom		
<b>Total capital cost</b>	<b>2,253,960</b>	<b>2,384,337</b>	<b>99,881</b>	<b>1,569,548</b>
<b>Per-child unit capital cost</b>	<b>20,679 (\$5.58)</b>	<b>18,341 (\$4.15)</b>	<b>724 (\$0.20)</b>	<b>14,400 (\$3.89)</b>

As Table 5 shows, capital costs are significant where standard primary classrooms are being used, but much lower where a community has done its own construction. To compare the two rural cases, at Tuyiga about one-third of the overall per-child unit cost was capital cost, while the proportion at Happiness was only 5%. The facilities at Happiness were insufficient for the demand, however. We shall return to the question of appropriate building designs in the final section.

### 7.6. External linkages

It is difficult for a local community to operate a preschool without some external support, in the form of subsidy or donated capital assets, especially in rural areas of Uganda. The most obvious form of external support in the cases studied was that of government-funded primary schools, in designating blocks of classrooms for use by the preschools. In the remarkable case of Happiness Preschool, the community managed to raise funds from a range of sources, together with voluntary labour, to provide buildings. Those who achieved this are among the unsung heroes of education in Uganda.

Other linkages that have been mentioned are the sponsorship provided to families through the Victory Outreach Church and the rehabilitation and teacher training provided for New Look by the NGO, Plan International. Such interventions, however, do not represent steady, long-term sources of support. In the absence of public subsidies, philanthropic or religious institutions that are based in Uganda are suitable as sponsors, especially if they have a non-sectarian approach, work through the local community and prioritise welfare. The preschools in Uganda that are supported by major NGOs such as BRAC and the Madrasah Early Childhood Programme are relatively fortunate and able to provide a service of better quality in a socially inclusive manner. Those preschools have an important demonstration value, but such organisations cannot on their own meet the national need of households with an average income for preschool education.

Linkage between preschools and local health services is advocated in the official guidelines for preschools (Ministry of Education and Sports 2010, 12), but we did not find any evidence of such integration such as visits by health workers. This is regrettable, as initiatives to promote child health and nutrition could usefully work through preschools.

## 8. Perceptions of Education Officers at District and National level

Although the Government of Uganda still treats ECCE as a voluntary and essentially private activity, both the national and the district authorities have a general responsibility for supervising pre-primary education; it was therefore appropriate to seek the informed opinion of officials on some issues relevant to this research. The questions focused on the specific roles of the officials, the effectiveness of local community management of preschools, how far the community-based preschools were prevalent and affordable to households, how participation could be increased and the quality issues in this type of provision. Interviews were held with the District Inspectors of Education (DIEs) of the two districts, the District Education Officer (DEO) in one district and with two national officials who had specialised responsibilities for ECCE. As the DEO made it clear that ECCE matters were left mainly to the DIS, our data come mainly from the other four interviews.

There were many differences of perception and attitude between the district and national officials. Firstly, the district officials showed greater awareness and appreciation of the efforts made by local communities to establish and sustain preschools. Although meeting registration requirements was an issue in some cases, the district officers were willing to give this type of preschool some attention, whereas the national officers seemed to be focusing more on the preschools that were supported financially and professionally by large NGOs such as BRAC, the Madrasah group and LABE (the latter supporting home-based approaches). When asked about the effectiveness of CMCs, one national officer gave details of a training initiative for CMCs (a cascading system) that had been started in 2018.

Little detail emerged about the prevalence of the community-based approach, but it was mentioned that some churches, as well as government-aided primary schools, have made premises available for community-managed preschools. One DIS saw primary schools and churches as important vehicles for community initiatives on ECCE. But it does appear likely that there are many unregistered preschools, both home-based and community-based, of which the authorities have little knowledge. This point needs further illustration through surveys when conditions for movement become easier.

On the question of affordability, one DIS estimated that fees of UGX 10,000 to 20,000 were affordable to 'about 80% of the community' – and our examples of volunteer preschools do seem to support this opinion. When asked what steps could be taken to increase participation, district and national officers responded in very different ways. The district officers openly expressed the view



that more funding should come from the government, so as to remove or reduce fees. The national officers spoke of advocacy, guidance to districts (including the allocation of 1% of their budgets to ECCE) and a possibility of some conditional funding for educational materials. As senior government officials, they were no doubt wary of suggesting anything more. One of the national officers, however, seemed sceptical about the value of the volunteer teachers, saying that many did not remain in the work for long and that some were irregular in attendance. The fact that volunteers enabled more children to attend seemed not to be appreciated.

When asked to describe the main issues of quality in Uganda's early childhood education, the district officials focused mainly on the need for the teachers to be better educated, qualified and trained. The need for suitable physical facilities was also mentioned. The national officials mentioned a wider range of quality issues, including pedagogy, inspection and record-keeping, as well as staff qualifications and physical facilities. There was agreement that insufficient funding was a major factor in the employment of 'cheap' and poorly qualified staff.

## 9. Towards the Formulation of Models

The findings in Phase I of this project help to prepare the ground for Phase III, the formulation of models of preschool organisation that would merit consideration for wider adoption. Several tentative conclusions may be stated that are relevant to models:

### **9.1. Feeding programmes are convenient and economical**

Three of our four examples managed feeding programmes successfully and with great economy. In the other case (New Look) there were complaints that not all parents were reliable about providing a packed meal for their children. We assumed initially that a feeding programme would be more necessary in rural than in urban areas, but it seems to be generally desirable. Urban parents can be given the option of contributing either in cash or in kind.

### **9.2. Preschools should have independent management and funding**

Even where a preschool is sharing some facilities with a primary school, there should be a head teacher and a Centre Management Committee specifically for the preschool. This independence allows for more community control and encourages appropriate staffing and curriculum. To some extent our example of New Look Preschool shows the risks of neglect where this independence is lacking.

A primary school can in some circumstances allocate a classroom block to a preschool and enable it to share some facilities, such as a common staff room and administrative office. But it is unlikely that a primary school in the public sector could allocate any funds to an associated preschool, as it could be sanctioned for misusing grants received for primary education. Even the allocation of classrooms to the preschool could be insecure if the primary intake increases. Primary classrooms too, as we have mentioned, are not ideally designed for the 3-6 age group. In the long term, preschools need entirely separate and age-appropriate buildings and play areas and independent means of covering their costs, both capital and recurrent.

### **9.3 Some professional staffing is essential, but volunteers have a role**

Public subsidy of community-based preschools (which we hope for), or subsidy by any charitable organisation, should be linked to the appointment of trained and certified teachers and to

arrangements for in-service training of any unqualified teachers, including volunteers. We have great respect for the commitment shown by volunteers, but it was not satisfactory to depend entirely on volunteers and just to pay them ad hoc allowances, as at Happiness and New Look Preschools. Currently, a 'Community of Practice' consortium in Uganda is exploring ways of combining professional with volunteer preschool teachers – and we welcome this initiative. In the poorer parts of Uganda, there appears to be a shortage of suitably trained early childhood teachers, in relation to the demand: volunteers are therefore an important resource for meeting the demand. Due attention should be given to basic training in health care as well as pedagogic skills, as it is unlikely that local communities could sustain a separate category of 'carers'.

It is important to consider how the apprenticeship of volunteers could be organised in practice. To learn on the job, volunteers need to share classes with regular teachers frequently, but this will be challenging to organise in the kinds of preschools that we have been studying, where the community could not afford more than one teacher per class (except at St. Mathew's) and the classes were quite large (30-40 children whereas 15-25 would be desirable). In such cases, the preschool could create training opportunities by holding the different classes at slightly different times of day or by having a slightly shorter term for the lower class – all of which requires parental cooperation.

#### **9.4. Realistic norms are needed for staffing and space use**

The norm of 20 children per adult, stated in the official guidelines for ECD centres (Government of Uganda 2010, 14) is out of touch with the realities on the ground and a more realistic staffing norm is needed. The recommendation of a classroom of 48 m<sup>2</sup> is also not very helpful: norms of space per child are needed both for classrooms and for play areas. For classrooms, a minimum space norm of 1.5 m<sup>2</sup> may be realistic. Limits should be placed on class size and a preschool should not operate with less than one full-time teacher per class. New norms should be established through professional consultation and should allow for the low-cost situations of community-based preschools.

#### **9.5. Age-appropriate preschool designs are needed**

In the longer term, reliance on transferred primary school classrooms is not desirable. In rural areas, many preschools should be on their own sites in any case if they are to be physically accessible to children aged 3-5. Low-cost preschool building designs that are age-appropriate, and for which the local community could assist in construction, should be encouraged. Such designs would include play areas, kitchens, latrines and fencing that are age appropriate. Uganda's architects and educators should work together to respond to this challenge.

There are reasons for considering designs that use local materials and are relatively easy for local communities to use and maintain. Arguments for and against the use of local materials for the construction of primary schools, as presented by Mark Bray (1988), also apply to preschools to a large extent. But the smaller size of preschools and the very limited scope for local communities to raise capital for building strengthens the arguments in favour of the use of local materials and labour.

## **10. Postscript: Issues Raised by the Pandemic**

In this study we have given much attention to the question of maintaining and strengthening the popular demand for ECCE by making it as affordable as possible to households. In the rebuilding of the service after the pandemic, however, issues of supply will equally require attention. The prolonged closure of preschools that are only just financially viable in normal times implies that

managers, teachers and other staff focus on alternative sources of income and lose touch with their educational role. As some private owners of preschools have been unable to maintain them during the closure, there could be an increased demand for provision by local communities when institutions are re-opened. Communities in turn will need the support of the educational authorities to re-staff and re-equip preschools.

The experience of school closure has shown the importance of the home as an educational agency. The efforts by Uganda's government and educational leaders to promote home-based learning for children of primary and secondary school age should be extended to the preschool age group. Parents can be guided on activities that help the balanced development of their children, even though they are deprived of the preschool experience.

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## Annex I: Interview Schedule for Preschool Managers

**Alternative formats:** This interview could be a four-person interaction, with the preschool manager / head teacher and one management committee member as informants and two researchers present. If circumstances do not allow for this, there could be separate one-to-one interviews for both informants.

**Preliminaries:** Explain that the interview will help us to understand the management system. Mention that the information will be used only for research and development and that anonymity will be respected.

**Seeking Consent:** Before you commence the interview, please seek written consent from the respondent to participate in the interview and request agreement to make a sound recording of the interview.

### 1. Background information

- 101 Date of interview .....
- 102 Start Time .....
- 103 Name of interviewer.....
- 104 Name of respondent .....
- 105 Sex of respondent .....
- 106 Position of respondent .....

### 2. Information about the pre-school

- 201 Name of pre-school .....
- 202 District .....
- 203 Sub-county .....
- 204 Parish .....
- 205 Village name .....

### 3. Interview questions

- 301** Please tell us / me when the preschool was established and how it is managed.
- 302** What do you hope that children will achieve by attending this preschool?
- 303** How are responsibilities shared between the manager / head teacher and representatives of the community? How are the members of the board or management committee appointed and how often does it meet? Have these arrangements been effective?
- 304** What is the present enrolment? We would like to see the breakdown by age, gender and class later.
- 305** Please describe the present staffing. We would like to see the staff list later (to include roles and levels of qualification).
- 306** How are financial decisions taken about:
  - a. The salaries of the head teacher, teachers and carers?

- b. Other recurrent expenditure: on utilities, learning and play materials, feeding, health provision, sanitation and hygiene?
- c. Construction and maintenance of the premises?
- d. The fee structure?
- e. Non-fee sources of income?

(Establish which person manages the accounts, as cost information will be needed from him / her. Mention that we shall need some details of annual income and expenditure.)

**307** Is there any differentiation of fees according to ability to pay? What are the methods and timing of payments? What difficulties are experienced in the collection of fees? Are some payments of fees made in kind?

**308** How are the daily activities planned? Have you received any curriculum guidelines from the government? Are these guidelines helpful or are they difficult to apply?

**309** How do you go about recruiting staff? Please comment on the availability of trained and suitable teachers and carers. (Do you see any role for men in a preschool?)

**310** Are there any children enrolled who have disabilities? Are they receiving any special support?

**311** Are you aware of any children in the local community who are prevented by disabilities from attending the preschool?

**312** Which primary schools do most of your pupils enter when they finish preschool?

**313** What problems do pupils experience when they make this transition (from preschool to primary school)?

**314** Please describe the catchment area of this preschool. Are there any other preschools in the same area (obtain details)? How many of the children in this preschool are brought by car or motorcycle?

**315** Do you have any outside assistance with (a) feeding of children and (b) health issues? (Obtain details.)

**316** What do you hope the children will achieve by attending the preschool?

**317** Is there anything more you would like to share with us?

Thank you very much for assisting us. (Make any necessary arrangements for other activities during the week: viewing of records, observation of typical lessons and play, interviews with teachers / carers.)

(The assistance of the head teacher will be needed in identifying at least two household heads for interview, selected according to type of occupation. See the interview schedule for household heads.)

**318** Interview end time.....

## Annex II: Interview Schedule for Teachers

**Preliminaries:** Explain that the interview will help us to understand the teaching programme. Mention that the information will be used only for research and development and that anonymity will be respected.

**Seeking Consent:** Before you commence the interview, please seek written consent from the respondent to participate in the interview and request agreement to make a sound recording of the interview.

### 4. Background information

- 101 Date of interview .....
- 102 Start Time .....
- 103 Name of interviewer.....
- 104 Name of respondent .....
- 105 Sex of respondent .....
- 106 Position of respondent .....

### 5. Information about the pre-school

- 201 Name of pre-school .....
- 202 District .....
- 203 Sub-county .....
- 204 Parish .....
- 205 Village name .....

### 6. Interview questions

- 301 For how many years have you worked as a preschool teacher / teaching assistant / carer? And for how many years in this preschool?
- 302 Please tell me where you received your pre-service training (if any) and what qualifications you have.
- 303 What education did you complete before you joined teacher training?
- 304 Have you received any in-service training while working at this preschool? Please give details.
- 305 Do you plan to obtain any further training or qualifications for the work you are doing here? (If so, give details.)
- 306 Do you mind telling me what your monthly pay is for the work you are doing here? (Find out the gross pay if possible.)
- 307 Do you consider that the rate of pay is fair for the work you are doing? (Ask the reasons for the response.)
- 308 Do you engage in business or other employment outside the preschool hours? (If so, what kind of work is it? What proportion of your income comes from this other work?)



309 (For teachers only) What do you hope that children will gain by attending this preschool?

310 (For teachers only) Please tell me whether the following activities happen daily for each group of children, or less often. If less often, how many times per week?

- Literacy activities
- Other language activities (e.g. spoken English)
- Numeracy activities
- Art and craft
- Free play (with toys and objects)
- Musical activities
- Religious activities
- Health instruction
- Outdoor games

311 What are the children's most common health problems?

312 What support is available for health problems? (Ask about resources within the preschool and help from outside.)

313 Have you had any inspection of your school from the district officials and government authorities and how many times?)

314 Is there anything more you would like to share with us?.

315 Interview end time.....

## Annex III: Data Sheet for Recording Institutional Costs and Income of Preschools

### 1. Sources of information

101 Name of preschool	
102 Informant(s) providing information (names and positions)	
103 Written records seen (specify)	
104 Name of researcher	
105 Date of record	

### 2. Enrolment and staffing

#### Number of children enrolled:

Group	Year 1 (Lower)	Year 2 (Middle)	Year 3 (Upper)	Total
Number				

#### Number and types of staff:

Type	Head teacher	Teachers	Carers	Others (specify)	Total
Number					

If any staff member is paid as a part-time employee, make a note of the percentage of normal salary that is paid to him / her.

### 3. Recurrent expenditure in the year 2019

Approximate figures, to the nearest UGX5,000, are acceptable.

Item	Amount (UGX)
Gross pay of all staff (including tax and any pensions contributions)	
Staff training costs	
Educational materials, including books and toys	
Feeding of children	

Health / medical supplies	
Sanitation, hygiene and cleaning materials	
Office supplies (ink, paper, stationery, etc.)	
Internet and airtime (if applicable)	
Water supply	
Electricity supply or other lighting	
Maintenance / repair of facilities and furniture	
Financial services (e.g. auditing, banking)	
Loan repayments (if applicable)	
Other (specify)	

#### 4. Value of capital assets

If necessary, divide each item into newer and older elements.

Item	Year of construction or purchase	Value at time of construction or purchase
Buildings and grounds		
Furniture (classroom and office)		
Fixed educational / play equipment		
Office equipment (computers, etc.)		
Vehicle owned by the institution (if any)		
Farmland owned by the institution (if any)		

Do the premises have other uses in addition to the preschool? If so, describe these and indicate the number of hours per week or per month for which they are used.

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### 5. Income in the year 2019

Source	Amount (UGX)
Fees for tuition and care	
Charge for feeding, if not included in the fees	
Grants or subsidies from external sources	
Donations and proceeds of fund-raising (if applicable)	
Payments for other uses of the premises (e.g. for community events)	
Value of any non-monetary assistance, e.g. feeding or health assistance provided by an external agency	
Rent from land or property owned by the institution (give details)	

## Annex IV: Interview Schedule for Household Heads

**Background:** This schedule is for a few examples of household heads who had children attending the preschool during the year 2019. Households with different levels of socioeconomic status will be selected. A local language can be used for interview if necessary, with interpretation by a local research assistant. Data sheets will be provided for interviewers to record responses.

**Preliminaries:** Explain that the interview will help us to understand the private costs of preschool attendance. Mention that the information will be used only for research and development and that anonymity will be respected.

**Seeking Consent:** Before you commence the interview, please seek written consent from the respondent to participate in the interview and request agreement to make a sound recording of the interview.

### 7. Background information

- 101 Date of interview .....
- 102 Start Time .....
- 103 Name of interviewer.....
- 104 Name of respondent .....
- 105 Sex of respondent .....
- 106 Position of respondent .....

### 8. Information about the pre-school

- 201 Name of pre-school .....
- 202 District .....
- 203 Sub-county .....
- 204 Parish .....
- 205 Village name .....

### 9. Interview questions

#### SECTION A. DETAILS OF PRESCHOOL COSTS

- 301 We are looking at your child, X, as an example; he or she attended the preschool in 2019. Please tell us how old he/she was at the beginning of the year. When did he/she start attending the preschool? (Give month and year.)
- 302 What benefits do you expect for your child, from attending the preschool?
- 303 Please tell us roughly how much it cost in 2019 to provide the various things necessary for the preschool, as follows. (Amounts to the nearest UGX 10,000 would be good.)
  - a. The fees for the year (excluding charges for food)
  - b. Fees for extra tuition (if applicable)
  - c. Feeding (possibly a component of the fees)
  - d. Uniforms (if required)
  - e. Shoes
  - f. Transport from home to school (if applicable)

- g. Books (if any)
- h. School bag and any other learning materials (e.g. writing materials, toys)
- i. Any other costs (specify type of cost and amount)

304 Did it cost more to feed the child at the preschool than it would cost at home? How much extra per week?

#### **SECTION B. HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND COMPOSITION**

305 What were the occupations of the child's father and mother and their approximate incomes in 2019? (Include part-time trading, etc.)

306 Was the mother able to do more work because the child was at the preschool? (I.e. more time for employed work or for self-employed business). How many hours per day were gained?

307 Did anyone else help to pay for the preschool attendance (e.g. another family member)? If so, give details of the amount paid.

308 Please tell us the numbers of people in the household, as follows:

- Working adults
- Dependent adults
- Dependent children

309 What was the total income for the household in 2019, from all adults who were working?

#### **SECTION C. HOUSEHOLD PRODUCE AND POSSESSIONS**

310 What was the market value (approximate) of the crops that you harvested in 2019? (This should include what was simply for consumption by the household.)

311 Please tell us the number of livestock that you had in 2019, as follows:

- Cattle
- Sheep
- Goats
- Chickens
- Other (specify)

312 Do the possessions in the household include the following?

- Motor vehicle
- Motorcycle
- Bicycle
- Refrigerator
- Oven
- Computer (PC or laptop)
- TV
- Radio
- Mobile phone
- Table and chair

**SECTION D. PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS**

313 What are the ages of the child’s parents or guardians? Father . . . . . ; Mother . . . . .  
[If the question causes embarrassment, an age category can be used, e.g. 26-30, 31-35.]

314 What levels of education did each of the child’s parents complete? Record one of the following for each: (1) no formal education, (2) started primary, (3) completed primary, (4) completed lower secondary, (5) completed upper secondary; (6) completed tertiary, non-degree tertiary training, (7) completed university first degree, (8) completed university higher degree.

315 Did the parents ever attend a preschool or nursery school themselves?  
Father: Yes / No  
Mother: Yes / No

316 Is there anything more you would like to share with us?

317 Interview end time.....

## Annex V: Interview Schedule for Selected National and District Officials

**Background – how this instrument should be used:** This interview schedule is for selected officials who have responsibilities for ECCE and will be treated as ‘key informants’. The interviews with these officials need to be adapted to their particular responsibilities and experiences. The questions in this schedule provide starting points for discussion, but the interviewer may add questions on emerging issues. The informants should be given ample opportunity to express their views on relevant issues.

**Preliminaries:** Explain that the interview will help us to understand the private costs of preschool attendance. Mention that the information will be used only for research and development and that anonymity will be respected.

**Seeking Consent:** Before you commence the interview, please seek written consent from the respondent to participate in the interview and request agreement to make a sound recording of the interview.

### 10. Background information

- 101 Date of interview .....
- 102 Start Time .....
- 103 Name of interviewer.....
- 104 Name of respondent .....
- 105 Sex of respondent .....
- 106 Position of respondent .....

### 11. Institution in which the respondent works

- 201 Name of institution .....
- 202 Location of institution .....

### 12. Interview questions

301 What are your main responsibilities relating to early childhood education, and preschools in particular?

302 Have you had any contact with preschools that are owned by local communities? (If so) Where were they located? [Find out name of districts and more specific locations if known.]

303 Can you comment on how far local communities have been successful in running preschools that they own? [Prompt if necessary to ask about staffing, facilities, attendance and learning outcomes.]

304 How far have community owned preschools been affordable to the poorer families?

305 How far have Centre Management Committees given communities an effective voice in the management of preschools generally (including those that are owned by individuals or religious organisations)?

306 Do you have any suggestions about how to increase the enrolment in early childhood education?



307 What do you see as the main issues of quality in Uganda's early childhood education?

[The interviewer should ask questions on any emerging issues.]

308 Is there anything else that you would like to add?

309 Interview end time.....