



Uwezo Uganda Annual Plan – 2024: Navigating Transition, Looking Towards the Future

[Approved by the Board on 19th December 2023]



UWEZO UGANDA

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Abbreviations

ALIVE	Assessment of Life skills and Values in East Africa
ALIVE2	Action for Life skills and Values in East Africa
ACA	African Curriculum Association
AEAA	Association for Educational Assessment in Africa
BAICE	British Association for International and Comparative Education
CLAs	Citizen-led assessments
CLFs	Community Learning Facilitators
CLL	Community-Led Learning
CIES	Comparative International Education Society
DRBCP	Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan
EA	Enumeration Areas
ECD	Early childhood development
EDP	Education Development Partners
ELANA	Early Learning and Numeracy Assessment
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FICH	Foundation for Inclusive Community Help
GEEAP	Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel
GEMR	Global Education Monitoring Report
GPF	Global Proficiency Framework
ISATT	International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching
LGIHE	Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
PAL Network	People’s Action for Learning (PAL) Network
PEA	Political economy analysis
RELI	Regional Education Learning Initiative
SMCs	School Management Committees
SESIL	Strengthening Education Systems for Improved Learning
SGD	Sustainable Development Goal
TETD	Teacher Education, Training and Development
ToC	Theory of change
UNEBC	Uganda National Examinations Board
UKFIET	United Kingdom Forum for International Education and Training

Introduction: Navigating Transition, Looking Towards the Future

As we embark on the journey into 2024, Uwezo Uganda stands at a pivotal juncture, poised for reflection and renewal. Born in October 2019 as an independent for-impact organisation, our roots trace back to a decade of commitment under Twaweza East Africa. In these formative years, we have passionately pursued a mission: to contribute to a society in which all children are not only enrolled in schools but actively learning and realising their full potential.

The year 2023 marks the last phase of our 4-year strategy (2020-23) as an independent entity — a comprehensive roadmap encompassing assessment, research, engagement, and institutional development. Recognising the challenges posed by the prolonged COVID-19 slowdown, the Board allowed us, in September, 2023, to extend the 2020-23 strategy into 2024, affording us the required additional time to execute our original aspirations as intended, while also reflecting on the outcomes achieved and addressing any gaps or challenges experienced to inform development of a new strategy.

Therefore, the 2024 annual plan serves as a bridge between our inaugural strategy (2020-2023) and the forthcoming one (2025-2028). It compels us to tie up loose ends, reflect upon previous achievements and shortcomings, and clarify what the most impactful path for 2025-28 will be as we continue to meet the escalating demand for evidence to inform education policy and practice. Our commitment to assessing learning outcomes, conducting research, fostering partnerships and continuously strengthening ourselves as an institution, remained unwavering in 2023 and the preceding years as we navigated the complex landscape.

In a recent gathering, facilitated by an independent specialist in Outcome Harvesting, we meticulously engaged selected stakeholders to better understand the reach and impact of the outcomes we have achieved over the past four years. Preliminary findings illuminate areas of intense contribution and those warranting renewed focus. Armed with these insights, we embark on a dual mission for 2024: completing outstanding commitments from the inaugural strategy and laying the groundwork for the vision that will shape Uwezo Uganda from 2025 to 2028.

In the pages that follow, we outline our plans for 2024—a year of reflection, consolidation, and forward-looking strategies. In 2024, our deepest wish is to continue working on this transformative journey, uniting stakeholders, fostering research and policy collaborations, and reaffirming our commitment to a Ugandan society where every child realises their full potential. The plan is structured around the strategic goals that we set out to pursue in the current strategy.

Goal 1: Assessment of Learning

Context

This goal focuses on producing independent evidence on the learning levels of children, their distribution and factors associated with them. On this basis, over the years we have conducted assessments of learning outcomes in basic literacy and numeracy to generate the much-needed evidence for measuring gains as well as addressing learning challenges. Further to this, the assessment landscape has been broadened to include other areas of significance that have implications on learning such as those on functional literacy and numeracy abilities as well as on life skills and values. Evidence generated from these assessments has been made available for policy makers, other researchers, practitioners and the public to use in order that focus remains on improving learning outcomes. More to this, our expertise in undertaking independent assessments at scale using a rigorous methodology has occasionally attracted adaptation by other organisations of our assessment tools to inform development and evaluation of their education interventions and programs.

Achievements and Challenges in 2023

In 2023, four major accomplishments have been made under this goal:

1. Monitoring and evaluation of the potential impact of Community-Led Learning (CLL), an initiative of the Ministry of Education's Strengthening Education Systems for Improved Learning (SESIL) programme with support from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the UK Government. The assessment conducted at baseline and endline in 6 districts (Maracha, Yumbe, Moyo, Kapchorwa, Kween and Sironko) focused on measuring the impact of the CLL initiative on learning outcomes using Uwezo basic literacy and numeracy assessment tools and methodology. The scale up of the CLL initiative was itself informed by Uwezo 2021 assessment findings, among other evidence, that illuminated major learning losses for younger children as a result of the Covid-19 school shutdown. The CLL initiative was developed to complement school-based learning for children who were identified as having low, if any, literacy and numeracy competences, to enable them to catch up. It involved Community Learning Facilitators (CLFs) conducting small group classes in communities, using structured lessons in literacy and numeracy. In addition, family-Led Learning resources were printed and distributed to all children attending CLL classes in order that there would be improvements in their numeracy and literacy in the home environment, with the support of parents, other adults in the home or older siblings. Selection as the independent monitoring and evaluation partner for this initiative is testament of the confidence in Uwezo's approach and capacity.
2. Partnerships with Universities on utilisation of Uwezo data for academic writing and publication. Two writeshops with one public and one private university in Uganda were held with 22 academics from both universities yielding eight writing groups that focused on utilising data sets to write papers for publication. So far, three academic papers have been submitted for peer-review while the rest are in advanced stages of writing. By doing this, we anticipate to increase our contribution to global knowledge of issues relevant to fostering children's learning.
3. Co-development and commencement of the second phase of the Assessment of Life Skills and Value in East Africa (ALiVE¹) with other counterparts in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. This

¹ ALiVE is an initiative of the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI), a network of over 70 Civil Society Organisations working together to promote equitable learning for all children in East Africa.

included co-organising a co-creation workshop with representatives from CSOs and key Ministry of Education agencies in the three countries and co-convening the first Values and Life Skills (VaLi) conference in Africa, which enabled identification and agreement on a priority list of actions to be implemented during phase 2 dubbed Action for Life skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE2). This second phase has a major focus on working closely with systems to enhance capacity for assessment and nurturing of life skills and values in the education systems of the three countries. We have since jointly held capacity enhancement and framing workshops for life skills and values with the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), Teacher Education, Training and Development (TETD) and selected teacher training institutions.

4. Supporting the adaptation of tools and methodology used for the Uwezo and ALiVE assessments for designing interventions and evaluations of education programmes of other organisations. Different organisations including Teach a Man to Fish, The Uganda School project, KOMO Learning Centres and Foundation for Inclusive Community Help (FICH) were supported.

The above achievements notwithstanding, in pursuing our aspirations for the assessment goal a few challenges have been experienced, including delays in executing organisational and jointly conducted assessments such as the People’s Action for Learning (PAL) Early Learning and Numeracy Assessment (ELANA) due to changing partnership schedules. Flexibility in scheduling and adjustment of plans has been necessary to enable execution of some aspects of the pending assessments in the last months of 2023 with plans to finalise them in the first half of 2024.

Plans for 2024

Besides continuation and completion of already ongoing activities, including work related to ALiVE, ELANA, Young People’s Assessment, standards review and efforts to increase uptake of Uwezo data by other researchers and practitioners, we have two new major activities planned in 2024, to advance achievement of outcomes set under this goal:

1. Conducting a national Uwezo basics learning assessment in the third quarter of 2024. It is in our strategy to conduct a large-scale national assessment of basic literacy and numeracy every 2-3 years as a means of providing to the national education system the much-needed independent evidence on the status of children’s learning. Our last national assessment was conducted in the thick of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021. The assessment was conducted in 29 nationally-spread districts, reaching 15,033 children aged 4-16 years in 435 Enumeration Areas/villages. The findings on learning from this assessment suggest that some improvements were made before the pandemic (in 2018-20) in the pace of children’s progress towards reading and numeracy competence. But the findings also illustrate the delay of younger children’s progress as a result of the school closures. These findings were shared in strategic forums, including at a national launch presided over by the MoES in January 2022, followed by an intensive media engagement around the findings. In addition, the report findings were cited at Uganda’s launch of the FCDO, UNICEF and World Bank-convened Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP) Report on Prioritising Learning During Covid-19. The report findings were further presented to the Education Development Partners (EDP) Group in February 2022. As a result of the learning losses illuminated by this assessment and the ensuing advocacy around the report findings, some interventions such as the scaled CLL initiative cited earlier, were implemented by Government and development partners to address the learning crisis. Another national assessment three years down the road, is timely to take stock of the status of learning post the Covid pandemic.

The plan is to undertake the 2024 national assessment in the same sample of districts and Enumeration Areas (EAs) in which the 2021 assessment was conducted since they are already nationally spread. Nevertheless, we will be mindful of any changes to the districts and EAs since the last assessment, which could have resulted from increment in the total number of districts at national level and changes to the census frame. The selection of the 2021 assessment districts and EAs was based on the 2014 census frame. We will also be mindful of the changes that could have happened to the list of schools that were selected in 2021 since their selection was based on the school in which most of the children in each sampled EAs were enrolled. All households within the sampled EAs in each district will also be listed afresh to address any changes at this level that could have happened in the last three years. Thereafter 20 households will be randomly selected per EA and all children aged 4-16 years in each sampled household assessed on basic literacy and numeracy. Although the sample of children assessed will likely differ from that which was assessed in 2021, retention of the same districts and EAs provides useful grounds for comparison of the previous and current learning status and fits within the resources available for this exercise. Some children who participated in the 2021 assessment might also be part of the new random sample. In addition, we will review the survey tool to include possible important aspects useful to increasing understanding of the post-covid-19 education landscape in Uganda e.g. issues of retention, progression and the conditions and support for re-entering mothers in schools, among other issues. We will undertake a series of consultations to seek feedback from Uwezo Board, the Technical Advisory Committee and other key education stakeholders on the survey plan before executing the national assessment in the third quarter of 2024.

2. Participating in People’s Action for Learning (PAL) Network’s Large-Scale Common Assessment of Foundational Learning. Uwezo Uganda has been a member of the PAL Network since 2015. The PAL Network is a south-south partnership of 17-member organisations working to promote children’s foundational learning across Africa, Asia, and America. PAL Network members conduct citizen-led assessments (CLAs) and learning intervention programmes (action) aimed at improving learning outcomes.

The PAL Network plans to conduct a common assessment of foundational learning in 2025 in 15 countries in the Global South to provide nationally representative data (or estimations) of numeracy, language, and literacy for children 5 to 16 years old. The planned 15-country assessment will provide (i) globally relevant snapshots of children's foundational learning, (ii) align with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 targets, and (iii) help track progress until 2030. Findings from this assessment will be used to support resource distribution, education planning, and decision-making at the global, regional, national, and local levels. These findings will also showcase the agency of local actors on an international stage.

Together with the PAL Network, we intend to use the common assessment results for advocacy purposes at global, regional, and national levels. The data will inform discussions about achieving global goals post-pandemic and will be leveraged to influence relevant global initiatives and collaborate with regional bodies. At the national level, the results will be used to complement evidence from our own national assessments to advocate for improved

education policies and highlight successful cases of achieving foundational learning for all children.

Although this common assessment is planned to take place in 2025, preparations, including, test development, pretesting and piloting of tools will take place in 2024.

Goal 2: Research and Experimentation

Context

The two-part goal aims to conduct research with the potential to improve learning outcomes and inform policymaking decisions and practices in basic education, with a specific focus on foundational learning. This involves highlighting evidence-based levers and margins of intervention for education stakeholders. The research activities, which include the analysis of existing datasets and collecting additional primary data beyond the large-scale Uwezo learning assessment, concentrate on understanding the drivers of learning at the community-, school-, and household-levels. The overarching objective of these research and experimentation initiatives is to illuminate areas that could potentially contribute to improving learning outcomes, with the hope that the findings will be instrumental in enhancing education policy and practices.

Achievements

In 2023, substantial progress has been made towards the initial goals of Research and Experimentation, marked by three significant accomplishments:

1. Completion of absenteeism and non-enrollment study. Fieldwork on a study addressing absenteeism and non-enrollment was successfully concluded, spanning four districts. This data collection occurred in March 2023, involving 88 stakeholders, including district education officials, head teachers, teachers, parents, children and members of School Management Committees (SMCs). The collected data is undergoing analysis to uncover factors that account for pupil absenteeism and non-enrolment at primary level, and the report will be launched next year.
2. Deep dives into pressing policy issues in Uganda, re-analysing the 2021 Uwezo Data. Our large-scale learning assessment data, collected every two-three years, serves as a rich data source, enabling us and other researchers to better understand various aspects of the educational landscape in Uganda. In 2023, we re-analysed this dataset, focusing on three concrete policy angles and developed three comprehensive policy briefs: "Gender Inequalities in Learning Outcomes and Enrollment," "Landscape of Mother Tongue Instruction and its Relationship to Learning Outcomes," and "Access, Quality, and Potential Benefits of Early Childhood Education." These briefs are at different stages of production and will be disseminated to policymakers and education stakeholders in 2024.
3. Completion of the UNESCO Spotlight research and report. This study and report on Uganda, is one of the country reports in the 2023 UNESCO Spotlight series, on the provision for children's learning of literacy and numeracy in primary education in Africa. The study and corresponding report focuses on three elements in the provision of education: curriculum and learning materials, support for teachers and assessment practices. The report pays particular attention to the extent to which these elements are aligned with each other and with the general goals of education. The report also considers how each of these elements relates to the needs of learners and of schools

and how far they are being implemented as intended. The study report that has been presented for consultation at two national workshops and will be finally validated with key national education decision makers in December 2023, is based on an analysis of data generated from various sources, including a) a review of literature and key policy documents b) interviews with key informants at national level (28 in total) c) a mapping of Primary 3 and Primary 7 mathematics curriculum, text books, teacher guides and examination papers against the Global Proficiency Framework (GPF) d) field research in 12 examples of primary schools, selected in four districts. The final report will be published at the end of this year, 2023, and will be widely disseminated at national, regional and international levels during the course of 2024.

Challenges

We encountered several challenges that hindered our ability to achieve all the planned activities contributing towards the Research and Experimentation goals to their full potential in 2023 but also opportunities arose that facilitated achievement of our objectives. In particular:

1. While our original vision encompassed the creation of five policy briefs, a set of challenges has led to a reconsideration of this ambitious goal. First, there were difficulties around accessing some data generated through partnership research and assessment undertakings such as that relating to the assessment of life skills and values in East Africa. Despite persistent efforts and the finalisation of data collection, full control over and access to the datasets essential for these briefs remains pending, impacting our ability to proceed as planned. Secondly, the commitment to producing high-quality, analytically robust briefs that align with the standards of our organisation has proven to be more time-intensive than originally planned. The realisation that crafting five briefs within the initially designated timeframe might have been overly ambitious prompted a reassessment of our approach.
2. Furthermore, opportunities arose during the course of the year where other researchers utilised or referenced Uwezo data and produced research products relevant to some of the policy briefs we had intended to develop. For example, [the article by Sakaue et al \(2023\)²](#) on the effect of parental engagement on children's home-based continued learning during Covid-19-induced school closures in Uganda largely addressed the issues we had intended to cover in the policy brief on factors in the continuation of learning during the school closure of 2020.
3. In addition to the policy briefs, our aspirations extended to conducting several standalone research studies. These studies were intended to delve into critical areas such as the language of instruction and the analysis of policies related to foundational learning. Unfortunately, these plans faced challenges, including overlapping activities curtailing our capacity to devote the required resources towards these specific studies. On the other hand, as we planned some of these studies, we had the recognition that some of the originally proposed studies could be effectively addressed within other planned research initiatives. One example is the planned study on language of instruction that was adequately addressed in the language of instruction policy brief. Consequently, these studies remain unexecuted, highlighting the need for strategic recalibration of our research endeavours in the coming year.

² Katsuki S., Wokadala J. and Keiichi Ogawa O. (2023). Effect of parental engagement on children's home-based continued learning during COVID-19-induced school closures: Evidence from Uganda. *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol. 100, July 2023, 102812.

Plans for 2024

For 2024, we have three key activities planned on this front. Below, we outline the three key targeted outcomes for the 2024 Annual Plan related to this goal, emphasising their significance, and detailing some of the main activities that will be implemented to achieve them:

1. To derive insights from local success stories demonstrating strong learning outcomes in the Ugandan context, we plan to conduct an in-depth study on “positive deviance.” The objective of this study is to deepen our understanding of household-, school-, and community-level practices and characteristics that positively impact girls' and boys' education and overall learning outcomes in Uganda. This study will consist of two integral components: firstly, a quantitative phase to identify areas yielding robust results for children despite the overall results in their districts, and where girls are performing on par with boys—addressing the 'where?' for the study. Subsequently, the study will include a qualitative component to explore potential factors driving this higher level performance and gender equity in the positive deviant villages in comparison with non-positive deviant locations, addressing the 'how' for the study and thereby uncovering the qualitative differences in these contexts. Together, these two components will enable identification of potential levers of engagement at community level to drive learning outcomes among children.
2. Additionally, we aim to finalise the policy brief on young people's workplace and everyday literacy & numeracy skills (in the 16-20 age group), which was originally planned for 2023. Through this brief we hope to contribute to understanding some of the issues that affect transition to secondary and other post-primary education for boys and girls in Uganda.
3. We will also complete research products relating to our inquiry into absenteeism and non-enrollment, and teaching and learning in refugee contexts. Through the absenteeism and non-enrolment product, we aim to achieve an improved understanding of the participation challenges, so as to contribute to a more efficient delivery of primary education. The refugee research product will serve as a crucial tool contributing to understanding the conditions of teaching and learning in mainstream schools that enroll large populations of refugee children.

Goal 3: Engagement

Context

Goal 3 focuses on mainly using evidence generated from goals 1 and 2 to engage with policy actors and with the public to influence and promote policies and practices for improved and more equitable learning outcomes. Over the years, we have made significant gains in engaging with key education actors, other researchers and practitioners at sub-national, national and global levels. On this basis, we have largely managed to foster a good relationship with key education implementers and positioned ourselves as major advocates for improvements in education using evidence. Nevertheless, initial findings from the recent outcome harvesting exercise point to the fact that our engagements have been more at district and national levels than at community level. The challenge ahead for us will be on how to drive system-wide change at all levels for improved learning.

Achievements and challenges

In 2023, we registered the following accomplishments in our engagements, at global, national and sub-national levels:

1. At global level, we extensively presented evidence from our research and learning assessments at different international conferences, including the Comparative International Education Society (CIES) conference that took place in the USA, the United Kingdom Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) conference that took place in the Oxford, the Women Deliver Conference that took place in Rwanda, the International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching (ISATT) Conference in Italy and the Annual Conference of the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA) that took place in Nairobi. In addition, we co-convened the first Values and Life Skills (VALi) in Africa conference with our East African counterparts united under the Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa initiative of the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI), and contributed a chapter to 'The Contextualisation of 21st Century Skills Assessment in East Africa' book publication by Springer. Furthermore, we contributed to the PAL Network Regional Policy Dialogue in March 2023. In all this, the intention is to contribute to global knowledge rather than being mere consumers of knowledge produced elsewhere. Engagement at this level is also critical in positioning us as important contributors to the global discourse on the relevance of education in the global south.
2. At national and sub-national levels, we presented at local conferences, such as the International Conference on Trends in Curriculum Development that was organised by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) in commemoration of its 50 years of existence. We further presented our evidence on accelerating return on investment in education through provision of pre-primary education in Uganda at the National Demographic Dividend Conference that was organised by the National Population Council and National Planning Authority. We also partnered with other education actors such as Save the Children, USAID and cultural institutions to share and discuss evidence on children's learning with key stakeholders. This enabled increased awareness and understanding of the status of learning outcomes as well as discussion and generation of actionable commitments for improving learning outcomes from key stakeholders that included parliamentary regional Caucuses, traditional leaders, political leaders and faith-based organisations. We also mobilised Uwezo district partners to disseminate ALiVE findings in 19 districts with our counterparts at Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education (LGIHE). This is hoped to have contributed to informing and widening the understanding of key stakeholders at district level, of the levels of life skills and values among adolescents and the importance of life skills and values.
3. Finally, we participated in media engagements throughout the year. Our expertise and evidence continued to be sought and referenced by various media sources. We estimate that reference was made to our work by TV, Radio and Newspapers over a dozen times, thereby keeping alive, the conversation around children's learning.

Despite the above achievements, our contribution to public and policy engagements in education continued to be constrained by resources that limited our reach, especially at levels below the national level.

Plans for 2024

In 2024, we will continue efforts to engage at all levels while at the same time figuring out how we could enhance this critical pillar in our new strategy. Key activities will include the following, among others;

1. At global level, we will continue to present our work at conferences and contribute to education publications relevant to learning. Already, our submissions to the 2024 CIES conference that will take place in March, in Miami, USA, have been accepted. We will be presenting two papers and chairing and/or leading discussion in two other panels at the conference. We also plan to submit abstracts to the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE) and the African Curriculum Association (ACA) conferences that are scheduled to take place during the course of the year.
2. At national and sub-national levels, we will continue the media engagement efforts, collaborations with other education coalitions and fostering participation of key actors in our research and assessment activities to enable them appreciate how we generate the evidence we use for advocacy. We will also use the policy briefs that we have developed in 2023 to organise policy dialogues around key issues that affect learning outcomes, e.g. Early Childhood Development (ECD) and language of instruction. We will also continue to disseminate findings of our joint spotlight study on foundational learning in Uganda with our UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR) counterparts.
3. In the run up to the 2024 national learning assessment, we plan to use district-reports that have been developed based on the 2021 Uwezo assessment to convene policy reflections around what they mean to the status of learning in the respective districts. This is hoped to create momentum and gather interest in generating newer evidence on the current learning status in the districts.

Goal 4: Institutional Development

Context

This goal aims at continuously developing Uwezo Uganda into a sustainable for-impact organisation, with an operational relationship with government, civil societies and other key actors nationally and internationally. We seek achieve this goal through the development of strong governance systems, partnerships and sustainable resources (human and financial).

Achievements and challenges

We registered a number of achievements in 2023 towards our efforts in developing a strong organisation, including the following:

1. We retained all our staff and sustained contracts with 10 consultants who supported us to deliver on over 90% of our annual plans.
2. We were able to mobilise financial resources and fully finance our 2023 annual plan.
3. We continued to have in place accountable systems, strengthened by our existing policy frameworks and continued advice and oversight by our Board and Technical Advisory Committee. Obtaining an unqualified audit opinion from our external auditors, Ernst & Young in August 2023, for the year ended 2022, and the continued trust of our funders such as Echidna

Giving and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, are testament of our indisputable accountable systems.

4. Sustained existing partnerships at global, national and sub-national levels and nurtured new ones, including one with two local universities (public and private) for uptake of our data in academic writing and the partnership with the UNESCO-GEMR team in the development of the spotlight report on foundational learning in Uganda.
5. We reviewed and renewed our key policies, including the Finance & Administration regulations and Human Resources (HR) policy, to ensure they are responsive to our organisational needs, the recommendations of our internal and external auditors and to good organisational practice in general. The changes to the policies were approved by the Board in June 2023.
6. In addition, we developed the Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan (DRBCP) that was approved by the Board in June 2023. The DRBCP is a written process or method designed to restore critical information technology systems and services if an unforeseen event interrupts them.
7. Finally, we commenced the process of reflecting on our current strategy as a starting point to developing a new one. In the month of November (6 - 8 November 2023) we convened a group of 29 Uwezo staff, trainers and district partners to conduct an outcome harvesting process facilitated by an independent international expert in the outcome harvesting approach. Several outcomes were harvested that will be key in informing what we did right in the ending strategy and what we need to improve to increase our impact and contribution to the education sector in the new strategy.

Four years down the road since we established ourselves into an independent organisation after a decade of operating as a program of Twaweza East Africa, we are confident that we have succeeded in growing the entity into a reputable organisation nationally and beyond. The year 2023 was yet another success story in our aspirations of an organisation that makes a measurable contribution to promoting equitable learning for all children, especially those at risk of being left behind. Nevertheless, our contribution has been limited by resource constraints that have made it difficult for us to fill positions in the research, communication and monitoring, evaluation & learning docket that are central to the delivery on our mission. We have had to stretch the available staff and occasionally engage short-term consultants to address this gap. Furthermore, the shrinking education funding space brought about by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the global political unrest (e.g. the Ukraine war and now the Palestine-Israel war) has made it extra challenging to fundraise for the organisation. Competition for the available global funding for education is simply too much. While efforts to widen our funding base continue through references from our existing funders, partnerships and exploring potential local investment options, we continue to rely on only a few external funding, which poses a major sustainability risk to the organisation.

Plans for 2024

We have outlined three main activities that we will implement in 2024, in addition to other ongoing governance undertakings, to facilitate achievement of our institutional development goal:

1. Completing the development of a new four-year organisational strategy
2. Resource mobilisation, strengthening existing partnerships and nurturing new ones
3. Enhancing our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework to track the impact we make and keep self-improving as an organisation

Potential Risks Towards Achieving 2024 Targets and our Mitigation Strategies

As with any implementation processes, certain risk factors may hinder our capacity to deliver on our annual plan in 2024. We outline some major risks, along with mitigation measures to minimise the possibility of failure. The likelihood and impact of these risks is summarised in Annex 1.

- a) Inability of partners to comply to agreed on activities where jointly conducted assessments are planned which may create delays or failure to accomplish planned activities. We plan to mitigate this through joint activity planning and flexibility in re-scheduling when delays are anticipated.
- b) Slow implementation of activities by consultants and sub-contractors in areas where we lack inhouse staff. This will be mitigated by agreeing on timelines and having regular check-in meetings to track progress and re-plan if necessary.
- c) Risk of misidentification in the "Positive Deviants" study. There is a potential risk of misidentifying areas of interest for the "positive deviants" study due to small sample sizes at the level of enumeration areas. The quantitative study may lead to the identification of areas as positive deviants that are not truly exceptional but rather result from statistical noise. While we anticipate a few such instances, we will mitigate this risk by sampling a relatively large number of areas, ensuring that false positives do not constitute a significant portion of the study. Emphasising the qualitative portion of the study, through thorough qualitative analysis, will be essential to ensure that areas identified as positive deviants genuinely exhibit noteworthy characteristics beyond statistical fluctuations.
- d) Possibility of limited patterns emerging from qualitative data. In the "positive deviants" study, there is a risk that no strong patterns may emerge from the qualitative data collected during fieldwork. Even in areas that are genuinely positive deviants, unique factors contributing to each area's exceptional status may be hyper-localised, not easily replicable at scale for policy relevance, or simply remain undiscovered through our interviews. To minimise this risk, we aim to employ comprehensive qualitative research methodologies, including in-depth interviews and contextual analysis. This approach ensures nuanced insights and a holistic understanding of the identified positive deviants.
- e) Fieldwork disturbances in the "Positive Deviants" study. Like any study relying on primary data collection, there is a potential for disturbances to the execution of fieldwork in the "positive deviants" study. Issues related to accessibility, partner selection, and other unforeseen challenges could impact the smooth implementation of the study. To mitigate these risks, careful planning and coordination with local partners will be essential. Additionally, we will develop contingency plans and alternative strategies to address unexpected disruptions and ensure the successful completion of the fieldwork.
- f) Other major risks relate to the constrained funding space for education and the challenge of sustaining our activities and broadening the funding base. We will maintain a good relationship with our existing funders while exploring possibilities of attracting new ones through doing impactful work and publicising it, and through nurturing useful partnerships with other organisations, nationally, regionally and globally.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

In 2024, we plan to develop our new four-year strategy (2024-2027) during the first half of the year. In it, a suitable and comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) approach will be laid out. As noted earlier, in November 2023, we organised a participatory Outcome Harvesting workshop, which was the kick-off of the development of our new strategy and MEL approach. At the start of 2024, we will analyse the harvest and discuss its lessons during a second participatory strategy workshop. However, we can already say that the core of the new MEL approach will be **learning and adaptation**. The aim is to continuously improve our contextual knowledge and find ways to improve our actions and adjust ways of working accordingly – in order to improve our effectiveness. Learning about implementing actions, emerging results and the ever-changing context, leads to adaptation. To be able to learn and adapt, our new strategy will contain several essential ingredients³, that will form the foundation for a new MEL approach, namely:

- a. a robust problem definition
- b. a context and political economy analysis (PEA)
- c. a theory of change

The starting point for us will be **identifying the problem** we aim to address, or rather, sharpen the existing problem definition if needed. Focusing on problems (rather than starting with solutions) tends to result in more feasible and appropriate actions rather than copying best practices. Problem-driven learning views context not just as a constraint but also as a subject of change. In this respect, problem identification is the first step in an approach focused on learning and adaptation.

Political economy analysis (PEA) involves examining the distribution of power and resources at different levels and identifying the formal and informal interests and incentives that maintain or threaten to challenge the status quo with regards to education. Such information is essential to understanding the forces that shape our environment and our performance. PEA will be used in an iterated way – at a minimum during our regular strategic reflection and reviews.

A **theory of change (ToC)** approach involves making explicit how we assume the process of change will occur. This explains how we expect our actions to generate a particular change. ToCs open the black box of assumptions between inputs, outputs and outcomes and acknowledge the complexity and unpredictability of social change and, in our case, research evidence uptake. An adjusted ToC should be regarded as a living document and revisited in order to support on-going learning.

Research evidence uptake requires a specific type of ToC, as it needs to capture the complex and unpredictable pathways of change that happen after research is published. Influencing change can be done on many levels and by different stakeholders. These stakeholders and their relations with our work will be mapped in the new ToC. For example, partners can use the reports for their own context-specific advocacy purposes, which is outside our direct control, but can be encouraged during their participation in our actions.

³ Valters, C., Cummings, C., Nixon, H. (2016). *Putting learning at the centre-Adaptive development programming in practice*. ODI report. <https://odi.org/en/publications/putting-learning-at-the-centre-adaptive-development-programming-in-practice>

The new MEL approach will be built on these ingredients, as it needs to include regular reflections on the problem definition, context analysis and theory of change. To be able to do so, the MEL approach will contain a selection of **MEL methods** and describe our **learning cycle**.

Various **MEL methods** are suitable to monitor progress and provide input for learning in complex contexts. These include Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting, developmental evaluation, principle-focused evaluation and/or participatory methods, either as stand-alone methods or as a mixed methods approach. Besides the available financial and human resources, our learning focus will determine to a large extent which of these methods will be most relevant and applicable for our work. In 2024 we will start testing some of these methods to assess their suitability to our work.

- **Outcome Mapping⁴** aims to help plan social change interventions. At the planning stage, the process of outcome mapping can help us to be specific about the actors we intend to target, the changes we hope to see and the strategies appropriate to achieve these. It can, as such, be used to complement the revision of our existing Theory of Change.
- **Outcome Harvesting⁵** is related to Outcome Mapping, but focusses on ongoing monitoring of emerging results, and could also be used for evaluation. It is a participatory, outcome-focused method that collects evidence on what has changed (outcomes) and determines if and how the programme interventions have contributed to these changes. It is particularly relevant for tackling complex problems.
- **Developmental evaluation⁶** moves away from traditional evaluation models, where there are summative findings at the end, and integrates the evaluator into programme teams to help them reflect on evaluative questions as the initiative progresses. Like other evaluations, this can involve regular quantitative and qualitative research methods but the difference is that developmental evaluation is embedded in the programme from the beginning so the questions the evaluator poses and the emerging findings can inform how the programme progresses.
- **Principles-focused evaluation⁷** is an innovative method that is organised around principles, not goals or compliance with processes. This method is built on the realisation that principles can be more than a nice list in a frame on the wall; they can actually lead to results. Using this method starts with developing principles that are actually principles (and not rules or assumptions). It continues with monitoring or evaluating them in terms of how well they are understood by our staff, whether our practice is consistent with them, and whether they are leading to our desired results.
- Various **participatory approaches** can help in validating and revising our Theory of Change with staff and partners, and basing the intervention on an up-to-date and robust understanding. Participatory methods are an important yet often neglected way of ensuring programmes are adapted to local diversity and needs.

These approaches will influence programme learning (that leads to adaptation) if they are used in a continuous manner as part of a **learning cycle**. Therefore, we will continue to build in reflection points in the planning of our work. Already, we organise quarterly and annual reflection meetings. Another option

⁴ <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/outcome-mapping>

⁵ <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/outcome-harvesting>

⁶ <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/developmental-evaluation>

⁷ <https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/principles-focused-evaluation-guide>

we will embrace is to organise After Action Reviews⁸ as soon as an action has come to an end. During these sessions, we will focus more intently on learning questions, stemming from the ToC (for example, examining one specific assumption and talking about its validity), the context analysis, or new monitoring data. These sessions will also be used to identifying new trends or topics that we could take up.

Budget

The estimated budget for executing our 2024 annual plan is **\$1,368,763** as summarised in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: UWEZO UGANDA BUDGET, 2024	
DETAILS	2024
	USD
Goal 1: Assessments	\$663,588
Human resource costs – Assessment	\$101,033
Total Goal 1	\$764,621
Goal 2: Research and Experimentation	\$26,400
Human resource costs - Research and Experimentation	\$57,068
Total Goal 2	\$83,468
Goal 3: Public and Policy Engagements	\$107,469
Human resource costs – Public and Policy Engagements	\$63,224
Total Goal 3	\$170,693
Goal 4: Institutional Development	
Strengthening organisational systems and governance structures	\$108,320
Strengthen policies, standards and procedures on staffing	\$67,969
Learning, monitoring and evaluation systems	\$42,000
Establishment and maintenance of partnerships with relevant stakeholders from the village to the global level to support achievement and sustenance of Uwezo mission.	\$6,000
Human resource costs - Institutional Development	\$125,692
Total Goal 4: Institutional Development	\$349,981
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$1,368,763

⁸ <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/methods/after-action-review>

Annex 1: Uwezo Uganda Risk Mapping 2024

Risk Description	Risk category	Likelihood	Impact	Gross Risk	Mitigation Strategy	Impact	Residual Risk	Risk Owner
	Context Delivery Operational Reputational Fiduciary Safeguarding	Likely Less likely Possible	Major High Moderate Minor	Major High Moderate Minor		Major High Moderate Minor	Major High Moderate Minor	
Failure of partners to comply to agreed on activities where jointly conducted assessments are planned which may create delays or inability to accomplish planned activities.	Delivery	Possible	Minor	Minor	Joint activity planning and flexibility in re-scheduling when delays are anticipated	Moderate	Minor	SPO
Slow implementation of activities caused by field disturbances or by partners and sub-contractors.	Delivery	Likely	Minor	Minor	Careful planning and coordination with partners will be essential. Additionally, we will develop contingency plans and alternative strategies to address unexpected disruptions and ensure the successful completion of the assessment and research.	Moderate	Minor	SPOR, ED
Risk of misidentification in the "Positive Deviants" study. There is a potential risk of misidentifying areas of interest for the "positive deviants" study due to small sample sizes at the level of enumeration areas.	Delivery	Likely	Major	Major	Sampling a relatively large number of areas, ensuring that false positives do not constitute a significant portion of the study. Emphasising the qualitative portion of the study, through thorough qualitative analysis, will be essential to ensure that areas identified as positive deviants genuinely exhibit noteworthy characteristics beyond statistical fluctuations.	Moderate	Minor	ED
Over reliance on a narrow range of development partners.	Fiduciary	Possible	Major	High	Periodic review of the fundraising and resource mobilisation strategy to ensure sustainability and flow of funds from donors.	High	Moderate	ED and Unit Leads

Reduced funding for education globally	Fiduciary	Likely	Major	Major	<p>Increased efforts for fundraising.</p> <p>Keep donors informed of Uwezo activities to ensure that Uwezo relevance is felt.</p> <p>Periodic review of the fundraising and resource mobilisation strategy to ensure sustainability and flow of funds from donors.</p>	High	Moderate	ED and Unit Leads
Foreign exchange risk	Fiduciary	Possible	Moderate	Moderate	We plan to work closely with our bank to take advantage of foreign exchange fluctuations to the benefit of the organisation. In the likely event that there is depreciation in the local currency, we plan to move fast to seize the advantage by forecasting future local currency needs and making local currency conversions to seize the forex gains.	Likely	Major	
Information security is not administered appropriately leading to loss of data through malware, hacking, poor/no backup.	Operational	Possible	Major	High	Regularly train staff and ensure compliance to the DRBCP.	High	Low	IT office
Uncertainty of sustainability of funding we are receiving through other Partners.	Fiduciary	Possible	Major	High	Work closely with funding conduit partners to ensure that donor requirements are met.	High	Moderate	ED and Unit Leads