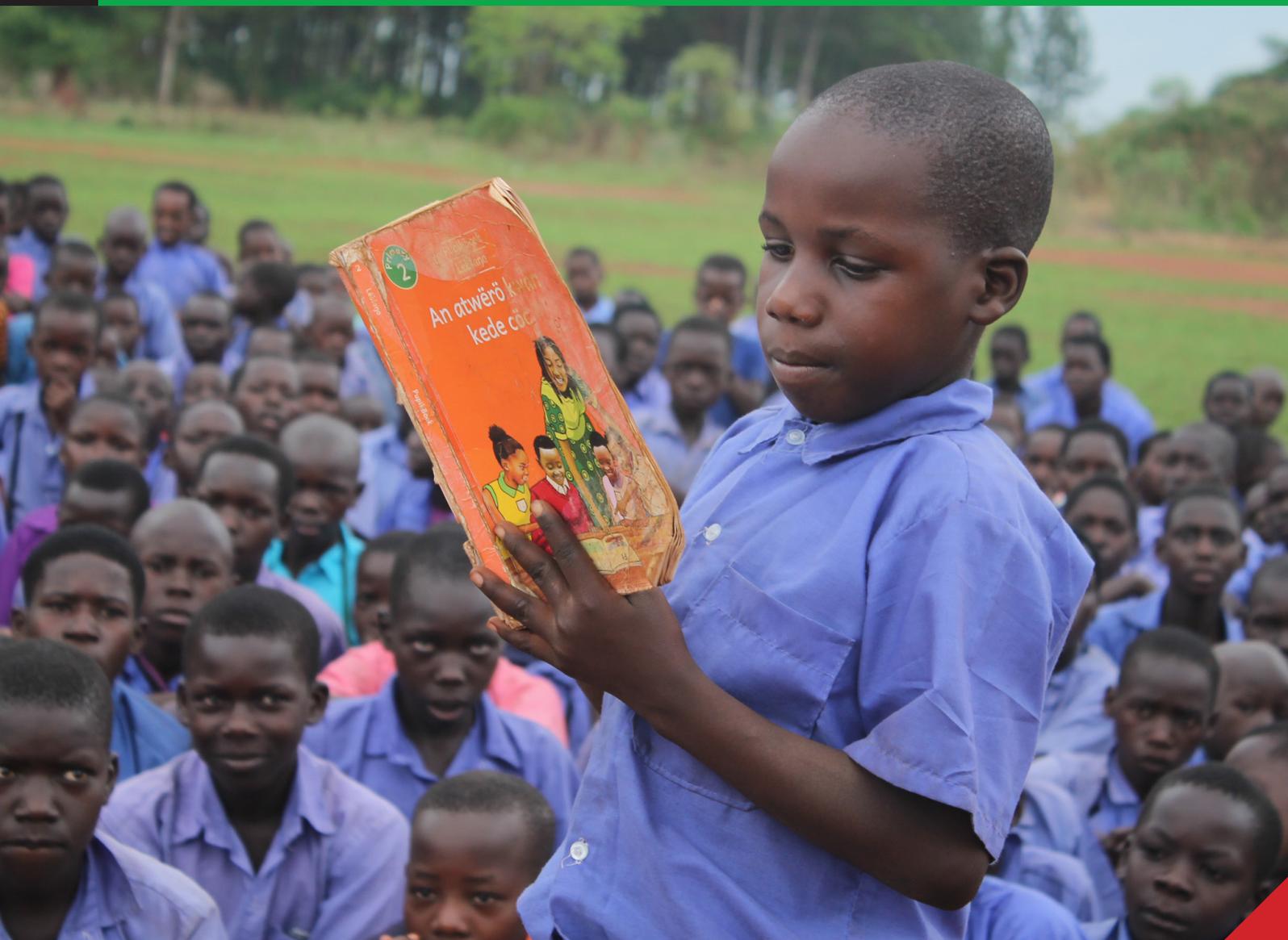


# Assessing quality, access, and capacity of grassroots organizations in improving learning outcomes in Oyam, Lira, Kole and Arua Districts

## Baseline Assessment Report



January 2022

Grassroots nest for Innovations for Change (GRIC)



A learner paints a parent during face painting session of the community reading day

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## List of Acronyms

<b>ASER</b>	Annual Education Status Report
<b>AYDI</b>	Arua Youth Development Initiative
<b>CDO</b>	Community Development Officer
<b>CFI</b>	Community Focus International
<b>COVID-19</b>	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
<b>CPD</b>	Contentious Professional Development
<b>CRM</b>	Child Rescue Ministry
<b>DCDO</b>	District Community Development Officer
<b>DEO</b>	District Education Officer
<b>DEPCOT</b>	Development Path for Community Transformation
<b>DIS</b>	District Inspector of School
<b>DLG</b>	District Local Government
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>ESSP</b>	Education Sector Strategic Plan
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FICH</b>	Foundation for Inclusive Community Help
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>GPS</b>	Global Positioning System
<b>GRIC</b>	Grassroots nest for Innovations and Change
<b>ICT</b>	Information Communication and Technology
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>LCs</b>	Local Councils
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Sports
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>NCDC</b>	National Curriculum Development Centre
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teachers Association
<b>RAs</b>	Research Assistants
<b>RCCs</b>	Resident City Commissioners
<b>RDCs</b>	Resident District Commissioners
<b>SAF</b>	Saving Aid Foundation
<b>SEL</b>	Socio-Emotional Learning
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual Gender Base Violence
<b>SMC</b>	School Management Committee
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<b>UNHS</b>	Uganda National Household Survey
<b>VECs</b>	Village Education Committee

## Acknowledgement

This baseline assessment was conducted by Foundation for Inclusive Community Help (FICH) and Grassroots nest for Innovations and Change (GRIC). GRIC incubates innovative and scalable solutions from grassroots organizations to increase opportunities for children and youth from vulnerable populations in East Africa to go to school, learn, transition to different levels of education and train and thrive in the ever-changing world. GRIC works with six grassroots partner organizations in Northern Uganda.

We are grateful for all the people within and outside these organizations whose dedication and generous contribution have made this assessment successful. We thank the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund for funding the study. We acknowledge the GRIC and FICH staff for their dedication to the design and implementation of the entire assessment. We extend our gratitude to the staff at Arua Youth Development Initiative (AYDI), Child Rescue Ministry (CRM), Community Focus International (CFI), Development Path for Community Transformation (DEPCOT), and Saving Aid Foundation-Uganda (SAF-U) for mobilizing and seeking consent from all those who were interviewed during the study. We are grateful to Stephen Okoch, the consultant for his dedication and leadership in the entire process, and appreciate the support Emmy Zoomlamai Okello and Samwel Mwayi Mbewa for their coordination.

This intervention would not have been possible without the participation of the education officials, community leaders, teachers, parents, students, members of school management boards, and the communities in Arua City Council, Lira City Council, Kole District Local Government and Oyam District. We appreciate their participation, ownership and guidance.

**Wangui-Nyaga**  
**The Executive Director,**  
**Grassroots nest for Innovations and Change (GRIC)**

## Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted school calendars globally. In Uganda, 15 million school-going children stayed out of school for two years. This is the longest school closure that has ever been experienced in the Country. To support learning during this period, Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) designed the 'preparedness and response plan to COVID-19 with a focus on continuity of learning'. The MoES worked with a consortium of stakeholders guided by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) to develop standardized study lesson packages in the core subjects for primary and secondary levels, and distributed to all learners. Lessons were delivered through scheduled radio and TV programmes, and also uploaded in phone-based apps to provide remedial lessons targeting topics that could have been covered by learners while at school. The government developed hard copies of education materials for distribution to learners. During this period, the roles of parents in ensuring continuity of learning was vital as evidenced in the findings of this baseline.

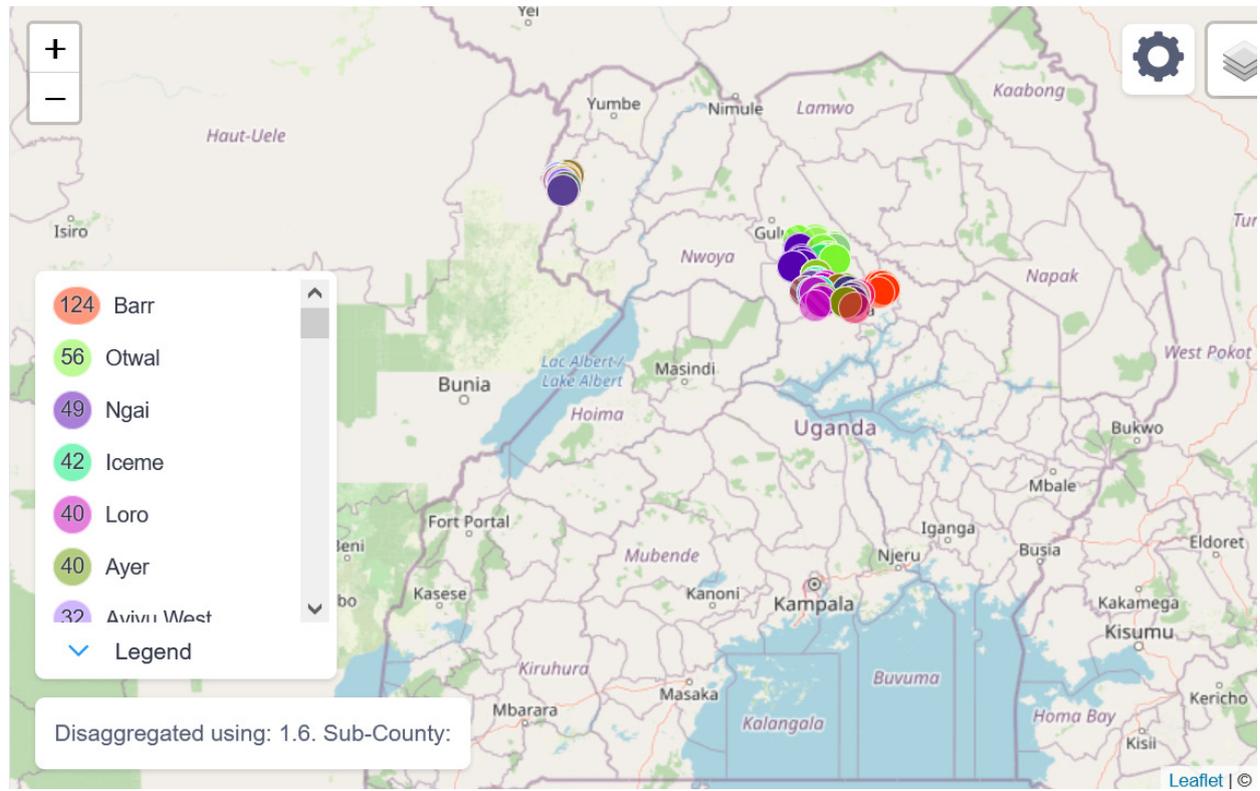
Grassroots nest for Innovations for Change (GRIC) and Foundation for Inclusive Community Help (FICH) partnership has played a vital role in how Uganda is responding to the distorted education calendar. The partnership extends support to five other partners with their core pillars of; Improving student learning outcomes with a focus on literacy and numeracy skills, strengthening school leadership and governance by building the capacity of school boards for effective schools, and strengthening parental engagement in their children's education and building youth leadership for community-driven education and social development initiatives.

This assessment provides information and status of community education in the target areas. It provides opportunity to implement innovative approaches to learning, monitor, track and evaluate progress of the community-based education project in the rural districts of Arua, Kole, Oyam and Lira. The assessment focused on the level of access, quality, and capacity of community grassroots organizations to support community-based education.

It is our hope that the Education Departments in the Districts and Cities will use the findings from the assessment on school survey and community assessment in northern Uganda to help these 4 districts improve learning opportunities for all vulnerable children that were most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Obiayi Ombere Raymond**  
**Principal Education Officer**  
**Arua City Council**

## Map



Acanpii-teaching of children at Acanpii Community Learning Centre

## Executive Summary

The Ugandan government recognizes education as a powerful tool to sustain development and attain national cohesion. This is reflected in the Uganda government's mainstreaming of education as a tool for growth throughout many sectors in Uganda.

Since attaining political independence, the Country has labelled education as a key component for driving social growth, economic development, and transformation. Recently, Uganda's economic development blueprint, Vision 2040, which provides paths to becoming a more prosperous nation, highlights education as a crucial mechanism for economic growth by providing skilled human capital.

### Uganda's Government Efforts at Continued learning During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted school calendars globally. In Uganda, this interruption led to 15 million children staying out of school for two years; one of the longest schools closure in the world. To support learning in this period, Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) designed the *'preparedness and response plan to COVID-19 with a focus on continuity of learning.'* The MoES, worked with a consortium of stakeholders, guided by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), to develop standardized study lesson packages in the core subjects for primary and secondary levels, to be distributed to all learners. Lessons were delivered through scheduled radio and TV programmes, and uploaded in phone-based apps to provide remedial lessons targeting topics that could have been covered by learners while at school. In addition, the government developed hard copy education materials to be distributed to learners in this period.

The materials developed were repackaged to suit the selected media and to ensure that the focus is more on basic concepts, the learning competencies, and skills to be acquired rather than on content coverage..

### Digital data divide perpetuating learning inequities during schools' closure

The Uganda government's efforts to ensure sustained learning during the pandemic were frustrated by the glaring digital divide that disproportionately affects low-income families predominantly resident in rural and informal settlements.

According to the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) 2019/20 report released by Uganda Bureau of Statistics, at least 31.7% of the surveyed households owned a radio with only 19.2% owning television sets. The ownership is concentrated in middle to high-class urban areas. The unequal access to ICT devices exacerbated the inequities in Uganda's educational landscape.

**“ The variation in the ability to access alternative forms of learning offered to kids during the lockdowns such as using radios and televisions, newspapers, and the internet has created two worlds within the Country– one that lost most of the two years of schooling and another, a ‘first world’ that managed the crisis and continued learning. There is a need to pay special attention to the group that did not learn at all.” - Dr Ibrahim Kasirye, researcher, Economic Policy Research Centre.**

### COVID-19 as a trigger of intergenerational poverty

With 75% of Uganda's population being below the age of 30 (UBOS, 2014), supporting the education sector is critical. Education is a key player in reducing poverty (UNDP 2014), and loss of instructional time due to the lockdown will affect the poorest communities. This in turn will lead to an intergenerational cycle of poverty and promote an unequitable economic structure.

It is urgent and paramount to ensure this larger portion of the population has the right education and skill sets required to increase capital and spur economic growth. The UN estimates that, unless managed, the pandemic's long-term impact in the education sector will

be greatly borne by low and average-income households.

### **“Children have lost hope in education and in life.” - KII respondent Lira District**

#### **Schools re-opening in Uganda**

The Ugandan government has developed and deployed strategies to ensure safe and sustainable school reopening. The primary focus is to develop a school-based surveillance for early identification, reporting and management of emerging COVID-19 cases in schools with mental health and psychosocial support to teachers and children being the secondary focus.

Much as the SOPs developed by the Uganda government will promote a COVID-safe learning environment, there is need for innovative solutions that provide for holistic education, ensure parent, community, and stakeholder involvement, and promote sustained out-of-school learning. These are urgently needed to provide temporary remediation and ultimately in the long term mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on learning in Uganda.

It is because of this that GRIC in partnership with FICHD and 5 development partners in Uganda, commissioned and facilitated this baseline survey to provide information against which progress in the implementation of the Education Project in the rural districts in Uganda, will be monitored and evaluated.

This report presents findings from the baseline evaluation of school survey and community assessment in northern Uganda. The Evaluation focus on the level of Access, Quality and Community grassroots capacity to Improve Learning Outcomes in Oyam, Lira, Kole, and Arua Districts.

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design using highly participatory mixed methods of data collection. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection (i.e., document review, key informant interviews, school survey and focus group discussions) were used. Overall, a total of 42 primary schools were surveyed with 457 (227 girls, 230 boys) respondents participating in the school survey

interviews. During the community assessment, 31 FGDs were conducted (3 Arua, 6 Kole, 6 Lira, 16 Oyam), and 17 Key Informants were interviewed.

#### **Key findings and recommendations**

##### **Findings**

##### **a) State of the learning outcomes with a special focus in literacy and numeracy skills.**

According to the assessment, the best performance in literacy was registered in P7 where 39% of the learners were in Level 5, none in level 0 and 1 (0%). Level 6 had the second-best performance in literacy with 26% in Level 5, 46% Level 4, 33% Level 3, 13% Level 2 and 1% Level 1. The lowest performance was seen in P3 with only 4% in Level 5 and the majority (69%) in Level 0.

Findings also revealed that the best performance in numeracy was in P6 with 41% of learners in Level 4, none in Level 0(0%), followed by P7 with 27% in Level 4, 46% Level 4, 18% Level 3, 6% Level 2 and 1% Level 1. However, the lowest performance was seen in P2 where none of the learners was able to score between Level 2 and 4.

Overall, girls performed better than boys in literacy; 41% of girls and 39% of boys were able to read words, construct a sentence, read a paragraph and being able to comprehend a story.

##### **b) Mainstreaming parental engagement in their children’s education and strengthening school leadership capacity to support learning.**

Key informants and FGD participants were all in agreement for the need of parent involvement in supporting learning and community development programmes. By being involved in community development activities, particularly those that are directly geared towards the learning activities of their children, an instructional extension is formed between the school and the home setting, which adds to the learning hours and facilitates positive modelling of the children’s behaviour. This is especially critical in underprivileged communities that

witnessed the most learning loss during the COVID-19 schools' closure in Uganda. However, results of this survey demonstrated that most of the parents were not keen on supporting continued learning at home. The school survey findings indicate that 49% of the parents demonstrated a positive attitude in being involved in the education of their children.

There were generally low levels of school management structures' knowledge, understanding, and performing of their roles and responsibilities. The survey pointed to the ineffectiveness of the school governance structures (SMC and PTA) and points to the need for capacity enhancement. 58% of respondents affirmed SMC/PTA are not functional and needs capacity enhancement to support effective teaching and learning.

In conclusion, this evaluation has found compelling evidence that learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy are generally good at upper primary level (P6 and P7) and worst in the lower classes P2 and P3 which is the foundation of good learning. Therefore, focus should be directed to strengthening strategies that improve early learning among children in primary schools.

### Recommendations:

- I. *Supporting community-based learning:*  
Learning must extend beyond the confines of the school. There is need to implement an adaptive catch-up program at the family and community-level that will minimize the learning loss occasioned by the two years schools' closure.

**“Parents should organize and create learning centres within their villages.” - KII respondent, Oyam District.**

- II. *Stakeholder involvement to support learning:*  
There is need for concerted awareness creation sessions for the community members especially parents and local leaders to inform them about the importance of education and taking children to school.  
  
Furthermore, coordination, collaboration, and partnerships between education

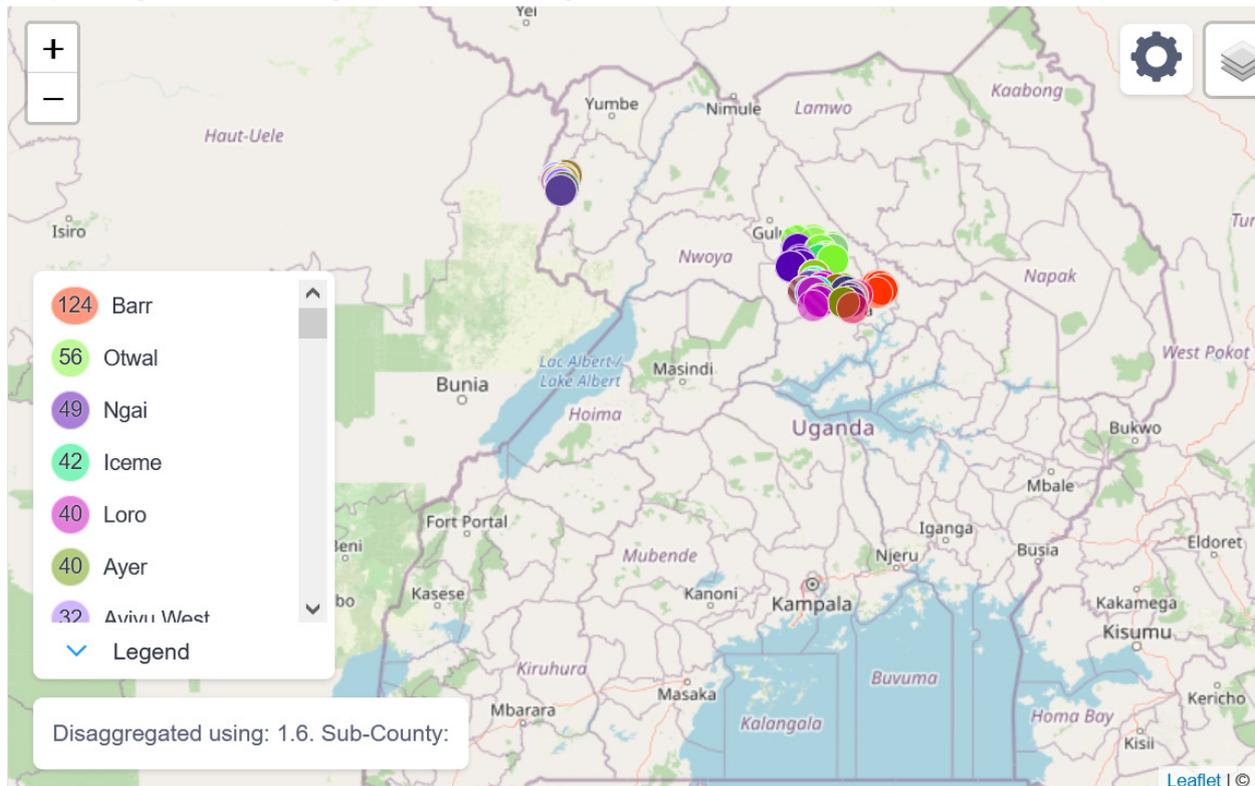
stakeholders are key to quality education and improved learning outcomes. All stakeholders within the community need to work together to support the children's learning needs. Parental engagement should be encouraged to help build their confidence in education.

- III. *School government and leadership structures support:* Enhanced efforts should be directed at strengthening school leadership and governance structures by building the capacity of school boards for purposes of building effective schools. PTAs, SMCs, VECs and other education community structures' capacity should be enhanced and upskilled.
- IV. *Supporting girl-focused education efforts:*  
To create equity in access to education, deliberate efforts are required to retain girls in school so that they, just as their male peers, can equally complete their education. The support needed by girls should go beyond provision of auxiliary services such as sanitary towels, to deeper interventions that promote the psycho-social well-being of the girls and build community structures that ensure that girls are protected and promoted to stay and thrive in schools.

**“Create counselling sessions in the learning centres for children age 12 years and above to restore hope in education and in life” - FGD respondent, Kole District.**

- V. *Ensuring COVID-19 safe schools:* The schools need to invest in precautionary COVID-19 SOPs and supplies such as masks and sanitizers for the teachers. This is the only way to ensure schools remain safe and minimize the possibility of COVID-19 spread that can necessitate future schools' closure.
- VI. *Targeted government support in learning:*  
Data indicate that the effects of COVID-19 triggered learning loss, was most felt by learners in less privileged communities, especially those in lower grades. To tilt the education scale back to some parity, most efforts by the government in terms of teacher recruitment and learning material support should be aimed at this category of learners.

### Map of Uganda showing areas of coverage



## 1.0. Introduction and Background of Baseline Assessment

### Introduction

The Grassroots nest for Innovations for Change (GRIC) commissioned a baseline evaluation to be conducted in the project areas of Lira, Oyam, Kole and Arua Districts in Uganda, in order to collect data that will be used as the benchmark, based on set performance indicators in the results framework. This report therefore presents the project's background, aims, objectives, study scope including the methods used to address the baseline objectives, and the study findings, as well as conclusions and recommendations.

### 1.1 The context

Education is a powerful tool for growth throughout many sectors in Uganda. Moreover, since gaining its political independence, the country has labelled education as a key component for driving for social growth, economic development and transformation, and driving democratic reforms, towards

achievement of a more united nation. In addition, Uganda's Vision 2040, which provides pathways to becoming a more prosperous nation, highlights education as a crucial mechanism for economic growth by providing human capital. However, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a serious threat to the access to education in Uganda. Innovative solutions are needed to support this sector and ensure continuation of education, especially among rural populations.

The two-year nationwide complete and partial lockdowns left approximately 15 million children out of school. However, these lockdowns did not impact all regions equally. For example, the UN estimates that the pandemic's impact on the education sector will be greatly borne by low and average-income households in both private and public schools. In addition, the loss of instructional time due to lockdown will hurt the poorest communities the most, considering that education is a key player in reducing poverty (UNDP, 14). Uganda also has a very young population, with approximately 75% being below the age of 30 (UBOS, 2014). Supporting the education sector is critical, because such a large percentage of the population has

the potential, if provided with education, to increase capital and improve economic growth. In the age of COVID-19, distance learning has become synonymous with technology, but there are massive gaps in access to technology among urban and rural areas in Uganda, which perpetuates inequality.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), a core principle of GRIC's work, aims to ensure that all children, irrespective of their physical or social backgrounds have access to good quality education at all levels. The Education project for all these implementing partners of GRIC is planned to reach over 20,000 learners. It is important to note, however, that the project is designed to be realistic and implementable, based on existing and potential resource flows.

The GRIC education partner's intervention is designed within the context of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) - 2017-2020. Under objective one of the ESSP, the education sector set out the need to develop and implement effective and efficient programmes for the provision of quality education to the communities. This created a clear entry point for all interventions in the education sector in Uganda especially in line with one of the strategic outcomes of GRIC partners to improve delivery of quality education and training.

## 1.2 Brief about the project and GRIC partnership.

This partnership between GRIC and all the six education partners in the districts of Lira, Oyam, Kole and Arua, is designed with a core principle of ensuring that vulnerable children within the local communities have access to good quality education especially in ECD and Primary school, through community learning approach.

The purpose of this education project is to ensure improved learning outcomes for the increasing numbers of vulnerable community children and adolescents across Uganda. This therefore calls for a baseline study that will provide benchmark information from which achievements against targets will be measured.

## 1.3 Justification and Purpose of the assessment

This baseline survey provides benchmark information against the performance indicators as per the GRIC partners' result framework. The framework measures achievements at output, outcome, and impact levels. The baseline information will form a basis for setting and/or revising performance targets for the remaining period of the plan and ensuring accountability to partners and other stakeholders.

### 1.3.1 Objectives of the assessment

1. To assess the current literacy and numeracy proficiency levels of vulnerable children in primary one up to primary seven.
2. To assess the current situation of children in regards to accessing learning opportunities.
3. To assess the current situation of teacher delivery and quality of education.
4. To assess the structure and effectiveness of community and school-based education leadership systems.
5. To assess how learners were affected by the COVID-19 school closures and the effects this has on improvement in termly assessment of education.

### 1.3.2 Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions per study objective as well as methodology for data collection are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Survey objectives, evaluation questions and methodology**

Objectives	Study Questions	Methodology
<i>To assess the current literacy and numeracy proficiency levels of vulnerable children in primary one up to primary seven.</i>	<p>What is the current status of learners in the vulnerable communities with regard to reading (literacy) and mathematics (numeracy) and continuous access?</p> <p>What factors facilitate/hinder learning, completion, and access?</p>	<p>Document review, learning centre survey using the Annual Education Status Report (ASER) tool, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with parents, SMCs, PTAs and LCs, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with District leaders.</p>
<p><i>To assess the current situation of children in regard to access to learning opportunities.</i></p> <p>Total number of learners able to access any form of education institution in the area.</p> <p>Total number of learners that participated in any form of remedial lessons.</p>	<p>What is the current status of vulnerable children in the communities concerning access to learning opportunities?</p> <p>What is the current status of children with disabilities concerning access to education?</p> <p>What factors facilitate/hinder access to education for children including those with disabilities?</p> <p>What is the perception of parents in this community about the girl child's access to education?</p> <p>What key factors limit children's access to education in this community?</p> <p>What was done by government (stakeholders) to ensure children in this community access education before, during and after COVID-19 lockdown?</p>	<p>Document review, school survey, FGDs and KIIs</p> <p>The Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability were included in the tool.</p>
<i>To assess the current situation of teacher delivery and quality of education?</i>	<p>What are the views of key stakeholders on alternative learning approaches for children who lost learning time?</p> <p>What should be done at school level to ensure effective learning?</p> <p>How can members of school governance structures be empowered to support teaching and learning in school effectively?</p> <p>Are there available materials to support children's self-learning to catch up with the syllabus?</p> <p>What are the stakeholders' opinions on remedial lessons?</p>	<p>Desk review of school reports, School survey and KIIs and FGDs</p>
<i>To assess the structure and effectiveness of community and school-based education leadership systems.</i>	<p>What roles can the PTA/SMC play to support effective learning in the schools?</p> <p>How can stakeholders support children in the rural community to cope up with the learning loss?</p> <p>(Parents, NGO, Government, Community)</p>	<p>Desk review of minutes of coordination meetings and reports, observation through attendance at sample coordination meetings and KIIs</p>

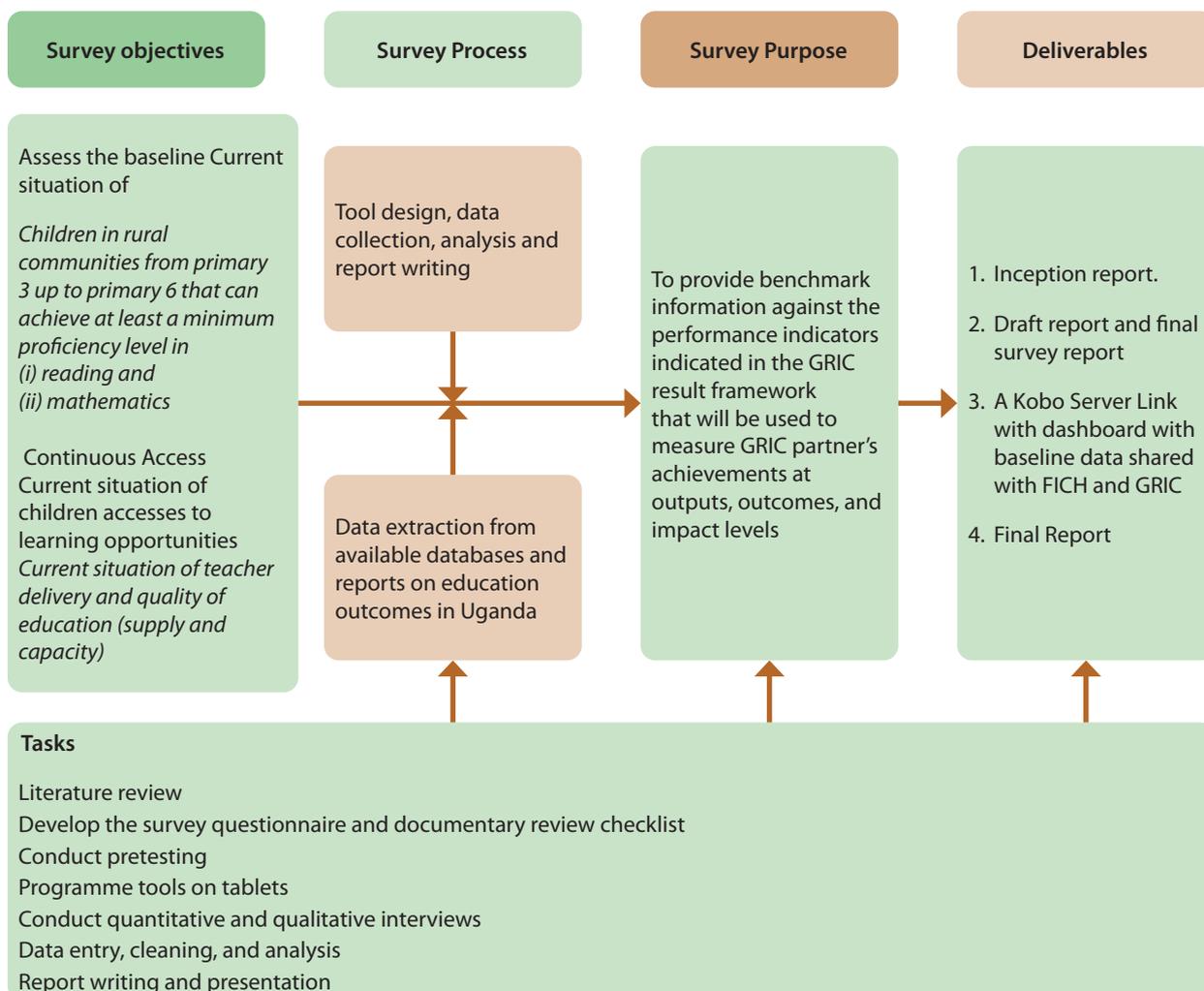
Objectives	Study Questions	Methodology
<i>To assess how learners were affected by the COVID-19 school closures and the effects it has on improvement in termly assessment of education.</i>	<p>How has COVID-19 affected the learning progress of children in this community?</p> <p>What can be done to improve the teaching/learning situation in schools where the children have lagged behind due to COVID-19 lockdown?</p> <p>What are some of the challenges being faced by children as a result of prolonged stay at home?</p> <p>What are the key aspects considered to be positive parenting in this community?</p> <p>During COVID-19 lock down were parents able to support children with home learning?</p> <p>What challenges did parents face with children at home during the prolong stay at home?</p> <p>How can teachers best support children who did not participate in any form of home learning?</p>	KII interviews and Focus Group Discussion.



Pupils during Community Reading event

## 1.4 Conceptual Framework for the baseline Survey

The conceptual framework of the survey is presented in Figure 1 below:



## 2.0 Methodology

This section discusses the methodology that was adopted to address the key baseline objectives. It presents the study design, geographical scope of the study and the targeted respondents, the sample size and the data collection methods that were used as detailed below.

### 2.1 Study Design

In order to achieve the principal purpose of this evaluation, the baseline survey employed a descriptive cross-sectional design using highly participatory mixed methods with a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches and tools. The qualitative research

strategies enabled the team to achieve both breadth and depth of understanding to assess the key study objectives. On the other hand, the quantitative methods helped capture relevant information to establish benchmark data related to the specific objectives and expected results of the intervention. This was useful in measuring progress and achieving the objectives of the final evaluation.

### 2.2 Study Area, Targeted respondents, and sampling strategy

The study areas included four (4) Districts namely: Lira, Oyam, Kole, and Arua, where the project is being implemented. Details of the reach per Sub-County in Table 2 below;

**Table 2: Summary of sub-counties reached with baseline survey**

#	Sub-County	District
1	Bar	Lira
2	Lira	Lira
3	Ngai	Oyam
4	Otwal	Oyam
5	Iceme	Oyam
6	Loro	Oyam
7	Ayer	Kole
8	Bala	Kole
9	Ayivu West,	Arua
10	Arua Central Division	Arua
11	Vurra	Arua

In the table above, a total of 11 Sub-Counties were reached with the baseline and samples drawn from each of them for interviews.

## 2.3 Study Population

The targeted population in this survey comprised of both in-school and out-of-school children aged 6-17 years as well as parents/guardians/caregivers of children aged below 18 years. In addition, the respondents included teachers, district local government officers i.e., District Community Development Officer, Probation and Welfare Officer, District Inspector of Schools, District Education Officer, and from the political leadership; Secretary social services from all the Sub-Counties and the Districts, Parents Teachers Association, School Management Committees; Local Council (LC) chairmen, Parish Chiefs and Village Education Committees.

In-school interviews targeted pupils from P.3 up to P.7 to determine their proficiency in literacy and numeracy. At community level, FGDs were conducted among female and male parents/guardians/caregivers of children aged below 18 years as well as among in- and out- of school girls and boys.

## 2.4 Sampling Procedures

### 2.4.1 Sampling Frame

#### Sampling for Schools

The study used cluster sampling design where Districts were first clustered and then a simple random sample of schools from the clusters were made.

#### Primary School

The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table was used for computation of the sample size with an error margin set to 5%. A total of 42 primary schools were randomly sampled using Stata15 software. In each of the sampled schools, a test was administered to a random sample of 20 pupils (about 10 in lower class and 10 in upper class). Gender balance was ensured by first separating girls from boys and randomly selecting both girls and boys in each class. This included learners with special needs. This figure was considered to be substantial to give a statistical power of 80% and manageable to mark within the given time. A total of 42 primary schools were surveyed with 457 (227girls, 230 boys) respondents obtained, giving a response rate of 86%. Failure to achieve a 100% response rate was due to; several schools that were closed during the lockdown, those that did not have the minimum required sample of learners per class, and failure to mobilize the learners needed from some schools. The list of schools where data was collected is attached as an Annex in this report.

#### Selection of Learners

In each class, girls and boys were lined up separately for random selection. They were counted and each group divided by nine. Every sixth boy or girl from the line was then selected for the interview. The team ensured that there was a secure place/room where the selection took place (to avoid mixing with other children). In each school, learners with special needs were purposively selected where they existed.

## Key Informants

Purposive sampling was used to select KIIs based on the level of involvement in the implementation of the plan. The list of people interviewed is attached as Annex 2.

## Sampling for FGDs

Purposive sampling was conducted to select a total of 31 FGDs with 204 participants reached. FGDs were conducted in each district. The selection considered a 70% of FGDs among the vulnerable children in the rural communities and 30% vulnerable children among the peri urban communities as follows:

- Volunteer teachers.
- Head teachers.
- Parents.
- SMCs.
- PTAs.
- LC1s
- Parish Chiefs

**Inclusion and exclusion criteria:** The inclusion criteria were all in and out of school girls and boys, and parents/guardians of primary school-going children who participated in the survey and FGDs without discrimination based on ethnicity, disability, and social-economic status. The exclusion criteria were the mentally ill and those who could not consent to the interviews.

## 2.5 Study Variables

The study examined the following variables:

### Independent Variables

- Age
- Sex
- Class
- Education level
- Village, Parish, Sub-County, County
- District
- Geographical location
- Special needs status

### Dependent Variables

- Literacy learning outcomes
- Numeracy learning outcomes

## 2.6 Data Limitations

There was a limited capacity by some school teachers to identify children with special needs, in particular cognitive disabilities. As a result, schools were only in position to identify children with obvious disabilities (physical, blind etc). This limitation was overcome by including the Washington Group questions.

## 2.7 Data Collection Methods

### Document Review

A detailed review of secondary data was conducted. The purpose was to obtain relevant preliminary data for some indicators as well as identify gaps which informed the design of data collection tools tailored to collect the missing data. Key documents reviewed are attached as references in this report.

### Learning Outcomes Assessment

A learning outcomes assessment was conducted among learners from P.3 to P.7 to assess the learning achievements in literacy and numeracy using the ASER toolkit. The tools were in English while the instructions were in both English and the main local languages, particularly for P.3 learners who had limited understanding of English. The other languages included Luo, Kiswahili, Kakwa, Lugbarati and Aringa.

### The School Survey

The school survey was conducted among learners in learning centres that exist both in the primary schools and out of school. A structured quantitative survey tool was used to collect data.

### Key Informant Interviews

In total, 17 Key Informant Interviews were conducted among key stakeholders at the district, community and school levels. A Key Informant Interview guide was developed and used to gather in-depth information from the respondents.

### Focus Group Discussions.

Focus Group Discussions were conducted among the respondents selected from the primary schools. FGDs were also conducted among parents/guardians of children of primary school going age. FGD participants also included

all the parents from the vulnerable communities. Inclusion of parents of children with disabilities was ensured during selection of participants. FGDs had a moderator to guide and a recorder to capture the proceedings of the group's discussions. An FGD guide was systematically designed and used.

#### **Extraction and Review of data from the partners.**

The baseline activity collected secondary data from 6 partners especially on location and lists of schools where the project intends to operate, obtaining preliminary values for populating the indicator performance table where applicable.

#### **Geographic Information System Mapping.**

Geographic Information System (GIS) was used first to understand the spatial distribution of the schools/community learning centres around the four districts of Lira, Oyam, Kole and Arua. Schools were identified based on their distribution and the statistical sampling technique prior to fieldwork. These schools were

remapped during fieldwork to ascertain areas of data collection.

After fieldwork, relevant quantitative data at District and community level were analysed and re-presented in a GIS system. Results were overlain on other existing data such as population and infrastructure to identify spatial patterns. Maps of raw data were presented.

Mapping for the baseline survey was done using the customised KoBo Collect app. The KoBo Collect toolbox has an inbuilt question that allows for collection of GPS (Global Positioning System) readings. During the baseline survey, GPS readings/coordinates were collected in the latitude-longitude format using the WGS 1984 Arc1960 datum system. Coordinates were collected for each school. In areas where coordinates could not be collected automatically through KoBo Collect, other free GPS coordinate tools were used such as Google GPS apps. Together with all the other data, cleaning and analysis was done in Ms Excel and Access.



Pupils reading

## 2.8 Execution/Implementation of the Survey.

### Field Teaming

A total of four teams were formed based on the district location and routing. Each team comprised of Research Assistants (RAs) who were fluent in the local community languages. In addition, all RAs were familiar with at least English, Lango, Acholi and Lugbarati languages which are widely spoken in Lira, Kole, Oyam and Arua Districts. Each team was assigned a supervisor for effective supervision and quality assurance as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Field Teaming**

No.	District	Sub-County
1	Lira (Team 1)	Bar, Lira
2	Kole (Team 2)	Ayer, Bala
3	Oyam (Team 3)	Ngai, Otwal, Loro and Iceme
4	Arua (Team 4)	Ayivu West Division, Arua Central Division, Ayivu East Division, Vurra Sub-County

### Pre-testing

The data collection tools were pretested a day before data collection at Apii Primary School, one of the non-sampled schools in Kole District. Thereafter, feedback from the pre-test was used to fine-tune and finalize the tools. Due to limited time, few members of the research team were involved in the pre-test for them to be acquainted with data collection tools and methodology.

### Electronic data collection

All quantitative data was collected electronically using Kobo Collect software, a computer software programmed on tablets. Data capture was instant, thus real time data was submitted to the server as soon as it was edited and finalized.

## 2.9 Data Management, Analysis and Data Quality Assurance

This section presents how data was cleaned, entered and analysed.

### Data collection

Quantitative data collection forms were designed using KoBo Collect and uploaded onto the enumerators' tablets. Data was collected, edited, finalized and sent to a central server and instantly uploaded to the cloud to allow for real-time data analysis and situational awareness. Data collectors were trained on the use of the Kobo Collect. Data was exported to SPSS for analysis. Qualitative data was collected using hard copy tools and recorders were used to audio recording (with consent) the interviews for backup.

## 2.10 Data Entry and Analysis

### Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data was directly captured electronically using tablets. Data was extracted from the server and exported to SPSS22 for analysis to obtain the various tables and graphs. Graphs were particularly generated using MS Excel and MS Word. Data was analysed to generate descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, means and totals. Cross tabulation tables were produced to establish the influence of social demographic factors against key variables.

### Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data was organized using the NVivo computer-aided data analysis software to augment quantitative findings. Data gathered and recorded from various sources was cleaned and transcribed in verbatim as well as analysed manually at some stage following a step-by-step process. Key themes were identified and later condensed into meaningful codes. Deeper meanings were captured based on observations made during data collection.

### Data Quality Assurance

The quality of data was maintained throughout the process through: (a) use of reliable sources of information, corroboration and cross-referencing with other credible sources; (b) the design and use of the standard data collection tools and methods for analysis; (c) rigorous training of the research team to ensure that they are fully conversant with the use of tools; (d) pretesting and reviewing the data collection tools based on the results of the pre-test; (e) having the research team members and supervisors crosscheck each filled-in data collection tool for

completeness, consistency, accuracy, reliability and validity where applicable (this checking was done during the day and at the end of the day so that corrections were done before field teams left the sites); (f) daily de-briefing among the research team conducted every evening to share experiences and chart out strategies for the way forward; (g) conducting random spot checks by supervisors in the field to validate the authenticity of compiled data.

## 2.11 Ethical Considerations

The survey consent forms, parental consent forms, assent forms and the proposed data collection tools were designed. Interviewers formally asked consent before continuing with the interviews.

The assignment adhered to the following accepted codes of conduct;

**Seeking consent:** Informed written consent was obtained from respondents before any interview was conducted.

**Maintaining confidentiality:** Confidentiality of all data collected from various respondents was ensured, and anonymity was maintained throughout the data collection process.

**Sensitive information:** Information considered private and/or infringing on the privacy of respondents was avoided.

**Avoiding bias:** The team ensured that the questions were well designed to avoid bias.

## 2.12. COVID-19 Mitigation Measures

The survey was carried out in January 2022 during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. A COVID-19 Risk Management Plan was developed by the consultant and submitted to the district tasks force for approval. Additionally, enumerators adhered to the Ministry of Health (MoH) guidelines and enforced the following measures to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19;

1. Regular washing of hands with soap and water or using sanitizer before and after interacting with respondents.
2. Mandatory enforcement of wearing face-masks for all interviewers and respondents.

3. Social distancing was ensured by maintaining a distance of at least one meter between interviewers and respondents during activities such as FGDs and trainings to prevent person-to-person spread of COVID-19.
4. Prohibiting handshakes and hugging at all times
5. Utilizing virtual communication methods like Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp and telephone calls as much as possible to conduct planning meetings and communicate to Partners, Districts and schools while scheduling appointments.

## 3.0 Study Findings

### Introduction

This section explores the findings of the Baseline survey conducted in Lira, Oyam, Kole and Arua Districts for the Education project funded by GRIC and implemented by six partners. The survey was based on four GRIC partnership pillars of; improving student learning outcomes with a special focus on literacy and numeracy skills, strengthening school leadership and governance by building the capacity of school boards to build effective schools, strengthening parental engagement in their children's education, and building youth leadership for community driven education and social development initiatives.

**Pillar 1: Improving student Learning outcome with special focus in literacy and numeracy skills.**

### 3.1: Analysis of the current literacy and numeracy proficiency levels of vulnerable children in primary one up to primary seven

The baseline assessment sought to establish the current literacy and numeracy proficiency status using the ASER tool that was first developed as

a nationwide survey of reading and math achievement of children from rural India. It has since been adapted and contextualized for use in Uganda by both MoES and Education development agencies, building upon the successes of other early literacy/numeracy tools used extensively in the Country.

The ASER English Literacy tool assesses a child's ability to identify letters, read words, read simple sentences, read a simple story, and answer oral questions about the story they have read. The rating of performance was as follows; Literacy learners in 'Level 1' are those that can read 4 or more letters from a structured list otherwise they are in 'Level 0'; 'Level 2' those who are able to read 4 out of 5 words provided correctly; 'Level 3' learners who are able to read a paragraph with sentences; 'Level 4' learners who are able to read a story fluently; and, 'Level 5' learners who are able to answer 1 or 2 comprehension questions correctly. In numeracy;

Level 1- A learner is able to point to and identify a number between 1-9 otherwise Level 0

Level 2- A learner is able to point and identify 4 out of 5 numbers between 10-99

Level 3- A child is able to solve at least 2 addition problem solutions with carry-over

Level 4- A child is able to solve at least 2 subtraction problem solutions with borrowing

### 3.1.1 Proficiency in Literacy

#### a) Performance by learners' grades

The best performance was registered in P7 with 39% of the learners in Level 5, none in level 0 and 1 (0%). P6 followed with 26% in Level 5, 46% Level 4, 33% Level 3, 13% Level 2 and 1% Level 1.

The lowest performance was however in P3 where only 4% of the learners are in Level 5 and the majority (69%) in Level 0 as shown in Figure 1 below.

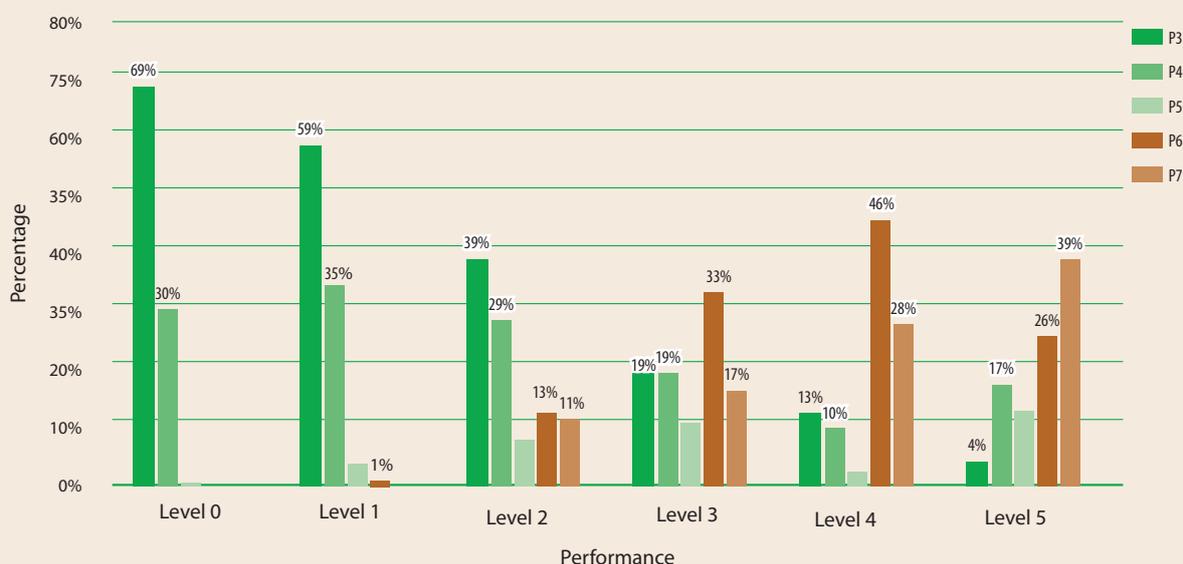


Figure 2: Overall performance across classes; Source: Baseline (January, 2022)

#### b) Performance by district

The best performing District was Kole at 38% with Ayer Sub-County registering 66% of learners scoring across Level 3 and 5. Lira District followed at 28% with Lira Sub-County registering the highest number (80%) of learners within Level 4 and 5.

Oyam registered 16% of learners within Level 3 and 5 with the best Sub-County being Loro represented by 25% of learners within Level 3 and 5.

The lowest learners' performance was registered in Arua where 91% of them were in Level 3 and below. Arua central division was the worst performing division where all the learners assessed were in Level 1.

**Table 4: Literacy proficiency per District/Sub-County**

	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Grand Total
<b>Arua</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Arua Central	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Ayivu East Division	0%	27%	55%	9%	0%	9%	100%
Ayivu West	61%	25%	11%	0%	4%	0%	100%
Oli	0%	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%	100%
Vurra	33%	50%	0%	0%	0%	17%	100%
<b>Kole</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Bala	20%	25%	13%	18%	25%	0%	100%
Ayer Town Council	0%	33%	0%	33%	33%	0%	100%
Bala Town Council	0%	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Ayer Sub County	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
<b>Lira</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Barr	61%	22%	17%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Lira Sub-county	0%	0%	0%	20%	40%	40%	100%
Lira city west	0%	0%	21%	23%	28%	28%	100%
<b>Oyam</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Loro	25%	25%	25%	0%	25%	0%	100%
Acaba	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Iceme	35%	41%	22%	2%	0%	0%	100%
Loro Town Council	17%	37%	26%	9%	9%	2%	100%
Ngai	6%	18%	35%	18%	12%	10%	100%
Otwal	60%	35%	3%	0%	0%	2%	100%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### c) Performance by sex

Variation in performance in the assessment across sex noted that females performed better than males.

6% of females and 4% of males were in Level 5, 8% of females and 9% of males were in Level 4, 5% of females and 10% of males were in Level 3, 22% of females and 16% of males were in Level 2. It is important to note that while at Level 5, slightly more girls perform better than boys. Furthermore, there are significantly more girls than boys at Level 2.

Overall, girls performed better than boys in literacy; 41% of girls and only 39% of boys were able to read words, construct a sentence, read a paragraph and also able to comprehend a story. See figure 3 below:

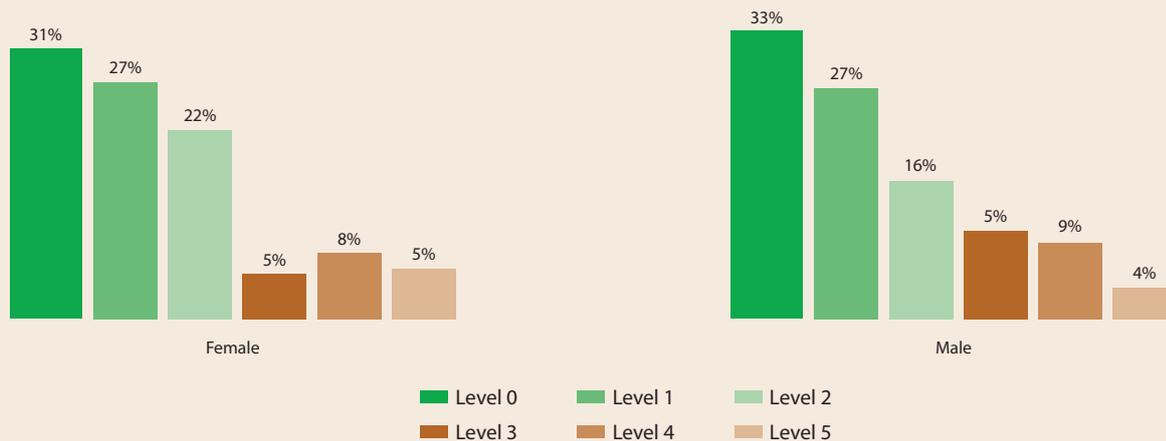


Figure 3: Performance in ASER by Sex

**d) Performance of learners with disability**

There was no significant variation between learners without disability (n=413) and those with disability (n=44) in ASER scores as follows; Level 5 (5% of both categories of learners), Level 4 (9% without disability and 5% learners with disability), Level 3 (8% without disability, 5% with disability), Level 2 (19% without disability and 16% with disability), Level 1 (26% without disability and 34% with disability), and in Level 0, 32% of learners were without disability while 36% had a disability. The learners included in the disability category were those with physical, visual, and hearing impairments.

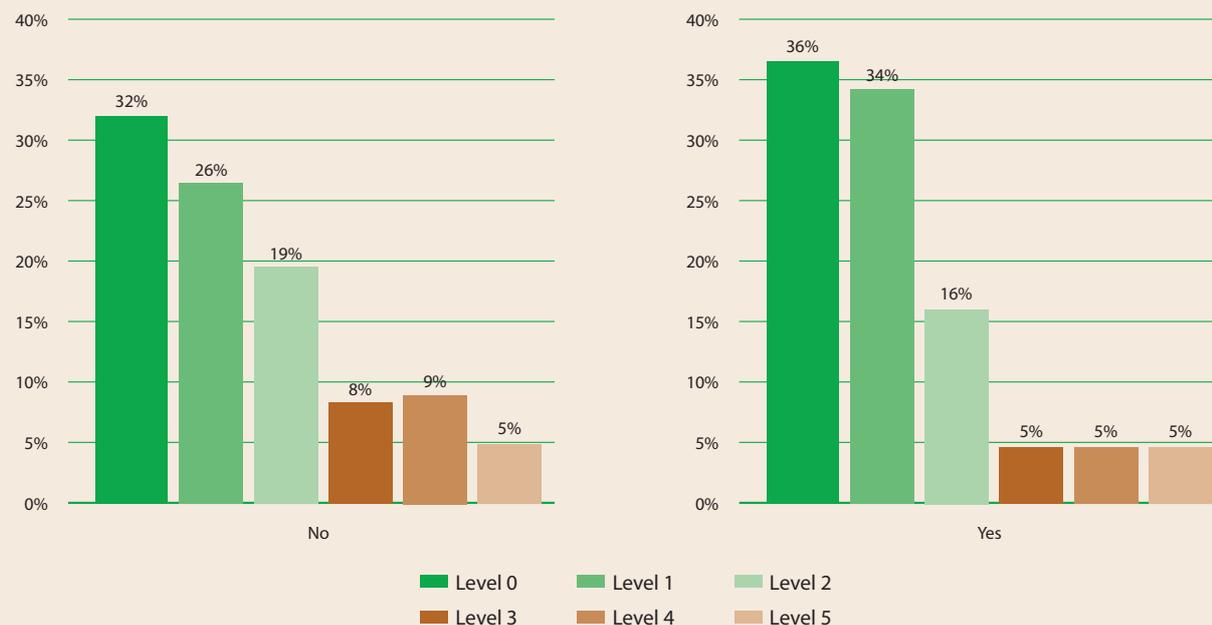


Figure 4: Performance in ASER by Disability Status

**e) Performance of learners by age**

Variation in performance across age was noted during the assessment in that the learners who are 12 years performed better than their counterparts aged 6-11 and 13-17 years. Learners between the age of 6-8 years scored a cumulative figure of literacy Levels 3, 4 and 5.

Learners between the age of 9-11 years who are defined by MoES as the age cohort for P.4 up to P.6, scored above 4% but below 7%. However, performance of learners aged 12 years rose significantly to 29% more than performance of learners between 6 to 11 years. From the findings above, it can be concluded that there are weak significant relationships between age and performance of learners in literacy.

Table 5: Numeracy levels by age

Numeracy level disaggregated by age							
Age of the learner	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 3 and above	% Performance
6	9	1	0	0	0	0	0%
7	8	3	0	0	0	0	0%
8	2	7	4	0	0	0	0%
9	4	19	20	3	2	5	5%
10	22	52	18	4	1	5	5%
11	9	17	24	3	4	7	7%
12	12	27	33	17	16	33	34%
13	10	7	21	5	5	10	10%
14	0	6	9	5	13	18	19%
15	0	3	8	5	7	12	13%
16	0	2	4	3	1	4	4%
17	0	0	0	0	2	2	2%
	<b>76</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.1.2 Proficiency in Numeracy

#### a) Performance by class

Overall, the best performance in numeracy was recorded in P6 with 41% of learners in Level 4 and none in level 0 (0%). This was followed by P7 with 27% in Level 4, 46% Level 4, 18% Level 3, 6% Level 2 and 1% Level 1.

The lowest performance was in P2 where none of the learners was able to score between Levels 2 and 4 as per *Figure 5* below:

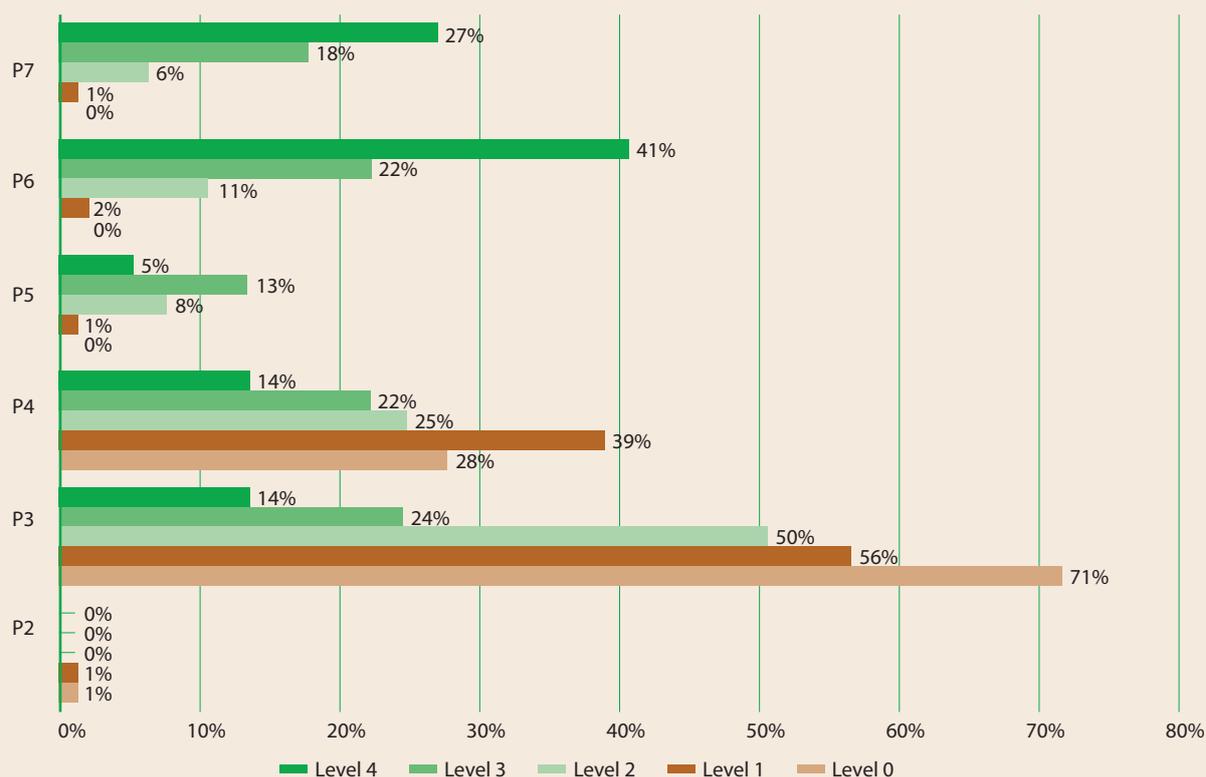


Figure 5: Overall performance across classes

### b) Performance by District

The best performing Districts were Arua and Kole with 34.70% of the learners between Levels 3 and 4. They were followed by Lira District at 21.17%

Oyam District emerged last with 12.84% of learners within Level 3 and 4, and 30.28% in Level 0. The worst performing Sub-County was Acaba and Otwal.

It is important to note that in general, 16.63 % of learners are performing at Level 0, with the overall performance of the 4 Districts standing at 17.95%. This implies that out of every 100 learners in the District, only 20 can perform addition with a “carry over” as represented in the Table below:

**Table 6: Numeracy proficiency per District/Sub-County**

District	Level of performance					Grand Total
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	
<b>Arua</b>	<b>0.00%</b>	<b>30.19%</b>	<b>52.83%</b>	<b>7.55%</b>	<b>7.55%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Arua Central	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Ayivu East Division	0.00%	9.09%	36.36%	27.27%	18.18%	100%
Ayivu West	0.00%	32.14%	67.86%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Oli	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Vurra	0.00%	33.33%	16.67%	16.67%	33.33%	100%
<b>Kole</b>	<b>12.24%</b>	<b>20.41%</b>	<b>32.65%</b>	<b>16.33%</b>	<b>18.37%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Bala	12.50%	22.50%	27.50%	17.50%	20.00%	100%
Ayer Town Council	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	0.00%	33.33%	100%
Bala Town Council	20.00%	0.00%	60.00%	20.00%	0.00%	100%
Ayer Sub County	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
<b>Lira</b>	<b>2.92%</b>	<b>35.04%</b>	<b>32.85%</b>	<b>12.41%</b>	<b>8.76%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Barr	4.49%	51.69%	39.33%	2.25%	2.25%	100%
Lira Sub County	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	60.00%	20.00%	100%
Lira city west	0.00%	4.65%	23.26%	27.91%	20.93%	100%
<b>Oyam</b>	<b>30.28%</b>	<b>32.11%</b>	<b>23.85%</b>	<b>7.34%</b>	<b>5.50%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Loro	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	100%
Acaba	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100%
Iceme	34.78%	41.30%	21.74%	2.17%	0.00%	100%
Loro Town Council	25.93%	40.74%	16.67%	11.11%	5.56%	100%
Ngai	2.04%	16.33%	48.98%	12.24%	16.33%	100%
Otwal	53.33%	28.33%	15.00%	1.67%	1.67%	100%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16.63%</b>	<b>31.51%</b>	<b>30.85%</b>	<b>9.85%</b>	<b>8.10%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### c) Performance of numeracy by sex

Variation in performance in assessment of numeracy across sex revealed that females performed better than males. In all, 7% of females and 9% of males were in Level 4, 11% of females and 9% of males were in Level 3, 32% of females and 30% of males were in Level 2, 18% of females and 18% of males were between Levels 3 and 4 as shown in Figure 6 below:

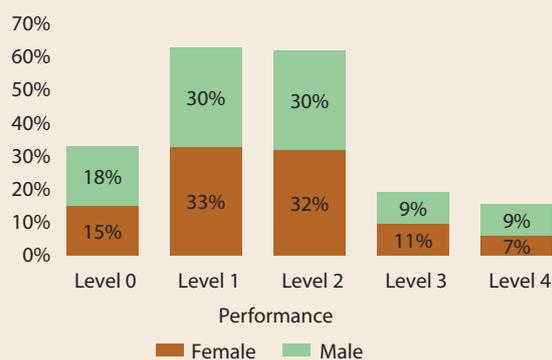


Figure 6: Performance in ASER by Sex

#### d) Performance of learners with disability

There was insignificant variation between learners with and without disability, Level 4 (9% without disability and 2% learners with disability), Level 3 (10% without disability, 9% with disability), Level 2 (31% without disability and 30% with disability), Level 1 (30% without disability and 43% with disability) and Level 0 had 17% of learners without disability and 14% with disability. This is as shown in Figure 7 below:

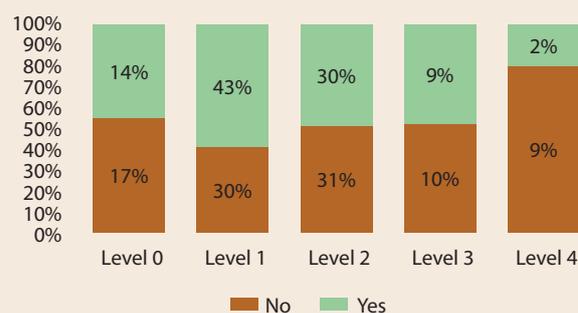


Figure 7: Performance in ASER by Disability Status

#### e) Performance of learners disaggregated by age.

Variation in performance in numeracy across age was noted during the assessment in that the learners who are 12 years old performed better than their counterparts aged between 6-11 years, and 13-17 years. Findings show that learners between the age of 6-8 years, of literacy Levels 3 and 4 scored a cumulative figure of less than 30% (total of Level 3 and Level 4). Learners between the age of 6-11 years are defined by MoES as school-going children for P.4 up to P.6. From the findings indicated in the table below, learners aged 12 years scored 34%, which is significantly higher than cumulative figure of learners between the age of 6-11 years (P.3-P.6). Overall, learners that are aged 13 years and above scored less than 30%. It can be concluded that there is a possibly weak significant relationship between age of learners and performance in numeracy in the community schools that were reached.

Table 7: Numeracy level disaggregated by age

Numeracy level disaggregated by age							
Age of the learner	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 3 and above	% Performance
6	9	1	0	0	0	0	0%
7	8	3	0	0	0	0	0%
8	2	7	4	0	0	0	0%
9	4	19	20	3	2	5	5%
10	22	52	18	4	1	5	5%
11	9	17	24	3	4	7	7%
12	12	27	33	17	16	33	34%
13	10	7	21	5	5	10	10%

Numeracy level disaggregated by age							
Age of the learner	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 3 and above	% Performance
14	0	6	9	5	13	18	19%
15	0	3	8	5	7	12	13%
16	0	2	4	3	1	4	4%
17	0	0	0	0	2	2	2%
	<b>76</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>
17	0	0	0	0	2	2	2%
	<b>76</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

## 4.0 Access to quality education (School-going children aged 3-12 years)

### 4.1 Pre-primary Education (3-5 years)

MoES policy is that provision of ECD services is led by private sector but the Ministry provides policy guidelines and implementation framework for monitoring quality of ECD services. From the stakeholders' Focus Group Discussions conducted with parents and school management committees, there is limited involvement of government in provision of ECD services and this has affected access to ECD services especially in rural communities.

The District Education Departments in the Districts are responsible for inspection and supervision of the ECD centres. However, there is limited monitoring and support provided to ECD centres by the District Education Authority. Financial challenges inhibit inspection of all schools and learning centres. Although the District Education Department is mandated to provide technical supervision of ECD centres, the Department is overstretched by overwhelming demands and lacks capacity to reach all ECD centres. This lack of inspection and supervision of ECD service delivery coupled with lack of appropriate facilities and human resources undermines the quality of ECD services thus has a negative impact on learning and stimulation for children. The FGD participants attested to low access to ECD services in the rural communities due to the fees levied by centre proprietors, and

the high cost of school uniforms against low income by parents in the rural setting. Above all, it was evident that some communities do not have ECD centres established so that children can access them.

### 4.2 Primary Education (6-12 years)

In Uganda, primary education is free and all vulnerable children have full access to government primary schools that are located in the community and aided by the government. However, under Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy, there are other costs of education parents have to cater for and this can be prohibitive for many parents<sup>1</sup>. In the vulnerable communities of Oyam, Kole, Lira and Arua, provision of primary education is managed by the District local government, private sector and some NGOs. Generally, the presence of large number of learners in these government schools against the poor infrastructure has strained the already poorly facilitated schools, thereby affecting the quality of learning. This has provided a good basis of emergence of community-based learning centres.

### 4.3 Baseline findings on access to primary education

Learning opportunities are core factors that facilitate or hinder learners to access schools. Overall, 96% (48% males and 48% females) of the learners reported that they have access to either informal or formal education institutions

<sup>1</sup> Under UPE policy, parents are expected to cater for scholastic materials, school uniform, meals etc.

including community learning centres, and only 4% (3% females and 1% males) did not have access as per Table 2 below.

Availability of schools within accessible distances in all the four Districts is one of the main factors that influences access to learning opportunities. The learners' proximity to the schools is key in that, the nearer they are to the schools, the more they can access learning opportunities. In all Districts within the program area, the respondents reported majorly distances being 1-2KM with Arua 11%, Kole 10%, Lira 21%, and Oyam 36%. 2% of respondents in Lira and Oyam however reported a distance of 5+ KM as shown in Figure 8 below:

**Table 8:**

Accessibility/Sex	
<b>No</b>	<b>4%</b>
Female	3%
Male	1%
<b>Yes</b>	<b>96%</b>
Female	48%
Male	48%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

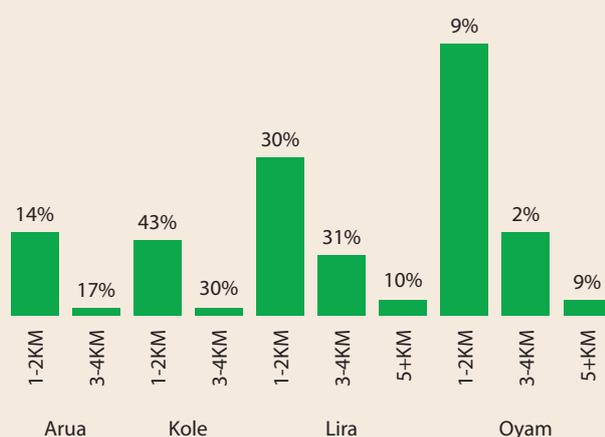


Figure 8: Distance to the nearest school per District, Source: Baseline data, Jan 2022

Further findings from Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with key stakeholders show that;

49% of the respondents said that the parents have a positive attitude towards supporting education for their children while 51% said the parents have a negative attitude towards

education for their children. This is an area of great concern as parents are key to their children's education.

Additionally, the level of access to education by children within the community also stands at 36% as portrayed by the study. The low level of access to education is attributed to several factors such as; non-affordable private schools and few government schools that are located within reach of the community.

**“ They have a positive attitude about education because majority of parents/guardians are able to send their children to school and pay their school fees,” - PTA and parents.**

**“ Private and government schools are available and within reach of the community,” - City Inspector of schools.**

However, it was noted that the perception of parents towards the girl child education is very negative. Moreover, majority of the parents prefer to educate the boy child as compared to the girl child. This is because the parents believe that educating the girl child is a waste of resources and time since they perform poorly and some of them get pregnant while at school. Majority of parents cited a high rate of school-going age children before, during and after COVID-19 as an example of how girls can spend the money.

**“ Some still consider it a waste of money to pay fees for the girl child,” - DEO Kole.**

**“ They prefer to educate the boy child.” - Community Development Officer.**

Furthermore, it was noted that school dropout is still a major challenge across the four Districts of the study. The high level of school drop outs in turn reduces the number of children accessing education within the community. Therefore, some of the factors that are limiting children from accessing education within the community are; lack of parents' support towards the learners' education, children's poor attitude towards education, lack of enough scholastic materials,

lack of sanitary pads for girls, early marriages, poor quality facilities that are not gender sensitive, and financial constraints.

**“ Negative attitude of parents towards education especially for the girl child and financial constraints are some of the factors limiting access to education.” - Community Development Officer of Oyam District.**

**“ Many children drop out of school because their parents have failed to pay school dues and to provide scholastic materials.” - Teacher.**

The study reveals that in order to address the low level of access to education by children especially the out of school girls within the community, it is important to conduct vigorous awareness creation sessions for the community members. In particular, parents and learners should be targeted to inform them about the importance of education and taking children to school. Likewise, sensitization of the community can be done through community dialogue meetings, feedback sessions and radio talk shows. Also, empowering the community leadership structures to mobilize the children to go back to school, creating inclusive school facilities and providing the school children with the necessary scholastic materials such as books, pens, pencils and sanitary pad for the girls who need them, can also enhance access to education within the community. Additionally, the majority of respondents (CDO, Teachers, Head Teachers, DIS and DEO) suggested that with current prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, there is need to continue implementing home learning practices and the schools need to invest in precautionary COVID-19 SOPs and supplies such as masks and sanitizers for the teachers and school going children.

**“ Sensitization of the children and parents to appreciate the importance of going to school, improving on the facilities in school is very important.” - City Education Officer of Lira City.**

**“ By use of village education committee to ensure children go to school.” - Parish Chief.**

Similarly, in order to increase school retention and completion rate of the girl child, there is need to sensitise the community on prioritising the girl child’s education. This can be done through community role models that the girls identify with as a strategy to encourage them to have good values, stay in school and pursue academic excellence. Teachers and relevant education focused stakeholders (including CSOs) should provide ongoing group and individual, general, and targeted guidance and counselling. Provision of sanitary towels and separate changing rooms for girls will create a school environment that promotes the dignity and privacy of female learners.

**“ In some schools, the boys and girls share the toilet, thus, it is good to build for them toilets and washrooms so that they can have privacy.” - One of the Teacher in Iceme Sub-County.**

According to the study, only 32% of the parents know how to support their children to access continued learning at home. 68% of the parents do not know how to do this.

## 5.0 Quality of Learning and Learning Environment

Quality of learning at the school level is an interplay of several factors including learning/ classroom environment, teaching methodology, language of instruction, and availability of instructional materials among others. However, in the vulnerable communities, findings generated from FGDs show that the capacity of teachers to identify and handle divergent learning needs of children is the most crucial factor affecting quality of learning.

### 5.1 Findings from Key Informant Interviews and focus group discussions with key Stakeholders shows that;

This part of the report presents a narrative of the views of primary education stakeholders (SMCs, LCs, SMCs, PTAs, VECs, DIS, DEO, CDOs, DCDOs) in the Sub-Counties located in the four Districts of Kole, Oyam, Lira and Arua, on the importance

of remedial lessons to catch up on lost learning, commitment of teachers towards teaching and learning, opinions on the level of numeracy and literacy competence of learners by stakeholders, and effective learning.

Findings reveal that the major factors affecting the quality of learning are; the limited participation of children in the teaching and learning process due to large class sizes, and gaps in skills of teacher. These affect the overall management of the classrooms in the UPE schools.

### 5.1.1 Learners catching up on lost learning time and inclusiveness learning.

Findings indicate that 98% of the respondents had positive responses towards attaining alternative community learning approaches such as home-based learning at the community learning centre, to boost the quality of education for learners who lost their learning time. They even provided some key suggestions that can be taken up such as organizing remedial lessons, providing home learning materials, airing formal lessons on the local radio stations existing within the community, and having larger coverage especially during the weekends to cater for rural

families to improve the quality of education for their children. This, therefore, provides a good basis for GRIC partners to leverage the good attitudes in order to undertake their intervention since it aligns to what the stakeholders desire to achieve in their community.

**“ The children should be given remedial lessons, homework, weekend lessons,” - Parish Chiefs.**

**“ There should be remedial teaching/ extra lessons in the morning and evening, a lot of homework and assignment to cover the lost lessons and regress learning. Teaching methods should be child-centred, and assessments informative to determine exactly the learning lost.” - District Inspector of schools.**

Furthermore, home-based learning helps the learners and teachers to cover the whole syllabus especially content that was not covered during the lost learning period. Moreover, the remedial lessons help learners to catch up on their learning gaps especially the slow learners and home-based learning. The lessons not



Pupils reading a story during community reading day

only encourage peer to peer learning but also strengthen parental engagement.

**“Home based learning is a community centred learning approach that helps children to compensate on lost learning time and catch up in learning gaps.” - City Inspector of Schools.**

During interview with learners, at least 45% indicated that all remedial lessons, home learning using home learning study packs, small group learning and other approaches used during lockdown were very effective. 26% said they were averagely effective and this was validated by responses from Parish Chiefs and education inspectors who strongly recommended the need to strengthen community learning approaches and implement remedial lessons to help catch up with lost learning. This is represented in the graph below.

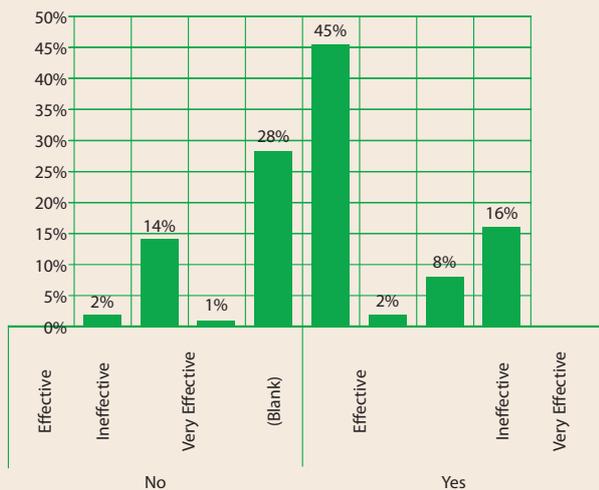


Figure 8: Effectiveness of remedial lessons

In addition, 95% of the respondents said that the use of self-learning materials to support the learners catch up with the syllabus are available though they are not enough to cater for all the learners within the various schools.

### 5.1.2 Teachers commitment in teaching and learning

Participants (88%) affirmed that the teachers in the community are committed to teaching and learning of children. On the other hand, 12% said that the teachers are not committed to teaching children and their learning based on the fact that they report late to school. There were also some cases of teachers missing lessons, inadequate accommodation for teachers

within the school, and limited parent’s support in the children’s education causing a delay in payment of the teachers. In a nut shell, teachers are committed to teaching and learning of the children since they are always available to support the learners, they always conduct timely assessments for the learners, and guide them where necessary. However, they face challenges such as inadequate accommodation that greatly affect their service delivery to the children hence affecting the quality of learning.

**“They are able to go and teach under hard conditions like teaching learners in dilapidated facilities.” - One Parent lamented.**

In addition, the study participants emphasized that the volunteer teachers need to be motivated in a timely manner. They also need to be given accommodation within the school, be continuously capacity built, and have timely delivery of the necessary instructional materials to motivate them to execute their tasks appropriately. The figure below shows numeracy and literacy competence of children.

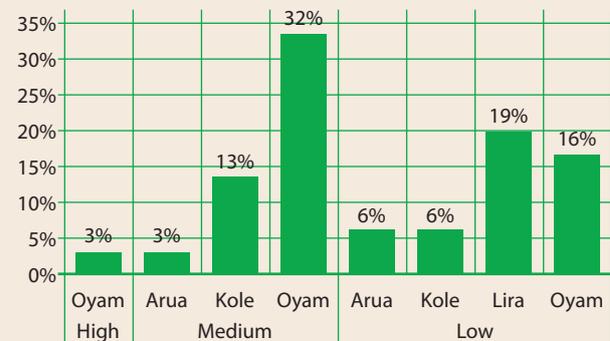


Figure 9: Numeracy and literacy competence of children

Therefore, to increase the numeracy and literacy competencies, it is important to work with parents and teachers to create a linkage between homes and schools to ensure that learners attend schools regularly and on time. Continuous structured engagement with parents geared at changing their attitude towards supporting learning and in taking the lead in providing their children with reading materials (textbooks) is crucial. Teachers should be encouraged to use visual aids when teaching, promote group work and peer-to-peer learning, inter-class competitions such as spelling bee and maths contest. This should go hand in hand with the teachers being supported to access

continuous professional development to meet the dynamic learning needs of their students.

**“ Provision of reading books, good learning aids, giving homework and encouraging remedial lessons.” - PTA member.**

The study also revealed that effective learning among school going children can be achieved by providing a conducive school environment that is child friendly and teacher motivating. Such an environment contains the following; adequate learning spaces, school feeding program, spacious co-curricular areas, and gender sensitive and disability sensitive facilities. Additionally, the teachers can also be motivated through timely payment of their salaries and incentives, provision of enough teaching materials, and continuous capacity building and mentorship. Furthermore, teachers and parents ought to give the learners appropriate guidance and counselling.

**“ A friendly environment should be put in place for example play grounds, facilities for the disabled, and special rooms for the girl child. A senior female or male teacher should be available to guide the children.” - Community Development Officer.**

**“ Proper planning per teacher, provision of proper teaching materials, regular support supervision, guidance and counselling for the learners.” - City Education Officer.**

## 6.0 Systems Strengthening Structures

### **Pillar 1: Strengthening school leadership and governance by building the capacity of school boards for purposes of building effective schools**

Education involves several stakeholders in order to achieve access, quality and improved learning outcomes. It is for this reason that the study sought to establish if all stakeholders at grassroots levels understand their primary roles in ensuring improved learning outcomes

especially for the vulnerable learners in the community. The findings that emerged from a discussion with lower-level education stakeholders (LC, PDC, Parish Chiefs, Sub County Chiefs, CDOs, VEC, SMCs, PTAs and others) are outlined below;

### 6.1 Introduction

Community participation has been embraced and considered as a very effective strategy for promoting or restructuring education in any community. This community participation is possible only with the efforts of the community leaders or school management structures. Therefore, capacity of community leadership is important for increased community participation for education. The success of a community structure for education such as VEC, PTA, SMC, etc., is based on their capacity to manage education functions of any existing community learning centres or formal schools.

Community leaders can make the environment conducive to the desire for education in the community. They can heighten the desire in the parents to such an extent that sending children to school can become a norm in the community.

### 6.2 Capacity building of school community governance and leadership structures

One of the main responsibilities of a community leadership structure for education is to ensure community members participate in education as well as other related activities. Community governance structures can fulfil their entrusted responsibility only through the training that equips them with; a better understanding and capacity to fulfil their roles, understanding of education monitoring tools and decision-making process, allows their views to be expressed and incorporated into future development and planning for education. Therefore, acquisition of new knowledge and skills enhance their effectiveness in addressing issues affecting education their communities. Training also helps them to identify opportunities and address crisis in innovative ways. The training is also relevant in that it helps in identifying out of school children and special focus groups, and how parents and youth can be engaged to support education.

42% of the respondents think that the school management structures understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring children access any form of education in the community. On the contrary, 58% suggested that school management structures do not understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring children access any form of education in the community. As such, the baseline study suggested that members of the school governance structures need to be empowered to effectively support teaching and learning in school by clearly training them on their roles and responsibilities, providing them with the necessary tools (documents) to execute their tasks of supporting the school and encouraging them to conduct regular meetings that are informative. Generally, there is also demand for partners to strengthen school leadership and governance by building the capacity of school boards for purposes of building effective schools.

**“ Conduct capacity building activities such as trainings to empower them knowledge-wise. They should regularly hold meetings.” - Community Development Officer.**

According to the study respondents, 84% of the management structures are in place and only 16% are partially or non-existent.

Of the 84% that exist, only 14% of them are properly functional i.e. they conduct meetings at least once a term, action points and meeting resolutions are tracked, and parents' engagement in education through PTA meetings is evidenced as well.

This means that the majority of the existing school management structures (86%) are only present on paper and are non-functional due poor communication and coordination by the existing leadership, and low level of understanding of roles and responsibilities.

### **Pillar 2: Strengthening parental engagement in their children's education**

Most research shows how children's literacy improves when their parents are involved in schools, regardless of the parents' level of educational achievement (Marphatia et al., 2010). Promoting higher levels of parental

involvement may help to reduce performance differences across socio-economic groups (Borgonovi and Montt, 2012). Evidence suggests that with support, disadvantaged parents can become more engaged in their children's learning and that in turn, can lead to better outcomes (Axford et al., 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of parental support as parents have had to join the front-line teaching and learning process (Winthrop et al., 2020). However, parents' lack of education and ability to provide support for homework, may crucially affect child learning outcomes, especially during school closures (Brossard et al., 2020).

## **6.3 Parenting and parental involvement and strengthening programmes**

Findings show that parenting programmes aim to create awareness on the importance of parents' role in supporting their children's growth and development and to strengthen or modify their attitudes, beliefs, and practices in relation to caring for a child. Parental involvement in programmes aim to strengthen community home-school relations like in Districts of Oyam, Kole, Arua and Lira with the objective of improving educational outcomes is very important.

District leaders highlighted that capacity building programmes should focus on marginalized or disadvantaged parents, which resonates with the GRIC partnerships programmes' approach to support socially disadvantaged families and parents of young children.

## **6.4 Roles of stakeholders in children's education**

The saying 'it takes a village to raise a child', cuts across children's access to education. This indicates that for children within a community to achieve good education, several stakeholders have to execute their roles and responsibilities appropriately. Some of these roles suggested by the respondents are presented in the table below;

**Table 9: Shareholders and their roles**

Stakeholder	Roles
Parents	Provide the necessary school requirements such as scholastic materials for the children to go to school, support and encourage the children to attend school, timely payment of the children's school fees, and participate in parents' school meetings where they discuss the developmental issues of the school and their children's studies.
Religious Leaders	Provide moral support and spiritual guidance to the school going children, sensitize the community members to take their children to school, and participate in developmental meetings at the school.
Government	Provide technical support and guidance to the teachers, timely provision of the curriculum, Continuous capacity development of the teachers, and work with development partners to improve the school structures.
Non-Governmental Organizations	Collaborate with government to support the education sector by constructing more classrooms, provide technical support to the school staff, Support the school feeding programs at school, and Provide scholarships to the vulnerable children.
Village Education Committees	Sensitize the community to take children to school, mobilize children to go to school, Sensitize the community on children's rights, monitor education related activities within the community, and inform community members of any events happening at school such as parents meeting etc.

Overall, findings suggest that the children of involved parents are more motivated to learn for learning's sake, because they adopt their parents' positive attitudes towards school and learning. Accompanying and supervising children's key learning outcome areas that is, to study(access) and to learn(quality), modelling positive behaviours and attitudes towards school, and conveying the importance of school have the strongest positive impact on learning. Stakeholders interviewed also noted that family policies can also be used as entry points for promoting school attendance and learning at all stages of childhood. However, these need strengthening to have an impact on promoting equitable learning outcomes.

## 7.0 Learning Continuity during and after Covid-19 lockdown

Just like all the other sectors of the economy, COVID-19 greatly affected the education sector. However, children were more affected because their learning came to a standstill and majority of the children in upper primary joined business ventures so as to make money and fend for themselves and their families. With the long

closure of schools, many girls were married off at an early age, and this led to early teenage pregnancies, intensive drug abuse and children lacking parental guidance to lose interest in education.

**“ Led to teenage pregnancy, loss of interest in education, led to drug abuse, some children were over aged felt no need to continue with their studies.” - Teacher.**

In order to improve the teaching/learning situation in schools where the children have lagged behind due to COVID-19 lockdown, teachers should conduct remedial lessons and provide guided group work/ discussions so that the learners can easily catch up on some of the content that they remember from before the long period of school closure. Furthermore, the parents need to increase their engagement in the children's academics by supporting them with homework. They need to work together with the school teachers to provide career guidance and counselling to their children.

**“ Homework, Group discussion, Career guidance and counselling, Healthy clubs and competitions to retain and attract other children in schools.” - PTA member.**

Table 10: Cross-cutting issues

Have you encountered Violence	Sex of the respondent:
No	68%
Yes	32%
Sexual abuse	1%
Emotional Abuse	10%
Neglect	9%
Physical abuse	12%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 7.1 Learners with Disabilities

The low level of resources available to support education means that specialized teachers are not available, and schools or community learning centres cannot meet the specific learning needs of children with disabilities. Besides teachers, there is need for specific materials/equipment to be used by children with disabilities which may not be easy to acquire. In some cases, there is need to adapt the learning environment (e.g. buildings, furniture, latrines, walkways etc), to make them accessible for children with disabilities.

Lack of knowledge in terms of identification of these learners and awareness of the needs of children with disabilities are major barriers to access to education, since community members may not take some of these children to school. In addition, specialized services for children with disabilities are few, and schools are not able to link children with disabilities to the various support groups. There is need for partners to strengthen the capacities of teachers to help in identification of these learners and advocate for support. So far, CFI have done an amazing job with their intervention aimed at supporting the vulnerable group.

## 8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

In conclusion, for effective learning to take place, there must be a conducive physical and social environment in the school and a supportive

home environment. School leadership and management committees should be trained on how to undertake their duties, parents' role in supporting continued learning at home should be mainstreamed and supported, and all other stakeholders at community level and national levels should be rallied to support learning.

Additionally, there should be intentional and tailor-made learning and psychosocial support for children with special needs, whether overage, lagging behind in learning, or living with disabilities. This can be made possible by the teachers and parents at community level, or additional stakeholders sought if situations call for the same.

Lastly, teachers play an integral role in the education and well-being of the learners. They can be motivated through timely payment of their salaries and incentives, provision of enough teaching materials and continuous capacity building and mentorship.

### Recommendations

#### From parents

1. With the prevailing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and learning of under-served children, there is need to continuously implement home-based learning activities. These should be simple enough to be implemented even in households with little physical spaces, and where parents or caregivers do not have advanced formal education. The activities should leverage the existing social structures and practices such as learning through fire side story telling.

2. To increase retention and completion rate of the girl child, there is need to sensitize the community on prioritizing the girl child education. Further, vulnerable girls should be offered psychosocial support either by parents, teachers or other relevant education supporting stakeholders. This should be a coordinated effort with a clear referral pathway for continued support for severe cases. In addition, auxiliary services that are supportive of girls' well-being such as sanitary towels should be provided. Communities, especially through organized community groups such as women and youth groups can be trained on how to make re-usable sanitary towels.
2. All technical stakeholders encouraged the provision of remedial classes to learners as a catch-up mechanism to cover for learning loss during the COVID-19 schools' closure. The remedial sessions can be led by the teachers or coordinated/supported by the teachers through guided group work/discussions and coordinated peer to peer learning in schools or community centres. This will enable learners remember education content that was forgotten during the long schools' closure, promote acquisition of social skills and allow learning to take place in a non-intimidating environment.
3. Coordination, collaboration and partnerships. All stakeholders within the community need to work together to support children to achieve good learning outcomes. There should be seamless coordination of efforts between the schools, families, non-state, and state actors involved in supporting the provision of education. This can be achieved through mapping out of, and regular and coordinated formal and informal interactions of these players in the education space at the various administrative levels.

### From teachers

1. Schools should be intentional about providing support to learners lagging behind. In addition to the normal classroom-based teaching and learning, teachers should implement innovative school-based activities that support the time-taking learners in acquiring (self) learning skills and competencies that will bring these learners to near parity with their peers/classmates.

Teachers should also engage with parents and care givers to ensure that learning is extended and sustained beyond the confines of the classrooms to the homes. They should also encourage parents to adopt practical solutions like ensuring that learners have reading timetables at home, and that a home environment enabling of learning is created. This is especially important for the vulnerable groups.

2. Finally, teachers should also ensure that the SOPs as advised or updated by the government are being strictly adhered to in schools. This will minimize the chances of the resurgence of COVID-19 infection cases in schools.

### From the District Education Office

1. There is need to conduct vigorous awareness creation sessions for the community members especially the parents and learners to inform them about the importance of education and taking children to school.

4. Parents to be trained on their role as pivotal players in promoting enhanced learning both at school and at home. In addition to the sensitization of the need for parents to take their children to school and ensure the basic needs for the learners are provided, the parents should be trained on how to ensure learning taking place at home.

Additionally, they should be trained on how to coordinate different roles at home to ensure that there is time allocated for learning. The other domestic chores should also be planned to ensure there are minimal interruptions to home-based learning activities.

5. Provision of a conducive learning environment. Depending on financial ability and their implementation scope, the Ugandan government, NGOs, and CBOs need to either improve on existent infrastructure or build physical spaces that create child-friendly and safe learning spaces in the communities or at schools supportive of learning. These can be temporary, semi-permanent or permanent structure as is relevant in their context.

These stakeholders should also support the provision of scholastic and instructional materials to learners either at school and community levels to the children and teachers respectively especially furniture and textbooks.

All these are aimed at ensuring there is a conducive learning environment at home, school and in community spaces.

6. Continuous capacity building and training of volunteer teachers. This can be done through periodic refresher trainings on how to deliver effective lessons that will in turn improve learning outcomes, the learners' social background or learning uptake levels notwithstanding.

The training should also enable the volunteer teachers to deliver effective life skill lessons to vulnerable learners. The volunteer teachers should be enabled through training to upskill learners on how to detect and mitigate potential violation instances and report any cases of violations.

7. Inspection and Support Supervision. Under the decentralized governance system, the local governments are responsible for technical supervision and inspection of schools and all learning centres under their jurisdiction to ensure compliance to policy

guidelines, provide supportive supervision and coordinate activities of partners. The opening of new schools and community learning centres by CBO, NGO and INGO partners has increased the areas of operations and the inspectorate function of the District Education Departments in most Arua Districts and Oyam is overstretched.

In Arua District, the increase in the number of learners from both learning centres and formal schools has increased the workload for the staff of the District Education Office. There are multiple demands on their time arising from the need to support activities in education operations. Besides, financial, and logistic support to the department is minimal, rendering the system overburdened and ineffective.

In view of the large number of teachers teaching in the many un-registered schools and ECD centres in the District, there is need for a comprehensive approach to strengthen inspection and support supervision as part of the overall oversight role of the District Education Department.

8. Provision of teacher's accommodation at school as well as CPD stood out as a motivation factor to enhanced effective teaching and learning.



Aloni-teacher marking exercise

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## Annex : Lists of schools/learning centres reached

#	School
1	Lela Learning Centre
2	Abari P/s
3	Aberdyangoto p/s
4	Abilonino Dem p/s
5	Abirici Learning Centre
6	Acanpii Learning Centre
7	Ajono Yivu Learning Centre
8	Akong-Atar C Learning Centre
9	Akong-Atar D Learning Centre
10	Akwangi Primary School
11	Alani Primary School
12	Alengo Learning Centre
13	Alidi Learning Centre
14	Alidi B Learning Centre
15	Alock B
16	Aloni P7
17	Amido P7
18	Angolo P7 Learning Centre
19	Angweta Primary School
20	Anyomolyec P7 Learning Centre
21	Anzu Learning Centre
22	Apii Learning Centre
23	Apii p/s
24	Ariek learning Centre
25	Ariek Primary School
26	Ariloko Learning Centre
27	Arua Primary School
28	Baramindyang p/s
29	Ilera p/s
30	Iyanyi P7
31	Kulakula Primary School
32	Ngai Primary School
33	Olaka Annex Learning Centre
34	Olaka Child Care
35	Omac primary School
36	Ombaci Learning Centre
37	Ombaci Primary School
38	Otwal Primary School Learning Centre
39	Oyoze Cell
40	Oyoze Community Centre
41	St. Daudi and Gildo Ibbu
42	St. Money Alocero



