

**REACHING CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL IN UGANDA:
A CASE STUDY OF COMPLEMENTARY OPPORTUNITY FOR PRIMARY
EDUCATION PROGRAM (COPE)**

A RESEARCH REPORT

BY

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Executive Summary

In 1993, the Government of Uganda, in conjunction with the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), initiated the Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education (COPE) Program. This program attempts to address problems in the country's education system s which had developed as a result of political instability that eroded the economy and seriously curtailed the government's ability to maintain social services. The education system especially at the lower levels, suffered from years of neglect. At the time of independence in 1962, education in Uganda was more advance than in other African countries.

Primary school attendance was twice as high and the quality of education was good. This affluent period lasted only a few years before the country entered into a period of political instability that lasted until 1986. Economic mismanagement accompanied the political instability and professional standards deteriorated rapidly as skilled personnel fled the country.

The situation continued until 1985. By 1985, government expenditure on education and health, in real terms, amounted to approximately 27% and 9% respectively of the 1970's levels (World Bank 1993a). The National Resistance Movement (NRM) government assumed power in 1986 inheriting a shattered economy.

It is against this background that the Government of Uganda/UNICEF country program developed an alternative, basic education opportunity for out-of-school children entitled Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education or COPE. COPE is an alternative educational strategy specifically designed to equip Ugandan Children who are unable to participate in the formal education system with basic literacy, numeracy and life-coping skills.

However, program performance varies in districts. When comparing districts with the COPE program, it becomes evident that some districts are performing much more poorly than others. Thus, the major question for this study was: what factors influence differences in performance/success in different districts?

Two districts were selected depending on performance (one program was rated above average and the other below average). Due to time and resource limits the methodology used in data collection were rapid appraisal methods including: 1) reviewing the existing documents, 2) interviewing key informants, and 3) holding focus group discussions with parents and the community. Qualitative analysis was used along with developing indices to measure variables.

Results indicated a better performance in the Bushenyi district, which was rated as an above average program. This was influenced by several factors including: 1) receptiveness of the community to the program, 2) transparent selection of the beneficiaries and commitment of the pupils, 3) high community participation, 4) enough district political support and utilization of the existing political structures, 5) lack of non-governmental organization (NGO) handouts in the district, 6) absence of labor turnover, and 7) a high level of morale and commitment among the key players of COPE.

In the Masaka district, which was rated as below average, the poor performance was mainly due to: 1) misadministration of the program, 2) a lack of support and will from the policy makers, 3) low community participation, 4) failure on the part of the implementers to utilize the existing political structures, 5) a lack of monitoring and evaluation by both UNICEF, the district implementers and the community, 6) the presence of many NGOs, and 7) a lack of management

committees at the inception of the program. It should be noted that in both districts there were attempts to reach more girls than boys which resulted in having more girls in all classes, though the difference was never exceeded by 10 girls.

Based on these results, the researcher recommends that there is a need to look at the critical dynamics that have lead to better performance in COPE centers and where possible integrate them in the formal system. In other words, COPE should play a complementary role to the formal school system. In addition, periodic monitoring of COPE programs is a necessary step for good performance.

UNICEF should always ensure that the recipient districts and communities have the capacity to account and report on the progress of the program. Furthermore, community participation should be emphasized right from the inception of such programs. For the program to sustain itself, districts should mobilize and sensitive LC IIIs (sub-county level) about the need for an d objectives of the program. There is a need for recognition of the program by both district politicians and technocrats. Proper utilization of the existing political structures was seen as a good step for better performance. Inter-district workshops should be encouraged to fill the technical gaps and share experiences with other districts. Lastly, despite the problems that NGOs created for COPE in Masaka, their role in promoting the interest of COPE should not be overlooked. NGOs can be utilized to mobilize children out of schools in urban areas where authorities or the government has failed to do so. NGOs are potentially in a better position to do this than the town council or government.

The research lead to the following areas and questions for future research:

How does the present Universal Primary Education (UPE) system impact the informal education system? Has COPE a future if UPE is continues? Can COPE be of any assistance to children not covered under UPE? To answer these questions, a more in-depth comparative study of COPE and the formal education schooling system is needed.

Because politicians do not value COPE since its services are not visible, how can they use the success of a program like COPE as political capital?

What are the 'magic' factors that have lead to the good performance of COPE? Can such factors be applied to the formal education system for better results? Can these factors be standardized?

In what kind of environment are the NGOs operating? What is their role in the provision of basic education? Are they targeting poverty relief, education school fees, etc.? Are they supply or demand driven?

1.0 Background

In 1993, the Government of Uganda, in conjunction with the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), initiated the Complementary Opportunity for Primary

Education (COPE) Program, in a bid to address problems in the country's education systems which had developed as a result of political instability that had characterized the country for more than twenty years. Twenty years of political instability destroyed the infrastructure, eroded the economy, and seriously curtailed the government's ability to maintain social services. The education system especially at the lower levels, suffered from years of neglect resulting in poor quality education, poor enrollment, high drop-outs, high attrition rates, low completion rate, limited skills acquisition, poor infrastructure, and a lack of books.

At and after Uganda's independence in 1962, the country had one of the most vigorous and promising economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Uganda's social indicators were comparable to, if not better than, most countries in Africa. Uganda's education systems had developed a reputation for high quality. However, economic mismanagement accompanied by political instability resulted in

the rapid deterioration of professional standards and many skilled personnel fled the country. Between 1970 and 1980, there was a decline in Uganda's: 1) gross domestic product (GDP) by about 25%, 2) exports by 60%, and 3) import volumes by close to 50%. This was accompanied with large increase in defense expenditures. The government budget became increasingly untenable and was largely financed by bank borrowing which resulted in average inflation rates well in excess of 70%. The situation continued until 1985. By 1985, government expenditure on education and health, in real terms, amounted to approximately 27% and 9% respectively of their 1970s levels (World Bank 1993a). The National Resistance Movement (NRM) government came to power in 1986 inheriting a shattered economy.

It is against this background that the Government of Uganda(GOU)/UNICEF country

program developed an alternative education project to provide basic education for out-of-school children. This is called the Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education program or COPE. It is mainly funded by UNICEF and implemented by districts and local community groups under the guidance of the Ministry of Education.

COPE is an alternative educational strategy specifically designed to equip Ugandan children who are unable to participate in the formal education system with basic literacy, numeracy and life-coping skills. More specifically, its objective is to provide an alternative to the formal school system for children aged 8-14 years who have never been to school. In other words, it promotes

education for disadvantaged children, especially girls to reduce gender inequalities in basic education.

The program is characterized by certain key features including: 1) community participation in planning and management of the "learning centers" or "posts;" 2) development of a group of paraprofessionals to serve as instructors who are based in the community; 3) participatory teaching and learning methods; 4) "child centered" learning with extensive individual attention; 5) small class sizes of 30-40 pupils; 6) only core subjects are taught such as Mathematics, Science, English, Social Studies, and language instruction in the mother tongue; 7) flexible timing of classes and 3 hour school days; 8) a skills-oriented curriculum to enrich life skills; and 9) continuous assessment of learning achievement. The syllabus is compressed to three years which qualifies children to join the formal primary schools at level six. COPE replicates some of the subjects studied (i.e. Mathematics, Science, English, and Social Studies) from the formal school system.

However, COPE program performance in the different districts where it is implemented has varied with some performing well while others finish poorly, despite the fact that the programs started at the same time. Consequently, the levels of literacy, numeracy, and life-coping skills remain low in some districts.

Research Problem

In order to fine tune or redirect the program's activities, it is necessary to investigate the reasons for the poor performance in some districts involved in the COPE program.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The finding from this study will assist the GOU/UNICEF country office in correcting the performance of the program. The local policy institutions will be interested in the results of the study if they are genuinely concerned about making it more effective in those districts where the program is performing poorly. Furthermore, the result will be beneficial to other African governments currently implementing similar programs or those that are contemplating taking similar action. Lastly, the results will contribute to the Association for the Development of Education in Africa's (ADEA) interest in improving the quality of education in sub-Saharan Africa.

1.4 Research Questions

The above inquiry has led to the following research questions:

What factors influence differences in the success of COPE programs in different districts?

What constitutes a successful program?

Are the teaching methods "child centered" with extensive individual attention?

To what extent are the disadvantaged given special consideration?

To what extent do communities participate in the planning and management of "learning centers" or "posts"?

To what extent does the program replicate the formal education system?

2.0 Literature Review

Basic education refers to the provision of minimum knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary for people to survive, to improve the quality of the lives, and to continue learning. Thus, the provision of basic education is a basic human right. It is against this background that the international community, including virtually all of the governments of the world, undertook a commitment at the World Conference on Education For All, to significantly increase educational opportunities for over 100 million children and nearly 1 billion adults, two thirds of them girls and women, who have no access to basic education and literacy (UNICEF 1990 & Government of Uganda 1992).

Historically, the concept of basic education does not seem to be foreign in Uganda though it is not widely discussed in local literature. In pre-colonial days, when there were no formal schools, children and youth learnt cultural values, morals, modes of behavior, and skills from elders in the home and community, through direct observation, and imitation. Their learning of the history of the tribe, moral values, etc., took place through oral traditions. There were no dearth of teachers as every capable adult served as a teacher. Such education successfully produced emotionally stable and economically productive members of society (Ministry of Education 1989).

The main promoters of basic education since the opening of Uganda to external influence have been voluntary agencies, the government, and the parents of those seeking education. The roles of each actor have changed over time in response to changing macro-economic, social, and political conditions that Uganda has undergone. Current problems and opportunities for educational development are entwined in this history. According to Opio-Odong (1993), the quality of education, its usefulness to those receiving it in society, and the quest for relevancy and practicability have run through the years as impulses for change in the education system.

Basic education is vital for development, particularly in its potential for women. It involves many delivery systems, incorporating not only formal

education opportunities in basic literacy skills and other developmental activities, such as health and agriculture. According to Hawes & Coombe (1984), the distinction between formal and non-formal education is by no means sharp and could even become less clear through the process of "deformalising formal education." The importance of basic education lies in its context rather than its structures.

From independence to 1970, there was a systematic effort to map out the development of education in a controlled manner in Uganda. The hopes of third Five-year Development Plan: 1971/72-1975/76 were shattered by the coup in 1971 by Idi Amin. This proved to be a national calamity which destroyed previous educational efforts (Obote 1984).

The Amin regime radically reversed the economic and social progress attained since independence. Economic mismanagement and the abuse of human rights on a massive scale continued during the Obote regime in the early 1980s. By 1985, government expenditures on education amounted to about 27% of the 1970s levels (World Bank 1993a). Due to neglect, the education system, especially the primary section, was characterized with poor quality education. Forty-nine percent of the teachers were not trained, there was poor enrollment, and high drop-out rates rose to 7.8% per year in the lower grades (GOU/UNICEF 1995).

Since the late 1980s, primary education has expanded rapidly in Uganda. The majority of Ugandan children enter primary school, but by Primary 7 the gross enrollment rates are only 49% for boys, and 29% for girls (UNICEF 1989 & World Bank 1993b). A study conducted in the Masaka district by the Child Health and Development Center (CHDC 1995) indicated that the majority of the youth had never been to school in this district and of those who did enroll, many dropped out prematurely.

The major reasons given for children dropping out of school included: 1) the death of a parent, 2) parents did not value education, 3) a poor home environment was not conducive to the child's education, especially if the parents were uneducated, 4) school fees were too expensive, and 5) poor learning conditions existed in the schools. The same study further reveals that the children who fail to enroll or dropout of school do not receive any assistance by the government, especially the primary dropouts. There is lack of vocational skills training, especially for girls who mostly receive skills such as tailoring.

These reports indicate that there is little planning done for educating disadvantaged children. Effective planning at any level requires skills of analysis and interpretation, the ability to monitor events, diagnose errors, and propose corrective action to make basic educational objectives operational, and

estimate what resources would be required, and how they should be obtained. According to Hawes et. al. (1984), effective management of innovations requires relevant data. Relevant data can be obtained by using a relevant methodology. In turn methodology is dictated by the time and resources at the disposal of the researcher. Where resources are limited and time short, qualitative data is more appropriate for research. Qualitative analysis should be seen as part of the normal, routine two-way traffic of information between management and the field.

3.0 Methodology

This section describes the sampling, data collection, and analysis efforts used in researching the COPE program in the Bushenyi and Masaka districts.

3.1 Sampling

Before sampling was done the researcher received documentary data from UNICEF concerning the districts where the COPE program had been implemented (i.e. Arua, Kamuli, Bushenyi, and Masaka). The researcher used COPE characteristics to develop indicators like enrollment, retention, cutoff points for enrollment, gender balance, type of instructor, frequency proceedings of meetings, COPE featuring in the district development and work plans, the level of community participation, and the realization of district funds to COPE to classify what would constitute a successful program. The above performance indicators were put in a matrix. Each indicator was classified either as being high, medium, low or none. High scored 3, medium 2, low 1 and none 0. This meant that the maximum any district could score was 12. The researcher then stratified districts in which the COPE program had been executed into two homogenous groups; above average in performance (or above 6: Kamuli and Bushenyi) and below average (or below 6: Masaka and Arua). For each group, the names of the two districts were put into a hat and one district was randomly selected. Bushenyi was selected from the above average group and Masaka from the below average group.

Within the same districts, two centers, one above average and another below average, were visited. In Bushenyi, the Kakanzu and Ishaka Town Council learning centers were visited and in Masaka, the Kigeye and Kisojo learning centers were involved.

3.2 Data Collection

In an effort to answer the research questions, rapid appraisal methods were used to collect the data which included:

(i) Reviewing the existing documents and information on COPE programs and its activities in the sampled districts. This gave the researcher background information on the events of COPE in a particular district. The researcher paid close attention to information concerning the selection criteria for children and instructors involved in the COPE program and the level of management at both the district and lower levels.

(ii) Key informant interviews were held informally with: 1) UNICEF program officers in Uganda who are in charge of basic education, 2) Local Council (LC5) vice chairman, 3) the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), 4) District Education Officers, 5) the officer in charge of the COPE program and other relevant district officials.

The two methods above mainly addressed administrative issues. In order to also obtain the views of beneficiaries, the researcher held focus group discussions with parents and the community in parishes where COPE centers are located. The main aim of focus group discussions was to determine those opinions, attitudes, and knowledge held by the community and parents in particular, which regulate community behavior and the efficacy of potential intervention strategies.

An interview guide was developed by the researcher for use during the key informant interviews and focus group discussions (Appendix A). This sought information on community participation and contribution in the COPE program, selection criteria, overall community management, and the monitoring of the program.

For purposes of checks and balances, the researcher carried out case observations of on-going COPE activities, mainly classroom instruction. This was to determine the degree of "child centered" learning and the ages of children under instruction. Basically, the researcher observed the teaching methods used, particularly paying attention to the extent of individual attention, the nature of questioning, the presence and use of instructional materials and charts, and the overall participation of children. Thereafter, all the above indicators were graded as being high, medium, low and none and scores were tallied accordingly.

3.3 Analysis

Data analysis was qualitative in nature. The first stage involved content analysis of the COPE documents to obtain information on issues like: the contribution of districts to COPE programs, the frequency of COPE meetings,

student flows (attendance, retention rates), class sizes, and gender balance in the learning centers. A comparison was made between the GOU/UNICEF document

describing the program and the information from the districts describing COPE events. Information from the informal interviews and focus group discussions was analyzed by developing indicators, such as community participation, political support, monitoring/supervision, pupil/instructor, and admission criteria. These indicators were developed from the descriptive characteristics of presented in the COPE literature as their ideal program. The researcher worked these indicators into a matrix to help in analysis (See Appendix B).

4.0 Findings

4.1 Bushenyi District

The Bushenyi district is an area of 4,385 square kilometers located in the southwestern part of Uganda, bordering with Kasese in the West, Mbarara in the North and East, and Ntungamo and Rukungiri in the South. It has a population of

579,137 people. There are 299,594 females and 279,543 males and 60.5% of the total population is made of children, while the elderly constitute 3%. The population of Bushenyi is rurally-based, engaging mainly in subsistence agriculture which employs 77.2% of the people (MPED 1991). There are also some

dairy and cash crop farmers. The rate of industrial growth is low, only boosted by local craftsmen (e.g. builders, metal works, and wood work which constitute 94% of the industrial sector) (Bushenyi 1995). Bushenyi is predominantly inhabited by the Banyankole people. The main language spoken is Runyankole and

the staple food is millet and Matooke (plantain widely grown in central and western Uganda).

COPE centers have been open in the Bushenyi District since October 23, 1995. They target children from 8-14 years of age who have never attended formal schools. Bushenyi is a pilot district for COPE schools. In the Bushenyi District, instructors are identified by the community and they are supposed to live in the same community. Priority is given to female candidates not only to serve more disadvantaged girls, but also because females are more stable at their work than their male counterparts.

4.2 Management of the Centers

COPE learning centers have a governing body selected by the Parish Community composed of 9 members, two of whom must be women. These members of the steering

or management committee work in liaison with the LCII executive committee as a political governing body. The fundamental objective of the program is to render a chance to disadvantaged children to become enlightened in subjects like Mathematics, English, and Social Studies, along with teaching their mother tongue and practical and life skills. The teaching is participatory, child centered and the instructor has to appreciate the child's way of doing things.

4.3 Supervision

A network has been put in place to supervise the schools weekly. Six coordinating center tutors and 4 school inspectors are responsible for this work. All COPE supervisors are required to answer to the district education officer. In general, in Bushenyi, apart from one COPE center visited, the program has been a success.

Reasons for Success

Before the inception of the program, UNICEF in conjunction with the district authorities carried out a needs assessment to identify areas where COPE could find fertile ground. Factors considered for this 'fertility' included: areas that were readily supportive, the number of tax payers in the parish, and the number of beneficiary (children out of school). Thus, COPE centers in Bushenyi are located in areas where they really need them because there was transparent selection of the beneficiaries and commitment among the recipients to the program.

In Bushenyi, the selection for COPE beneficiaries was done by the Local Council

I in collaboration with the management committee. They are familiar with each household which led to the selection of truly disadvantaged youth for this program. Because these children were deprived of the chance to acquire an education formally due to the poverty experienced by their families and the negative attitude of their parents towards education, they responded to COPE with a strong commitment. The children knew that they wanted to receive this education, and why they were there.

Furthermore, humiliation from children from formal schools has made pupils of COPE centers more committed. Pupils from COPE centers are referred to as the 'disabled' by their counterparts from formal schools. In one focus group discussion a parent commented that:

"my children are referred to as the Kateyamba (financially disabled) by their friends from the formal education system and this has made them more aggressive towards academics and by now pupils from the formal system cannot match them in knowledge."

Unlike in the formal education system, in COPE instructors are answerable to the community and not to the government. Communities in Bushenyi have taken a keen interest in COPE and the entire process of planning, monitoring, and recommending instruction for future recruitment. Easy monitoring of teachers by parents makes them more committed to the program.

In Bushenyi, because of the clear leadership and support from both politicians and administrators (who are the policy makers and implementers), the district has been able to facilitate continuous sensitization through door-to-door sensitization at the grassroots levels. As a result, the local population (parents and non-parents) is giving more financial, planning, and monitoring support to the program. Every taxpayer in the parish is supposed to pay the equivalent of US\$1 for the upkeep of the center.

Politicians in this district have made it possible for the COPE program to be incorporated in the district budget and they have ensured that the district shares in the funding with UNICEF. This has led to transparency in budgeting and the allocation of resources. Furthermore, the COPE program has always been given priority when compared to other programs. For instance, the district has always addressed delays in financial releases from UNICEF by diverting resources meant for less emergent programs to COPE to ensure its continuity. In Bushenyi, the community is utilizing the existing political structures (county, sub-county and parish) for its benefit. Officials at each level are fully involved in the sensitization of people on COPE activities. This has not been done in Masaka district.

There is also a lack of non-governmental organization (NGO) handout in the district, both in the past and present, which helps to explain its success in part. In the districts where NGOs have been active and giving out handouts to communities, the community contribution has always failed. In Bushenyi, such mentality towards NGO handouts is absent. This community is familiar with self-help programs providing fertile ground for COPE. This is because the Bushenyi community looks at COPE as their own program. In other words, they see themselves as the owners of the program which implies that it would be sustained even in the event of the withdrawal of UNICEF funds.

Another factor that contributes to the success of the COPE program in the

Bushenyi district is the absence of labor turn over. In Bushenyi, unlike other districts, there has not been the problem of staff interdiction. The staff that was sensitized in 1995 is the same staff implementing the COPE program today. This has led to a high level of morale and commitment among the key players of COPE. Their commitment is reflected in their comprehensive work plans and timely accountability to UNICEF.

It should however be noted that one of the centers in the Bushenyi district, the Ishaka Town Council learning center, that the attendance of pupils was very erratic. This was attributed to the majority of the pupils being street children with no parents in the vicinity. It was the Town Council that took over the responsibility of the community in mobilizing these street children into the COPE program and providing a financial contribution for this. This action has caused a lot problems because financial contributions are not forthcoming and there are delays due to the bureaucratic procedures that has to be followed before they are released. Also, because these street children cater for themselves, many of them do not attend the program regularly making instruction difficult.

4.5 Masaka District

The Masaka district is an area of 10,611 square kilometers located in the southern part of Uganda, bordering with Mbarara in the west, Mpigi in the northeast, and Lake Victoria in the southeast. It has a population of 831,300 people with 420,000 females and 411,300 males. The population of Masaka is basically rural, with 754,000 rural dwellers and 77,300 urban dwellers. The major economic activity in the Masaka district is agriculture with food crops (bananas, pineapples, and tomatoes), cash crops (coffee and cotton), cattle ranching, and fishing on Lake Victoria. Industries in the district include: soft drinks factories, coffee processing, metal works, and cotton ginning. Masaka has 304 primary schools, 12 secondary schools, 2 technical institutions, and 3 Teacher training Colleges. It is predominantly inhabited by the Baganda people with a few other tribes. The main language spoken is Luganda. The staple food is millet and Matooke.

In the Masaka district, COPE centers were opened in April 1997. There was no major criteria for selection of the children to be involved in the program. There was no age limit and even those who had dropped out of school were allowed. The COPE program has so far opened 8 COPE centers in the district.

Supervision

Unlike in the Bushenyi district, in the Masaka district, there is no network in

place for supervision. Supervisors have been identified, but not facilitated. Basically, there is no routine supervision of the 8 established COPE centers in the district apart from one which is visited by a supervisor who lives in the vicinity. Basically, the program has fared poorly in this district, apart from one of the COPE centers visited.

Constraints to Success

The greatest constraint to the success of the COPE program identified by the study in the district of Masaka was misadministration of the program. This is mainly due to a lack of technical capacity to implement the program. In Masaka, most of the cardinal principals of the program were not followed. For example, the coordinator identified and recruited the instructors, children who had been to formal schools were admitted, and the community was not involved in the planning of the centers.

A lack of support and will from the policy makers (Local Councils) has contributed to the poor performance in the district. Unlike in the Bushenyi district where politicians are behind the program, in the Masaka district they are accepted in principle but practically ignored in reality. This is reflected in the release of funds for COPE activities. COPE is in the plan and budget for such activities, but, when it comes to releasing the funds, COPE is not given priority. For instance, in the 1996/97 financial year, US\$13,540 was budgeted for the COPE program, but only US\$1331.25 was effectively released. This was compounded by financial release delays from UNICEF. UNICEF held back funds

because of the districts slowness in submitting accountabilities which affected the time frame of their work plans. As a result, it has been difficult to maintain COPE activities, not to mention continuity. This is reflected in delays from the start of the program. Whereas a needs assessment was carried out in early 1995 in the Masaka district, COPE centers only began in 1997.

Due to the lack of political support and the subsequent under funding, mobilization and sensitization are weak for the COPE programs in the Masaka district. The district coordinator, the Local Councils, and the management committees are supposed to work as a group mobilizing and sensitizing the community on COPE activities, but this activity is non-existent in Masaka, with the exception of one COPE center. The COPE coordinator has tended to relay on

the Local Council system to disseminate the 'necessary' information. The problem is that Local Councils have not been given the technical capacity to do this activity.

As a result, continuous community mobilization and sensitization has been non-existent. The community does not fully internalized the objectives of the program and where some awareness had been created, they have tended to relax and

forget about their role and input. In other words, community participation is very low. This could clearly be realized at Kisojo leaning center where instead of the community, it was the children and instructors who erected the building used as classrooms. Funding from the community for the running of the centers and the upkeep of the instructors was never realized. This has definitely affected the proper running of the program.

Failure on the part of the implementers to utilize the existing political structures (county, sub-county, and parish) has been detrimental to the mobilization and sensitization exercise. Not all officials at the different levels have been involved in the mobilization and sensitization of people on COPE activities.

A lack of monitoring and evaluation is another constraint to the success of the program in the Masaka district. Whereas UNICEF is supposed to regularly monitor the progress of the program, in the Masaka district this has been very irregular. Even the few times that they have actually monitored and evaluated the program, there has been no documented feedback. This has denied district implementers the opportunity to use these documents as a reference for fine tuning the program. Furthermore, the district failure to facilitate supervisors in terms of transport has been disastrous to the program. Lower level implementers, apart from the Kigeye COPE center, where the supervisor stays in the community, are not regularly monitored leading to either relaxation or misadministration of the program. In addition, the community is supposed to identify and recommend teachers, but in the Masaka district, this task is done by the coordinator who is also the education officer. Therefore, communities have no control in monitoring instructors.

The Masaka district is a business oriented district, therefore for anything to materialize, it must have some financial gains in one way or the other. Since COPE lacks these qualities, it has met many implementation problems. In fact, most politicians and counselors who are the policy makers and are supposed to spearhead the COPE program are running private schools. This could explain the relaxed attitude of politicians towards the program.

Interestingly, the Masaka district was also one of the first districts in Uganda to be hit by the AIDS scourge and as a result many NGOs, both local and international, flocked to the area since the late 1980's. Notably, World Vision International and the Norwegian Redd Barna (Save the Children) have been deeply involved in the construction of schools and paying school dues for children. Though it was discovered that communities are aware of the education problems of their children, they believe resources must come from outside their district,

implying in the case of the COPE program, from UNICEF. Thus, introducing COPE as a program where the community has to contribute in terms of its planning, infrastructure, monitoring and finances, was practically unacceptable.

In addition, in the Masaka district, management committees were not established at the inception of the program. Unlike in the Bushenyi district where management committees were in place before the program implementation began, in Masaka, they came later. Local councils and the politicians carried out the mobilization, sensitization and implementation of the COPE program. Moreover, they lacked the technical capacity to do this and had not been oriented to the program. They also wanted to use the program as political capital. As a result, COPE's reputation was hurt more than helped by their efforts especially in terms of who it should benefit in the population. The politicians did not restrict the program to 8 to 14 year olds who had never been to school and the number of children in classes was above 40. Children below 8 years were brought in and those who had been to formal education system were also incorporated. The mixture of children who have never been to school and those who have been to school did not only bring in problems of classification to the program, but also caused psychological problem as some children who had never been to school could not keep up with those who had, causing a hostile learning environment.

Despite all the above constraints, however, in the Masaka district, the Kigege COPE center has been to some extent successful. This is mainly because the Kigege center is in a newly created parish (after residents agitated for it for some time) under a new sub-county. Therefore, each and every member of the community is looking forward to the development of their community. Thus, the COPE program was received with a lot of enthusiasm. In addition, World Vision International has been very active in this area in school construction. It also contributed its support in terms of mobilizing and sensitizing the community on the COPE program. Lastly, in Kigege, the COPE supervisor stays in the vicinity and is a member of the community. In fact, of all the COPE centers in the Masaka district, it is only the Kigege center which has been fully supervised.

Commonality

In both districts, there was almost a balance in gender represented in the classroom. There were more girls than boys in the classes, although the difference never exceeded 10 children. It was reported that historically girls have been denied the chance to go to formal schools, which qualifies them for COPE programs. Households in the areas of study value the time that daughters can devote to out of school tasks, including care of younger siblings in large

families. Hence, COPE programs, where a child stays for only 3 hours, were seen as conducive to their education.

Conclusion

COPE programs have been successful in some districts and a failure in others. Where it has been a success, the program has complemented the existing formal education system by imparting life coping skills to children. The principle aspect identified in this study which has led to either success or failure of COPE program has been the level of community participation and mobilization of the program. Community mobilization and participation is paramount for the success of such a program. The community must play an active role in the design and operation of COPE activities. Since community participation is not a unitary concept, but incorporates a hierarchy of levels which reflects the kind and degree of involvement of the community in COPE activities, communities should be deeply involved in the needs assessment, identification, strategy formulation, and more importantly in the implementation stages. At the community level, mobilization and sensitization should be aimed at encouraging positive decisions at the household level for sending children to the learning centers and the management of these centers. At the sub-county level (higher level) and district levels, mobilization activities should target those political leaders and technical specialists who have a critical say in how locally generated resources are allocated and spent.

6.0 Recommendation

The following recommendations are based on the research:

It is necessary to look more closely at the critical dynamics that have led to a better performance in certain COPE centers, and where possible, integrate them into the formal system. In other words, COPE's role should be complementary to the role of formal education.

Periodic monitoring of any program under implementation is a necessary step for redirecting and/or fine-tuning its processes. Though the community has been given the opportunity to determine the destiny of COPE activities in their locality, COPE is generally a new approach to basic education, which is also new to the community. Therefore, UNICEF and the district should ensure that monitoring takes place. UNICEF should give documented feedback to the district implementers. District authorities should facilitate monitoring especially in terms of transport (funds for fuel).

UNICEF should always ensure that the recipient districts and communities have

the capacity to account and report on the progress of the program. Before any program is funded, UNICEF should train the recipients with enough technical capacity on how to do proper and acceptable reporting. Workshops should be organized for the purpose of ensuring that delays are not caused by a lack of proper reporting (accountability).

Community participation should be emphasized right from the inception of such

programs. The affected population should fully participate in the designing, planning, follow-up, and monitoring of such programs. This ensures continuity after the withdrawal of external funding. In other words, community participation is paramount to the success of such programs.

Since decentralization efforts have been in effect in Uganda, 65% of the revenue collected by the government is retained at the sub-county level. Districts in collaboration with UNICEF should mobilize and sensitize Local Councils IIIs (sub-county level) about the need and objectives of the program. Local Councils IIIs should be equipped with the basic technical knowledge of the program because if this is internalized, it will ensure funding and easy monitoring.

There is need for thorough mobilization and sensitization of both district politicians and technocrats. The program should be internalized by these two groups to ensure its sustainability. Where possible, sensitization should be continuous and refresher courses for district implementers should be organized regularly. There should be proper utilization of the existing political structures (county, sub-county and parish), such that officials at each level are fully involved in the sensitization of people on COPE activities.

Inter-district workshops should be encouraged to assist in filling technical gaps in addition to sharing experiences among districts involved in COPE programs. These workshops should be held once a year so that there are enough

experiences to share among districts.

Although NGOs have been pointed out as detrimental to the progress of the COPE

program, it is important to know the environment in which they are operating. For instance, in the Masaka district, a district hit by AIDS, it is important to know the impact of NGOs in this area. This may be a good indicator of how the inception of something like a COPE program will be treated. Does the community have the capacity to fulfill the community obligations required by a COPE program? The role of NGOs in promoting the interest of COPE should not be overlooked, however. An NGO is often in a more

favorable position than the town council or government to promote a program.

Dissemination

A copies of this report will be sent to: Florida State University, the Makerere

Institute of Social Research Library, Makerere University's main library, the Uganda Ministry of Education, and the UNICEF country office in Uganda.

Depending

on the availability of resources, districts that were sampled will be sent a copy of the report. It is the hope of the author to also have this report published as an article in a relevant journal.

Areas of Future Research

Areas and question of future research include:

How does the present Universal Primary Education (UPE) system impact the informal education system? Has COPE a future if UPE is continued? Can COPE be

of any assistance to children not covered under UPE? To answer these questions, a more in-depth comparative study of COPE and the formal education

schooling system is needed.

Because politicians do not value COPE since its services are not visible, how can they use the success of a program like COPE as political capital?

What are the 'magic' factors that have led to the good performance of COPE?

Can such factors be applied to the formal education system for better results?

Can these factors be standardized?

In what kind of environment are the NGOs operating? What is their role in the provision of basic education? Are they targeting poverty relief, education school fees, etc.? Are they supply or demand driven?

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APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

What is COPE and how did it begin in this district?

Was a needs assessment carried out? If so, who was involved?

What role does the district/UNICEF play in the COPE program?

How does COPE differ from formal primary education?
Who are the beneficiaries of COPE?
How are beneficiaries identified and who does it?
Were you satisfied with the recruitment exercises at lower levels?
Are the disadvantaged (girls, orphans, disabled, neglected, etc.) given special consideration for the COPE program?
Who decides on the location of the center and what is considered?
How does the community view COPE and how does it contribute?
What basic education statistics do you have for this district? (type of schools (government, private, etc.), primary school enrollment, drop-outs, etc.)
Apart from UNICEF, what other NGOs are involved in non-formal education in this area?
Is your COPE program monitored? If so, do you receive feedback?
In your view, would you consider the COPE program in your district to be a success or failure? What factors contribute to this opinion?
How does the district intend to sustain the COPE program when UNICEF withdraws funding?

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS:

Why is your child enrolled in a COPE program and not in the formal school?
How are COPE beneficiaries identified and who does it?
Were you satisfied with the identification and recruitment process? Why or why not?
How is COPE different from the formal primary schools?
Where did the instructors come from? How were they selected? Are they monitored? If so, by whom and do they get feedback?
How is the COPE center maintained financially?
How will the COPE center be sustained when UNICEF withdraws funding?
How does the community view COPE? How does it contribute to the program?
Why was a COPE center located here and who decided this?
Are the disadvantaged (girls, orphans, disabled, neglected, etc.) given special consideration for attending the COPE program?
What are the major problems that the program has faced since its inception?
What are the reasons for its failures and successes?
Any further comments?

APPENDIX B - ANALYSIS MATRIX

SCORES	0	1	2	3
Overall Community	None	Low	Medium	High

Participation				
Participation in needs Identification	None	Low	Medium	High
Participation in Strategy formulation	None	Low	Medium	High
Participation in Implementation	None	Low	Medium	High
Overall Political Support	None	Low	Medium	High
Willingness to Release Funds	None	Low	Medium	High
Mobilization & Sensitization	None	Low	Medium	High
Monitoring/Supervision	None	Low	Medium	High
Pupil/Instructor Admission Criteria	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Presence of NGOs	None	Few	Many	Very Many
Rate of Labor Turn-over	None	Low	Medium	High