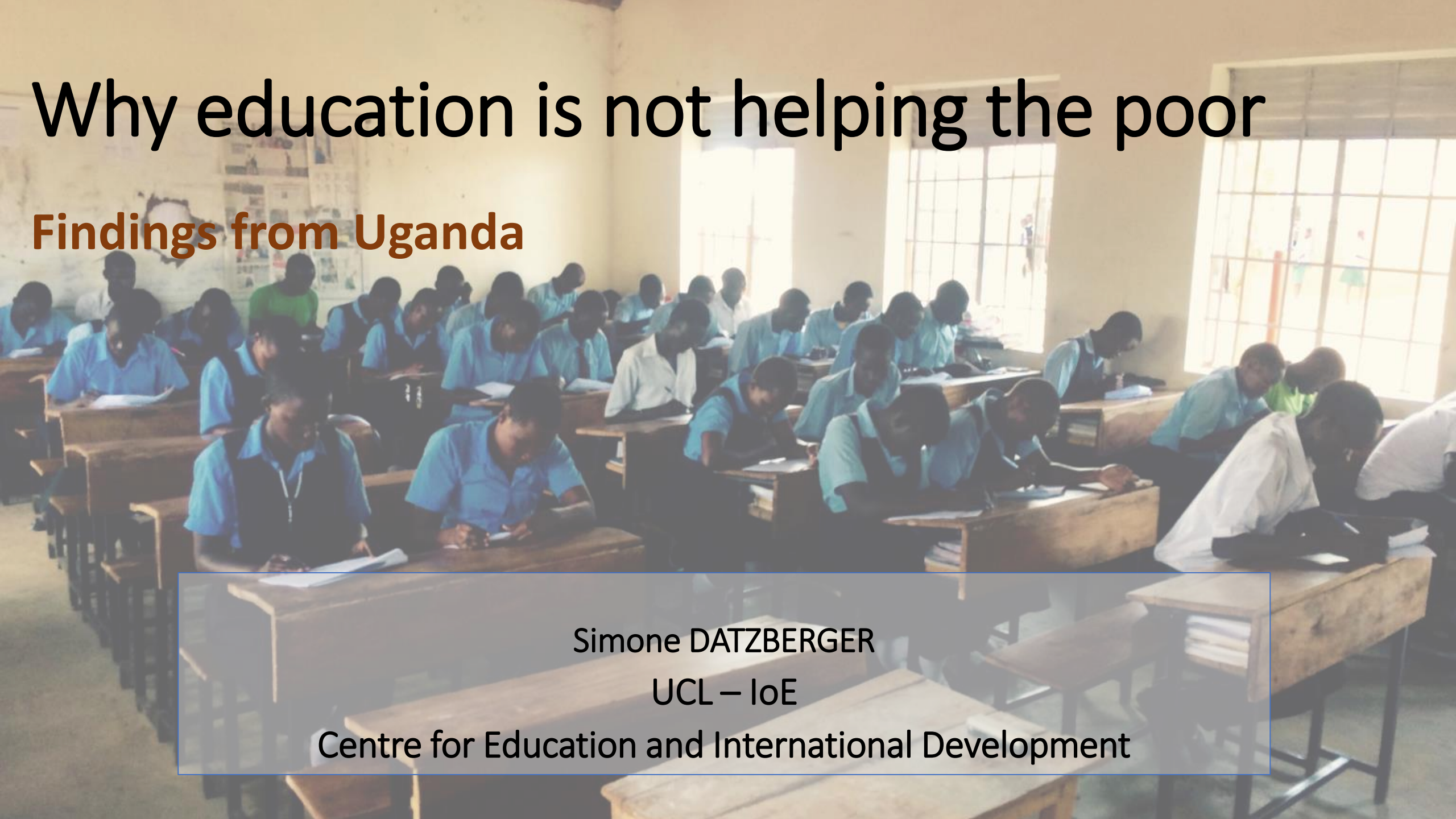


Why education is not helping the poor

Findings from Uganda



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Political Structures

- Hybrid Regime
- Freedom House “Partly Free” 2018
- Regional differences and divides
- Since 1986 seven civil wars (most prominent war: conflict in the North against LRA / Joseph Kony)
- Ranks 24th on Fragile State Index 2018



Economic Structures

- Uganda is a low-income country with a GDP per capita equivalent to 3 per cent of the world's average.
- Although Uganda's GNI (Gross National Income) increased significantly, by about 125%, between 1985 and 2012, it continues to suffer from a discriminatory global trading system with negative impacts on the national market
- USD 2.31 billion of exported goods alongside USD 5.52 billion of imported goods in 2015 alone
- Uganda continues to be highly dependent on development assistance (MoFPED Uganda, 2018, pp 6-7). More than 40 developmental partners or donors provide financial support to the country.

Roundtable Event

Democratization through Education?

19 April 2017 - Gulu University



“The education system that the government has given us is not helping the poor. It makes the poor poorer. It is still very expensive. I have met mothers who have sold land to educate their sons and daughters. The children who they have painfully paid for then go back to the villages to sell beans and shoes. The education also takes so long. By secondary level you still don’t know what you are going to be. After studying a lot of theory and wasting a lot of money. (...) The quality of UPE schools is poor. You can notice from the English these pupils speak. Those on government scholarships are people who can afford.”

Education as a fundamental human right

*“Education represents the hopes, dreams and aspirations of children, families, communities and nations around the world—the **most reliable route out of poverty** and a critical pathway towards healthier, more productive citizens and stronger societies. Not surprisingly, when people are asked to list their priorities, education tops survey after survey, poll after poll.”*

(UNESCO Institute of Statistics and UNICEF 2015)

Case Study: Uganda

- National Development Plan (2015-19) & World Bank: Education as an ingredient towards human capital development
- UPE – Universal Primary Education (1997)
- USE – Universal Secondary Education (1997)
- Creation of ECDs (Early Childhood Development Centres)

At first sight...

- School enrollment rates rose from 3 million (1996) to 8.3 million in 2015 (UBOS 2016)
- 84 % of children are currently enrolled in primary education (World Bank 2016)
- By 2008 almost two new classrooms were added in each parish district
- National poverty line declined from 31.1 % in 2006 to 19.7 % in 2013 (World Bank 2016)

At a closer look...

- Uganda has the highest school drop out rates worldwide at primary level
- Between 75.2 % (UNDP) - 67.9 % (Uwezo) of pupils drop out between P1 – P7
- Poverty rate of 19.7 % outdated not reflective of reality (World Bank 2016)
- 51.1 % still live in multidimensional poverty (HDI 2016)
- Poverty reduction predominantly built on agricultural income benefitting population with low levels of education (World Bank 2016)

A large group of children, likely in a classroom, are shown with their hands raised, suggesting an active learning environment. The children are of various ages and are looking towards the camera or slightly to the side. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Question

Why did Uganda's investments and policy reforms in education not uplift the poor?

Methods

- Fieldwork 2015 and 2017
- Qualitative data: 89 key informant interviews; 7 FGDs with youth in 4 different regions in the country
- Quantitative data: Ugandan Bureau of Statistics; Afrobarometer; Uwezo Report (2015, 2016); “Out of School Children Study”

Education and Poverty Alleviation in Uganda

Strategies to alleviate poverty through education revolve around three central themes:

- Increased access to education
- Improved quality of education
- Employment generation through education

Table 2: Reasons for school drop-out (20013/14 out of school children survey) conducted by (Mbabazi et al. 2014)

Reason	Refugee status		Region				Total
	<i>Non-refugee</i>	<i>Refugee</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Eastern</i>	<i>Northern</i>	<i>Western</i>	
Inadequate funding to pay the costs of school	82.4	70.2	64.9	76.7	89.3	74.8	78.7
Cooking or cleaning, fetching water or wood	73.9	78.0	75.0	71.9	78.1	62.5	75.3
Child no longer wanted to attend school or had enough	28.7	25.0	22.1	31.7	34.1	14.1	27.8
Tend animals, or work on the family farm / family business	25.2	25.0	22.5	53.1	13.7	37.5	25.2
Child needed to work or help at home	20.1	28.0	28.7	16.8	26.8	8.1	22.2
Classrooms were too crowded	16.8	27.7	13.3	13.0	28.6	11.2	19.4
Child failed examinations or had to repeat class	17.7	11.1	6.8	33.3	11.4	12.8	16.2
He became married or made someone pregnant	12.9	17.0	17.5	21.7	9.7	5.1	13.8
Teachers did not perform well	9.5	26.2	17.5	10.2	16.2	5.6	13.5
It was unlikely that child would find a place in secondary	13.4	12.4	16.5	26.5	6.0	13.5	13.2
School buildings or facilities were poor or had problems	8.3	18.5	18.7	9.2	9.4	3.7	10.7
The school offering the needed class was far away	8.7	14.7	8.3	7.5	13.7	8.8	10.3
Work for an employer	9.6	5.4	6.1	34.4	0.0	0.0	8.2
Travelling to school was unsafe	6.3	13.8	15.4	2.5	8.9	7.3	8.1
Pupils were unsafe at school	3.9	13.6	13.3	8.7	2.6	2.8	6.2
School graduates cannot find good jobs	4.5	10.3	12.7	8.7	2.0	0.0	5.9

Source: (Mbabazi et al. 2014, p. 20), information provided in this table was shortened for the purpose of this paper

Sample size: The quantitative sample size for this study was determined by Mbabazi et al. (2014, p 5) using a sample size of 769 per region, which amounted to a total number of n=3076

Increased Access to Education

- Hidden costs of education place an unexpected burden on the poor
- Among others: "Small" contributions such as food reason for drop-out
- The way in which funds for education are allocated across the country are not benefitting the most impoverished and marginalized populations
- System of capitation grants (MoES)
- USE supposed to be free but in reality it is not (FHI 360 2015)

Improved Quality of Education

- Learning outcomes are poor

Proportions of Primary 3 pupils who were competent in English literacy and numeracy tasks by sector, 2014			
	<i>Government</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Total</i>
Able to read a story in English	12 %	31 %	19 %
Able to perform division	23 %	36 %	28 %
Source: Uwezo 2015, p. 35			

Improved Quality of Education

- Quality of education in Uganda varies tremendously from school to school affecting equal opportunities for poorer societal segments
- “Higher standard” and “lower standard” education
- Rise of low-cost private schools – compromise quality for profit
- Public-private divide has created a gap between children of the “haves” (= expensive private schools) and the “have-nots” (= government or low-fee private schools).

Employment Generation through Education

- 78 % of young people are under 30 in Uganda
- Second highest population growth rate world wide (3.2 %)
- Youth unemployment is pervasive – no accurate figures
- General perception, that the higher the level of education, the better someone's employment prospects.

*“Uganda must create a bank of highly educated people to manage the emerging economy and which will contribute to poverty alleviation by increasing wealth. Skilled human resources produce more, earn more and pay more taxes. **Higher Education contributes to the wealth of nations by directly producing skilled human resources that produce wealth.**” (Revised Education Sector Plan 2008, MoES).*

Employment Generation through Education

- Several research studies suggest that the level of education or vocational training did thus far not increase employment in Uganda (Annan et al. 2006; Bird et al. 2011, Bird & Higgins 2009, UBOS 2013).
- Majority of those who are employed display a low education level – 72 % of working population in agriculture (UBOS 2016)
- *“After education there is always unemployment in Uganda. Even in this community there is unemployment”*
- Unemployment increases with the level of education attained: Out of 400.000 university graduates only 150.000 find a job leaving 250.000 unemployed each year (Ugandan Investment Authority)
- Knowledge conveyed in schools frequently critiqued for being disconnected from skills required for the job market



What are the implications?

Concluding remarks

- Among all respondents education *per se* was never the subject of critique
- Argument is not that education does not have the potential to uplift people from poverty and help to overcome structural barriers
- BUT: current development models to reduce poverty through education do not have an impact on the **political, economic** and **social** structures that cause poverty (indirect and direct forms of violence) in the first place.

Concluding remarks

- Change cannot emerge from the very grassroots level alone, (through educating society at large), but also has to emerge from the systemic level, i.e. government institutions at the local, national and global level.
- The way in which education is funded, organized, redistributed and strategized at the very systemic level affects the poor can potentially also lead to new conflicts – transformative approaches are needed.
- The predominant focus on economic empowerment or employment generation through education sidelines the role of education in enhancing political agency
- Need for cross-sectoral approaches as the education sector alone cannot overcome economic and political (structural barriers on its own).
- Lack of research on what types of support to parents and what kind of skills conveyed in schools are most responsive to the economic and political realities and structures poor people are struggling with.

Datzberger, S., McCully, A., & Smith, A. (2015). [The Role of Education in Peacebuilding. Country Report: Uganda](#). UNICEF New York & Ulster University.

Datzberger, S. (2018). [Why education is not helping the poor. Findings from Uganda](#). *World Development*, 110, 124-139. doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.05.022



Discussion

- Where do you see the benefits of but also challenges in a *Political Economy Analysis* in conflict/crisis affected environments?
- How does this affect your own work?
- On the basis of your own work, what kind of cross-sectoral approaches in education do you think are needed to address political and economic constraints of people in conflict/crisis affected environments?