



Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika  
الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا  
Association for the Development of Education in Africa  
Association pour le développement de l'éducation en Afrique  
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação em África

**Triennale on Education and Training in Africa  
(Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, February 12-17, 2012)**

**Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa: How to design and implement an effective response by education and training systems**

**Sub-theme 1**  
**Common core skills for lifelong learning and sustainable development in Africa**

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**Are our children learning? Assessment of learning outcomes among children in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Working Document**

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**DOC 1.4.05**

## 1. ABSTRACT

1. This paper attempts to compare learning levels of children in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, based on the Uwezo Report titled: *Are Our Children Learning? Numeracy and Literacy Across East Africa*. This report bases on learning assessment of children in reading and comprehension of English (in the 3 countries), reading and comprehension of Kiswahili (In Tanzania and Kenya) and numeracy (in the 3 countries). A total of 145,730 children were assessed in the 3 countries, based on class 2 syllabus for the respective countries. This paper highlights three key findings.
2. Primary enrolment is high, but not universal. Enrolment is lowest in Tanzania, and highest in Uganda. The graph furthermore. In Kenya, a larger proportion of older children attend primary school, boosted by the fact that primary education in Kenya lasts 8 years, against 7 years in Tanzania and Uganda. Further to this, enrolment in primary school is unequal and depends largely on household wealth.
3. Learning levels in literacy and numeracy are low in the three countries. On average, less than a third of children in class 3 have acquired the class 2 competences. Learning levels are highest in Kenya, and lowest in Uganda. Like enrolment, learning levels are shaped by household wealth. Kenya posts the highest inequalities of learning levels across different wealth quintiles, while Tanzania has lowest inequalities.
4. There are large differences in quality among schools. Defining quality by using a set of simple indicators (pupils per teacher, pupils per class, and pupils per toilet) illustrates great variance in quality among the three countries, across districts within countries, and within schools found in the same districts. Schools in Kenya are generally better equipped than schools in Uganda and Tanzania; schools in Uganda are particularly poor. Only a weak association was found between school quality and performance on the Uwezo tests. However, *This should caution those who believe that performance in schools will improve by reducing pupil:teacher or pupil:classroom ratios.*
5. Private school attendance varies greatly in East Africa, with as many as one in four pupils attending private schools in Uganda, to as few as one in 50 in Tanzania. As expected, mostly children from the wealthiest families attended private schools, though in Uganda access was more equally distributed across wealth classes. Children in private schools demonstrate higher learning levels than children in public schools.
6. Gender inequity is often noted across many socio-political spheres. This was not the case for primary education, at least in terms of enrolment or performance in basic literacy and numeracy; boy and girl students functioned almost at par. In Kenya, female students did slightly worse both in enrolment and on the Uwezo tests. For Uganda and Tanzania the results were mixed, and it would be fair to conclude that overall girls and boys performed at par.