



# Time to Teach

Teacher attendance and time on task  
in primary schools

Uganda

Spogmai Akseer and Despina Karamperidou

November 2020

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Editorial production: Sarah Marchant, UNICEF Innocenti

Graphic design: Alessandro Mannocchi, Rome

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## Acknowledgements

This report was produced by a team of researchers at the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. The study was managed by Matt Brossard and Dominic Richardson, designed and coordinated by Despina Karamperidou, and written by Spogmai Akseer and Despina Karamperidou. Silvia Peirolo and Seun Adebayo provided research assistance and Claire Akehurst and Lara Stefanizzi offered invaluable administrative support to the team.

The team would like to acknowledge the guidance of Gunilla Olsson (Director, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti), Priscilla Idele (Director a.i., UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti) and the many UNICEF colleagues who assisted the planning and drafting process. Christine (Yue) Han and Juliana Zapata and (UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti), who supported inception and training missions in participating countries, and Suguru Mizunoya (UNICEF HQ – Division of Data, Research and Policy), who supported the study at its inception stage, deserve special mention. The team is also indebted to Shiraz Chakera (UNICEF East and Southern Africa Regional Office), Rosemary Rugamba-Rwanyange and Nabendra Dahal (UNICEF Uganda) who facilitated in-country trainings and monitored data collection. Invaluable editorial and communications support was provided by Dale Rutstein, Celine Little and Kathleen Sullivan (all UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti).

Special thanks go to Dr Jessica N. Aguti, Dr Alex Okot, Dr Betty Ezati and their team at the College of Education and External Studies (Makerere University Kampala) who helped pilot and pre-test Time to Teach (TTT) instruments and undertook data collection in all 20 schools. The Innocenti team would also like to thank the members of the MoES who provided direction, critical advice and vital insights during many stages of the project.

The research team is deeply indebted to the 394 study participants (teachers, head teachers, pupils, community representatives, national officials and subnational education officers), who generously shared their time, experience, and materials for the purposes of this project.

Lastly, this work would not have been possible without the financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Government of Italy and the Government of Norway and other contributors to the UNICEF Thematic Funding for Education. The UNICEF Innocenti team greatly appreciated the excellent cooperation with Clio Dintilhac from BMGF.

## Foreword

Teachers play an integral role in imparting knowledge to pupils. More than just conduits of information, teachers equip children with the academic and socio-emotional skills and the tools to analyse, problem solve and effectively use information – skills that are necessary to lead healthy and productive lives. These are all skills necessary to lead a healthy and productive life. However, many education systems in East and Southern Africa, are failing to prepare, support, motivate, and manage their teachers. Uganda has become increasingly aware of the important role teachers play within the education system, recognizing also that a teacher’s time on task can play a vital role in cultivating positive learning experiences. Increasing demands for education, a literacy rate above 90 per cent for both male and female pupils, along with a national average of 94 per cent trained teachers, are indicative of the commitment from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) toward educational advancement. Despite these gains, the country faces multiple barriers that threaten this progress. Some of these include the extreme shortage of teaching and learning materials, poor infrastructure and facilities in the school and in the community, a shortage of teachers, and insufficient processes for accountability, monitoring and management of the education system.

Additionally, while a vast majority of Ugandan teachers are trained, absenteeism is an ongoing dilemma, estimated to be at 29 per cent nationally in 2014.<sup>1</sup> There is indication, however, that Uganda is boosting its efforts to improve these practices, evident through the MoES’s recent launch of the Teacher Incentive Framework, which includes — as part of its aim to enhance teachers’ instructional time use — future initiatives to track and address teacher absenteeism, so it is reduced by 50 per cent by 2022. The framework is also committed to achieving, by 2040, the Sustainable Development Goal 4.c, which centralizes the importance of teachers’ pedagogical skills and knowledge.<sup>2</sup> These measures are especially important because Uganda’s national budget allocation for primary education has, over the years, decreased, with direct implications for the sector’s capacity to meet the needs of its citizens. Uganda’s 11 per cent budget allocation in 2016 was the lowest in comparison to other countries in the region, which is especially concerning as Ugandan teachers’ subject knowledge and attendance are also among the lowest comparatively.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Ugandan primary school teachers receive lower wages compared to teachers in other countries across the region.

Improving both budget allocation and processes for needs-based training, regular supervision and support for teachers’ professional growth are critical factors for Uganda to consider in order for the country to conform to regional trends and meet international benchmarks for primary education. Teacher absenteeism not only deprives children of their basic right to education, but causes significant financial wastage that Uganda is not in a position to absorb. Therefore, enhancing teachers’ presence in the classroom and ensuring instructions are meaningful to learners’ needs can contribute significantly to the growth of the education sector, as well as the country, by helping prepare pupils to become contributing members of society.

It is hoped that findings from this study will not be interpreted narrowly as criticism of teachers and other education stakeholders, but rather as a snapshot of Uganda’s primary education system. We also hope the findings will help tailor the future interventions of the MoES and the Education Service Commission (ESC) to ensure a competent and motivated teaching force, but also to increase the opportunities for children to learn at school in a healthy learning environment and improve their opportunities in life.

The Research Team  
UNICEF Innocenti

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

CAO	Chief Administrative Officers	TDMS	Teacher Development Management System
CCT	Coordinating Centre Tutor	TIET	Teacher Instructor Education and Training
DEO	District Education Office	TIF	Teacher Incentive Framework
DES	Directorate of Education Standards	TTT	Time to Teach
DFID	UK Department of International Development	TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
ESA	East and Southern Africa	UNEB	Uganda National Examination Board
ESC	Education Service Commission	UNATU	Uganda National Teachers' Union
EPSC	Economic Policy Support Centre	UPE	Universal Primary Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion	WCA	West and Central Africa
IDI	In-depth Interview		
IFMS	Integrated Financial Management System		
IMS	Instructional Materials Supply		
IPPS	Integrated Personnel and Payroll System		
IRB	Institutional Review Board		
HML	Health Media Lab		
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports		
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development		
MoPS	Ministry of Public Works		
NA	Northern Africa		
NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre		
NCS	National Council for Sports		
NTP	National Teacher Policy		
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan		
PTA	Parent Teacher Association		
QEI	Quality Enhancement Initiative		
TCA	Thematic Content Analysis		

## Executive summary

### Overview

Teacher absenteeism constitutes a significant barrier to achieving learning outcomes in many low- and middle-income countries, where teacher school absence rates range from 3 to 27 per cent.<sup>4</sup> In Uganda, primary education has achieved several milestones resulting in significant gains, including over 90 per cent literacy rate throughout the different districts, 94 per cent of the teaching force trained, and ongoing commitment from the MoES toward enhancing the provision of education. The country has also achieved gender parity in primary school enrolments, which in 2016 was at 84.1 per cent for girls and 83.3 per cent for boys. The Government's recognition of the centrality of teachers within this system is another positive gain, legitimated recently through the establishment of the National Teacher Policy (NTP) document and development of the Teacher Incentive Framework (TIF). There are, however, ongoing challenges that put pressures on current gains and future goals. UNICEF Uganda estimates at least 60 per cent of Ugandan teachers are not present in the classroom at half of all public schools. Regional observations indicate teacher absence is a much larger issue in Uganda than other neighbouring countries, and that their subject knowledge is lower, comparatively. This is especially concerning because pupil drop-out and repetition are also high among primary pupils, resulting in additional constraints with socio-economic implications. Also, the national budget for education — at 11 per cent in 2016 — was found to be the lowest among other countries in the region.<sup>5</sup> In 2018, this was reduced further to 10.5 per cent, demonstrating that national resources are limited.

The Time to Teach (TTT) study seeks to support the ministry in its efforts to strengthen teachers' role in the school in order to increase their time on task. Its primary objective is to identify factors affecting the various dimensions of primary school teacher attendance and to use this evidence to inform the design and implementation of teacher policies. Specifically, the study looks at four distinct dimensions of teacher attendance: being in school, being punctual (i.e. not arriving late/leaving early), being in the classroom (while in school), and spending sufficient time on task (while in the classroom).

TTT is a mixed-methods project, employing both qualitative and quantitative research tools. The study draws from national, system-wide, qualitative data collections and school observations, and a quantitative survey of 193 teachers working in 20 purposely selected primary schools.

### Main findings

In line with the study's systems approach, findings regarding the determinants of various types of teacher absenteeism in Uganda are presented in this report based on the level of education system to which they most closely correspond, or the level at which they manifest most significantly.

#### How frequently are teachers absent?

Findings reveal absenteeism happens across all schools, with 13-19 per cent of the teachers saying it occurs at least once a week. Late arrival or early departure is especially high at 19 per cent, followed by limited time on task (14 per cent). There are also significant urban-rural disparities. Absenteeism appears to be higher in rural areas (9-16 per cent) compared to urban areas (1-4 per cent). Gender differences are also evident in school absence (though not as significantly as other forms of absenteeism), with 8 per cent of male teachers and only 5 per cent of female teachers pointing to school absence as happening at least once a week at their school.

## Why are teachers absent?

At the national level, teachers do not receive salaries on time, causing them to miss school frequently in order to resolve the issue. Also, wages are not enough to cover teachers' basic living expenses, causing them constant worry and stress, which affects their time on task. Teachers also lack essential teaching skills (classroom and time management, lesson planning, subject knowledge) to effectively follow the new thematic curriculum requirements, causing them to reduce their time on task. Also, poor provision of non-monetary incentives hinders teachers' sense of accountability, resulting in frequent school and classroom absence. Bureaucratic sanctioning processes also make it difficult to hold teachers accountable and, consequently, there are higher instances of school absenteeism at such schools.

At the subnational level, measures designed to sanction school absences are not enforced regularly or consistently, thus allowing the behaviour to continue. Also, monitoring focuses mainly on absence from school and does not include other types of absences. District officials have limited resources, which weakens their relationship with schools and makes them less likely to sanction teachers for school absence. Additionally, bureaucratic sanctioning processes at the district and national level result in delayed actions against absenteeism.

At the community level, extreme weather conditions, mainly heavy rains and heat, cause teachers to miss school, arrive late, or to cancel or shorten lessons because school infrastructure and resources are not conducive to teaching or learning under these conditions. Poor classroom infrastructure offers inadequate protection against the weather, and therefore hinders pupils' academic progress. Lack of teacher housing results in teachers living further away from school, and thus frequently missing school or arriving late and leaving early. Pupils' health and personal challenges affect their performance in the classroom, causing teachers to repeat lessons or to limit their time on task.

At the school level, head teachers' regular absence weakens monitoring and supervision of teachers, resulting in inadequate management of schools and classes and instructional time use. Additionally, heavy workloads, due to high pupil-teacher ratios, and teachers' engagement in non-teaching administrative tasks causes them to miss school, scheduled classes, and to shorten their lesson durations. Lack of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) and feeding programmes also limit teachers time on task.

Finally, at the teacher level, lack of knowledge and skills to teach the curriculum, as well as deficient deployment practices limit the amount of time teachers dedicate to their instructional activities. Similarly, poor health and inadequate access to health-related resources, as well as gender-based violence in the community, limit teacher presence at school and in the classroom, their punctuality, and their instructional time use. Poor provision of non-teaching incentives are additional hindrances to teachers' motivation for coming to school regularly, or attending to their pupils while at school, and their scheme of work.

## What are the common causes of teacher absenteeism across all levels?

The key determinants from the different education system levels were aggregated further to identify commonalities and connections between them. The following four challenges emerged as significant and are, therefore, recommended for policy recommendation:

- Poor provision of teachers' basic needs lowers motivation and makes it difficult for teachers to attend schools regularly, to use instructional time effectively, to attend to their pupils — even though they might be present in the school — and heightens their sense of isolation from the ministry's educational initiatives.
- Sub-optimal working environments increase teachers' workload and stress levels, causing them to be away from their classrooms and to compromise the amount of time they can dedicate to instructional activities.

- Inconsistent and inadequate monitoring of teachers by district officials and head teachers, as well as a narrow understanding of teacher absence, result in frequent school and classroom absences, as well as poor instructional time use.

### What are the potential recommendations for policymaking?

The provision of teachers' basic needs requires a multi-system and multi-sector approach in order to address their immediate needs and develop long-term sustainable goals that can improve their quality of life.

- In the short-term, the MoES should consider improving the Integrated Personnel and Payroll System (IPPS) through capacity development of district officials. Long-term provisions need to include additional budget allocation for primary education, strengthening of the Uganda National Teachers Union's (UNATU) role in schools, inter-ministerial collaboration and salary increments.
- Tailored in-service training opportunities that incorporate school-level and community-level needs and realities in their provision are especially important for teachers to utilize their instruction time effectively. At the school level, the teachers' professional code of conduct needs to be reinforced in order to ensure accountability and reinforce positive and encouraging relations between teachers and pupils.

Teachers need support from head teachers, government officials and the community in prioritizing their teaching responsibilities so they can dedicate their time toward their teaching tasks and help learners achieve academic success through effective instructional time use.

- School management and local government officials should ensure teachers are not engaging in non-teaching tasks while at school. Additional staff should be provided by the district offices or through Parent Teacher Association (PTA) support so schools can carry on their duties without dependence on teachers. In the long-term, the ministry must consider clarifying duties and responsibilities of teachers in a manner that prioritizes their time-on task.
- The provision of TLMs, nutrition programmes and school and classroom resources need to be provided, especially for disadvantaged districts. Inter-ministerial collaboration is especially important because parents' poor socio-economic conditions increases demand for child labour, resulting in frequent pupil absenteeism. The MoES should also consider engaging the PTA at the national policy level so they are given opportunities to engage, and not simply expected to implement national directives.
- Encouraging teachers away from absenteeism requires school and district-level support and feedback as well as consistent and adequate monitoring of teachers' presence and conduct in the school and classroom.
- The ministry should allocate additional funds to districts so that inspections are conducted regularly and thoroughly. School inspectors also need to be encouraged to work directly with teachers in order to give them support and guidance for professional growth. Head teachers' presence at the school must be prioritized by the local and national governments so they are not engaged in activities that result in their absence from school. This also requires additional clarification on monitoring responsibilities at the school level so there are no overlaps between the role of the head teacher and local educational officials, because head teachers are well acknowledged as the first inspectors of schools.
- Any national or district level efforts designed to improve teacher absenteeism should move beyond its focus on school absence mainly, and instead, district officials need to ensure that a multi-dimensional understanding is utilized so that teachers are also monitored for school lateness, early departures, absence from the classroom, and time on task.

## Section 1: Introduction

### 1.1. Teacher absenteeism and why it matters

Teacher absenteeism wastes valuable financial resources, short-changes young pupils and is one of the most cumbersome obstacles on the path toward universal learning in developing countries.<sup>6</sup> Studies from across the developing world have found national averages of teacher absenteeism that range from 3 to 27 per cent.<sup>7</sup> These national averages conceal even higher rates of absenteeism within countries, and large variations in educational opportunities and outcomes, since educators tend to be more frequently absent in poorer and more remote communities and schools.<sup>8</sup>

Teacher absenteeism is particularly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa. The Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) study by the World Bank found that between 15 and 45 per cent of all primary school teachers in seven sub-Saharan African countries<sup>i</sup> were absent from school, and between 23 and 57 per cent were absent from class on any given day.<sup>9</sup> The same study estimated that, on average, the loss of teaching hours due to teacher absenteeism corresponded to a waste of approximately 46 cents for every dollar invested in education, which is equivalent to an annual wastage of between 1 and 3 per cent of GDP.<sup>10</sup> Afrobarometer data, drawn from 36 African countries,<sup>11</sup> also indicate that teacher absenteeism contributes to unequal education outcomes, confirming a strong association between high levels of teacher absenteeism and the presence of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

In Uganda, primary education has achieved several milestones resulting in significant gains, including over 90 per cent literacy rate throughout the different regions, a teaching force with 94 per cent trained, and ongoing commitment from the MoES toward strengthening educational attainment. The country has also achieved gender parity in primary school enrolments, which in 2016 was at 84.1 per cent for girls and 83.3 per cent for boys. The Government's recognition of the centrality of teachers within this system is another positive gain, legitimated recently through the establishment of the NTP document.

While these are important milestones, Uganda continues to face ongoing dilemmas in the provision of equitable basic education, including teacher absenteeism. UNICEF Uganda estimates at least 60 per cent of Ugandan teachers are not present in the classroom at half of all public schools. Regional observations indicate teacher absence is a much larger issue in Uganda than other neighbouring countries, and that their subject knowledge is comparatively lower. This is especially concerning because pupil drop-out and repetition are also high among primary pupils, resulting in additional constraints, with socio-economic implications. It is important to note that while primary enrolment is high across the country, less than 20 per cent of male and female pupils go on to pursue secondary education.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the MoES national budget has decreased over the years, and the 11 per cent that the Government allocated in 2016 was found to be the lowest among other countries in the region.<sup>13</sup> In 2018, the Government dedicated 10.5 per cent of its national budget toward education.<sup>14</sup>

i Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda.

## 1.2. Objectives

Policy makers and education stakeholders in Uganda are becoming increasingly aware of the negative consequences of teacher absenteeism. Nevertheless, the evidence base on how policies and practices — at various levels of the education system — influence different dimensions of teacher attendance (school, classroom, and so on), remains limited. This lack of evidence contributes to difficulties in designing effective teacher-management policies to increase educators' motivations and opportunities to teach and successfully implement school-governance reforms.<sup>15</sup>

The principal objective of the Time to Teach study is to generate and collate empirical evidence on the various types and determinants of primary school teacher absenteeism in the country and to provide practical recommendations for improving teacher attendance rates. The study seeks to offer critical insights on factors at different levels of the education system that influence teacher attendance and to assist the policy and programmatic work of the MoES and UNICEF Uganda.

More specifically, the study aims to:

- Understand the various forms of primary school teacher absenteeism (e.g. absence from school, classroom, teaching, etc.) and assess their prevalence in different regions, types of schools (e.g. public/private) and settings (e.g. rural/urban).
- Explore the issue of teacher absenteeism from a systemic perspective and to identify factors at different levels of the education system (national, subnational, community, school, and teacher) that affect teacher attendance, as well as teachers' capacity and motivation to teach up to standards.
- Detect gaps in teacher policy and policy implementation linked to identified determinants of absenteeism and barriers to higher teacher attendance rates.
- Identify promising practices and provide actionable policy recommendations on increasing teachers' time on task as a means of improving learners' academic performance.
- Increase awareness among national education policy makers, international organizations, and donors supporting education, on the importance of well-designed teacher policies and the integration of the issue of teacher attendance into national education strategies, programs, and policy discussions.

## 1.3. Data and methods

TTT is a mixed-methods project, that employs both qualitative and quantitative research tools. The study takes a systems approach toward explaining teacher absenteeism and examines the relevance of factors at various levels of the education system, including the national-, subnational-, community-, school-, and individual teacher-levels. The study also evaluates whether factors outside of the education system have an important role to play in determining teacher attendance, and if so, what that role is.

In total, 20 primary schools were purposely selected across Uganda based on the following four criteria: location (region/district), governance (public, private and inclusive), rurality (rural or urban) and performance (high or low). At each school, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were carried out with the head teacher, three teachers and a member of the school management board. A focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with pupils, and a teacher survey was administered to all teachers who were present on the day of the (pre-announced) visit. National and subnational education officers in charge of teacher monitoring, and teacher union representatives were also interviewed. In total, 447 individuals participated in the study.

## 1.4. Chapter organization

This report is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a short overview of Uganda's primary education system and teacher policies. It also critically reviews existing literature on the drivers of teacher absenteeism in the country and highlights their limitations. Section 3 presents the methodology of the study and discusses issues of sampling, instruments development, data collection, and data analysis. Key findings are presented in Section 4. Section 5 presents a summary of the key challenges teachers in Uganda face and highlights how these are connected across the education system levels and may reinforce different types of absenteeism. This section also includes a list of related policy gaps and policy-implementation gaps related to each challenge. Finally, Section 6 presents a list of policy recommendations that address the main findings from this study.



## Section 2: Country context

### 2.1. Overview of country

Uganda is an East African<sup>16</sup>, Sub-Saharan country that shares borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the West, Rwanda and Tanzania to the South, Kenya to the East and South Sudan to the North. Kampala is the capital and also the largest city in Uganda, located in the southern part of the country. Certain regions of the country (mainly northern and north-eastern Uganda) have poorer conditions due to underdevelopment, insecurity and unfavourable climatic conditions. In 2014, the country's population was estimated at 34.9 million, with the number expected to rise to 40.4 million in 2020.<sup>17</sup> More than half Uganda's population (52 per cent) is female<sup>18</sup>, and a vast majority (77 per cent)<sup>19</sup> live in rural areas. The official languages of Uganda are English and Swahili, although Luganda is widely spoken across the country, along with several other languages.<sup>20</sup>

Since its independence in 1962 from British colonial rule, the country has experienced several challenges, including repeated civil strife, military conflict with Tanzania, violation of human rights under a totalitarian regime and economic deterioration.<sup>21</sup> Since 1986, the rule of Yoweri Museveni has brought relative stability and economic growth to the country. In 1992, Uganda introduced its national decentralization policy, which has delegated significant authority, function and resources to local governments, who now have extensive oversight of service delivery to various sectors, including education.

The country's economy is dominated by agriculture, which remains one of its most important sectors, employing 72 per cent of the work force.<sup>22</sup> Despite the country's natural resources, such as copper, gold and other minerals, Uganda has a small industrial sector that is dependent mainly on imported inputs, including refined oil and heavy equipment.<sup>23</sup> Since 2016, its economic growth has slowed as the Government's spending and public debt has grown.<sup>24</sup> Uganda faces many economic challenges, especially related to the instability in South Sudan and the sharp increase in Sudanese refugees.<sup>25</sup> Among other countries in the region, Uganda is the third-highest refugee-hosting nation, with progressive policies that grant refugees the same rights as Ugandans.<sup>26</sup> This causes additional challenges for the local populations as well as refugees because Uganda is financially not in a position to look after these populations.

### 2.2. Overview of national education system

#### 2.2.1. History and development

The present system of education has existed since 1997, when the Ugandan Government introduced universal primary education (UPE) to strengthen enrolment and attainment.<sup>27</sup> Its introduction was a response to decades of conflict, which had caused large-scale devastation to the country's social, political, and economic life, including the education system.<sup>28</sup> Since then, policy provisions have shifted toward inclusivity and away from the elitist approaches of the past.<sup>29</sup> The Government has recognized the important role education can play in national development initiatives and has focused on the sector as part of its national Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and, more recently, the National Development Plan II. Despite its promising increase in pupil enrolment, the demand for TLMs, qualified teaching staff and infrastructure are ongoing challenges that are difficult for the sector to meet, all of which limit UPE's success.<sup>30</sup>

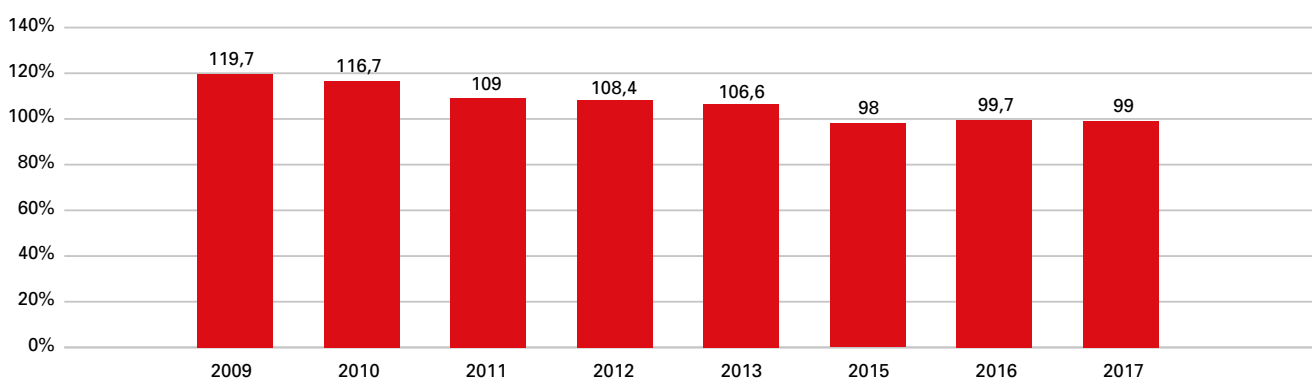
Between 1998 and 2003, the MoES launched and implemented the Education Strategic Investment Plan, which included a Primary Education Reform Programme, comprised of (i) increasing access through Uganda's Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy, (ii) improving school and teacher management through its Teacher Development Management Service (TDMS) policy and its Instructional Materials Supply (IMS) policy,

and (iii) strengthening planning, management and implementation strategies.<sup>31</sup> National decentralization goals resulted in delegating the management and provision of education to local governments, who were tasked with implementing UPE, supervising the disbursement of UPE capitation grants, and ensuring its successful management and administration at the district level. Currently, the MoES framework of support is articulated within the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2017/18-2019/20), which has been formulated to support the country's drive towards middle-income status by 2020 through consolidation of the gains that have been made by the Government of Uganda in the education & sports sector over the years. The ministry's role is limited to policy formulation and maintenance of standards through teacher training, curriculum development and examinations.<sup>32</sup> Finally, in 2017, the Government launched a key policy focused on teacher motivation, the Teacher Incentive Framework (TIF), as part of its National Teacher Policy (NTP) initiative, to focus specifically on enhancing teacher motivation.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.2.2. Key primary education statistics and trends

The Government expenditure on education increased gradually throughout the years, from 42 per cent in 1971 to 59 per cent in 2014.<sup>34</sup> In recent years however, funding has decreased, even though the needs of the ministry are rapidly increasing due to increased demand for education. The national budget of the MoES stood at a share of 11 per cent in 2016, which was lower than in previous years (13 per cent in 2015). In 2018, the budget appears to have further decreased to 10.5 per cent. This amount is among the lowest, compared to other countries in the region.<sup>35</sup> In 2002, primary education was allocated 2.23 per cent of the national budget, which was reduced by more than half in 2016 to 1.02 per cent.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, access and enrolment in primary education grew significantly since the 1970s, most likely in response to the government's UPE policy.<sup>37</sup> However, in recent years, this appears to be declining (*see Figure 1*). It has dropped from 119 per cent (120 per cent for girls and 119 per cent for boys) in 2009 to 99 per cent in 2017 (100 per cent for girls and 97 per cent for boys).<sup>38</sup> These indicators suggest the Government has not yet achieved its UPE goals. In addition, pupil numbers have increased between 2000 and 2016, by approximately 32 per cent, resulting in high pupil-teacher ratios, which also increased from 34:1 to 43:1 in 2016.<sup>39</sup>

Figure 1: Gross enrolment rate in primary schools



Source: UNICEF OoR - Innocenti, data pulled from UNESCO Institute for Statistics<sup>40</sup>

### 2.2.3. Structure

The Ugandan education system is structured on four levels (see Figure 2). Children begin primary school at the age of 6 — beginning with grade 1 or P1 — and completing P7 by the age of 12, whereby they must complete a national exam to determine their eligibility for secondary education. Through the UPE programme, education is now free and compulsory for all children.

Figure 2: Structure of the education system in Uganda

<b>Tertiary Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Young people aged 19-23</li> <li>■ Degrees are obtained at the end of university, and diplomas and certificates at the end of other tertiary institutions.</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Adolescents aged 13-18</li> <li>■ Duration: 4 years of lower secondary and 2 years of upper secondary</li> <li>■ The Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) is obtained at the end of lower secondary and the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) at the end of upper secondary.</li> </ul>
<b>Primary Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Children aged 6-12</li> <li>■ Duration: 7 years</li> <li>■ Free and compulsory</li> <li>■ At the end, pupils sit the primary leaving examinations (PLE)</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-primary Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Children aged 3-5</li> <li>■ Duration: 3 years</li> <li>■ Non compulsory</li> </ul>

Source: UNICEF OoR – Innocenti

### 2.2.4. Governance

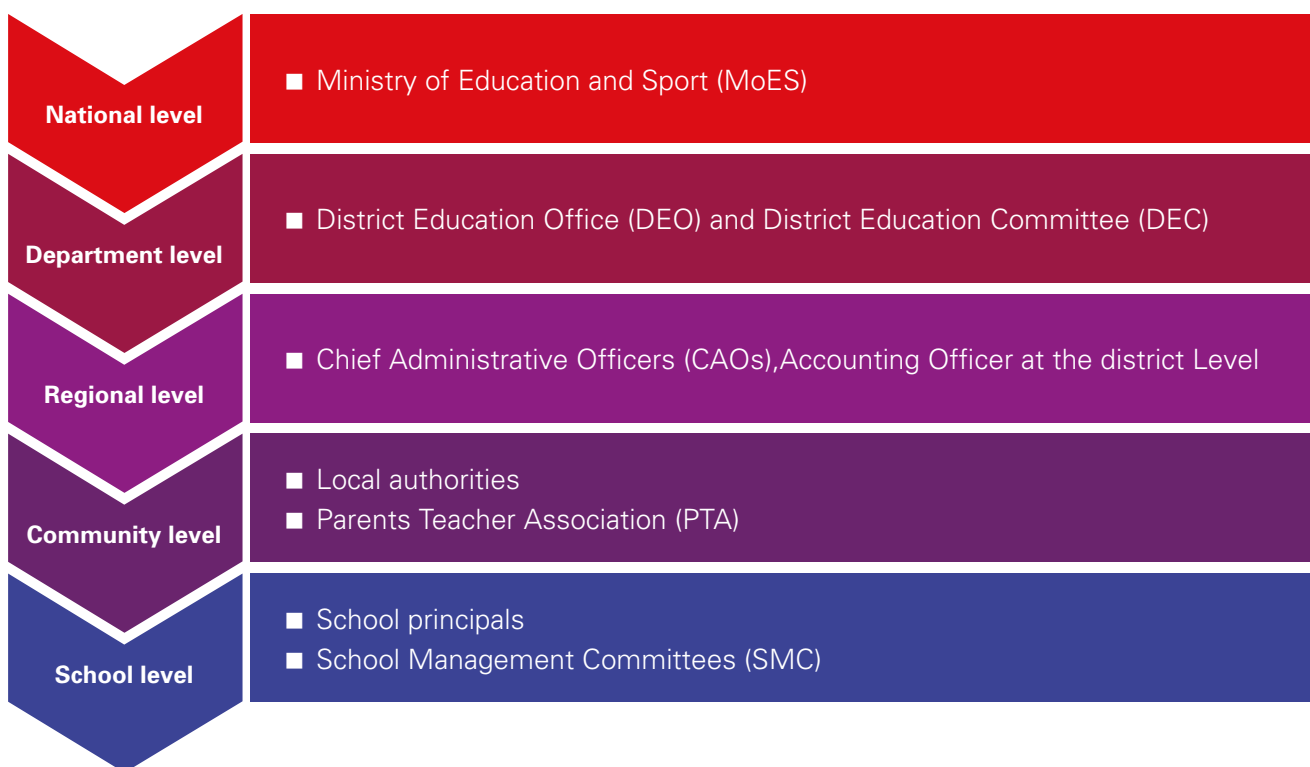
Figure 3 illustrates the governing structure of education including actors responsible for oversight of teachers at each level of the system. At the national level, the MoES is responsible for the development and implementation of policies for all of Uganda,<sup>41</sup> which is divided into 4 administrative regions, 15 sub-regions and 121 districts. Moreover, it ensures the formulation and periodic review of the education system, and the planning and mobilisation of financial resources.<sup>42</sup> The institutions affiliated with the MoES are the Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB), National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), Directorate of Education Standards, National Council for Sports (NCS), Education Service Commission (ESC) and government universities.<sup>43</sup>

At the regional level, district councils and district education officers (including district officers, district education officers, and district inspectors of schools) have responsibility for the overall monitoring and management of the primary education system.<sup>44</sup> Each district has its own district education office (DEO). The DEO is responsible for planning, preparation and execution of the budget, and supervision and monitoring of educational activities in the district. It receives reports from schools under its jurisdiction and distributes textbooks and classroom furniture. Senior education officers, principal education officers and school inspectors work under the DEO. In addition, under the leadership of the chief administrative officers

(CAOs), local authorities are responsible for ensuring all funds released by the MoES reach schools and are not retained for any other purposes.<sup>45</sup> Sub-county chiefs represent the CAOs at the sub-county level, and thus visit schools regularly, implement local government bylaws on UPE, and keep a record of both pupils' and teachers' attendance.<sup>46</sup>

At school level, the school management committees (SMCs), PTAs and head teachers are involved in the management of primary schools.<sup>47</sup> More specifically, the 2008 Education Act empowers the SMC to take full responsibility for all aspects related to school management.<sup>48</sup>

Figure 3: Education Sector Management Authority



Source: UNICEF OoR – Innocenti & UNESCO (2010) World Data on Education: Uganda (7th edition, 2010/11).

### 2.2.5. Challenges and strategic priorities

In recent years, tremendous strides have been made towards achieving UPE despite challenges of inadequate budget allocations and rapid population growth, which have put immense pressure on existing resources and infrastructures (see Table 1).<sup>49</sup> For instance, the continued implementation of UPE increased enrolment from 7,537,971 to 8,264,317 between 2007 and 2015.<sup>50</sup> A robust SWOT analysis provided by the ministry points to several challenges, including outdated policies and legal frameworks and poor inspection and supervision of schools.<sup>51</sup> To address these, the Government developed the Education Sport Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2020, which is hinged on three major strategic policy objectives aimed at improving equitable access to quality and relevant education in the country.<sup>52</sup> These priorities include: achieving equitable access to relevant and quality education and training, ensuring delivery of relevant and quality education and training, and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of education and sports service delivery at all levels.<sup>53</sup>

## 2.3. Teachers in Uganda

As Uganda continues to prioritize educational quality and access, the number of teachers also continues to rise, with gender disparities improving over the years as female teacher numbers continue to increase (see *Table 1*).<sup>54</sup> It is also estimated that in order for the MoES to keep up with population growth, at least 12,600 additional teachers are required annually.<sup>55</sup>

Table 1: Number of primary school teachers by gender

Number of Primary School Teachers by Gender (2002-2010)									
Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007 <sup>ii</sup>	2008	2009	2010
Male	87,883	91,424	91,846	88,946	91,858	80,457	95,985	100,264	101,879
Female	51,601	54,163	55,396	55,886	58,277	51,868	63,531	68,112	70,524
<b>Total</b>	<b>139,484</b>	<b>145,587</b>	<b>147,242</b>	<b>144,832</b>	<b>150,135</b>	<b>132,325</b>	<b>159,516</b>	<b>168,376</b>	<b>172,403</b>

Source: MoES, 2002-2010, modified from [http://open\\_jicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12083119.pdf](http://open_jicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12083119.pdf)

Uganda recognizes teachers' role in the provision of education as instrumental, since they not only engage directly with learners, but are also responsible for the implementation of MoES reforms.<sup>56</sup> The Government considers it essential, therefore, to approach teachers' needs holistically, by addressing their personal and teaching needs and also ensuring there is greater effectiveness and consistency through the implementation of effective management policies and delivery of services. This acknowledgement is important because teachers in Uganda currently experience obstacles that limit their ability to achieve learning outcomes in the classroom (see *Figure 4*). For instance, classrooms in public schools are almost twice as large as those in private schools, and the teacher-pupil ratio is above the 40:1 recommended by the ministry.<sup>57</sup> There are also regional disparities as fewer teachers appear to be available in the central and eastern parts of Uganda, which is indicative of the larger unevenness in development of those regions (see *Table 2*).

Additionally, a 2013 World Bank study found teacher absence to be a frequent occurrence in schools, and a UNICEF-Uganda study found that 60 per cent of teachers are not present in the classrooms.<sup>58</sup> Regional disparities are also evident (see *Table 2*). The average number of pupils per class in northern and eastern areas is 105:1 and 104:1 respectively, compared to 68:1 in central and 72:1 in western parts. Moreover, the number of toilets available throughout the regions is generally limited across Uganda (93 pupils per toilet), but more significantly in the northern (132 pupils per toilet) and eastern (110 pupils per toilet) regions. Also, most schools in Uganda (54 per cent) lack fences, which makes schools vulnerable to disruptions and intrusions during teaching times (see *Table 3*).<sup>59</sup>

ii The original report states that this low number might be the result of improper input since the total number of teachers according to the Sector Indicators' Fact Sheet was 152,086, though this information is not available by gender.

Figure 4: Pupil-teacher ratio in Primary 5 and 6

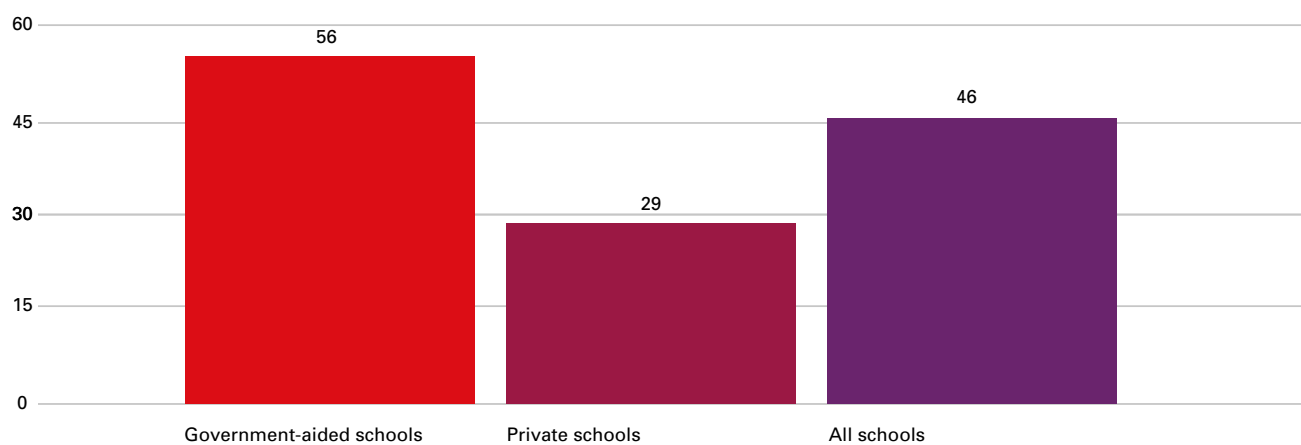


Table 2: Teaching quality by region

Pupil-teacher Ratio and Teaching Quality by District and All of Uganda					
Pupil-Teacher Ratio and Teaching Quality by Region	Central Region	Eastern Region	Northern Region	Western Region	All Uganda
Pupil-Teacher Ratio	36:1	56:1	58:1	41:1	46:1
Percentage of Trained Teachers	95 per cent	97 per cent	94 per cent	91 per cent	94 per cent

Source: Modified from [https://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uganda per cent20Report per cent202016 per cent20Web per cent20Pages.pdf](https://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uganda%20Report%202016%20Web%20Pages.pdf)

Table 3: School facilities by region

School Facilities	Central Region	Eastern Region	Northern Region	Western Region	All Uganda
Pupil-Classroom Ratio (Average number of pupils per class)	68:1	104:1	105:1	72:1	84:1
Pupil-Toilet Ratio (Average number of pupils per toilet)	76:1	110:1	132:1	69:1	93:1
Percentage of schools with Fence	49 per cent	21 per cent	14 per cent	48 per cent	36 per cent

Source: Modified from: [https://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uganda per cent20Report per cent202016 per cent20Web per cent20Pages.pdf](https://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/Uganda%20Report%202016%20Web%20Pages.pdf)

The Government's development of the NTP is an important measure that the ministry has taken in response to these challenges. The NTP's main goal is to provide equal and effective education to learners, through a professionalization and standardization of the teaching profession, and to produce motivated and qualified teachers who are able to respond to education development.<sup>60</sup> This document however is still new, and thus it remains to be seen how it will impact the everyday teaching realities of Ugandan classrooms.

### 2.3.1. Teacher management policies

#### Teacher eligibility, recruitment and transfer

To enter the teaching profession, primary school trainees must complete training approved by the MoES (Grade III Certificate or Diploma in Primary Education), be registered with the MoES, and complete an additional 3 years of training for specialization (i.e. working with special needs pupils) after the completion of Grade III certification (*see Table 4 below for additional entry requirements*).<sup>61</sup> Teachers are deployed to schools based on need and requests from head teachers, which are sent to the DEO. DEOs compile a list of vacancies in their districts and submit these to the CAO, who requires additional approval from the Ministry of Public Service (MoPS). The MoPS liaises with the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) to determine how many teachers can be recruited at the national level, based on the amount of funds available, which often results in recruitment of fewer teachers than requested. Also, lack of monitoring of teacher deployment at the national level often results in poor allocation, both in numbers (some schools receive more or fewer than they require) and the school's needs.<sup>62</sup>

Table 4: Current primary education teacher training system

Award	Academic entry requirement	Duration/ Mode of delivery	Institutions
Grade III Teacher Certificate	UCE/O' level with a minimum of 6 passes including English, Mathematics and any two Science subjects + must not exceed 3 years after O' level expect for A' Level leavers	Pre-service: 2 years with a supervised school practice	Primary teacher colleges
Grade III Teacher Certificate	UCE/O' level with a minimum of 6 passes including English, Mathematics and any two Science subjects + must be a licensed teacher practicing in primary and must be recommended by the school head teachers, DEO or DIS	In-service: 3 years, part-time	Primary teacher colleges
Diploma in Education Primary (DEP)/ Grade V Primary Certificate	Grade III Certificate or its equivalent + 2 years of teaching experience as a Grade III teacher + at least 6 passes at O' level; and a pass either in math or English at O' level. Must be registered, appointed and confirmed	In-service: 2 years	University

Source: UNICEF Innocenti, information taken mainly from Ministry of Education (2013).

## Pre-service and in-service training

Pre-service teacher training falls under the Pre-primary and Primary Teacher Education (PTE) division of the Teacher Instructor Education and Training (TIET) Department at the MoES and Kyambogo University.<sup>63</sup> Kyambogo University plays an important role in overseeing the implementation of pre-service training policies and guidelines through primary teacher colleges and national teachers colleges' entry requirements, admission, registration, program content and certification processes,<sup>64</sup> although some colleges and universities do provide independent courses. These trainings often provide basic knowledge and skills needed for the teaching profession.

In-service training opportunities are available for teachers who want to upgrade, for instance from Grade III Teaching Certificate to a Diploma in Primary Education, or for further studies (bachelors or graduate degree in education).<sup>65</sup> However, these opportunities are insufficient, and lack a systematic process that ensures teachers who need additional qualifications receive required training. Instead, teachers often upgrade based on their own personal interest or self-identified needs and use personal resources to achieve these aims, making it less accessible and affordable for teachers who may need it most. Moreover, upgrading does not appear to lead to increases in salary or non-salary benefits, which may hinder a teacher's motivation for acquiring these opportunities. The Coordinating Center Tutors (CCTs) provide some opportunities for professional growth, but these are also not accessible to all educators.<sup>66</sup>

## Teacher salary and incentives

Teacher remuneration at the primary level is comprised of basic pay and allowances, though neither of these are usually provided. More than 85 per cent of primary education expenditure is allocated toward teachers' wages.<sup>67</sup> Salary increases in 10 annual increments to UGX 312,833, corresponding to a total increase of 15 per cent, or UGX 3,983 on average per increment.<sup>68</sup> Once the teacher reaches this point, the next step is promotion (*see Table 5 for information regarding qualifications*). However, in practice, most teachers at the primary level do not move beyond the top of the grade's scale.<sup>69</sup> Additional allowances provided to teachers include housing, retirement and health care. Those posted in-hard-to reach areas are also entitled to a top-up allowance of 30 per cent of their basic pay, along with the provision of housing. However, in practice, these are limited mainly to boarding schools.<sup>70</sup> Also, retirement benefits are available to teachers over the age of 60 (or who must leave the profession due to medical issues), and those who have served for a continuous pensionable period of at least 20 years.<sup>71</sup>

Table 5: Promotion ladder for primary school teachers

Position	Entry Professional Qualification	Salary grade	Promotion modality
Education Assistant Senior Education Assistant	Grade III Teacher certificate	U7 U6 U5	Based on years of experience: between 6 years of teaching in initial positions (assistant and teacher) and 3 years in upper positions (from senior to deputy) + a certain number of certificates and short courses
Principal Education Assistant	Diploma in primary education	U5 U4	
Deputy head teacher Head teacher	Degree in primary education		

Source: UNICEF OoR – Innocenti, information taken mainly from Ministry of Education (2013).



Additionally, health care is available for permanent teachers and their families, although very few teachers take advantage of this, due to lack of availability of resources.<sup>72</sup> Any other allowances that may be given to teachers, especially at the school level, are not tracked and therefore remain at the discretion of the individual school.<sup>73</sup>

In 2014, Uganda decentralized the management of teacher salaries, which has resulted in significant reductions in missing or delayed salaries, as well as fewer instances of teachers' names suddenly disappearing from official payrolls.<sup>74</sup> Despite these efforts, however, travelling long distances to collect salary, corruption, and high absenteeism among district officials impede on the consistent disbursement of teacher' salaries.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, a vast majority of teachers (83 per cent) consider their salaries insufficient in meeting their basic needs.

## Monitoring and management of teachers

Teachers are monitored and assessed by head teachers annually, and the process is based on a set of targets developed collaboratively with teachers.<sup>76</sup> These targets often include attendance, scheme of work and lesson plans, subject and pedagogical knowledge, teaching and assessment methods, use of instructional materials, and leadership skills.<sup>77</sup> While district-level and national-level school inspections may occur regularly at schools, these often do not include monitoring of individual teacher performance, but rather focus on the overall achievements of the school.<sup>78</sup> Head teachers therefore, play a central role in the monitoring of teachers' performance, and the provision of support and guidance for improving instructional practices. Heavy workload and lack of training in leadership and management, however, limit the amount of time head teachers devote to these responsibilities, resulting in poor and infrequent monitoring and support for teachers.<sup>79</sup>

### 2.3.2. Teacher absenteeism: Existing realities and future needs

Some of the underlying causes of teacher absence in Uganda include inadequate salaries — primary school teachers receive significantly lower wages compared to other countries<sup>80</sup> — and having to work in poor conditions, especially due to high pupil-teacher ratios.<sup>81</sup> Lack of TLMs and essential facilities such as blackboards and chairs are additional factors that make it difficult for teachers to carry out their responsibilities, and ultimately lower their motivation levels.<sup>82</sup> There is also evidence that community participation in school monitoring is low, and that SMCs are not aware of their official responsibilities, resulting in poor and inconsistent monitoring, as well as the possibility they may be covering up for absent teachers rather than addressing it as a problem.<sup>83</sup>

Additionally, a number of government initiatives have been described as further demotivating teachers and potentially increasing teacher absence. The new curriculum, for instance, is described as adding to teachers' workload.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, the Government's UPE policy has led to a drastic decline in the community's management of schools as they consider this to now be the responsibility of mainly the Government.<sup>85</sup> Finally, there is also dissatisfaction among teachers in regards to the Government's automatic promotion policy, as this does not take into consideration the impact of overcrowded classrooms on teachers' capabilities.<sup>86</sup> The national union also lacks efficiency, resulting in minimal inclusion of teachers in the formulation of educational policies and, consequently, their poor adherence toward their implementation.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, the MoES has attempted to capture the magnitude of teacher absenteeism (defined as a situation where a teacher who is scheduled to teach does not report to work), through monitoring bi-annual reviews, which have been conducted since 2008.<sup>88</sup> According to its 2012 report, out of 765 teachers that were visited unexpectedly at various schools across the districts, 634 (83 per cent) were present and 17 per cent were absent, of which 61 had authorized leave while 57 did not.<sup>89</sup> Another study, conducted in the Iganga district in 2010, established teacher absence to be at an average of 43.6 per cent.<sup>90</sup> These findings suggest teacher absenteeism is significantly higher than the World Bank results, which estimated it to be at 27 per cent. Moreover, the Efficiency of Public Education in Uganda report (2008)<sup>91</sup> points to teacher absenteeism

as a key underlying cause of leakage of financial resources, with the MoES also making some efforts to address this problem through the use of instant messages to collect data on teacher absence through a telephonic reporting system.<sup>92</sup>

Overall however, literature on teacher absenteeism in Uganda is limited, and policy provisions focus mainly on absence from school. While there is some understanding of the major determinants causing absenteeism, the ministry utilizes a narrow definition and understanding of absenteeism, that does not take into consideration the additional ways that can compromise instructional time use, or how different levels of the education system may trigger or reinforce such practices.

## Section 3: Methodology

### 3.1. Teacher absenteeism: A multidimensional concept

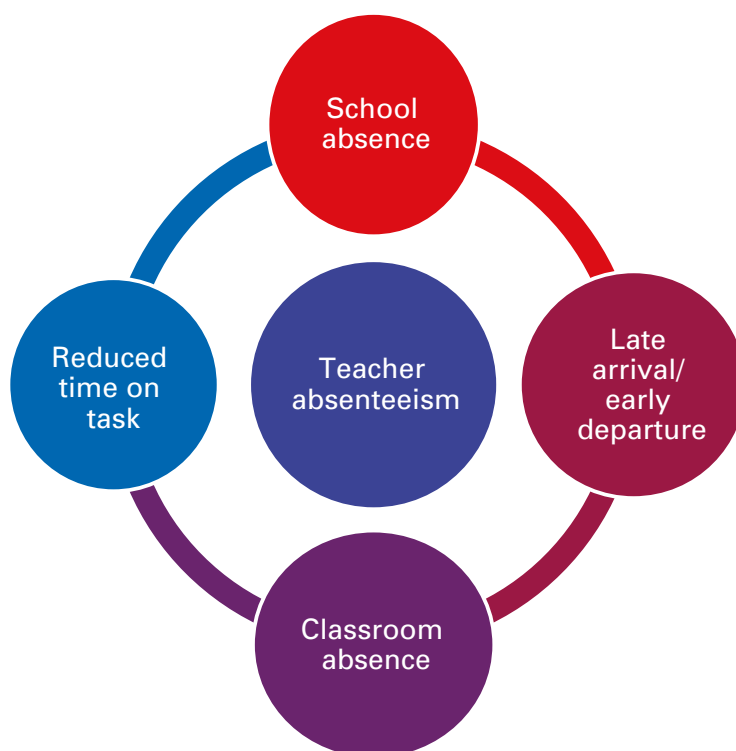
Policy makers and researchers have traditionally recognized one form of teacher absenteeism: absence of the teacher from school. Accordingly, in the past two decades, numerous programs have been implemented globally to increase teacher school attendance as a means of improving pupil learning.<sup>93</sup>

Several interventions aimed at improving teacher school attendance have been found to be successful (especially when they couple monitoring systems with rewards).<sup>94</sup> However, few studies have so far established an association between increased teacher school attendance and pupil achievements.<sup>95</sup> This is due to that fact that teacher attendance in school does not necessarily mean teachers are actually in the classroom teaching or, when they are teaching, that they spend the required time on task.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, the relationship between teacher school attendance, motivation to teach, and time on task needs to be further unpacked in order to better understand learning mechanisms and outcomes.

While the Time to Teach study does not focus explicitly on learning outcomes, in defining teacher absenteeism, the research team relied on the assumption that in order for learning to occur, a number of minimal conditions, relating to the role of teachers in the learning process, need to be fulfilled. Specifically, teachers have to be in school; in the classroom; and actively teaching. This led to the development of a multi-dimensional concept for teacher absenteeism (*see Figure 8*). The concept is in line with contemporary understandings of absenteeism that look beyond school absence<sup>97</sup> and recognizes four distinct forms of teacher absence: absence from school, absence of punctuality (late arrival and/or early departure from school), absence from the classroom (while in school), and reduced time on task (while in the classroom).

A multi-dimensional definition of teacher absenteeism has not been widely used in education-sector analysis where teacher-pupil ratio and share of qualified teachers have conventionally been used to represent educational inputs and human resources available for children. This is under the implicit assumption that employed teachers will be in school, spending time on educational activities with pupils (*see Figure 5*). The notion of multi-dimensional absenteeism can therefore help us classify and unpack the various obstacles to effective learning and establish causal links between these obstacles and specific teacher absenteeism types. Factors that hinder teachers' ability to achieve any form of attendance can have direct effects on achieving learning outcomes in the classroom. It is therefore imperative that the drivers of each type of absenteeism are identified, and corresponding policies to address the adverse effects of teacher absenteeism on learning are designed.

Figure 5: The Concept of multi-dimensional teacher absenteeism



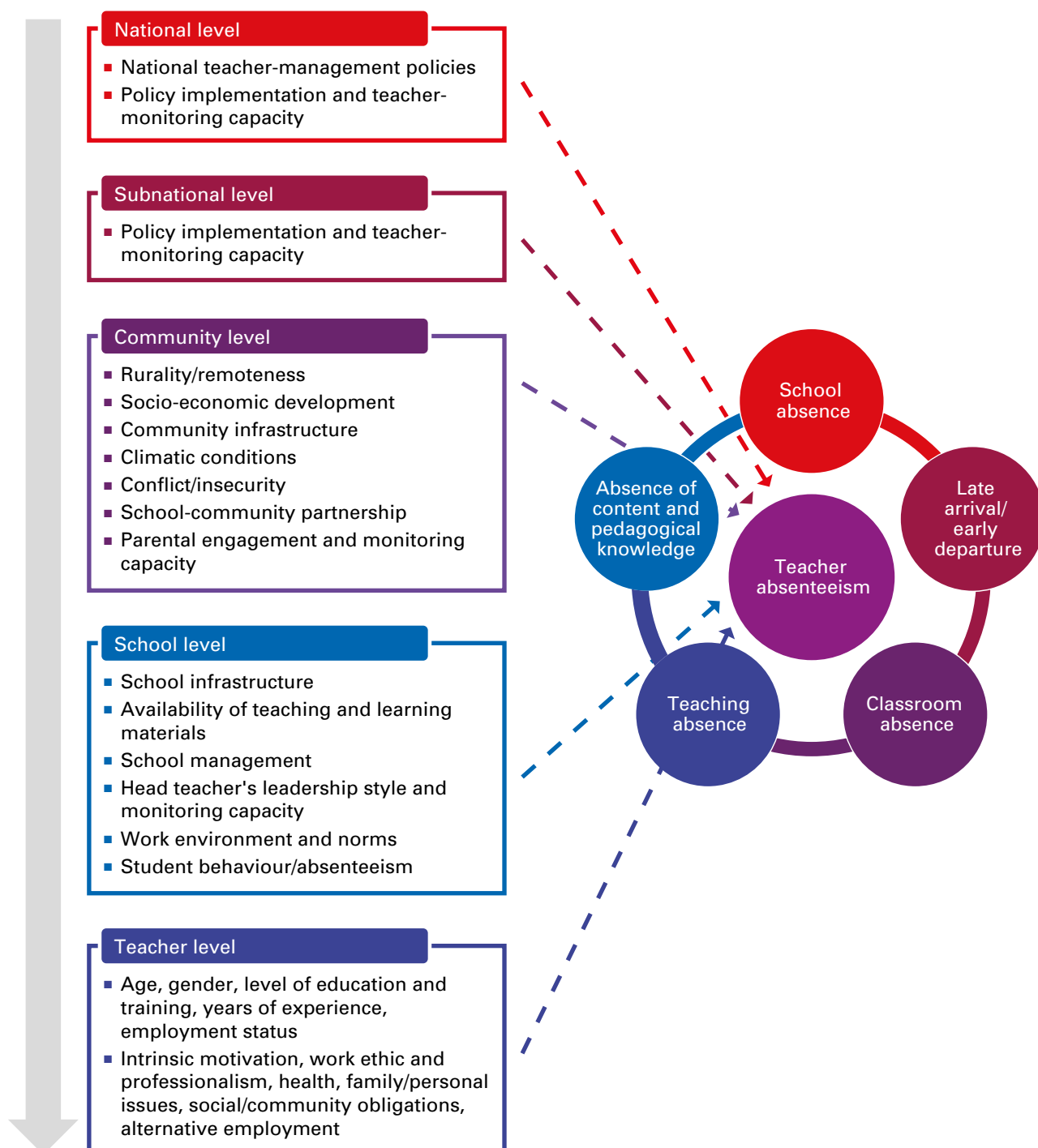
### 3.2. Understanding teacher absenteeism from a systems perspective

The determinants of teacher absenteeism are likely to be located at various levels of the education system. A systemic analytical framework is therefore needed to understand first, how factors within the education system combine to force teachers to be absent in various ways, and second, which policies can holistically address chronic teacher absences.

Based on a review of existing conceptual models of general employee absenteeism and the literature on teacher absenteeism in particular, Guerrero et al. (2012, 2013)<sup>98</sup> suggested three sets of factors affecting teacher attendance: teacher-level variables, school-level variables, and community-level variables. Their model considers two groups of teacher-level variables: teachers' demographic factors (such as age, gender and level of education), and teachers' school-related factors (such as job satisfaction, opportunities for professional development, and work environment). School-level variables include organizational factors within the school, such as work norms and the head teacher's leadership style, but also teachers' administrative workload. Finally, community-level variables include remoteness, level of prosperity, and school-community partnerships.

The Time to Teach project adopts Guerrero et al.'s (2012, 2013) explanatory model with an important modification that consists of adding two further groups of variables (see Figure 6). These variables operate on two additional levels of the education system: the 'national' and the 'subnational'. These variables are included to measure the impact of national teacher-management policies and subnational policy implementation on the dimensions of teacher absenteeism.

Figure 6: Proposed explanatory framework



Source: Adaptation of the work of Guerrero et al. (2012): Guerrero, G., Leon, J., Zapata, M., Sugimaru, C., & Cueto, S. (2012). What works to improve teacher attendance in developing countries?: A systematic review.

### 3.3. Study implementation

In Uganda, the Time to Teach study was implemented in consultation with the MoES and support from UNICEF Uganda and Makerere University. The implementation involved three complementary but separate processes (see Figure 7)

Figure 7: Stages of implementation



#### 3.3.1. Sampling and instrument development

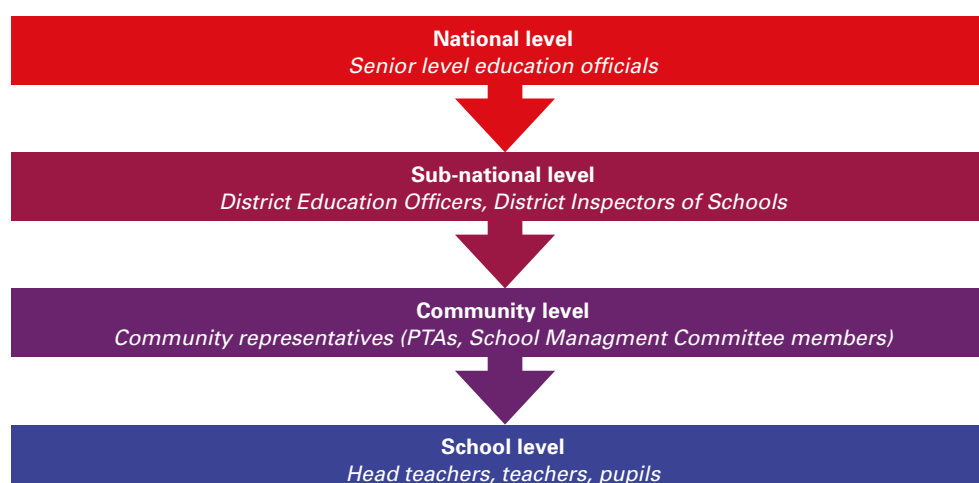
Following a series of consultation meetings with national partners in February, 2018, the research team developed a sampling strategy and designed the instruments for primary data collection. School and respondent selection involved a combination of purposive, quota, and random sampling techniques. School selection was based on four criteria: location, rurality, governance, and performance. In the end, 20 schools were selected across 5 districts, from the north-eastern, north-western, central, western and eastern regions of Uganda. The schools selected include a mix of rural (17), urban (three). Of these, three schools are inclusive of children with special needs, and three are inclusive of refugee populations. The 20 also include high-performing, average, and poor-performing schools, as categorized by the MoES (see Table 6). As the selected schools were assured complete confidentiality, their names are not mentioned in this report.

Table 6: Selected schools in Uganda

School Number	District	Ownership	Performance Category
1	Napak	Urban, public	Good
2	Napak	Rural, public	Good
3	Napak	Rural, public, with special needs support	Poor
4	Napak	Urban, public, special needs	Average
5	Namayingo	Rural, public	Average
6	Namayingo	Rural, public	Poor
7	Namayingo	Rural, public	Poor
8	Namayingo	Rural, public	Average
9	Mubende	Rural, public	Poor
10	Mubende	Rural, public	Average
11	Mubende	Rural, public	Average
12	Mubende	Urban, public, special needs	Good
13	Adjumani	Rural, public, refugees	Good
14	Adjumani	Rural, public	Poor
15	Adjumani	Rural, public	Good
16	Adjumani	Rural public, refugees	Average
17	Kibaale	Rural, public, refugee	Poor
18	Kibaale	Rural, public	Average
19	Kibaale	Rural, public	Good
20	Kibaale	Rural, public	Average

In selecting respondents, the research team employed a number of criteria, including the respondents' unique position within the education system, expert knowledge, and personal characteristics (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Study participants by level of analysis



At the national level, respondents included several senior education officials, all of whom were affiliated with primary education and teacher management and monitoring. Respondents at the subnational level included district education officers and district inspectors of schools who were familiar with school governance and teacher-management processes. Community representatives (including PTAs and school management committee members) were selected due to their intimate knowledge of their communities and the school staff and pupils. In each selected school, the study targeted the head teacher (or in his/her absence, the deputy head teacher), three of the serving teachers, and seven pupils. Additionally, several teachers were approached at each of the schools for a pen-to-paper survey. Teachers were selected on the basis of their individual characteristics, specifically age, gender, employment status, and years of teaching experience. The goal of diversifying the teacher sample was to capture a wide range of unique teacher experiences related to absenteeism, shaped not only by the teachers' contextual circumstances, but also by their individual traits. Pupil selection was based on age and gender. In each school, both male and female pupils were included with a total of 140 pupils interviewed. To rule out selection bias and convenience sampling, pupil respondents were identified via lottery.

To collect the data, the UNICEF Innocenti team designed a range of qualitative and quantitative tools, including in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and a pen-and-paper survey. Different tools were used for each respondent group, reflecting the participants' expert knowledge and unique perspective. The pen-and-paper survey was administered to all teachers serving in the selected schools to supplement and triangulate teacher interview data.<sup>iii</sup> An observation tool was also designed to record the enumerators' observations on teacher absences, teacher-pupil interaction and teacher working relations during school visits.

Data-collection tools were shared with the MoES and Makerere University for feedback and review and were refined accordingly. The Innocenti team also sought and received research ethics approval for the TTT instruments and fieldwork protocols by the Health Media Lab (HML) Research and Ethics Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the office of Human Research Protections in the US Department of Health and Human Research.<sup>99</sup> The instruments and the fieldwork protocol were also approved by the Ethics Committee of Makerere University.

All of the TTT data-collection tools that were administered in Uganda can be found on the TTT website.<sup>iv</sup> Table 7 summarizes the number of study participants and specifies the data-collection tool administered to each respondent group.

Table 7: Number of study participants in Uganda

Respondent Type	Number of Respondents per School	Total Number of Respondents	Data Collection Tool
Head teachers	1	20	IDI
Teachers	3	60	IDI
Teacher survey	varied	193	pen-to-paper survey
Pupils	7	140	FGD
Community leaders	1	20	IDI
District education officers	0	10	IDI
National education officers	0	4	IDI
<b>Total number of respondents: 447</b>			

iii The teacher survey was self-administered. The profile of surveyed teachers can be found in the Appendix.

iv <https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/education/>



### 3.3.2. Fieldwork preparation and data collection

A training of trainers took place at UNICEF ESARO offices (Nairobi, Kenya), on 26 June and 28 June, 2018. The training was facilitated by UNICEF Innocenti and involved representatives of the MoES, UNICEF Uganda, and a representative from Makerere University. The training entailed an introduction of partners to the Time to Teach study and its objectives, sampling frame, selection of respondents and study protocols, as well as daily requisite field preparations/checklists and probable risks. Soon afterwards — in July 2018 for two days — additional training was provided for the field enumerators. Attendees included researchers from Makerere University. These sessions were meant to familiarise the data-collection team with questionnaires and they were a replica of the training of trainers.

Following these trainings, a rapid field testing of the tools was undertaken to check the effectiveness of the instruments and reconfirm their compatibility with the local context, re-estimate timing for each interview and focus-group discussion, and to identify gaps or areas that required further improvement. The enumerators were organized into three groups, each led by a researcher from the university. The teams visited the schools to complete the pre-test in July, providing the team with an opportunity to share their experiences and lessons from the field testing. During this meeting, the team also familiarized themselves with the final data-collection tools as approved by UNICEF, and data-collection teams were issued with all the necessary study materials.

The data-collection team was deployed to the five different districts included in this study in August 2018. The team comprised of 20 enumerators in total and three research leads from Makerere University. In each district, the research team started their data collection by first holding a courtesy meeting with local authorities, education officials, and school administration to familiarize them with the study and to seek their support so the teams could gather data efficiently and within the allocated time.

### 3.3.3. Data analysis

#### Qualitative data

The multi-faceted data-generation strategy employed in Uganda, facilitated the collection of a large amount of rich qualitative evidence, which ensured saturation and triangulation. The 134 interviews and FGDs that were conducted with the different education system actors were transcribed word for word, resulting in more than 1,300 pages of transcribed materials (see Table 7). To systematically analyze and interpret this data, the research team employed thematic content analysis (TCA). While content analysis is a broad methodology that can be applied in various ways, the approach adopted to draft this report is closer to the interpretive analysis of latent content with the use of a codebook that comes from the deductive reading of existing literature and the inductive reading of the transcripts.<sup>100</sup> Coding was done manually, and assisted the organization of data into themes, and thereafter the analysis of the data with the use of frequency measurement and interpretive methods.

#### Quantitative data

The 193 pen-to-paper surveys of teachers from the 20 schools were cleaned and compiled. Information that could identify participants was removed. Tests were run in order to correlate teachers' responses with qualitative findings, to compare responses and to identify diversions or similarities. The main aim of the quantitative data analysis was to enrich the IDI and FGD data and to provide further insights across the 20 selected schools, while highlighting variations between regions and school types.

## 3.4. Limitations and challenges

Like all studies relying on self-reported data and conducted under time and budget constraints, TTT Uganda is not free of methodological limitations. The three most significant challenges likely to have emerged during data collection are presented below, along with mitigation strategies employed to ensure accurate data interpretation and minimize impact on findings and conclusions.

### 3.4.1. Response bias

Surveyors were trained to communicate the objectives of the study in a non-threatening manner and clarify any misconceptions regarding implications of voluntary participation. Surveyors also highlighted the principles of anonymity and confidentiality underpinning data collection and usage, and stressed the right of participants to revoke consent and demand their testimonies be disregarded and destroyed. And yet, response bias may have been a significant challenge, as absenteeism is a taboo subject and, in some contexts, participants may have perceived the study as inquisitive or potentially threatening to their employment status. Consequently, it is unclear how truthfully teachers responded to questions around the nature and frequency of their absences and the role of the head teacher in providing leadership and instructional support due to concerns that it may affect their performance evaluations. Similarly, it is difficult to assess how honestly head teachers answered questions around subnational officials' efforts to enhance educational development as head teachers were often engaged more closely and directly with these individuals than teachers or community representatives. Under these conditions, three types of response bias seem especially likely: selective memory (i.e., remembering or not remembering experiences or events), telescoping (i.e., recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time), and downplaying (i.e., representing outcomes or events as less significant than is actually suggested from other data). These potential limitations are mentioned in the reporting of findings and have been taken into consideration when interpreting data. Systematic data triangulation was also undertaken across multiple sources to ensure the relevance and reliability of findings.

### 3.4.2. Selection bias

Selection bias may have also been an issue. The selection of interviewed teachers was based on a set of pre-determined criteria and was performed randomly among teachers sharing the same characteristics. However, it was limited to the teachers who were in school on the day of the visit. Additionally, the teacher survey was administered only to present teachers. This means that some of the frequently absent teachers may not have been interviewed or surveyed. To pre-empt this problem, none of the school visits were unannounced and teachers were informed about them well in advance. However, this does not exclude the possibility of built-in bias among those who eventually participated in the study.

### 3.4.3. Representativeness of survey data

Finally, the research team recognizes that due to the small size of the TTT survey sample (N=394) it is difficult to draw statistically significant conclusions, make generalizable claims and ensure the internal and external validity of quantitative findings. The TTT survey data can only provide a snapshot of issues surrounding teacher absenteeism in selected schools rather than a comprehensive view of the situation across all schools in Uganda. For this reason, the majority of findings reported in subsequent chapters depend on the systematic analysis of qualitative data for which saturation has been achieved.

## Section 4: Key findings by education system level

This section presents an analysis of the qualitative interviews with respondents across the different education system levels and triangulates their responses with the quantitative data results whenever considered relevant. Teachers' responses indicate absenteeism is a regular occurrence at their school with 13 per cent to 19 per cent of the teachers indicating it occurs at least once a week, and 11 per cent to 26 per cent suggesting less than once a week. Likewise, there are significant urban rural disparities (*see Figure 10*). Most absenteeism appears to be significantly higher in rural areas (9 per cent to 16 per cent) than in urban areas (1 per cent to 4 per cent).

Figure 9: Frequency of different types of teacher absenteeism

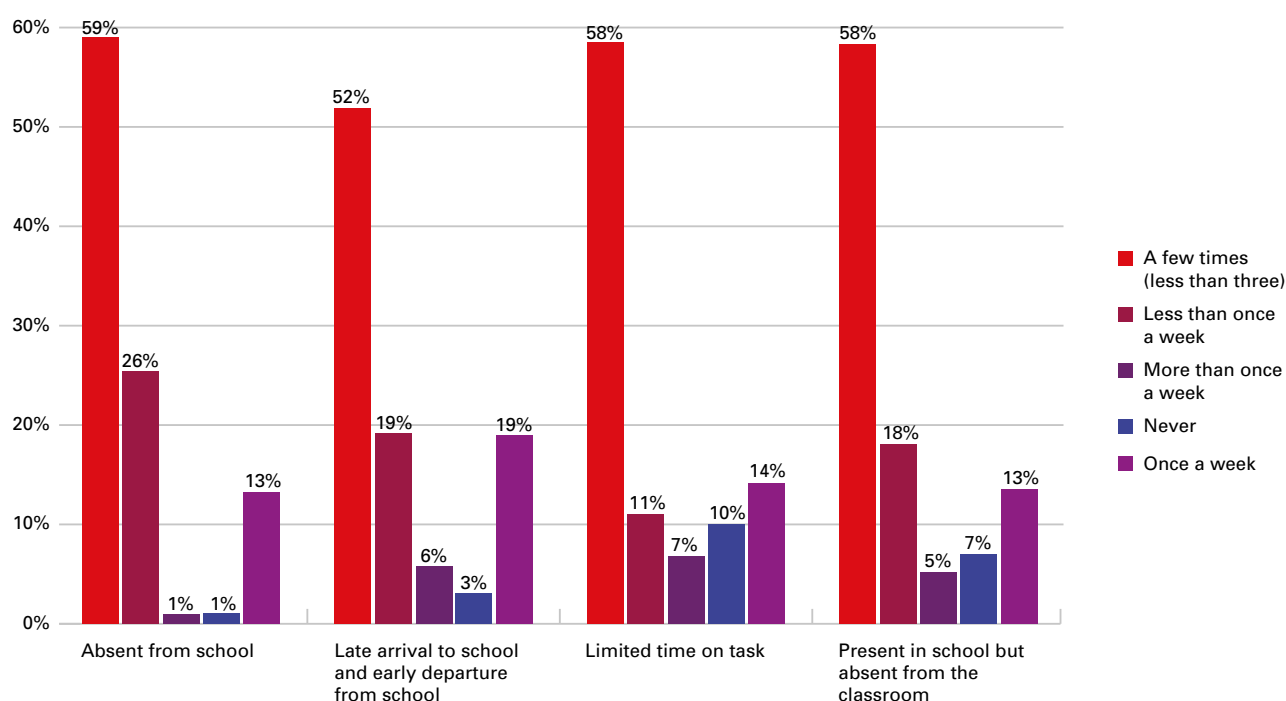
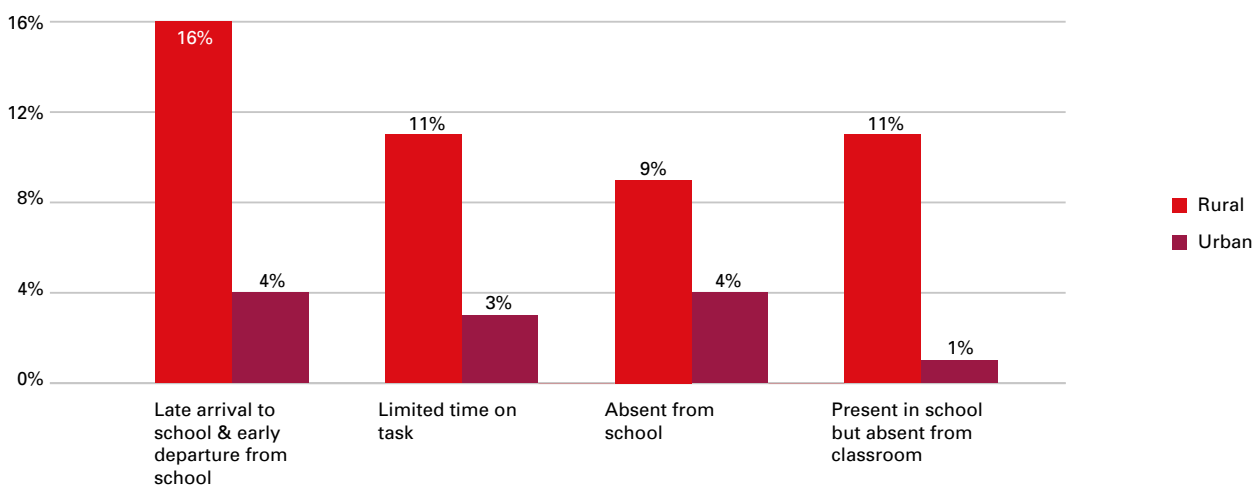


Figure 10: Frequency of absenteeism for once a week



While respondents often point to several factors affecting their attendance, this section presents those that appear to be pervasive across the different schools. Additionally, initiatives across the different levels of the Ugandan education system that trigger or reinforce teacher absenteeism are highlighted in the analysis. The findings are presented through an examination of national-level determinants first, since they are responsible for the overall development and direction of the sector. District-level findings are presented next as district officials are mainly responsible for implementing national directives. The community is another important stakeholder in the everyday affairs of the school, followed by the school itself where head teachers and their deputies engage in direct oversight and management of teachers. Finally, teacher-level determinants are presented in order to see how the impact of the various levels of the education system trends materialize in daily experiences of teaching.

## 4.1. National-level determinants of teacher absenteeism

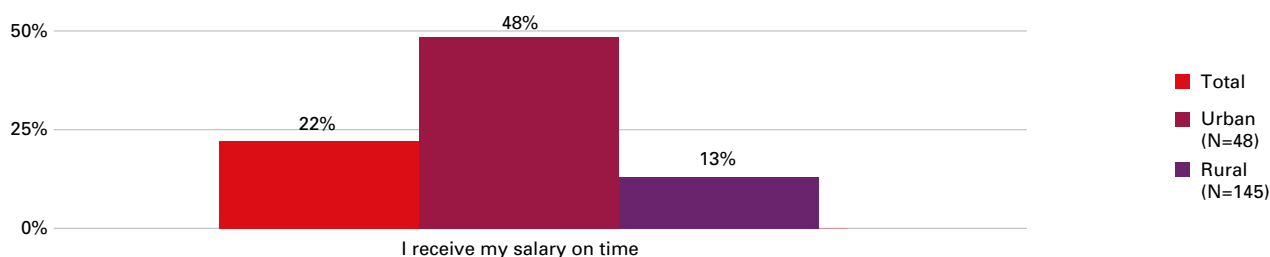
### Overview

Respondents across the five regions describe the MoES as actively working towards enhancing teacher's pedagogical skills and their time on task. Notably, teachers and head teachers consider the ministry's efforts helpful in creating awareness on the importance of teacher attendance, punctuality and time on task. Many teachers appear to be aware of initiatives the ministry has introduced (sometimes in collaboration with development partners) to enhance teacher practices and to encourage them against school absence. Teachers also point to ongoing challenges at the national education-system level that they describe as a hindrance towards their attendance and instructional time use. Some of these include, teacher salary, national curriculum and training, and weak national policy implementation.

#### 4.1.1. Teacher salary

Several respondents point to remuneration as a common reason why teachers may not be punctual, or why they might not come to school or attend to their pupils (see Figure 11). Collecting salary is a major challenge for all teachers. Only 22 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they received their wages on time. Rural teachers appear to be affected significantly more than urban. Only 13 per cent of rural teachers agreed with the statement, compared to 48 per cent of urban teachers.

Figure 11: Response to statement: "I receive my salary on time."



Respondents explain that oftentimes, eligible teachers do not receive their salaries because their names have been unknowingly removed from the payroll despite their eligibility.<sup>v</sup> This is a common occurrence across the different schools and leaves teachers without pay for several months. Consequentially, teachers miss school regularly, arrive late, or leave early, in order to resolve the issue.

We have a problem where teachers are suddenly deleted from the payroll, so they must visit the district offices to resolve the problem. I have a teacher who missed her salary for four months because they did not have a tax identification number. This caused her to be absent from school for a number of days because she had to go back and forth to the district or another sub-county.

– Head teacher, urban public inclusive school, Mubende district

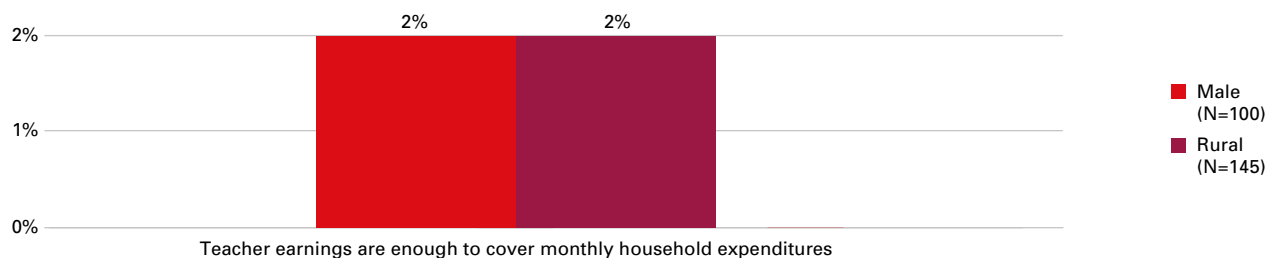
<sup>v</sup> While many teachers do not seem to understand why their names disappear, the ministry has indicated that this is a consequence of limited interfacing of the IPPS with the Integrated Financial Management System (IFMS)

I come to school in the morning and I write my name in the attendance book. Then I tell the head teacher that I am going to collect my salary and I tell them when I will return. This way I avoid coming late in the morning because I first come to school and inform the head teacher that I am leaving.

– Teacher, rural public, inclusive school, Mubende district

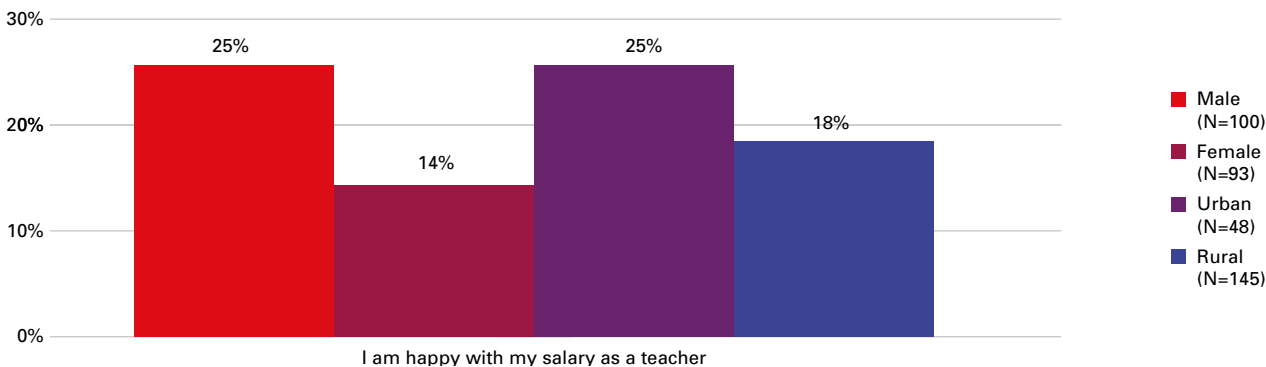
Delayed salary is another concern that worries teachers constantly and also causes some to miss school while they seek additional sources of income. Teachers explain the immense pressure they are under at the end of the month when they do not receive their pay. This pressure also affects their ability to concentrate in the classroom on their lessons. Some leave school early to go to the district and inquire about the delay or arrive late to work because they are looking for someone to borrow money from. Teachers point to their own children’s school fees as a source of constant worry as delays affect their school fee payments. Teachers across rural and urban schools consider their monthly wages not sufficient in meeting their household expenditures. Only 2 per cent of male teachers and 2 per cent of teachers in rural schools agreed that their salaries were adequate (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Response to question: “Are your total earnings as a teacher enough to cover your monthly household expenditures?”



Respondents also point to inadequate salary as a reason why teachers might not feel motivated enough to be punctual or to be on task while in class (see Figure 13). Teachers who completed the quantitative questionnaire were also dissatisfied with their salary, with only 18 per cent of rural and 25 per cent of urban teachers agreeing with the statement. Additionally, while satisfaction is generally low among male and female teachers, it appears female teachers are much more dissatisfied, at 15 per cent, compared to males at 25 per cent.

Figure 13: Response to statement: “I am happy with my salary as a teacher.”



Lack of pay during school breaks also forces teachers to look for other sources of income, resulting in absence from school, especially the first week of school. Teachers point to heavy workloads and lack of promotion as factors that hinder their motivation to go to class. A teacher from an urban public and inclusive school in Mubende explains: “One might have taught for a very long time, like I have, but for reasons beyond my understanding, that person does not receive any promotion. On the other hand, a teacher who has started much later than me is suddenly promoted. So this really affects my motivation to go to the classroom.” Some head teachers also describe their discontent with the ministry’s decision to remove the grading system for head teacher salaries in some districts. This has caused discrepancies in head teachers’ salaries across the districts, with some teachers earning more.

Sometimes my colleagues don’t come to school because the salary that they receive, for the amount of work that they do, it’s not enough. In this school, there are several periods that we are required to teach and only 10 teachers, so that means that each teacher is responsible for 2 or 3 subjects. This is a very heavy workload.

– Teacher, urban public school, Kibaale district

#### 4.1.2. National curriculum and training

The ministry organizes — through its district offices — training opportunities for teachers and head teachers that are held during the school year, forcing teachers to miss school for multiple days. It is also common for pupils to be sent home, or for schools to be closed during these times.

The ministry has also made changes to the national curriculum through the introduction of the thematic curriculum, which mandates children learn their lessons in their mother tongue as a medium of instruction from P1 to P3 (where English is taught as a subject), and switching to using English as a medium of instruction from P4 onwards. Despite the fact that learners are introduced to English in the lower grades, many teachers point out that this switch makes it difficult for pupils to understand their lessons, especially in P4 when the language of instruction changes, and that they too struggle to implement their scheme of work effectively. Many pupils also find it difficult to read and write from P4 until P7 due to the switch. Teachers worry this might affect the students’ academic progress. Additionally, since national examinations after P7 completion are in English, teachers realize the importance of focusing on English, even when they know that some pupils might not be able to keep up.

Last year, there was a seminar about the Quality Enhancement Initiative, as well as some others, that we were required to attend. The administration knows about these, and usually sends pupils home while we go to the seminars.

– Urban public and inclusive school, Mubende district

The thematic curriculum requires children from grades 1-3 to be taught in mother tongue, and from grades 4-7, they use English. When the learners come to grade 4, they find the readings very difficult, and find it difficult to speak because they are used to the local language only.

– Teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

Sometimes teachers lack skills that can help encourage positive learning. Pupils point out that teachers sometimes raise their voices, or use physical violence, which causes fear among some of their classmates and discourages them from asking questions in the classroom. There are also instances where teachers struggle with teaching in the mother tongue because learners often speak diverse languages that are different from those included in the national curriculum, or the teacher might be from a different district. A teacher from a rural public school in Kibaale stated: “I am not happy working in this school because most of the pupils speak different languages. Sometimes you find that 80 per cent of your pupils speak a language that is different than the one we are required to teach them in.” Teachers express frustration as they often have to repeat lessons in order to ensure learners are keeping up. Pupils describe feeling lost and confused when they are not able to understand their teacher. On the other hand, they explain that they feel confident and motivated when their teacher provides translations into local language. Thus, teachers who lack training and skills that are

Some pupils find it difficult to understand the teacher because they explain in English. However, the pupils complain to the teacher, so they then switch to explain in the local language of Ngakarimojong or Ateso.

– Pupils, rural public and inclusive school, Napak district

reflective of local needs and realities, struggle with content, which limits their effectiveness in the classroom, particularly in supporting and guiding learners towards academic success.

#### 4.1.3. Weak national policy implementation

Teachers and head teachers consider inadequate salary and housing accommodations as indication the ministry is not fulfilling its promises. Some believe their needs are not a priority for the Government, causing them to feel less accountable towards their job. A teacher from an urban public school in Kibaale discloses: “The Ministry has not done anything for teachers because what they had promised us was salary increase, and so far it has not happened. This is why some teachers keep away from school.” Lack of training opportunities and overcrowded classrooms are described as additional examples of poor policy implementation.

When you look at the policy, one teacher should be teaching around 45 pupils. However, if you look at these government schools, a teacher usually has 130-140 pupils in each class. The size of the classrooms is also very small and congested.

– Teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

Also, some teachers who are frequently absent are described as not fearing consequences since they are aware of the long and bureaucratic sanctioning process. A national-level respondent explains: “The procedures for sanctioning teachers is too long. Many times, the head teacher takes action but then he has to send these cases to the next level, and from there to the district.” It is also possible a head teacher’s decision is overturned by other levels of the Government, which can dissuade head teachers from monitoring absenteeism. It is important to point out that while many teachers are aware of salary deduction as punishment for missing school or poor delivery of lessons (*see also section 4.4.1*), none of the respondents interviewed for this study have experienced it personally. This indicates that the implementation of these policies might not be in effect across all districts. A district-level representative alludes to this as well: “We just talk about salary deductions, but it is not yet implemented. If a teacher works for fewer than the required number of days, they say that they have still earned their salary, so it becomes challenging. But with head teachers, we have started to demote them if they are not working.”

In public schools, there are seven steps involved in handling discipline issues, and this can take weeks. One has to write reports and then follow relevant processes, which is a very long way to discipline.

– District officer, Adjumani district

In conclusion, while educational leaders have provided several important provisions for increasing teachers’ time on task and their overall presence at the school and in the classroom, there are nonetheless ongoing challenges that limit their positive potential. Some of these obstacles include inadequate and inconsistent salary, training opportunities that conflict with scheduled class time, and poor implementation of existing policies and procedures designed to enhance teachers’ instructional time use and attendance. These challenges directly affect teachers’ capacity to be present at school or in the classroom as required, or to provide learners with meaningful learning activities.



## 4.2. Subnational-level determinants of teacher absenteeism

### Overview

Respondents across the 20 schools described their relations with subnational-level education officials as positive and encouraging and vital to the overall monitoring of teacher absenteeism at their schools. Many teachers and head teachers pointed to various measures taken by these officials to help address issues of absence and teaching accountability. Some of the schools received regular visits from district-level school inspectors or other officials who use this time to observe teachers and their work. A few also provide them with additional guidance and support in order to ensure they use instructional time effectively in the classroom. While the relationship generally appears to be positive and encouraging, there are nonetheless some challenges at the district level that either directly or indirectly result in teachers' absence. Some of these include, weak policy implementation, availability of resources, and monitoring absenteeism. These are discussed further below.

#### 4.2.1. Weak policy implementation

There is general awareness among most respondents that the MoES does not tolerate teacher absenteeism, and that there are rules in place to discipline such actions. Some common measures include warning letters, requesting teachers to write an apology letter, being summoned to the district offices to provide an explanation for their absence, and in cases where teachers are frequently absent, to deduct pay for the numbers of days missed. The extent to which these are followed, along with the sequence in which they are followed, however, varies across schools. While salary deduction appears to be a common form of punishment for absence from school, it is not always clear when this is considered applicable. It also appears that salary deductions are a recent initiative and thus why they may not be fully in effect. A teacher from a rural public school in Mubende points out: "Recently, we were told that we will count the days that we are present at the school and that we will only be paid according to those days." Salary deduction also appears to vary. Some schools deduct from those teachers who are absent repeatedly in a week or multiple times per month, and others for any absence that is not authorized. In some instances, teachers who are frequently absent are moved to other regions instead of being given support to improve their behaviour.

Some district education officers and national-level officials point to the challenge of implementing absenteeism policies. They explain that sometimes teachers are protected by head teachers or powerful individuals in the community. This makes it difficult for government officials to carry out sanctions. Several teachers also describe their frustration with the district officials' limitations in taking action against regular absences. They point to instances where teachers at their schools are regularly absent, and although the district officers were informed, no action was taken against that teacher. A teacher from a rural public school in Adjumani explained: "There are some teachers in our school who do not attend regularly and have been

First, we give the teacher a warning letter if they are absent. If there is no improvement, we forward their names to the district-level authority. Others are asked to write commitment letters promising to improve their attendance.

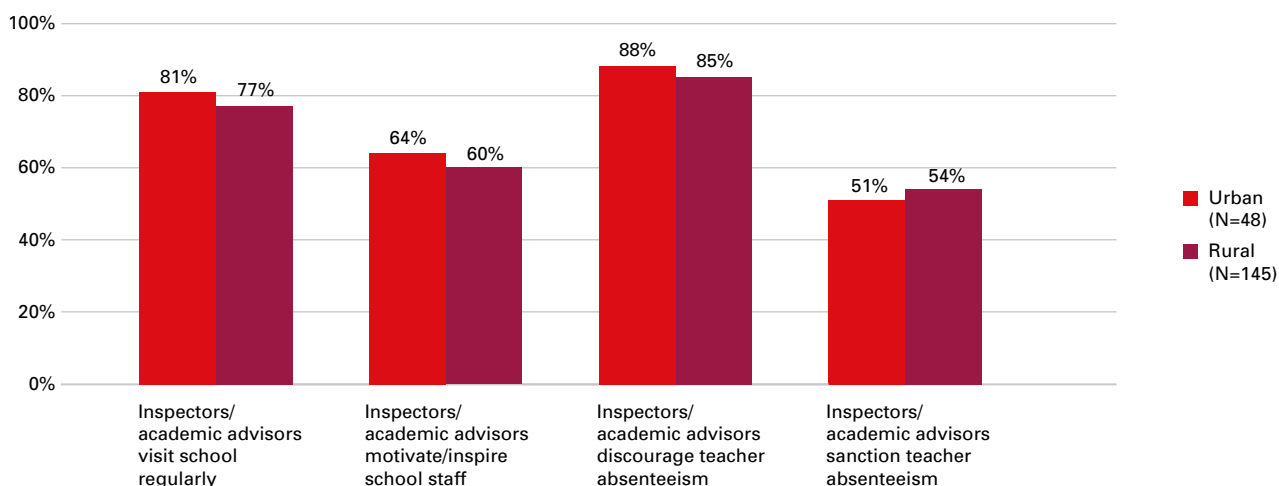
– Head teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

It is difficult to punish frequently absent teachers because some of them have the support of local political leaders. Or they might have the sympathy of the head teacher or local district-level officials. Some say, 'he was absent only for three days', but if a teacher misses three days, how much have the pupils lost in their learning? No extra classes are provided to make up this time.

– National-level education official

reported. But so far, no action has been taken to sanction their behaviour.” While teachers generally provide high ratings for school inspector visits to their schools (88 per cent among urban teachers and 85 per cent rural), they consider them less effective when it comes to motivation (64 per cent urban, 60 per cent rural) and even lower in regards to sanctioning, with just 51 per cent of urban and 54 per cent of rural teachers agreeing such measures take place at their school (see Figure 14). These findings also suggest that while there are some variations across rural and urban schools, it appears cases of sanctioning are lower across the selected regions, though inspectors do engage in encouraging school attendance.

Figure 14: Response to statements: “School inspectors and academic advisers visit this school regularly, school inspectors and academic advisers motivate and inspire school staff, inspectors and academic advisers discourage teacher absenteeism & school inspectors frequently sanction teacher absenteeism”.



The ministry has created the Teachers’ Scheme of Service, but you can only implement this if you have incentives that you can provide the teacher in order to promote them. Without additional incentives, it is not easy to implement the Teacher’s Scheme of Service.

– District inspector of schools, Napak district

#### 4.2.2. Availability of resources

School inspectors point out that they conduct regular inspections and also observe teachers during these visits, including their attendance. Their capacity however, is limited due to financial constraints. Mainly, they lack the funds or means to travel to different schools in their jurisdiction, and as a result are not able to observe teachers or to address issues related to punctuality. A head teacher from an urban public school stated: “The school inspectors visit the school twice per term for inspection, but sometimes, they fail to do this due to lack of fuel, and the number of schools are too many.” District officials and head teachers also point out that there is unequal distribution of resources among the educational offices located across the different districts. These challenges appear to affect rural and remote schools more frequently than urban schools, as supervision in remote areas is often more costly and thus performed less frequently.

Along with travel-cost limitations, some district inspectors of schools also highlight the shortage of staff as another reason why they cannot visit all schools in their district. They explain that often there is substantial administrative work that needs to be completed in the office, leaving little time for school inspections.

District inspectors of schools often collaborate with the CCTs in each district who carry out observations at schools, including tracking teachers' daily attendance (arrivals). District inspectors also seem to have a dependency on school managers to provide information about the school, especially in the implementation of the national Quality Enhancement Initiative (QEI), which focuses on teacher absenteeism and instructional time use. As part of the MoES's initiative to strengthen head teachers' capacity to carry out assessments at their schools, the local educational officials work with them in order to encourage head teachers to take the lead on overseeing teachers' performance using the QEI approach. While some district officials describe this as a positive step, others worry that head teachers might not be reporting honestly on teacher attendance.

#### 4.2.3. Monitoring teacher absence

Teachers and head teachers describe district offices as very bureaucratic and sometimes lacking clarity on its procedures. As noted earlier, head teachers and teachers face dilemmas where they feel they require prompt action from the district offices. These officials, however, follow processes that require multi-level approvals, which is often a time-consuming process that does not resolve the school's problem as needed. Moreover, it is not always clear how these processes distinguish between authorized absences (illness) and unauthorized absences (leaving without a supervisor's permission). The respondents interviewed in this study do not point to any such distinctions, including, if there are additional conditions that might guide authorized leave. As a result, there are variations across the schools in head teachers' perceptions of when teacher absences should be reported to the local officials, especially for sanctioning such as salary deductions.

Finally, a vast majority of local government officials describe absence from school as the main type of absenteeism that they monitor and sanction. Even these absences are generally focused on teachers who do not come to school for extended periods of time, or those who have left their positions without informing a relevant authority. Almost all other respondents in this study (community members, head teachers and teachers) make references to absence from school when describing instances requiring preventative actions. They do not mention late arrival, early departure, or absence from classrooms and reduced time on task as forms of absenteeism that require monitoring or sanctioning. A few respondents did point out that overseeing additional forms of absences (lateness, missing from the classroom, or compromising time on task) are more challenging than observing teacher's attendance, which is often recorded and easily accessible at all schools. There is some indication that

We are required to conduct physical observations of schools in order to monitor teacher attendance and inform the Chief Administrative Officer, who submits a report to the sanctions committee as required. But the head teachers do not play a good role in this process as they try to cover cases of absenteeism.

– District school inspector, Kibaale district

According to the policy, teachers are supposed to meet with parents twice per term, but here at this school, it's not like that. It usually happens maybe once a term, or sometimes, it doesn't happen at all, unless there is a serious problem. Otherwise we just sit here.

– Teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

When school inspectors arrive at school, they check the teacher's arrival books and when they see that a teacher has been absent, they call on that teacher. Sometimes they warn absent teachers verbally or write in the teachers/visitors record book.

– Head teacher, rural public school, Napak district

There are many teachers who go to their classrooms but they do not teach. This group is difficult to monitor. As a result, the curriculum is not covered, and a P7-level pupil ends up being at a P5 level academically. In one school, P3 pupils refused to write examinations on the grounds that they had only been taught seven times in that term. We dismissed that teacher.

– District school inspector, Adjumani district

along with school absence, school inspectors (through the OEI) are beginning to increase their effort to monitor and when needed, sanction teachers' use of instructional time. This however is not the case at most of the schools selected in this study, and even in the ones where this might be in effect, it is often left to the discretion of the head teacher. Findings from this study also suggest it is mainly head teachers who frequently observe teachers' time on task, and who make attempts to hold teachers accountable for their instructional time use.

In conclusion, district-level education officials appear to play a positive and encouraging role in guiding teachers against school absences and supporting the school leadership in attendance oversight. There are, however, concerns that some of the Government's efforts are not implemented as required, and that these offices lack the resources to carry out their duties and responsibilities. Finally, findings from this study also indicate strategies for monitoring or addressing absenteeism are focused mainly on school absences, and do not take into consideration teachers' poor punctuality (arriving late or leaving school early), their presence in the classroom, and their overall time dedicated to subject delivery.

### 4.3. Community-level determinants of teacher absenteeism

#### Overview

Respondents throughout the different regions consider education important to the overall wellbeing and progress of the community. Teachers generally receive encouragement and reminders from the community about the importance of the work they do. Community-level respondents often demonstrate a thorough understanding of the work and needs of teachers. Teachers also describe the respect and acknowledgement they receive from parents and other members of the community, with a sense of pride. They consider this a source of motivation and commitment towards their work. Most of these communities, however, are socio-economically poor, with limited infrastructural development that directly and indirectly limits their capacity to engage with schools. Some of the community-level challenges that cause teachers to be away from their lessons include, climatic conditions, community infrastructure and resources, and community engagement.

#### 4.3.1. Climatic conditions

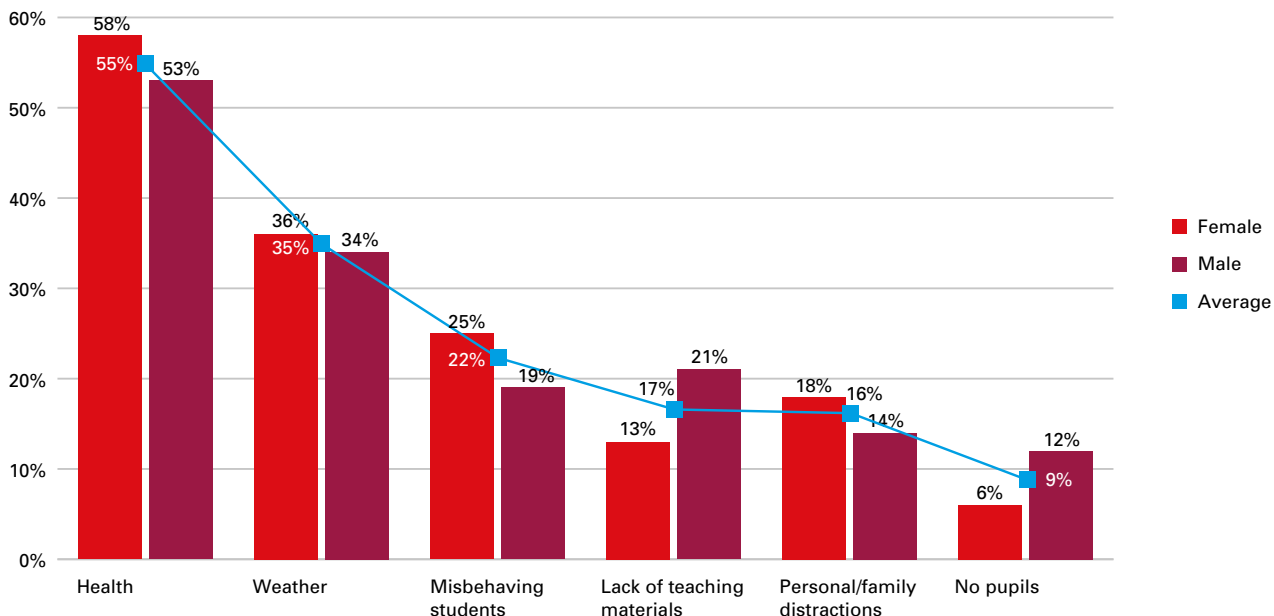
Throughout the schools, respondents explain that heavy rains are a common reason why they are not able to arrive to school on time. Poor infrastructure in the community makes it difficult for teachers to travel to school due to slippery, muddy and impassable road conditions. Teachers and head teachers also point out that sometimes excessive water causes flooding, making it difficult to walk or ride bicycles, which is how most teachers reach schools. Sometimes teachers leave their homes early or leave schools early, in order to avoid the rain.

Weather also affects teachers' ability to stay on task due to poor conditions of the classroom and lack of protection against the rain. Poor-quality of roofs cause a lot of noise in the classroom, or the small size and number of windows make it difficult for learners to see what they are reading or writing. Sometimes, rain falls directly on pupils, causing discomfort and difficulty to focus on learning activities. The second-most common reason teachers are not on task in the classroom is due to the weather, identified as a barrier by 36 per cent of female and 34 per cent of male teachers (*see Figure 15*). This appears to affect teachers' instructional time use more than TLMs (13 per cent of female and 21 per cent of male teachers selected this as a barrier).

In the morning when it rains, you might get caught on your way to school even though you still have a long distance to cover. Sometimes you are forced to go back home to change your clothes, but then it's very difficult to start the journey again to come to school.

– Teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

Figure 15: Response to question: “What are the main reasons that may sometimes limit the time you spend on teaching while in the classroom?”



In one of the schools where I used to teach, the walls were made of iron sheets. Sometimes it would be so hot in the classrooms that we had to move the pupils outside.

– Head teacher, rural public school, Mubende district

Several teachers try to improvise their lessons so pupils can work on activities that do not require listening. In most instances however, teachers put their lessons on hold until after the rain has stopped. A teacher from a rural public school in Napak explains: “Sometimes there is too much rain, which makes a lot of noise so I stop teaching until after the rain has stopped.”

Along with rain, some schools also struggle with extremely hot weather conditions, causing both teachers and pupils discomfort in the classroom. Teachers find it challenging to provide lessons in the afternoons because classrooms are too hot causing some learners difficulty in focussing or staying awake. As a result, some teachers decide to end the class early and leave school in order to escape the heat.

### 4.3.2. Community infrastructure and resources

Respondents across the different schools point to housing as an essential resource many teachers do not have access to. It is often teachers lacking such accommodation who are frequently absent or late to school. Even when houses are provided, they are not always in liveable conditions, so teachers feel the need to look for accommodation elsewhere. Several teachers also explain that it is usually expensive to live near the school and as a result, they rent houses further away. This however requires them to walk several kilometres every day, making it difficult to arrive to school regularly or on time. Teachers in this study explain that sometimes they take a day off because they are physically too tired from walking daily to and from school. A teacher from a rural public school in Adjumani explains: “Since we do not have housing here, some of us live further in a different sub-county. And when you travel on foot like this three to four times in a week, you feel tired. Sometimes you

decide to not come to school that day.” Others describe coming to school tired and exhausted and therefore struggling to focus on their teaching tasks.

Public transportation is also expensive and difficult to find during rainy seasons. As a result, most teachers do not turn to these as options. A head teacher from a rural public school in Mubende explains: “During the wet seasons, teachers cannot find transportation because *bodabodas*<sup>vi</sup> do not want to ride in such weather conditions, or they increase the fees so teachers instead choose to wait for better weather conditions or for the fees to be lowered.” Public transport also operates at specific times that are not always convenient to teachers, therefore requiring some to leave school early so they can catch the bus or to arrive late in the morning. Salary delays are described as additional reasons why teachers cannot afford transport. Head teachers point out that teachers who live further away from school, usually do not show up to schools on Mondays, after they have gone home for the weekend.

Finally, teachers describe the poor availability of resources in the community — especially the availability of electricity — as an obstacle that interferes with their time on task. They explain that pupils often do not complete their homework or study at home due to lack of light, which causes them to come to school unprepared. The teachers, as a result, either repeat the previous day’s lesson, or carry on with a new lesson even though some pupils are not able to keep up.

We have houses for teachers in this school but they are not enough. So what the teachers do is they share rooms. They will take one room and split it in two, with one side used by one teacher and the other side by another.

– District official, Napak district

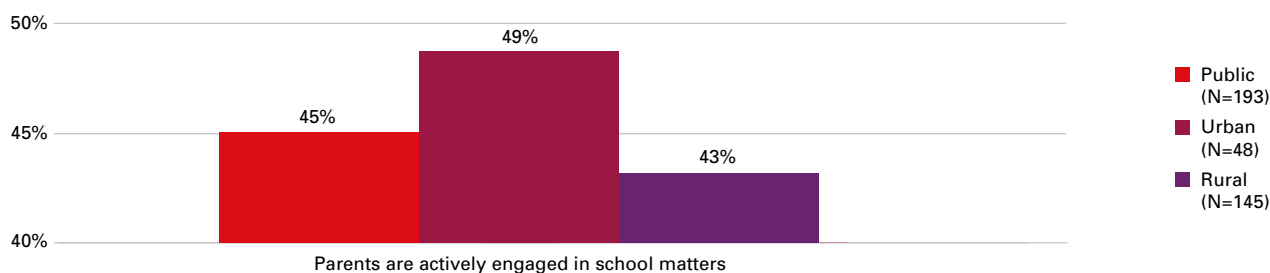
The last time I did not come to school was because our salaries were delayed and I could not afford transportation from Kotido to Napak. So I missed a day in travelling, rested the following day and reported to school on Wednesday.

– Teacher, rural public school, Napak district

### 4.3.3. Community engagement and support

Several respondents express their concerns over the lack of priority they feel parents give to their children’s academic and social wellbeing. Teachers generally do not consider parents to be very active (*see Figure 16*). Only 45 per cent of public school teachers agreed with the statement that parents were engaged in school matters. Additionally, involvement appears to be especially low in rural areas, with only 43 per cent of teachers feeling parents are engaged with school affairs, compared to 49 per cent of urban teachers, indicating this is a dilemma across all schools.

Figure 16: Response to statement: “Parents are actively engaged in school matters.”



vi These are a form of taxis (involving the use of a bicycle or motorcycle) that are commonly used for transportation in East Africa.

Additionally, parents often pull pupils from schools so they can provide support to their families. Looking after their families' needs takes a physical and psychological toll on pupils' health because they often come to school tired or feeling worried. A school inspector from Namayingo district states: "Children in this community mine gold. I went to a school recently where I found all the children were in the class but they were dozing. This means, that at night, they are busy mining, and in the morning they are exhausted."

Many teachers also point out that parents provide very little, if any, academic support to learners at home, causing pupils to come to school without completing their homework or preparing for their lessons as required. Teachers point to poor reading and writing as a consequence of parents not giving their children enough time at home to do their schoolwork. Some pupils are also sent to school without nutrition, proper clothing or school supplies. Teachers describe these as signs the parents are neglecting their duties and the teachers feel burdened by it since it hinders their capacity to remain on task.

In a number of the selected schools, parents do not seem to attend regular meetings at the school, making it difficult for teachers to ensure pupils are receiving the attention they need to succeed academically. For teachers who are not members of the community in which they teach, it is especially difficult to connect with parents due to cultural or language barriers. Some respondents point out that parents also feel disconnected from teachers due to their lack of education and fear the teacher may look down on them and see them as belonging to a lower social status. A district official from Namayingo states: "We have some communities that are hostile towards teachers. This prevents those with education to come and work in this community. Recently, we had a situation where a parent entered the classroom and physically attacked the teacher." Such biases make it difficult for teachers to encourage parents to become active in their child's learning. Instead, teachers are forced to carry on with their lessons in order to ensure they are on track with their teaching loads, even if they are aware some pupils may need additional time to understand.

In conclusion, there are challenges within the community that hinder teachers' instructional time use in the classroom. Climatic conditions and the availability of resources in the community cause teachers to be absent, delayed and, in some instances, to reduce time spent on teaching. Similarly, parental support and engagement is described as a key factor in how prepared pupils are in the classroom and how well the teacher uses their instructional time.



## 4.4. School-level determinants of teacher absenteeism

### Overview

School managers and teachers often work together to strategize and develop plans that address the needs of their pupils. In order to carry on with their daily responsibilities, both teachers and head teachers try to use resources available at their disposal to their full potential as these are often insufficient. Head teachers oftentimes lead these efforts, navigating through various financial and material hurdles in order to maximize teachers' capacity and instructional time use. Many teachers explain that they also coordinate with their colleagues in situations where they know they will be absent, so that their pupils do not lag in their lessons. Often, this entails preparing and providing to a colleague in advance a scheme of work, which they can teach from in their absence. While these appear to provide considerable solutions in instances where teachers need to be absent (and know ahead of time when they might be away), there are, nonetheless, barriers that make it difficult for teachers to be on task. Some of these challenges include the role of the head teacher, the teachers' working environment, and school resources.

#### 4.4.1. Role of the head teacher

Head teachers hold a significant role in the overall day-to-day function and activities of the school. They provide leadership and assistance to teachers and monitor and observe their daily engagements with pupils, to ensure they are on task. Head teachers are also key representatives of their schools within the community and at the local and national government offices. As such, they are frequently required to be absent from schools in order to attend meetings with these stakeholders, or to attend training and workshop opportunities. Official meetings can cause head teachers to be absent for multiple days, with some teachers not clear on who they are meeting with or when they might return. A head teacher from an urban public school for special needs children disclosed: "Sometimes I have a meeting at the district, or at the centre since this is the centre's school. Other times I may be called for a meeting in the community, or international organizations supporting our school. I am also absent sometimes because I have to look for midterm examinations."

Respondents across the 20 schools pointed to head teachers' absence as a key reason why teachers may also choose to be absent from school. This is a concern for teachers as well as some district officials, who worry that head teachers who are absent cannot monitor teacher absenteeism. A district officer from Mubende explained: "If the head teacher is not present regularly at the school, then how can he enforce attendance policies on others?" Respondents also point out that teachers may be present in school but if the head teacher is absent, they often do not attend their classes. A teacher from a rural public school in Namayingo explained: "The main reason teachers might be at school but not in the classroom is because the head teacher is not around."

The previous head teacher was sick and often absent from the school. This new head teacher is always around and he normally monitors the teachers. You know, in a home without a parent, children can do whatever they want.

– Teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

When the head teacher is not at school, the teachers can do whatever they want. They can decide to sit in the staff room and just chat around.

– Subnational representative, Mubende district

If the head teacher is serious about their supervision and holds teachers accountable for their lesson planning, the system for that monitoring is there. So when a teacher has not used instructional time appropriately, it goes back to the head teacher, since they are responsible for monitoring this.

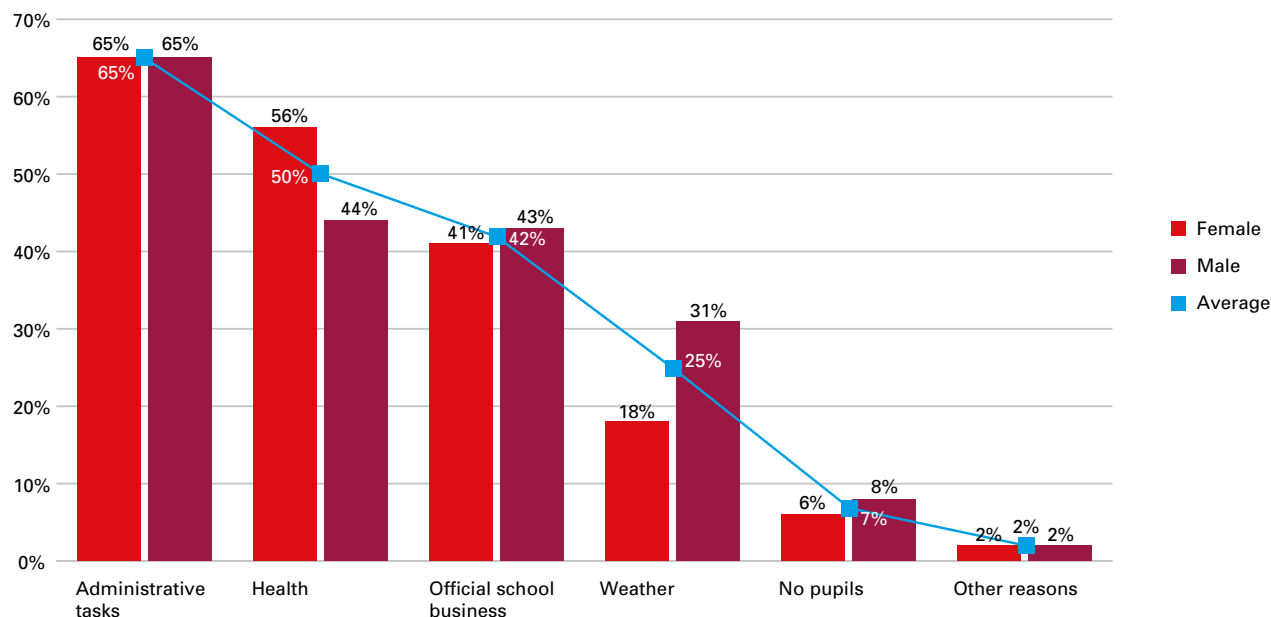
– Subnational representative, Mubende district

On the other hand, even when head teachers are present at school, teachers can be frequently absent or arrive late to class due to poor monitoring. Schools where teachers are not held responsible for their absence often experience higher instances of teachers not attending to their classes or compromising their instructional time use. Lack of classroom observations or prompt action against attendance breaches are common reasons why teachers might feel a lack of accountability towards their time on task or regular presence in the school. These practices also have consequences for learners, who often leave school and go home if their teacher is absent, or who miss out on receiving a scheduled lesson. District officials often consider a head teacher’s weak supervision as an important factor in why teachers may not observe regular attendance and punctuality.

#### 4.4.2. Teachers’ working environment

Another important challenge affecting teachers’ attendance is the amount of work they are required to do in addition to teaching. Administrative tasks are the main cause of classroom absence, with 65 per cent of teachers selecting this as a barrier (see Figure 17). There do not seem to be any gender discrepancies, as both male (65 per cent) and female (also 65 per cent) select this as the main reason they are not present in the classroom. Likewise, official school business is another key reason why teachers are not in the classroom (selected by 41 per cent of male and 43 per cent of female teachers). These findings suggest school-related activities are a significant cause of teachers’ absence from the classroom.

Figure 17: Response to question: “What are the main reasons that may sometimes keep you outside of the classroom even though you are physically at school?”



It is often school managers who request teachers take on additional administrative or work-related responsibilities. Some of these include preparing for important school functions, tidying up the classroom or the school, and meeting with relevant stakeholders (including, community members, international organization representatives and local government officials). These activities regularly keep teachers from their classrooms or disrupt them while they are providing lessons. Head teachers sometimes call for meetings without prior notice, causing teachers to miss their scheduled classes even though they are prepared to provide learning activities.

Along with administrative work, teachers across the different districts express that they often struggle to achieve learning outcomes due to large class sizes. Teachers find it difficult to review pupils' assignments or examinations, which requires additional time that they do not have, resulting in many using class time to grade pupils' work.

Large classroom sizes also make it difficult for teachers to manage pupils and, as a result, they spend a great deal of their time trying to manage them, and thus limiting their time on task. Several teachers also point out that congested classrooms do not allow them to reach out to all pupils and ensure everyone is engaged in learning activities. It is also difficult for them to observe all pupils due to limited space to walk around or to make themselves seen and heard by all pupils. It is especially challenging for the teacher to include children who may have learning challenges or physical disabilities. A teacher from a rural public school in Adjumani explains: "When slow learners come up to me, I usually try to help them learn. But when you look at our classroom size, there are too many pupils and we only have seven classes in total. So, as a result, the teacher may fail to identify learners who are not following." Teachers point out that this directly affects their ability to cover all contents of the curriculum or to regularly assess pupils as required, due to fatigue from the previous day's teaching. Some teachers feel demotivated from coming to school because they feel overwhelmed at the amount of work they must complete due to high pupil-teacher ratios.

#### 4.4.3. School resources

Finally, teachers struggle to fulfil their duties due to the condition of the school and the resources that are available to support them. Mainly, not having access to required teaching and learning materials is described as a key obstacle that affects teachers' capacity to cover the subject content as required. Teachers describe having to look for teaching materials during class time, especially when the head teacher is not at the school as they are usually the only ones with access to school supplies. Delays in receiving grants from the ministry to purchase teaching materials also make it difficult for teachers to plan and deliver their lessons on time. Some teachers try to improvise by using additional resources; however, they explain that this is often a challenge and not always possible. A teacher from a rural public school in Adjumani explains: "We sometimes

I might be given an assignment to complete by the head teacher within a given timeline. So I have to make sure I do that. Or sometimes we have meetings since I am the chairperson of one of these committees, and that meeting can take place during class time. So not only me but other members of that committee will also have to miss their classes even though we are at school.

– Teacher, urban public and inclusive school, Mubende district

When there are so many pupils in one classroom it is very difficult for teachers to identify the individual differences among learners or to address individual pupils' needs. It's very difficult. At the end of the day, if only a few have understood a lesson, you tell yourself that the lesson was successful. But when they write their exams and you see their results, you realize that nothing has been achieved.

– Teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

There are some lessons that need to be taught practically and if the learning aids are not there then the children might not understand. Because when they do something practically with their hands, they understand better.

– Teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

Sometimes children come to school hungry. Others come to school and they are very tired. When you ask them, they tell you, 'I have to fetch water in the morning and wash dishes. Others walk long distances. Some come from broken families or the parents work in bars and come home very late, so the children sleep very late.

– Teacher, rural public school, Mubende district

improvise instructional materials when they are not available. But sometimes, this is not possible, like if we need specific materials for a class, then we cannot improvise." Many pupils point out that they do not have required learning materials (textbooks, notebooks to write in), which makes it difficult for them to learn in class.

Along with TLMs, teachers described pupils' health —including lack of access to nutrition at the school or in the home — as additional reasons why they might not devote enough time to learning tasks and why pupils cannot focus on their studies. Most schools in this study did not have nutrition programs for learners. Teachers described pupils who were sleepy or physically unwell due to hunger. Pupils also explained that one of the main reasons they could not concentrate while in class was because they were feeling hungry. A pupil from a rural public school in Mubende stated: "When we don't understand our lessons, we ask our teachers and they explain it to us. However, there are times when we are hungry and we just cannot concentrate." Sometimes, teachers stop teaching in the middle of a lesson because a pupil who is not feeling well requires medical attention.

In summary, head teachers' absence and lack of leadership and monitoring of teachers' punctuality causes teachers to be less cautious about maintaining punctuality or using time effectively while in the classroom or at school. Poor working conditions, mainly due to teachers' engagement in additional activities and large classrooms, along with a lack of essential resources — including necessary TLMs and feeding programs for learners — further hinder a teacher's capacity to remain on task.

## 4.5. Teacher-level determinants of absenteeism

### Overview

Many teachers included in this study described their professions as rewarding and a direct means through which they can positively contribute to the wellbeing of their communities and country. Supporting learners and watching them progress academically provides teachers satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. Moreover, they often feel pride when one of their pupils is recognized in the community or goes on to achieve additional academic success. Also, while these teachers often face many limitations — both in their working environment and personal lives — they nonetheless try to work around these so they do not deprive learners of meeting required learning outcomes. Some teachers make it a priority to prepare lessons ahead of class time, and others organize meeting times to further support learners who may be lagging. There are, however, several challenges that directly impede a teacher's attendance and time on task. Some of these are discussed further below, including training deficiency, personal and social challenges, and personal conduct and motivation.

#### 4.5.1. Training deficiency

Insufficient training is a challenge that affects teachers' attendance and punctuality, as well as their instructional time use in a number of different ways, including poor classroom preparation or lesson-preparation skills. Head teachers point to lack of training as a key reason teachers might not arrive to school on time or, more commonly, why they might not be attending their classes while at school.

Respondents also point out that teachers' poor training causes them to stay out of the classroom in order to complete grading a previous day's work or assignments. Sometimes, these teachers do go to classes but they use their instructional time to engage learners in activities not related to the lesson (telling stories or socializing with learners), or they continue working on non-task-related activities (grading, on the telephone, surfing the internet). This appears to be a common occurrence among many teachers as one subnational representative from the Adjumani district shared that in that region, they had found teachers were on average covering only 47 per cent of the curriculum.

Teachers also seem to lack the skills or knowledge required to teach required subjects. This is a common reason why teachers are not present in their classrooms or why they are not teaching for the full duration of a lesson. Subjects appear to be allocated based on needs of the school rather than the expertise of the teacher. A head teacher from a rural public school in Mubende explains: "When you allocate subjects, it doesn't mean that the teachers will be knowledgeable in all the subjects, even though we are trained primary teachers. You might assign a subject to a teacher that they do not have the knowledge to teach. If he is told to teach math, he won't know where to begin so he will go to class and just waste time." Assigning teachers subjects they are not trained in is also a concern among some subnational respondents. They describe this as a factor in why teachers struggle to stay on task while in class. In the quantitative survey, however, teachers appear to regard their

It happens that sometimes teachers miss scheduled classes, even though they are present in the school, because they are not adequately prepared. So they prepare their lessons while at school.

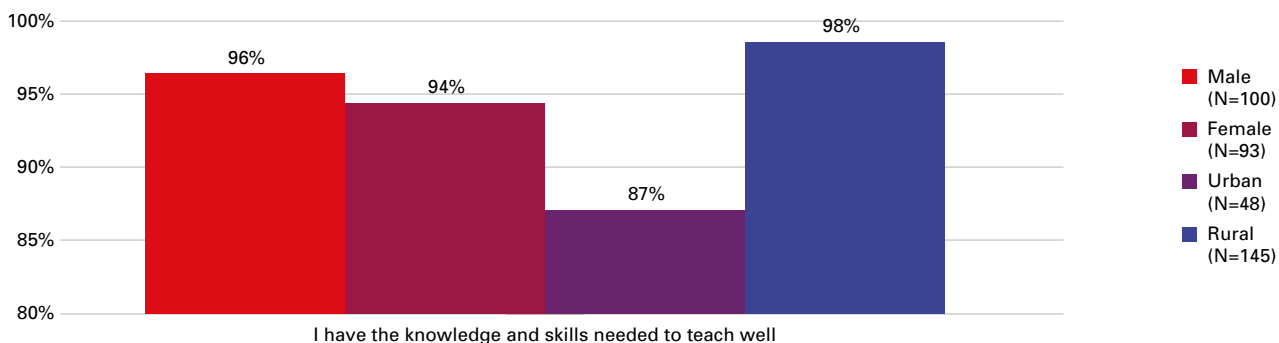
– Head teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

The teacher might lack the knowledge to teach a particular subject, so they skip it and move on to a different subject that they know they can teach. Although we encourage them to seek support from their colleagues, they don't because they don't want their peers to know they might be struggling with the subject.

– Subnational representative, Napak district

knowledge and skills as adequate. A vast majority of urban (87 per cent) and rural (98 per cent) teachers agreed with the statement that they had the skills and knowledge to teach well. These attitudes also appear consistent across gender, with both male (96 per cent) and female (94 per cent) feeling they have sufficient skills (see Figure 18).

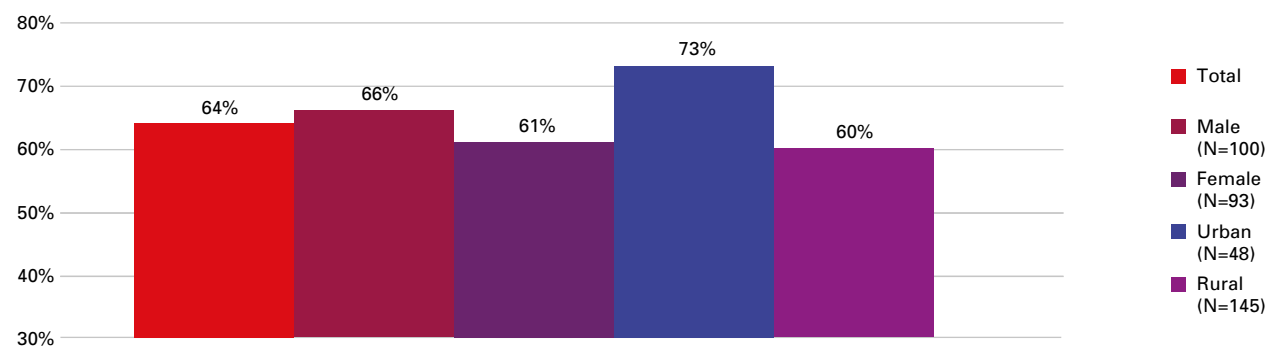
Figure 18: Teachers’ response to statement: “I have the knowledge and skills needed to teach well.”



From the qualitative response, it is also evident that along with subject knowledge, teachers also appear to lack skills in pupil-centred teaching, and thus fail to engage with learners in an encouraging and inviting manner. Many pupils seem afraid of their teacher, which is why some explain they choose to remain quiet in class, even when they do not understand their lessons. District officials and head teachers explain that when learners with special needs (poor hearing or sight), struggle to keep up in class, it is due to the teacher’s lack of adequate training.

Finally, teachers explain that not having access to TLMs also delays their ability to develop or deliver effective lessons. In the survey data, 64 per cent of teachers agreed that they had access to TLMs at their school, with men having slightly more access (66 per cent) than female teachers (61 per cent) (see Figure 19). There is variation across urban (73 per cent) and rural (60 per cent) schools. This suggests that while lack of TLMs is a problem across all schools, it is much more prevalent in rural schools — which supports national trends as noted in Chapter 2 — and these constraints affect female teachers slightly more than male.

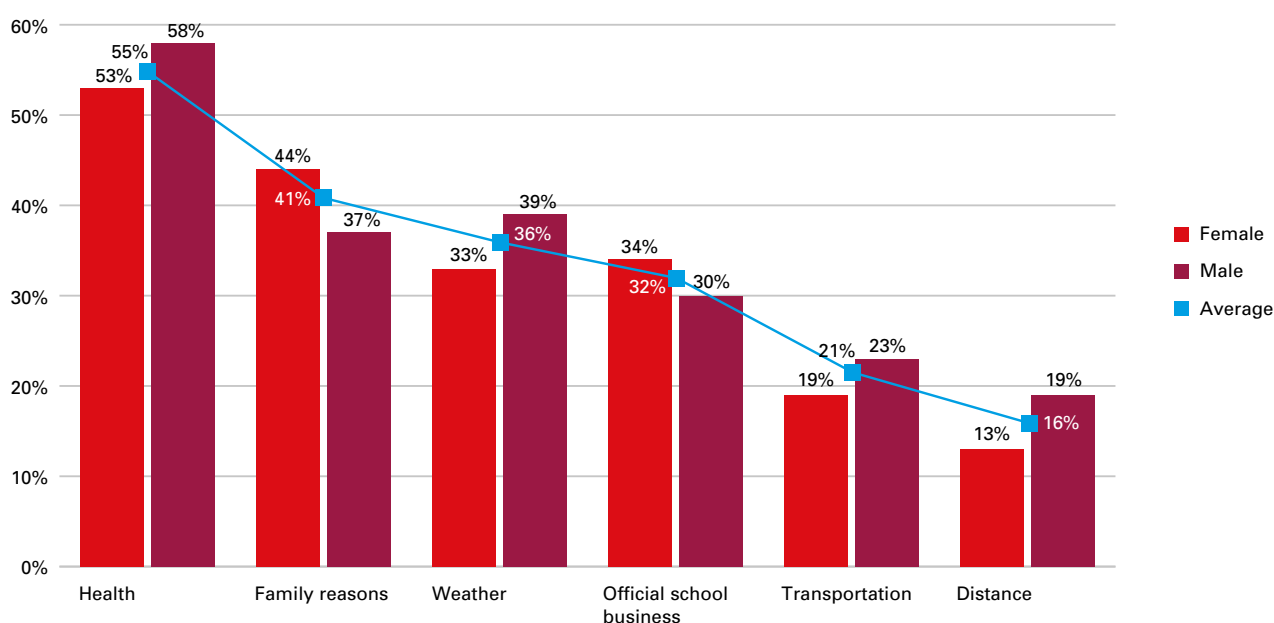
Figure 19: Teachers’ response to statement: “Teachers at this school have the teaching materials they need to teach”.



#### 4.5.2. Personal and social challenges

For most teachers, health appears to be the most common and consistent cause of absence from school, late arrival or limited instructional time use, with 58 per cent of male teachers and 53 per cent of female teachers citing health as the reason they might not be present at school (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Response to question: “What are the main reasons that may sometimes keep you away from school?”



Teachers cite malaria, allergies, HIV and pregnancy as common causes for their absence from school. Sometimes, teachers arrive to school sick and attend their classes but do not allocate enough time for their lessons, especially when they come to class sedated due to medicinal intake. It is also worth noting that securing medication or medical treatment requires teachers to travel far distances from the school, resulting in school absence. This is especially the case when teachers are seeking medical attention for their family members, notably children. Female teachers are described by some respondents, including district officials, as absent more regularly due to pregnancy or arriving late and missing lessons while at school as a result of domestic violence. Even when in class, such teachers might not devote enough time to learning tasks. A teacher at a rural public school in Mubende explains: “If you have a problem like friction or domestic violence at home, you do not want to show it at school to children, so you stay there in class seated.” Findings from the quantitative data point to slight gender variations, with more female teachers (39 per cent) appearing to arrive to school late or leave early, compared to male teachers (34 per cent) (see Figure 21). Similarly, health is cited more often by female teachers (55 per cent) than male teachers (49 per cent) as a cause of their late arrival or early departure. These findings suggest health might

We have a colleague who has been away for two weeks. She has a child with severe mental health problems, which developed at the beginning of this term.

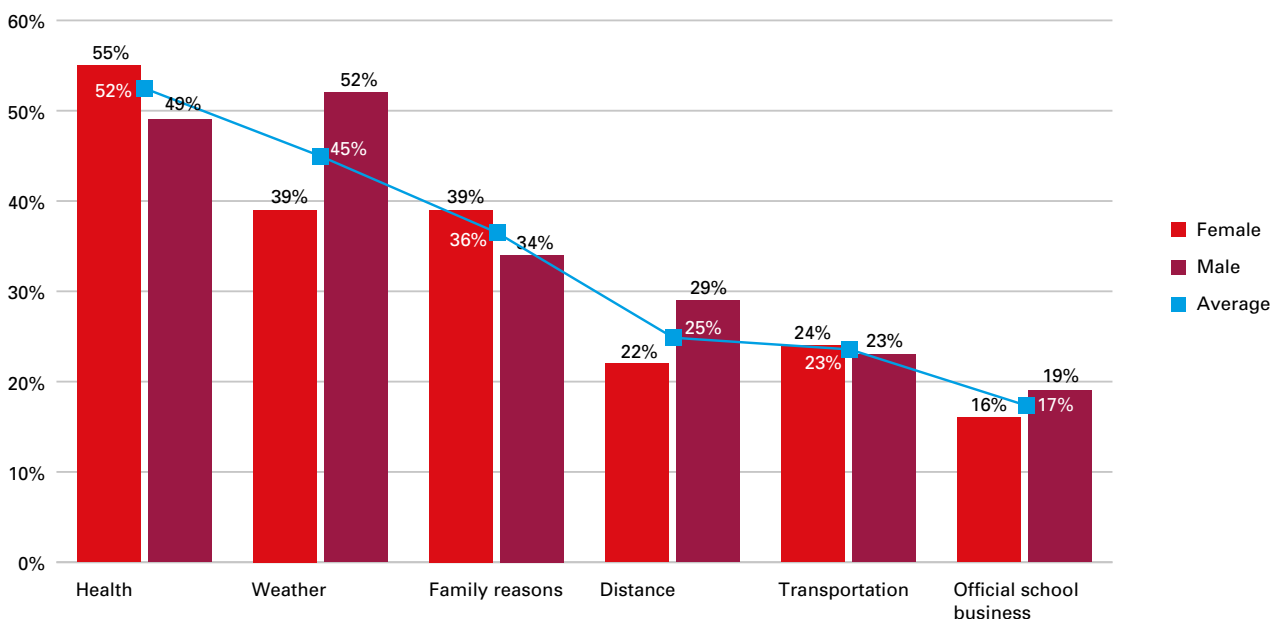
– Teacher, urban public school, Mubende district

At times, you may find that there is no food at school, usually during the last term of the school year. So teachers leave school very early, or those who stay outside the teachers’ housing will also leave early to go home and prepare something to eat.

– Teacher, rural public school, Adjumani district

cause different types of absenteeism among male and female teachers, as more male teachers are absent due to health, compared to those who are late.

Figure 21: Teachers’ response to question: “What are the main reasons that may sometimes cause you to arrive late or leave school early?”



A teacher takes out a loan in one place but it is not enough. So they visit another financial institution and take out an additional loan. In the end, they cannot repay these loans, so they decide to keep away from their school because that is where anyone looking for them would expect to find them.

– District official, Namayingo district

Teachers also appear to struggle with stress, which affects their attendance and effective time use in the classroom. Teachers find it difficult to focus on their teaching responsibilities when they have not eaten in the morning or at lunch time, especially while at school. Teachers who do not receive lunch at school often do not go to class either in protest, or to look for lunch elsewhere.

Some teachers are also stressed due to family-related concerns. A teacher from an urban public school for special needs children in Mubende illustrated: “If I have a misunderstanding at home, I cannot tell the head teacher because they want me to come. So you will see me around, I’ll sign the attendance book but my mind will be elsewhere.” Some district-level respondents also point out that those teachers who have taken out multiple loans they are struggling to repay, may also be too stressed to teach. Teachers with loans often do not come to school for fear of being forced to repay.



### 4.5.3. Personal conduct and motivation

Several respondents point to alcohol consumption as a problem that limits a teacher's presence and instructional time use in the classroom, as well as their regular attendance and punctuality at the school. Drinking causes teachers to show up to school unprepared or struggling to stay on task. A teacher from a rural public school in Napak district disclosed: "Most teachers here drink, even during class hours. I think it is because the trading centre is nearby. That teacher will opt for 'the water jar'— that's beer —instead of the tea that is provided in the staff room." Some respondents pointed out that along with teachers, head teachers also consume alcohol during school hours.

According to head teachers and district officers, additional factors that hinder teacher attendance and time on task include lack of motivation, caused by a variety of factors discussed previously, such as low salary, lack of TLMS, lack of opportunities for professional advancement and lack of recognition from the school, community and local government officials. Many teachers feel not enough is being done to provide them with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. They maintain that there is a need for the school administration and the Government to increase their efforts in addressing issues that affect teachers' perception and engagement with their work. A national-level respondent raised similar concerns and provided additional clarification on what these measures could entail: "Positive motivation should be structured so that it is known and not ad hoc, as it is now. For instance, when pupils pass their examinations, they might provide teachers with additional incentives. This is not helpful. Instead, we need to have an insurance health scheme for teachers and their immediate family, pay school fees of their children, provide meals, and pay teachers' salaries twice a month."

Teachers lack sufficient motivation, not only because of low salary but also because parents do not support them. Instead, they wait for their child's assessment and then blame their poor performance on the teacher.

– Community representative, rural public school, Napak district.

In conclusion, an exploration of the teacher-level determinants of absenteeism reveal that while many teachers enjoy their profession — especially when their pupils succeed academically — they are nonetheless faced with challenges that make it difficult for them to carry on with their teaching duties. Lack of training in lesson preparation, subject knowledge, or using alternative sources for teaching, along with personal and social challenges (including health, family, and stress), and teachers' personal conduct and motivation are common determinants of absence from their school, classroom and lessons. Additionally, findings in this section indicate teacher-level determinants of absenteeism are heavily impacted by others explored under the individual education system levels. Section 5, therefore, will present a summary of the main causes of teacher absence and reveal connections across the different system levels in order to identify potential gaps in policy.

## Section 5: Bringing it all together: Understanding teacher absenteeism through a system's lens

The Time to Teach study's examination of teacher absenteeism in Uganda reveals the Government's growing commitment toward meeting its national learning outcomes and improving the overall system so that it is conducive to both learning and teaching. Section 2 highlighted many of these trends, along with ongoing challenges, especially in MoES's efforts to understand and address teacher absenteeism, including their time on task. Growing demands for education in the country, a shrinking national budget allocation for education, pervasive poverty and unemployment, and uneven development across the different regions, are some of the fundamental challenges that hinder this progress. Results from this study also reveal teacher absence is a serious and ongoing threat to the ministry's advancement efforts.

The analysis in Section 4 presented many of the factors that directly and indirectly lead to teacher absence. As detailed in Section 1, the aim of this study is to expand traditional notions of absenteeism, which focus mainly on school absence or limited time on task, and instead approach it as a complex process requiring holistic solutions. Additionally, in Chapter 4, a comprehensive exploration of teacher absence reveals there are a variety of obstacles affecting teachers' motivation, compromising their teaching time, and hindering their potential to promote positive learning and facilitate pupils' academic progression. Though determinants may be situated at one level of the education system, they often correlate with factors at a different level to reinforce or create new challenges and forms of absences. The issue of inadequate and delayed salaries, for instance, causes teachers to be absent from school and compromises their living conditions because they are not able to afford essential resources (food, housing, children's school fees, health care and transportation) in the community that can enable their regular presence in the school. On the other hand, simple provision of salary does not guarantee teachers' attendance will improve, if the schools in which they teach do not have necessary TLMs, or if education officials in their districts do not provide opportunities for professional growth through needs-based, in-service training. Results from this study also indicate a much wider collaboration, across different ministries, and considers cross-ministerial cooperation and coordination as essential to improving these conditions, and contributing toward the sustainability of the Government's overall development initiatives. It is difficult for the education sector to address teachers' needs if some of those needs are dependent on infrastructure and living conditions of pupils and their families, including lack of economic opportunities for pupils' parents, high costs of living, and inadequate provision of roads, technology and essential resources like clean drinking water, and protection against common illnesses and diseases.

The aim of this section, therefore, is to summarize some of the common threads across the key challenges presented in Section 4, with a focus on the interconnections between these and how they may reinforce or enable new forms of absenteeism. These determinants are then examined in relation to Uganda's current educational progress and goals in order to identify relevant policy gaps and policy-implementation gaps that may be instrumental in improving teachers' pedagogical practices and knowledge. Specifically, the following three factors are highlighted as central to the causes and sustenance of teacher absence: insufficient provision of teachers' basic needs, the teacher's working environment, and inconsistent and inadequate supervision of teachers.

## 5.1 Synthesis of findings

### **5.1.1. Poor provision of teachers' basic needs lowers motivation and makes it difficult for teachers to attend schools regularly, to use instructional time effectively, or to attend to their pupils — even though they might be present in the school — and heightens their sense of isolation from the ministry's educational initiatives.**

The findings from this study point to both salary and non-salary incentives as familiar reasons why teachers may not arrive to school regularly or on time. Since salaries are paid by the Government, there's a sense of disappointment among some teachers that the ministry is not looking after them, especially due to inadequate and delayed wages. At the school level, this causes head teachers to approve regular absences of teachers who need to visit the district to follow up on their delayed or missing salaries. Consequently, absence from school and the classroom are common outcomes as most schools do not have additional teaching staff to cover an absent teacher's required scheme of work. Due to heavy workload, teachers are often unable to complete their lessons, which may also limit head teachers' assessments of their work, or their ability to hold them accountable if they do not achieve the required outcomes. This is an important finding because it might also provide context as to why district officials consider head teachers' monitoring of teachers unsatisfactory. Also, when teachers do not receive adequate salary to enable them to look after their families' basic needs, they look for alternative income-generating activities, or take out multiple loans from different loan providers, which many in this study explain are not easily repaid.

Along with salary, teachers consider lack of non-salary incentives (housing, transportation, nutrition, health care) as additional examples of the ministry's poor understanding of teachers' needs and how to effectively improve their wellbeing. Analysis from all 20 selected schools demonstrates poor health of teachers and their family members is a frequent cause of school absence, lateness, and why teachers may stay outside of the classroom or struggle to stay on task. Addiction to alcohol also appears to be a frequent problem among teachers, with little support in the community or at the school to restrict the behaviour, resulting in frequent school absences and poor instructional time use. Teachers are also unable to secure food, transportation or adequate housing due to low remuneration, resulting in regular absences from school and classrooms as well as late arrivals and early departures. At the teacher level, these factors have a direct effect on their lack of motivation and dedication toward their jobs, leading some teachers to believe the ministry does not care for their personal wellbeing.

Finally, training opportunities for teachers across the different regions appear to be limited and difficult to access, leaving some struggling to understand and implement curriculum requirements, especially when pupils also do not come to school prepared. This affects teachers' ability to stay on task, and also causes some to feel less motivated to come to school regularly. The Government's move towards a thematic curriculum has added additional work for teachers, especially when learners are transitioning from mother tongue to English in P4. Also, national deployment practices create further barriers for teachers who may be required to teach in areas where they lack familiarity with local linguistic or cultural practices, causing mistrust, not only between pupils and teachers, but also the community (parents) and teachers. Pupils in the survey also point to teachers' objectionable attitude toward learners as many exercise corporal punishments, favouritism and harassment. Study results also indicate teachers do not have adequate time-management or classroom-management skills, resulting in poor delivery of instruction.

An examination of existing policies related to teachers' basic needs reveals there are a number of gaps in existing policies as well as challenges surrounding policy implementation that correlate with why teachers in Uganda lack access to basic necessities. This can have a detrimental effect on motivating and enabling teachers to maintain regular attendance and provide sufficient teaching time. In 2014, Uganda introduced the Integrated Personnel and Payroll System (IPPS) as part of its efforts to decentralize the management of the public payroll and salary-processing system in order to enhance provision of salary and avoid delays or inaccuracies. A 2018 assessment found while there was some improvement, the IPPS had not been able to improve delays or errors due to lack of infrastructure (network coverage, distance), and lack of technical capacity of district-level officials.<sup>101</sup> Also, while there have been some salary increments, national

budget allocation toward primary education appears to have decreased by more than 50 per cent since 2002.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, salaries are not benchmarked against the cost of living in Uganda, making it difficult for teachers to survive on current pay levels.

Results from this study point to inadequate supply of non-salary provisions, which supports the Economic Policy Support Centre's (EPSC), findings<sup>103</sup> that the provision of non-salary incentives is uneven across the different districts of Uganda, with significant disparities in the areas where schools from this study are located. Also, while the union offers some health benefits to teachers, none of the teachers interviewed for this study seemed to be aware of these. Finally, while the ministry is on the right track by reviewing its national approach to in-service teacher training through a review of the current TDMS,<sup>vii</sup> with the aim of making the system more efficient and effective, it is not clear if this review will include a focus on knowledge and skills that take into consideration the context-specific challenges of schools. As this study illustrates, many teachers lack class-management and time-management skills, as well as content knowledge. Also, while there is a substantive focus on addressing challenges faced by learners and improving their experiences in Uganda's recent strategic efforts, it does not include provisions that also consider relations and attitudes of teachers towards their pupils. The Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct<sup>104</sup> provides detailed notes on teachers' relationships with learners —including their protection against any kind of neglect or harassment — however, this does not appear to be enforced in schools, as experiences of pupils in this study highlight. Moreover, national resource constraints have negative repercussions for teachers' capacity in the classroom, because they need additional resources and strategies to work effectively in their unique contexts.

### **5.1.2. Teachers' working environment increases their workload and stress levels causing them to be away from their classrooms, and to compromise the amount of time they can dedicate to instructional activities.**

At the school level, there appears to be dependency on teachers' engagement in non-teaching tasks that are required for the school to carry out its daily functions. Teachers are frequently kept away from their classrooms and their lessons due to additional administrative responsibilities often requested by the head teacher and other educational stakeholders (government officials, community members). Findings reveal that teachers spend a significant amount of their teaching time carrying out additional non-teaching activities and that this is the main cause of absence from the classroom for most teachers (especially in rural areas). Since teachers are required to offer support without prior notice, they often are not able to recover lost instructional time. These practices also suggest that local government officials and head teachers do not take into consideration the impact of their demands on a teacher's ability to stay on task and to adequately fulfil required learning outcomes. This is also evident in the timing of training opportunities, which are often provided to teachers during their teaching hours, causing them to miss school and, in some instances, classes to be cancelled.

Additionally, since training opportunities are limited, and sought after by teachers, there is little hesitation among school managers and teachers in pursuing them when they become available, even if they conflict with scheduled lessons. These practices are especially concerning in situations where teachers have large classroom sizes, and already struggle to provide regular assessment and feedback to learners as required. As discussed in Section 4.4.2, teachers often do not have the time to grade pupils' work, or to provide regular assessment due to high teacher-pupil ratios. This results in absence from school and the classroom or ineffective use of instructional time because teachers often use these absences to complete grading pupils' work. Many teachers also feel they do not receive enough salary for the amount of work they do, thus affecting their dedication towards their job. Consequently, learners do not receive regular feedback or assessment, increasing their potential to repeat or drop out of school, which, as explored in Section 2, is a challenge the MoES is aiming to overcome. It also directly impacts on the overall time teachers can dedicate to their lessons because regular disruption to a teacher's scheme of work and large class sizes (along with lack of motivation due to poor remuneration) leave little room for making up for lost teaching time.

vii TDMS was developed by the World Bank in 1994 and is designed to provide teachers training, particularly in-service teachers and head teachers, as well, community mobilization.

Finally, pupils' lack of access to resources needed for learning — both at school and in the community — hinder their performance in the classroom and burden teachers with additional responsibilities of repeating lessons or providing support outside of the classroom. Similarly, lack of electricity in the community, along with poor parental engagement and support, causes learners to come to school unprepared and, therefore, in need of lesson review or further support. Classroom facilities and school infrastructure are also not always conducive to learning, especially in districts with poor climatic conditions. Protection against rainy or hot weather conditions in particular make it difficult for teachers to stay on task or to be inside their classrooms. Thus, while teachers may be prepared and ready to teach, they feel the need to pause and either wait for weather conditions to improve, (in which case, instructional time is reduced), or cancel classes completely.

Hunger, due to lack of nutritional provisions at the school or at home, further limits learners' ability to focus in class, causing teachers to limit their time on task because they find themselves instead looking after pupils' wellbeing. The results from this study demonstrate teachers find parents' lack of support and engagement a key factor in their poor performance and health. Parents appear to hold the assumption that schools are responsible for the provision of these as part of the UPE program. Field observation reports, on the other hand, also point to high poverty and unemployment in the community, suggesting parents may be constrained due to socio-economic conditions.

A survey of existing policies demonstrates a need at the national level for the provision of a healthy working environment that is conducive to teaching and enhances teachers' capacity to engage in meaningful learning experiences for pupils. At the moment, the Government does not appear to have a clear articulation of teachers' roles and responsibilities, which may explain why teachers are regularly requested to participate in non-teaching tasks. The 2008 Education Act<sup>105</sup> includes duties and powers of educational leadership but does not specify similar clarification for teachers. Moreover, while Uganda's teacher scheme of service provides a list of expectations for teachers, these are all related to teaching tasks. Similarly, while the newly established Teacher Incentive Framework describes the role of teachers in achieving advanced learning outcomes, it does not provide clarification regarding teachers' engagement in non-teaching tasks. Additionally, while the current strategic plan emphasizes the need for further training (like TIF), it does not include information on their timings, and whether efforts will be made to ensure teachers will not be required to miss scheduled lessons.

Policies related to poor infrastructure, lack of learning facilities and nutrition programs indicate an ongoing need for additional resources and improvement. Results from a 2010 study<sup>106</sup> point to poor classroom conditions, and lack of TLMs and textbooks as challenges that hinder teachers' ability to stay on task. Additionally, the 2010-2015 strategic plan<sup>107</sup> states a third of primary school resources are not allocated based on need. The national Government has also committed itself to improving school environments, through the development of a national-level strategy for school feeding programs.<sup>108</sup> Likewise, the 2017-2020 strategic plan echoes similar priorities, but also includes the importance of encouraging parents' role in these provisions.<sup>109</sup> While these are important initiatives, it is not clear how they will be implemented, given there are district-level disparities and resource constraints. Moreover, poverty and poor infrastructure in the community require inter-ministerial collaboration that does not appear to be present at the moment. Finally, while the MoES continues to prioritize the inclusion of parents in the provision of schools as part of its national decentralization efforts, they do not engage parents as active stakeholders at the national policy level<sup>110</sup> and are only invited to participate in the implementation of these policies.

### **5.1.3. Inconsistent and inadequate monitoring of teachers by district officials and head teachers, as well as a narrow understanding of teacher absence, result in frequent school and classroom absences, as well as poor instructional time use.**

Findings from this study point to inconsistent and inadequate management of teachers as a common dilemma faced by schools throughout the districts. It is most prevalent at the school level, where head teachers are described as performing these tasks unsatisfactorily. Specifically, many respondents connect absence from school or the classroom, as well as insufficient or limited engagement with pupils during scheduled teaching time, as a direct consequence of the head teacher's absence from the school (due to

engagement with national and subnational level stakeholders) and their ineffective oversight. Interviews with district-level officers, school inspectors and national educational leadership indicate a teacher's absence from school is often a consequence of poor management at the school level.

This perspective, however, does not take into consideration the correlation between head teachers' absence due to frequent engagements with government officials, or the district-level authority's own limited capacity to inspect schools consistently and thoroughly. Moreover, while teachers appreciate and look forward to feedback from school inspectors and head teachers for their professional growth, this is not provided regularly by either level. Consequently, teachers who do not receive support from their school managers and district-level leadership, are potentially deprived of opportunities to improve, affecting their overall sense of motivation and commitment towards their work.

Results from this study also highlight the monitoring of teacher absenteeism as a bureaucratic process that often requires the engagement of various actors (head teacher, district-level and national-level permissions) in order to sanction. This results in lengthy engagements that do not result in effective action at the school level as needed. There is lack of clarity among some school managers and district officials regarding which level is directly responsible for absence oversight, resulting in poor accountability mechanisms, in turn resulting in frequent school absences and poor instructional time use. Lack of resources at the district level is an additional constraint as district-level inspectors and officers cannot carry out regular inspections or follow up with schools in order to ensure teachers are following national teaching requirements. They often depend on head teachers to implement these inspections, though, as discussed elsewhere, local government officials are not convinced head teachers are providing honest accounts of teacher absenteeism at their school.

Findings also indicate that it is mainly absences from school that are monitored. This is evident from the salary-deduction provisions, which some teachers were aware of. This approach does not take into consideration additional forms of absences and their implications for learners, even though they appear to be common occurrences across the 20 schools. It is also worth noting that while teachers demonstrate an awareness of salary deductions, they had not experienced it personally, nor were they aware of its implementation at their school, suggesting this policy may not yet be in effect at the school level.

Policies related to monitoring and management of teachers reveal Uganda's growing commitment toward redressing teacher absence, which is seen as a challenge that directly compromises instructional time use.<sup>111</sup> While there have been some initiatives to curb absenteeism, including the IPPS, a scan of recent practices, including this study, indicate this is an ongoing issue in Ugandan primary schools. Education inspectors often lack the capacity and funds to carry out regular inspections,<sup>112</sup> and the guidelines they are required to follow include a broad range of issues that leave little, if any, room for teacher monitoring and support. Inspection reports are rarely followed up, leaving district officials in a weakened position to carry out sanctions at the school level.<sup>113</sup> There is also lack of clarity on the roles of head teachers and the coordinating centre tutors, as it is not clear who is directly responsible for assessment and support. The findings from this study are in line with others that have highlighted inadequate inspection as an issue across Uganda, particularly outside of the central region. These are related not only to inadequate resources, but also high absenteeism among district authorities.<sup>114</sup> Finally, the ministry appears to be focussing mainly on absence from school, with district-level education officials and school management reporting and disciplining teachers mainly for this form of absence. This is evident in the newly established NTP as well, as it includes mainly school absence as part of its goals to reduce absenteeism by 50 per cent between 2017-2022.<sup>115</sup>

## Section 6: Policy recommendations

Uganda is determined to overcome educational challenges in the country as it continues to recognize and prioritize the significant role teachers can play in achieving learning outcomes in the classroom. This is especially important with the country also facing ongoing resource constraints as the demand for education continues to increase, most notably due to rapid population growth, and the migration of refugees from neighbouring countries. Under these conditions, it is crucial the country's educational provision utilizes available resources effectively and inefficiency is minimized.

The TTT's multi-dimensional approach to examining teacher absenteeism offers a holistic understanding of the factors that directly influence instructional time and presents opportunities for potentially attainable solutions. As Section 4 and Section 5 highlight, this study's approach to understanding key determinants of teacher absenteeism — as interconnected and reinforcing across the different levels of the education system — reveals the problem is complex and requires an integrated approach. This section presents recommendations that address these challenges by taking into consideration the contributions different levels of the education system can make, with the aim of improving teacher attendance and time spent on teaching in Ugandan schools.

### 6.1 The provision of teachers' basic needs requires a system-wide and multi-sector approach in order to address their immediate needs and develop long-term sustainable goals that can improve their inadequate living realities.

- a. In order to enhance teachers' living conditions and create a supportive environment that strengthens their professional conduct and progress, the ministry needs to consider both short-term and long-term solutions. In the short term, the MoES should continue prioritizing salary provision by improving the implementation of the IPPS, through capacity development of district-level officials and school managers. The inclusion of head teachers is especially important in these capacity-development initiatives as they are responsible for daily monitoring of teachers and can thus provide district officials with up-to-date data on their activities. It is also necessary to task head teachers to work closely with DEOs and other local government officials to ensure teachers receive their salaries on time, that their names do not inexplicably disappear from payrolls, and that all teacher transfers are communicated clearly. This also has the potential to strengthen communication and trust between these stakeholders, which currently appears weak.

Long-term solutions need to take into consideration the following steps:

- The ministry should lobby for better budget allocation for primary schools and teachers in order to enhance service delivery as well as working and living conditions of teachers. Likewise, district officials should strengthen their advocacy efforts for enhancing the environment within which teachers live and teach. Additional funds are especially needed at the district and school level in order to enable these actors to provide non-salary incentives based on a district-level assessment of the needs of schools. This has the potential to empower school inspectors and head teachers and enhance their monitoring and management authority. The ministry should also continue to lobby for better teacher salaries and collaborate with districts to ensure timely salary payments.
- The relationship between UNATU and teachers should be strengthened so teachers are aware of resources the union has available for them to use. UNATU are in an ideal position to lead this effort as they are Uganda's officially recognized representation of teachers and thus, through

their coordination and communication with schools, UNATU can identify teachers who require essential care that may be interfering with their attendance. At the school level, school managers should also ensure better management and utilization of school facilities and of teaching learning outcomes.

- Inter-ministerial collaboration between the MoES, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Works and Transport is especially crucial because poor infrastructure in the community and inadequate health care and prevention programs limit teachers' ability to carry out their duties. Special attention needs to be given to providing accessible transportation, functioning roads, and making health care affordable and relevant to the community's needs. While alcoholism, malaria and HIV/AIDS are common causes of poor health among teachers in this study, their occurrence varies across districts and schools and therefore require a needs-based approach.
  - Salary increments should take into consideration the cost of living so teachers are able to see a positive change in their lives, which can also contribute towards their motivation. This should also be interspersed in the promotion standards, which, at the moment, do not play a positive role in motivating teachers or head teachers due to insufficiency.
- b. In-service training of teachers that focuses on school and community-level needs can significantly improve teachers' time on task. In the short term, the training centres and the national curriculum development centre need to provide in-service teachers with strategies and skills for classroom preparation and pupil management that take into consideration the realities of their classrooms. Also, the Teachers' Professional Code of Conduct needs to be enforced by district officials as part of their school inspections in order to hold teachers accountable for their conduct with learners, and ensure pupils are engaged and supported in a respectful and encouraging manner. Long-term efforts should include the development of training programs that are context specific and take into consideration the socio-economic and geographic realities of schools. As this study demonstrates, challenges vary across schools, especially due to climatic conditions and cultural differences. These are especially important for the MoES to consider as part of their planned TDMS review since it will provide them with an opportunity to empower local governance, which also complements Uganda's national decentralization strategy. Additionally, context-specific initiatives provide the ministry with additional opportunities to strengthen its relationship with teachers and make them aware of the Government's efforts and commitment towards them, which presently is weak.

## **6.2. Teachers need support from head teachers, government officials and the community in prioritizing their teaching responsibilities so they can dedicate their time to their teaching tasks and help learners achieve academic success through effective instructional time use.**

- a. There is a need to disrupt current practices at the school level that allow and encourage teachers to be off task. District officials and school managers should limit, and ultimately move away from, their expectation from teachers to engage in non-teaching activities if this compromises time on task. Additionally, government officials should ensure training programs do not conflict with teaching hours because it is difficult for teachers to make up for missed classes and achieve national learning outcomes. In collaboration with districts, the MoES should continually monitor the implementation and enforcement of quality standards and all other policies and procedures designed to enhance teachers' instructional time use. Likewise, local community leaders should continually mobilize communities to take interest in the education of their children and to actively engage with the school's programmes. School management committees and PTAs need to play a much more active role in monitoring school activities and promoting teacher presence in the classroom. It is also necessary for community leaders to limit visiting teachers to either before or after their scheduled class times. This may require the ministry to allocate additional funds to schools for administrative support in the future. In the short-term



however, district-level officials should consider assigning non-teaching responsibilities to community members as part of the national Government's initiative to increase community engagement in schools. This will enable qualified teachers to focus on their scheme of work and provide the community with opportunities to strengthen their awareness and understanding of teachers' responsibilities and participate in the school's affairs. Additionally, head teachers should lead by example and ensure they attend school regularly and are punctual as required. District officials should consider the provision of additional funding for school supervisors to carry out tasks related to enhancing existing policies and procedures.

Long-term solutions must look at existing expectations of teachers as outlined in the 2008 Education Act, and NTP in order to consider clarifying teachers' non-teaching responsibilities so there is a consistent approach nationally that gives priority to teachers' time on task.

- b. The provision of TLMs, nutrition programmes for learners, and school and classroom resources and facilities that enable an environment conducive to learning and teaching requires the MoES to develop an approach that prioritizes disadvantaged communities and considers allocating additional funds. Without appropriate TLMs, it is difficult for teachers and pupils to meet their required outcomes, resulting in poor knowledge and academic progression among learners, which also increases their potential to drop out or repeat. Head teachers should lobby district-level officials for adequate teachers, better school infrastructure and for adequate TLMs. Some of these provisions are dependent on the community's physical and socio-economic structure and thus require inter-ministerial collaboration — especially with the Ministry of Finance, Planning & Development, which needs to provide income-generating opportunities for parents so they can look after their children's basic needs. This will also free learners from participating in economic activities to support their families and instead focus on their learning and presence in the school. Since the current strategic plan is dedicated to expanding parental involvement, they should consider engaging parents at the national policy level, through PTAs, so they are given an opportunity to influence policies that shape their lives, instead of only implementing these, as is the current practice. This can help the ministry develop initiatives that will be relevant to local needs and have the support of the community, which can result in long-term sustainability. Moreover, such collaboration also has the potential to enhance parents' sense of commitment towards their child's health and learning and strengthen their support for schools.

### **6.3. Encouraging teachers away from absenteeism requires school- and district-level support and feedback, as well as consistent and adequate monitoring of teachers' presence and conduct in the school and classroom.**

- a. District inspectors of schools are required to conduct inspections but are limited due to financial constraints. The ministry should consider allocating additional funds so these officials are able to conduct regular inspections. There is also a need for additional clarifications on the roles and responsibilities of district officials and school managers. It might also help for the ministry to reinforce the implementation of the Education Act 2008 as well as other policies related to education in Uganda as some existing processes can also help in this regard. The following additional measures may be worth considering:
  - District officials need to prioritize the presence of head teachers at school by ensuring meetings and other official engagements are minimal.
  - At the national level, the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) should further clarify the current guidelines established for school inspection, which are extensive and difficult to implement within the allocated time, resulting in selective and insufficient monitoring. The DES also needs to revise the purpose of inspection reports so they are provided directly to schools in the form of strategies that can support school management and help teachers improve their methods. This is especially

important because inspectors rarely receive feedback or a follow-up from government officials who collect these reports. Such modification also increases the potential for district officials to strengthen their relationship with teachers, and to help head teachers foster a culture of support and encouragement.

- District officials need to encourage school inspectors to engage directly with teachers, and to prioritize observing their instructional time use, as well as punctuality, so teachers can receive advice and support to improve their practices.
  - In order to avoid potential overlap in monitoring with the IPPS system, the ministry should clarify supervising roles of CCTs and head teachers. This is currently not clear. This can be enforced as part of the MoES's capacity-development programs for district officials, outlined in the 2017-2020 strategic plan.
- b. Current practices and measures designed to address teacher absenteeism need to move beyond its narrow focus on monitoring only absences from school, and instead approach absenteeism from a multi-dimensional perspective through the following considerations:
- At the national level, the Government should consider expanding its notion of absenteeism by implementing recommendations that have been raised by previous studies, including the World Bank's SDI study in Uganda and the Build Africa Uganda review, both of which — like the TTT study — suggest inclusion of additional forms of absences that impact on teachers' time on task. The MoES and all other key stakeholders should approach absenteeism from a multi-dimensional perspective, covering absence from school, class and teaching; and absence of teaching pedagogy and content knowledge. The NTP is one important area where a multi-dimensional understanding of absenteeism is needed, especially for the ministry to achieve its goal of reducing school absence by 50 per cent in 2022. This policy should be implemented and explained to teachers and other stakeholders at the national level, to ensure clarity and understanding. This is because sometimes, interpretation of policies may vary across schools, levels and individuals.
  - District officials can play a significant role in ensuring schools monitor, not only absence from schools, but also lateness, time on task, or absence from the classroom. This requires closer collaboration and a supportive relationship with head teachers and teachers, as stated above. Support supervision should be carefully planned at the district level, and the right feedback given to both head teachers and teachers to ensure effective service provision and better head teacher and teacher presence in schools.
  - At the school level, head teachers need to develop a mechanism for monitoring, not only school absence, but recording additional forms of absences. This may require support of the district officials, particularly the CCTs who are trained to provide school-level support. As the most immediate supervisors of teachers and first inspectors of schools, head teachers should play an active role in ensuring regular attendance and ensuring instructional time is used effectively.

Finally, the present national development plan's initiative to empower schools in managing instructional programs and other resources at their schools provides an important opportunity for head teachers to strengthen their authority. But this requires the Government to recognize and encourage head teachers to lead monitoring of absenteeism, and for the district officials to develop a relationship of trust with head teachers by limiting their engagement to enabling and supporting head teachers in carrying out these duties.











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