



The Republic of Uganda

Ministry of Education and Sports

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[The Significant Strides by the Education and Sports Sector – 1986 to 2026](#)

On Tuesday, 12th May 2026, His Excellency General (Rtd.) Yoweri Kaguta Museveni will be sworn in for another 5-year term of Office to steer our homeland. In recognition and appreciation of the invaluable contribution H.E. the President has made towards the rescue, recovery, rehabilitation, and restoration of the country, we take this opportunity as the Ministry of Education and Sports led by First Lady Maama Janet Museveni, to share with the public the significant strides the Sector has made during this 40-years journey under the NRM administration.

Furthermore, we consider it important that given that 80 to 85 percent of Uganda's population are under the age of 40 years, it is worth laboring to document an orderly account of where we have come from as a Sector.

Uganda's geography has not increased in size, but the density of education delivery points has been on the rise. For example, in 1985 there were **33** administrative districts compared with **177** Districts, Municipalities, Cities, and the Capital City in 2026.

The population in 1986 was **15 million** people compared with an estimated **53 million** people in May 2026; an increase of more than **three and a half times**. The population of 1985 was served by no more than **7,600** Education institutions of learning that included **7,000** primary schools, **527** public secondary schools, less than **100** tertiary institutions, and only **one** university – Makerere University.

On account of the policy of liberalization of the economy under the NRM government, as of May 2026, the people of Uganda are served by **79,819** education schools and institutions of learning that include **45,466** primary schools, **7,503** secondary schools, **1,494** post-primary institutions, **126** international schools, and **55** universities and degree awarding institutions.

Whereas most of the 79,819 education institutions of learning in the country are privately-owned, most of the learners study from the public schools and institutions on account of affordability and accessibility. For example, of the **11.4 million learners** in Primary Level of Education, **79 percent (9.1 million)** are in public schools. A similar pattern is seen in Secondary School Education system where **61 percent (1.3 million)** of the 2.1 million learners in Secondary Schools go to public secondary schools. The trend is not any different either in Tertiary and Higher Education Institutions as well as TVET.

Universal Primary Education (UPE):

The turning point in Uganda's Education journey under the NRM administration has been the introduction of UPE in 1997. Within one year of introduction of UPE, enrolment in Primary Schools doubled from 2.5 million to 5 million pupils to over 9 million to-date.

Prior to the introduction of UPE, Primary Education in Uganda was largely a preserve of public schools yet fees and other charges in these schools were the biggest barrier to access to education opportunities in the country.

With the introduction of UPE, the NRM administration was responding to the philosophical question of, "**All Education for Some, or Some Education for All?**" After 29 years of implementing UPE and having at least **twenty million** learners go through the Program, it is resoundingly self-evident that UPE has perhaps been the greatest catalyst in the socio-economic transformation of Uganda inspite the imperfections that still linger in the program.

UPE has increased the proportion (Net Enrolment Ratio) of children in Uganda that are aged 6 to 12 years who are expected to be in Primary Education from averages of 35 to 46 percent in the early 1980s to the current **91 percent**. This means that 9 out of every 10 children **aged 6 to 12 years** in Uganda is enrolled in primary school. UPE has ultimately fueled to rise in literacy rate of **79 percent** amongst persons aged 15 years and above in Uganda as of 2021, and **85 percent** for the 15- to 24-year-olds as of 2024.

Universal Secondary Education (U.S.E.):

By 1986 there were 527 grant-aided secondary schools in the country with no more than 150 of them offering both A-level as well as O-level. The total enrolment in secondary education at the time did not exceed 180,000 students.

Currently, enrolment in secondary education has grown more than **eleven times** to **2.1 million** learners largely on account of the introduction of U.S.E. in 2007, and the government's aggressive expansion of availability of public secondary schools from **527** in 1986 to **1,515** in 2025 which reflects a **three-fold** growth.

At the core of the growth strategy of access to affordable secondary education has been the government's policy of a public secondary school per subcounty where there is no such school. This policy alone is responsible for the **250** completely new Seed Secondary Schools built in the last ten years with a further 116 under construction.

The increased presence of affordable public secondary schools under the U.S.E. program is responsible for the **four-fold** improvement in transition rate from primary to secondary education from less than **15 percent** in the early 1980s to **60 percent** as of 2025.

Gender Parity in Basic Education:

Before the introduction of UPE in 1997, only about **34 to 40 percent** of girls would enroll in primary education. However, this has since changed to a ratio of **one-to-one** meaning that for each boy enrolled in primary education, a girl is also enrolled.

The same marked improvement has been witnessed for secondary education from **30 percent** enrolment for girls in 1986 to **0.9** which represents a nearly 1:1 ratio to-date.

Instructional Materials in Basic Education:

The government has progressively invested in provision of instructional materials to both primary and secondary schools over the years. This has improved the learner-to-textbook ratio from **10:1** in the late 1980s to the current **2:1** against our target of **1:1**.

Special Needs Education (SNE):

Preceding 1986, SNE interventions were largely stopping in Primary Level Education at a few select schools. SNE who wanted to proceed with formal education either went out of the country if they could afford or joined vocational training.

Today, the Basic Education System has witnessed a massive increase in enrolment of SNE learners because of increased access to SNE opportunities by the State. Approximately, **580,200** SNE learners are enrolled in over **200** Primary Schools and a further **38,642** SNE learners in Secondary School Education.

Furthermore, in 1996 the NRM government established a specialized institution (U.N.I.S.E.) at Kyambogo to train teachers to teach SNE learners. When Kyambogo University was established in 2003, UNISE was subsumed into the University. However, the this function of specialized training of teachers to teach SNE learners has now shifted to the Uganda National Institute of Teacher Education (U.N.I.T.E.).

The government has also embarked on the process of rehabilitating and equipping **sixty-six (65)** SNE Primary and Secondary Schools.

Inspection of Schools:

To improve learning outcomes in basic and secondary education levels, the government has adopted digital solutions to curb the vice of teacher absenteeism.

The digital solution called Teacher Effectiveness and Learner Achievement (TELA) system is being implemented in over 14,000 schools providing real-time teacher attendance data and monitoring of teacher presence and performance. As a result, teacher attendance levels have improved to at least **68 percent** in participating schools.

Over the years, the government has progressively increased the non-wage allocation for the inspection function of schools to the current levels of **UGX 8.8 billion** for central and local government capacity.

Promotion of Science Education:

The government has promoted science education in more ways than salary enhancement of scientists and science teachers.

Whereas by 1986, there were only **2,182** Science and Mathematics teachers in the Secondary Education system, this number has since increased **more than six-fold to 14,000** in public Secondary Schools.

In addition, whereas only **40 percent** (260) of the 645 public Secondary Schools had science laboratories by the year 2000, the government has since constructed and equipped **800 laboratories** in public schools.

Furthermore, the government has deliberately promoted the study of sciences in higher education by allocating a higher proportion of available merit-based government bursaries and loans under the Higher Education Students Loan Scheme to students pursuing science programs.

All the **ten (10)** public universities offer science programs of which **six (6)** have health professional courses.

Teacher Education and Training:

The increase in teacher training institutions from only **nineteen (19)** in 1986 to **150** addressed limited access for teacher training opportunities nationwide. As a result, the number of teacher education nationwide has increased from **8,000–**

10,000 in 1986 to more than **100,000** in all teacher education and training institutions that include National Teachers' Colleges, Universities, and U.N.I.T.E.

As a result of the government's efforts, all teachers in public schools are trained and qualified teachers. There are no more "licensed teachers" recruited in the teaching service in Uganda.

Expansion of Access Tertiary and Higher Education:

In 1986, Makerere University was the only public university in the country – that is, To date, there are **ten (10)** public universities distributed in regionally – West Nile (Muni University), Teso (Soroti University), Acholi (Gulu University), Lango (Lira University), Kigezi (Kabale University), Ankore (M.U.S.T.), Rwenzori (Mountains of the Moon), Central Buganda (Makerere and Kyambogo Universities), and Bukedi (Busitema University). All Universities (public and private) now **graduate 40,000** students annually compared with 1,000 in 1986.

As per H.E. the President's directive, the Ministry of Education and Sports is implementing the policy of establishing a public university in a phased manner in each of the traditional administrative regions of Uganda as at independence. The newest public universities in the preparation phases are a public university for Bunyoro region and one for Busoga region as well as a constituent College for Gulu University to be established in Moroto/Napak) as a Seed for a future public university for Karamoja region.

There are **202 tertiary institutions** offering Diploma and Certificate courses, with **20** being Public Health Training Institutions (HTIs).

In academic year 1992/1993, the government introduced private sponsorship in public universities. This opened the opportunity to families which could afford but whose children had not attained the aggregates for government scholarships to join public universities because they remain the most affordable.

In 1986, all the 1,239 students admitted at Makerere University were on government bursaries. In 2005, the government increased university bursaries to

4,000 slots of which **1,000** were ring-fenced for affirmative action to increase equity through the district quota (**896** slots) system, PWDs (**64** slots), and Sports (**40** slots) whereas **3,000** remained centralized merit-based bursaries.

Affirmative Action for Girls:

Historical records of student admissions at Makerere University indicate that enrollment of girls ranged between **17 to 20 percent** prior to 1986. The trends in enrolment in technical training weren't any better for girls with admission rates averaging less than **six percent** at the time.

Earlier in 1990, the NRM government introduced 1.5 points affirmative action for girls joining Higher Education. This raised enrolment of girls in higher education from as low as **17 percent** in the late 1980s to the current rate of **44 to 47 percent** in public universities. Despite the affirmative bonus points for girls, generally, girls remain under-represented in higher education opportunities due to effects on their progression with education in the lower levels of the Education System.

Higher Education Student Financing Loan Scheme:

In 2014, the government introduced the Higher Education Students Financing Loan Scheme. The scheme started off with less than 1,500 beneficiaries has since increased to 2,000 beneficiaries in 2025/2026 and is projected to offer loans to **2,500 to 3,000** new beneficiaries in 2026/2027 following an additional resource of **UShs. 10 billion**.

To date, more than **16,000** Ugandans have benefited through the Students' Loan Scheme of which a **third are** females. The scheme targets academically strong students who are economically disadvantaged to access higher education.

Research and Innovation Funding:

In 2019/2020, the government started funding research and innovation directly through the academia in public universities as a catalyst for evidence-based and science-led socio-economic transformation. In the last six years, a total of **UShs.**

164.5 billion has been released towards this cause and more than **1,000 innovations** have come out from this funding.

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET):

Under the NRM government, in the last 40 years, the TVET Sector has witnessed remarkable growth and rejuvenation that has seen it increase training institutions from an estimated **fifty** in 1986 to **146 public** and more than **800 private** TVET providers.

The government has invested significantly in the rehabilitation and upgrading of existing TVET institutions while at the same time constructing new ones. Regional centres of excellence have been established at UTC Elgon in Building construction, UTC Lira in Road construction, UTC Bushenyi in manufacturing, Agriculture College in Bukalasa for Agriculture, UTC Kichwamba and Uganda Petroleum Institute Kigumba (UPIK) for Oil & Gas.

As a result of various government interventions, enrolment in TVET has increased from significantly to about **103,000 trainees** up from **5,000** with improved female participation rate averaging 20 percent, and an overall completion rate of 84 percent.

Reforms in Curricula:

The NRM government has undertaken major curricula reforms at various levels of the Education system not limited to the revised O-Level Curriculum. Curricula reforms have been implemented in TVET, Health Education and Training, Teacher Education and Training, as well as Higher Education to ensure that curricula become competence based.

Further Curriculum re-alignment is taking place in the Primary Education and A-Level Curricula to make them fully aligned with the competence-based curriculum of Lower Secondary.

Sports:

Government funding of sports has grown from less than **UShs. 300 million** in the late 1990s to more than **UShs. 500 billion** in recent financial years; that is growth in funding that is more than **1,600 times**.

In 1986, the government had one national stadium at Nakivubo. As of today, the government has developed stadia in an athletics facility at Teryet, stadia in Hoima City and Namboole in addition to Akii-Bua Olympic Stadium coming up in Lira City together with **twelve (12)** mini-stadia that can accommodate not only football but other field sports like rugby, court sports, and athletics. This is positioning Uganda as a viable destination for competitive sports tourism.

Uganda has won **13 Olympic** Medals, more than **50 Commonwealth** Medals as well as over 80 medals in African Games and Competitions.

Strong sports talent identification and nurturing has been achieved through coordination with Sports Federations/Associations and education institutions of learning. These include the Uganda Secondary Schools Sports Association (USSSA).

Policy and Legal Frameworks:

In this 40-year journey, the political leadership in the Education and Sports Sector put emphasis on strengthening the foundations of the Sector by formulating relevant policies and legal frameworks to support implementation of the President's vision of transformation of the country. This focus has been given unwavering commitment by First Lady Janet Museveni since she assumed the stewardship of the Sector in 2016:

1. The Government White Paper of **1992** that laid the macro-policy framework for most of the Reforms in the Sector.
2. The Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, **2001** that provided for establishment of a regulator for the Higher Education Sub-sector.

3. The Education (Pre-Primary, Primary, and Post-Primary) Act, **2008** that allowed grant-aiding to increase access to basic and secondary education.
4. The National Teacher Policy, **2019** provided for professional regulation of the teaching profession and a dedicated institution for Teacher Education.
5. The TVET Policy, **2019** that provided for the establishment of TVET as a distinct Education system from the general education system.
6. The National Curriculum Development Centre (Amendment) Act, **2021** that provided for regulation of Curricula used by International Schools.
7. The Uganda National Examinations Board Act, **2021** that provides for stricter penalties for malpractice in examinations.
8. The National Physical Education and Sports Policy, **2023** streamlined the objectives of physical education and sports development and regulation.
9. The National Sports Act, **2023**, provides a modern legal framework to regulate Sports in the country.
10. The Early Childhood Care and Education Policy, **2024** that provides for equitable access to ECCE services especially in under-served areas.
11. The TVET Act, **2025** that provided for distinct regulation of the TVET industry and an employer-led TVET system.
12. The National Education and Training for Health Policy (**2025**), which streamlines the delivery of Education and Health training as well as placement, apprenticeship, and internship.

For any inquiries on the subject, contact the Office of the Spokesperson by sending an email to pro@education.go.ug

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