



Impact of the Education Programme in Uganda



Intervention

With the primary school in Uganda being free, it is no surprise that the enrollment is above 90%. Things, however, change as the students move to higher levels - secondary school enrollment is at around 20% of whom only a quarter finish it and about 5% enroll in tertiary education.

To facilitate students' transition to tertiary education, BRAC used an integrated package of support including school fees, uniforms, learning materials, accommodation and a stipend. In partnership with MasterCard Foundation, BRAC Uganda launched the *Scholars programme* in 2013 to support more than 5,000 students from 2013 to 2017. About 70% of students were admitted in their senior first year after passing the primary leaving examination (PLE) exam and financed for six years. The remainder was financed for two years as they entered senior fifth year after passing the Uganda certificate of education (UCE) exam.

Students were selected by the committee, composed of education experts from the Ministry of Education and high-profile education stakeholders. After an interview at district, the applicants were ranked based on the poverty scoreboard and the final exams score. Successful candidates were guaranteed admission to one of the top 100 secondary schools with full tuition coverage and a monthly stipend of UGX 50,000 paid quarterly on a savings account of a (female) guardian. They were also assigned a teacher mentor and given a leadership training twice a year.



Research

A Tale of Many Constraints: The Impact of a Multifaceted Education Programme (Lerva, 2020, Kampala: [IERC and IIES](#), Stockholm University)



Method

A *randomised controlled trial* (RCT) method enrolled 1,330 respondents from the shortlisted programme applicants to the intake rounds of 2014 and 2015 into treatment (680) and control arms. An *intention-to-treat* (ITT) method was used to assess children's educational outcomes, households' assets, food security and the psychological well-being of mothers.



▲ **0.36**
SD scores on the national UCE exam

▲ **9.6**
pp enrolment in secondary schools

▲ **25**
pp attended quality boarding schools

▲ **9**
\$ spending on food

▲ **23**
\$ household savings

▲ **0.33**
SD happiness of mothers

The Scholars programme had a significant positive impact on students' test scores and enrollment. They scored better on the national UCE exam by **0.36 standard deviations (SD)**, relative to the control group, which was larger than in most other education programmes. Scholarship winners had higher enrollment in secondary school by **9.6 percentage points (pp)** - 87% of control applicants were enrolled in secondary schools compared to 97% of treatment applicants. To that, 95% of treatment applicants were attending higher-quality boarding school compared to 70% of control applicants, which was **25 pp** more. Since the students were yet to finish their secondary education at the time of this study, the effects on enrollment in tertiary education still to be commented.

The cash and in-kind support package provided by the programme significantly boosted households' food and non-food expenditures. Monthly expenditures of the households were higher by \$3 and spending on food by **\$9**, compared to the control means. Their dietary diversity improved by 0.15 SD with an increased number of meals by 0.1 SD, relative to the control mean. The diet quality equally improved as they were 6pp more likely to consume protein-rich food. The households' savings, durables and land ownership increased by **\$23**, \$109 and \$1,221 respectively, compared to the control mean. The leadership workshops might have also affected households' preferences about livestock composition which was more business-oriented. Treatment households invested \$18 more in small animals like goats, pigs or sheep and \$8 more in chickens than the control ones.

These aggregate improvements were beneficial for other household members; in particular, for the psychological well-being of mothers and older siblings' education outcomes. Mothers' depression was slashed by 0.25 SD while life satisfaction and happiness burgeoned by 0.29 SD and **0.33 SD** respectively, relative to the control means. About 14pp more of the older siblings were able to attend private secondary schools as their parents could afford \$206.83 higher fees, relative to the control means. No effects were observed on child labour which was initially low at 3%.

➤ Way Forward

The Scholars programme had large positive effects on enrollment and the test scores of the students and it even created aggregate benefits for their family members. In just two years, its large positive effects positioned it as a potential strategy to improving future prospects and wellbeing of both the students and their family members, especially women. Overall, findings are in line with anti-poverty interventions that provide a similar monetary value to recipients. Its benefits, however, did not seem to be equally distributed among household members, in particular among younger siblings. To better understand the necessity and contribution of each programme components to the final outcomes, randomising individual components could be explored by future evaluations.