



Report on the Abuse and Misuse of the School Facilities Grant (SFG) in Teso



Pupils at Opiu Primary School in Kaberamaido study under a huge tree after the roof of their classroom was blown off.

December 2002



UDN Vision

A prosperous Uganda with equitable development and a high quality of life of the people

UDN Mission

UDN works to promote and advocate for pro-poor policies and full participation of poor people in influencing poverty focused policies, monitoring the utilisation of public resources and ensuring that borrowed and national resources are prudently managed in an open, accountable and transparent manner so as to benefit the Uganda people

UDN Strategic Goals

1. To ensure that Uganda emerges from being a debt burdened poor country and embarks on the road to sustained development, growth and poverty eradication
2. Ensure that macroeconomic and budgetary policies are participatory and incorporate the concerns and interests of various sections of civil Society
3. Mobilise the public to ensure public accountability and transparency in the utilisation of public resources
4. Ensure that UDN becomes an effective lobbying and advocacy organisation capable of mobilising civil society to influence policy planning at national and local levels.

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Plot 424 Mawanda Road (off Kira Road) Kamwokya,
P.O.Box 21509, Kampala-Uganda;
Tel: 256-41-543974/533840 Fax: 256-41-534856 E-Mail:
info@udn.co.ug

Website: <http://www.udn.or.ug>

Background

The Teso Anti-corruption Coalition (TAC), is a loose coalition of members of civil society, especially UDN's grassroots partners in the struggle against corruption formed in June 2001 after a lobby and advocacy workshop for grassroots partners in the struggle against corruption, organized by UDN June 28th – 30th June 2001. It is comprised of members of the civil society from the districts of Soroti, Katakwi, Kaberamaido, and Kumi.

The aim of this coalition is to organize civil society groups into a formidable institution able to participate as equal partners in the monitoring of the poverty status, use of public resources in development programmes and control of corruption in the Teso region.

Strategic Objectives of the Coalition

- i. To elicit government and institutional support for the Teso region anti-corruption coalition through networking.
- ii. To mitigate the impact and practices of corruption and human rights abuses through information exchange and other appropriate actions.
- iii. To generate data through continuous monitoring the utilisation of public resources, the poverty status and poverty action programmes in the region by civil society on behalf of the beneficiaries.
- iv. To develop the institutional capacity of TAC to be able to effectively undertake its programmes

In April 2002 the TAC together with the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) Soroti Diocese compiled a report on collapsing schools in Katakwi district. This report was circulated to anti-graft offices in Uganda and to other line ministries. The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) took up the case and made its own investigations, independent of what the request was based on. The findings from the OPM's investigations confirmed what the TAC and JPC had reported.

Soon after in August 2002 the OPM organized another meeting to discuss the findings and this time, UDN grassroots partners from TAC were invited to articulate their issues. This was the beginning of a campaign to wipe out shoddy work in public offices but more so, in the operations and implementation of the School Facilities Grant.

UDN has since been monitoring to see how much of the recommendations made in the OPM report have been followed up. It

is at this point that the Network decided to carry out an electronic investigation and documentation of the situation in Teso region. The intention of carrying out this activity was to broaden the discussion beyond those who already know about it in order to include other stakeholders. What is happening in Teso is a representation of what is happening in many other schools under the SFG.

Between 20th and 27th November 2002 a team from Uganda Debt Network travelled through the four districts of Teso meeting with local communities, head teachers, teachers, pupils, School Management Committees and members of Parents and Teachers Associations, documenting evidence that shows direct abuse of the SFG. What appears in the following paragraphs are the findings of the investigation.

The School Facilities Grant (SFG)

THE School Facilities Grant (SFG) was established by the government of Uganda in 1998 following the launching of Universal Primary Education (UPE) to improve and expand the Primary School Facilities. It is one of the resources set aside by the government of Uganda to assist the most needy school communities to complete unfinished classrooms and /or build new classrooms. The government has identified primary education as one of the key sectors in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). The resources for enabling the availability of basic primary education are drawn from the Poverty Action fund within which the SFG falls.

The Ministry of Education and Sports has provided SFG Planning and Implementation General Guidelines for District and Urban Councils. The guidelines are divided into two phases:

- Planning and Budgeting Phase
- Implementation Phase.

Under the Planning and Budgeting Phase activities include the communication of SFG District/Municipality ceilings, SFG promotional activities, Field Appraisal, preparation review and approval of SF Annual Workplans/Budgets. This is expected to be done within the period (November – June).

The Scope of the SFG Programme:

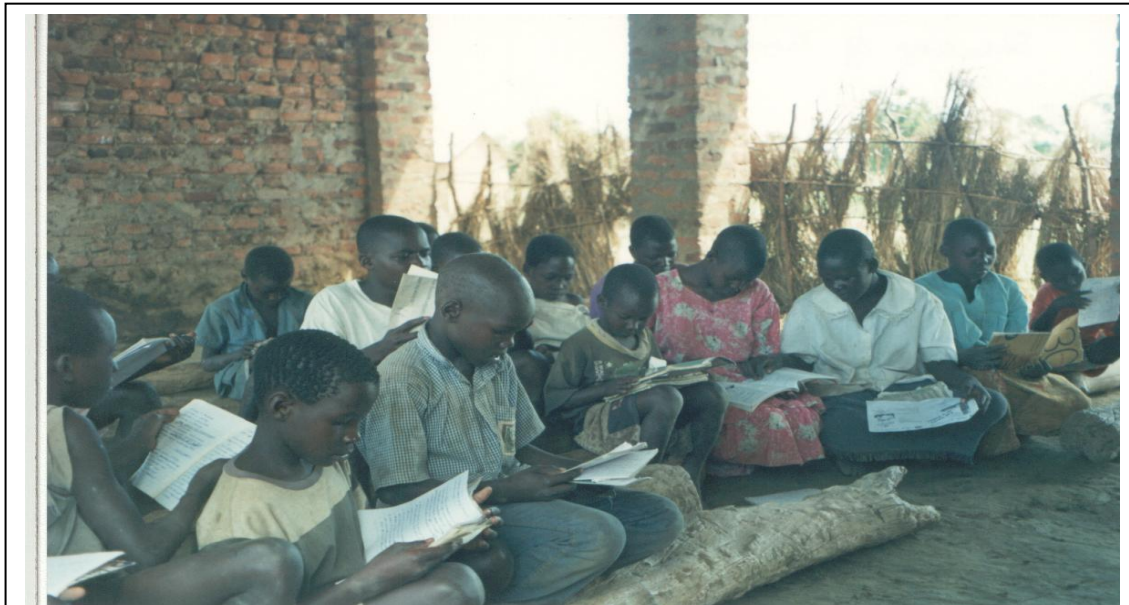
- a) Completion of unfinished classrooms started by communities.
- b) Construction of new classrooms (the number of new classrooms to be constructed is limited to a minimum of two and a maximum of four per school (including store/Head teacher's office).
- c) Construction of new classrooms.
- d) Construction of latrines and teachers' houses and providing classroom furniture.

Classroom Construction

All the schools investigated (see annexed list of schools) did not qualify to be called completed classroom blocks under the SFG guidelines. Particular areas of interest during the investigations were firmness of the walls and floors, windows (and their shutters), doors, quality of timber, roofing of the classrooms, provisions for children with disabilities and how many schools had been completed or approved as near completion.

Firmness of walls and floors:

All the school walls have cracks. The only difference is in the size and magnitude of the cracks. The cracking walls are attributed to unproportional mixtures of the materials used. However there are schools, which do not have walls (Aarapoo Primary School – Soroti). One just sees bricks stuck together and some well calculated gaps here and there. Then for the more extreme cases, pupils study from either grass-thatched structures or under mango trees. There are classrooms where the contractor just laid up some bricks and disappeared.



These pupils at Aarapoo Primary School have a faint idea of what a wall is. As for the floor, they spend Friday afternoons collecting cow dung and smearing it on the ground to smoothen it.

The floors are cracked. There is no single smooth floor in all the schools visited. In other schools there is no floor at all and the grass has started growing in the classroom.

Windows and doors:

Most schools have practically no windows and doors. One just sees gaps between the "walls".

Those which have doors, the hinges are loose and the quality of timber used is very poor. Where metallic doors have been used they have no bolts and they are already rusting. At Olobai Kamuda Primary School the SFG engineer, Okello Emmanuel is quoted to have said that the school



Opiu Primary School in Soroti

was not entitled to window shutters. When the District Education Officer Soroti visited Olobai Kamuda Primary School on 21st October 2002 (visitor's book) he said the school was 99% complete.

Quality of timber:

There is no doubt that the quality of timber used is very poor. The chairs and desks are already broken; some of them have the wood splitting into pieces. Huge cracks and even holes are visible in the desks and seats. In addition to this, smaller children cannot sit and write at the same time.

The size of the furniture is too big for them. Often time they have to write standing. Others opt for the rough floor where it is more convenient for them to write using their laps to support their books/slates.



At Aarapoo Primary School Soroti District there is no furniture for these pupils. they have to sit on logs and write from their laps. the ground is smeared with cow dung.

Where the window and doorframes have been placed, ants are eating up the timber while in other cases it is visible that split wood was used. The roofs are also being supported by split wood, which has been joined together

using some metallic wires.

Roofing of the Classrooms: (photo)

The roofing is so poor and this has resulted into winds blowing them off. At Anyara Township Primary School (Kaberamaido) there is practically no roof. Classes are now being held under mango trees. The manner in which the iron sheets are being nailed together is also wrong, leaving the roof vulnerable to any wind. At Opiu Primary School (Kaberamaido) the head teacher (Okello Simon Peter) almost lost his child when the wind blew off the school roof. At Ocacia Primary School (Katakwi) the pupils had to carefully get out of a classroom where they were sheltering from the rain and strong wind which blew off the roof.



Opiu Primary School. The roof was blown off. Now the pupils study from under a mango tree.

Parents and teachers have tried to put up structures in which to conduct classes from. But even they cannot alter nature. The grass on the roof of this structure was blown off during a heavy rain. Classes are now conducted under the mango tree in the background



Catherine Imalingat stands with her pupils inside a classroom with a grass thatched roof blown off.

Provisions for Children with disabilities:

Schools such as Agirigiroi Primary School in Soroti have this provision in form of a raised ground that leads into or out of the classroom. However because of the condition of the floors and furniture, children with disabilities are prone to more suffering compared to the others. Some have to seat on the rough floors while others have to stand in order to reach the desks on which they can do their work.

Number of Completed Schools under SFG:

None of the schools visited has been completed. In some instances records show that the District Education Officer or the Chief Administrative Officer or District Chief Engineer are very impressed with the work being done. Indeed a 99% completion was given to Olobai Kamuda Primary School (Soroti) By the District Education Officer yet this school has no latrines, the buildings are falling and there are no teachers' houses or even an office.

Under the SFG guidelines, when a school is completed it must be handed over to the School Management Committee after it has been approved by the District/Municipal SFG Committee. The only school that is alleged to have done this is Angwara Port Primary School in Soroti (3rd September 2002). However the head teacher could not tell us exactly what happened because he is new and he was only told that the school was completed and dully handed over. Otherwise the contractor simply stops reporting only for it to be discovered that he was paid all his money.

Construction of Latrines

The construction of latrines is very poor and dangerous. Particular interest is in the area of availability of the latrines (for boys, girls, teachers), quality of materials used, depth of the pits, number of stances and number of completed latrines.

Availability of Latrines:

This varies from one school to the other. The most common finding is that the latrines are shared between pupils and teachers. However an attempt at separating the girls' latrines from the boys' is evident. Even where the latrines are not available some make shift structures are there and they are separated. The trouble with the make shift structures is that they give off a stench and where defecation has been made it is near to impossible to keep going there.

In many schools there is at least one block of latrines which is shared amongst the pupils and teachers. There is a wall separating the boys' latrines from the girls'. There are no latrines attached to the teachers' houses. Some teachers really have to walk long distances to get to the school latrines to ease themselves. Others simply use the bush

Quality of Materials used:

Just as is the case with the quality of materials used for classroom blocks, latrines are affected in the same way. Most walls are not plastered, the floors are rough, the entrance to the latrine is so soggy (from urine and rainwater), huge cracks appear in the walls, some have no roof at all, others have completely sunk before they are even used, it is pathetic. Some latrines have no doors at all (Abwanget Kuju Primary school, Aarapoo Primary School, Oculura Primary School, while others have iron-sheets for doors (Akaikai Primary School)

Because of the poor quality of materials. Latrines like that of Angwara Port Primary School (Soroti) have collapsed. Others have sunk into the ground leaving behind just a huge hole (Akaikai Primary School). This standard of latrines has made the pupils and teachers prefer using makeshifts.

Number of Stances:

The SFG guidelines say that there must be two latrine blocks each of five stances. Most of the schools that have attempted to construct latrines have the five stances on one block two for the girls and three for the boys. The problem is with the quality of the latrines and the number of latrine blocks.

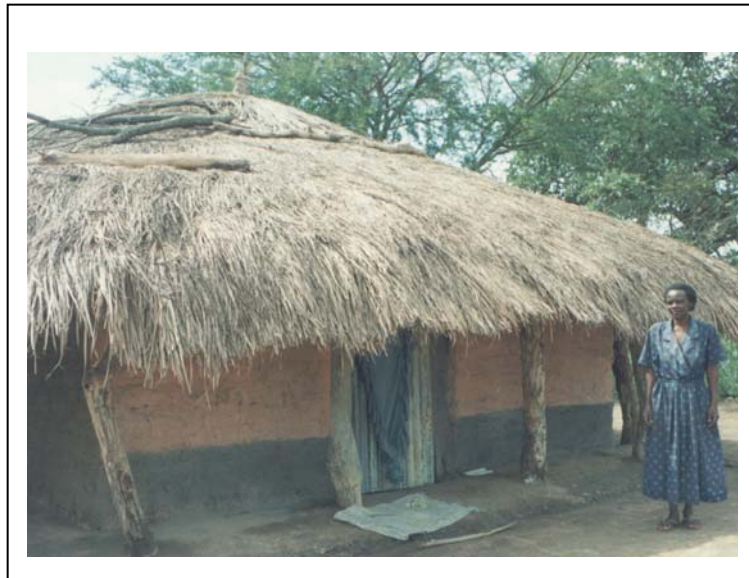
Number of Completed Latrines:

All the schools visited have either no latrine or what is there, needs to be worked on. Otherwise there is no completed latrine.

Construction of Teachers' Houses

This is one of the most neglected areas in as far as the SFG is concerned. Teachers and head teachers continue to live in the most pathetic structures constructed by parents. Their grass thatched roofs leak, the mud keeps falling off and their houses are surrounded by bushes leaving them prone to snakes.

Catherine Imalingat is a teacher at Olwelai Kamuda primary School. She lives in this house alone. On two separate occasions a cobra has attempted to enter her house. Her grass-thatched roof leaks and she supports it with some logs to prevent it being blown off by the wind.



In Oculura Primary School, having seen the shoddy work done by the contractor, the parents got another one who built the head teacher's house. They monitored him every day to ensure that the same mistake was not repeated. The headmaster's house is certainly the most attractive building that is in the area now.

Involving Civil Society in Monitoring SFG

Civil society in Teso has played a significant role in monitoring the implementation of the SFG. Under the umbrella of the Teso Anti-Corruption Coalition various radio programmes have been aired questioning the collapsing schools. The questions were zeroed around collapsing schools and flying roofs because this is the biggest evidence that something is wrong.

Through raising awareness about the SFG the local communities are starting to pay closer attention to what goes on in the schools within their areas. From this awareness questions are arising and the relevant authorities must provide answers. One of the biggest questions is: how do contractors get their complete payments without completing the work? Even without looking at the SFG guidelines it is obvious that no straight thinking person can pay a builder the whole amount for constructing a house before it is even roofed!



David Emodo (left) is the LC III Councillor in Anyara Sub-county. He put Pascal Oleke the district engineer to task to explain why he was letting a contractor continue with shoddy work even after he (the contractor) had admitted that he was not following the SFG guidelines.

The civil society has gained support from some councilors as is the case in Anyara (Kaberamaido). They have openly challenged the shoddy work being done to the extent that they stopped a contractor

belonging to Obonyo & sons from continuing with the construction of a classroom block because he was using unproportional ratios of cement and sand.

This effort of questioning such acts is being frustrated by district officials who think that local communities do not understand government programmes. This must be brought to an end. Civil society has the right to question the activities of suspected corrupt officials. It is even criminal for a public official to defend shoddy work as was the case in Kaberamaido.

Recommendations

The local communities in Teso region and UDN as the organization which spearheaded the investigations herein make these recommendations:

- 1) A thorough investigation into the implementation is done and all the culprits be brought to book.
- 2) All contractors who have done shoddy work are tracked down suspended from doing any other work until they have completed the work in accordance with the SFG guidelines.
- 3) The Ministry of Education and Sports
- 4) The contract tendering system should be revised

Annex 1 : List of Schools Visited

Katakwi District:

- Abwanget Kuju Primary School
- Alupe Primary School
- Amare Primary School
- Ocacia Primary School

Kaberamaido District:

- Angol Tok Primary School
- Anyara Township Primary School
- Anyara Primary School
- Opiu Primary School
- Katinge Primary School

Soroti District:

- Aarapoo Primary School
- Oculura Primary School
- Angwara Port Primary School
- Olwelai Kamuda Primary School
- Olobai Primary School – Kamuda
- Agirigiroi Primary School
- Akaikai Primary School

Kumi District:

- Mukura Primary School
- Madoch Ailak Primary School
- Tajara Primary School.