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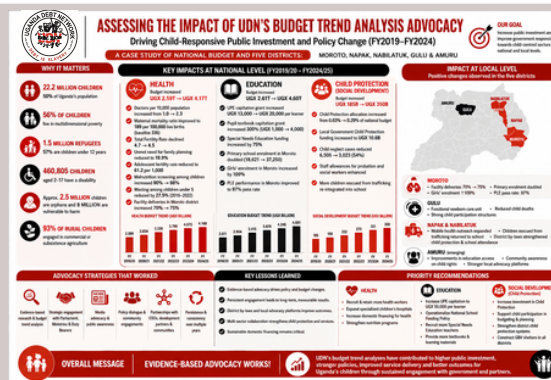
When Budget Advocacy Meets Real Children's Lives: UDN's Impact Assessment (2019–2024)



Opening Remarks by UDN's Executive Director Mr. Patrick Tumwebaze

Uganda's children make up half the national population 22.2 million young people whose futures are shaped, in large part, by how national and district budgets are drawn up and spent. Since 2019, the Uganda Debt Network (UDN), working with Save the Children International (SCI) Uganda under the NORAD–SCI partnership, has used evidence-based Budget Trend Analyses to press government to invest more, and better, in child-centred sectors. A new impact assessment ,covering the national budget and five districts (Amuru, Gulu, Moroto, Napak and Nabilatuk) between FY 2019/20 and FY 2024/25, under stakeholder validation shows real, measurable progress alongside gaps still demanding attention.

Health: Advocacy on health financing has paid off: the national health budget grew from UGX 2.589bn to UGX 4.168bn, and domestic funding now covers 68% of health spending, up from 55%. Maternal mortality has fallen to 189 per 100,000 live births (from 336), and revised staffing norms approved by Parliament have pushed doctor and nurse numbers up though overall staffing still sits at just 34% of the approved structure. In Gulu, a newly functional newborn care unit has cut annual child deaths at one facility from around 38 to 16–18.



Summary of the Assessment

Education: UDN's advocacy for a higher UPE capitation grant recommended in 2020 led government to raise it from UGX 13,000 to UGX 20,000 per pupil in 2022. The national education budget has grown 49% since FY 2018/19. In Moroto district, primary enrolment has doubled in five years, girls' enrolment is up 109%, and the PLE pass rate has climbed from around 60% to 97% now the best in the region. In Amuru, districts have partnered with NGOs to provide assistive devices and build classroom ramps for children with disabilities. UDN's policy input also helped shape the draft National School Feeding Policy, paving the way for government's 2024 commitment to nationwide school feeding though Cabinet approval is still pending.

Social Development: National crime data shows a 54% drop in reported child neglect cases (6,505 in 2022 to 3,023 in 2025), part of a broader decline across nearly every child-crime category. Per-child spending on protection has risen from USD 0.27 to a projected USD2.52. In Nabilatuk, sustained engagement secured the first increase to the district's child protection budget in five years, and community protection structures recently rescued a 14-year-old girl at risk of early marriage a stark illustration of what better-resourced systems mean in practice.

What This Tells Us. The assessment is clear-eyed about what hasn't worked as well: health staffing remains under-resourced, Special Needs Education funding hasn't reached local governments adequately, and the National School Feeding Policy remains stuck awaiting Cabinet approval. These gaps are shaping UDN's next phase of advocacy sustained engagement with the Ministries of Health, Education, and Gender, Labour and Social Development, to turn policy commitments into funded, implemented programmes.

The findings show that budget advocacy, done consistently and backed by evidence, moves the needle from a capitation grant that now reaches every UPE pupil in the country, to a welfare officer in a single district who stands between a vulnerable child and harm. UDN will continue tracking these budget lines, because behind every shilling allocated or withheld is a child's chance at health, education, and protection.

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