



REGIONAL
EDUCATION
LEARNING
INITIATIVE

2019

ANNUAL CONVENING HIGHLIGHTS

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ABOUT RELI

The Regional Learning Initiative (RELI) is a member-driven initiative that brings together over 70 organizations working to collaborate and learn from one another on what works in improving learning outcomes in East Africa. RELI provides a platform for members to work towards creating a knowledge hub of evidence on learning outcomes co-created by member organizations for effective policy influence. RELI also seeks to enhance the transformation of individuals and member organizations by providing support in knowledge synthesis, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and strategic communications.



RELI's objectives help in cross-country and organizational learning with members clustered in thematic areas of work. These are; Teacher development and support; Values and Life Skills; and Equity and Inclusion. These clusters are self-organized and are guided by the work and composition of the RELI member- organizations.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

In order to promote collaborative learning across countries, RELI holds annual regional summits that are rotated among the three countries. The first regional summit was held in Nairobi, Kenya in July 2017. The convening served as an opportunity for members to familiarize themselves with each other and the overarching RELI philosophy. It was during this convening that member institutions were grouped into four thematic clusters namely; Teacher development and support; Life skills and youth leadership; Accountability for the right to education and flexible and adaptable learning approaches

The second regional meeting held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in June 2018 brought together RELI members - including partners from the Democratic Republic of Congo and members of the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE). Guided by its theme, learning to learn, the second convening was geared towards facilitating exchange of information collectively and individually through sharing of experiences, challenges and lessons learnt over the past year and also to bring about a common understanding of the RELI values (equity, respect, and trust) and principles (collaboration, empowering and learning). The 2019 learning summit held in Entebbe, Uganda was guided by RELI's call for greater inclusivity under the theme learning for all. This was with the view of making quality education available, especially for those furthest left behind. In particular, the discussions revolved around understanding the most vulnerable children and exploring innovations that present solutions to improve their access to quality education.

THEMATIC CLUSTERS



TANZANIA

RE-WRITING THE NARRATIVE

(ENGAGING WITH POLICY MAKERS)

RELI members had a chance to engage with policymakers from Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania to understand the policy framework on equity and inclusion, and to create connections and opportunities for working with policy stakeholders at both national and regional levels.

Representing the East African Community (EAC) was James Jowi while the three countries were represented by Fred Haga (Ministry of Education, Kenya), Tixon Nzunda (Deputy Permanent Secretary at the President's office, Tanzania), Brighton Barugahare (Ministry of Education, Uganda) and Abdulla Mzee Abdulla (Ministry of Education, Zanzibar).

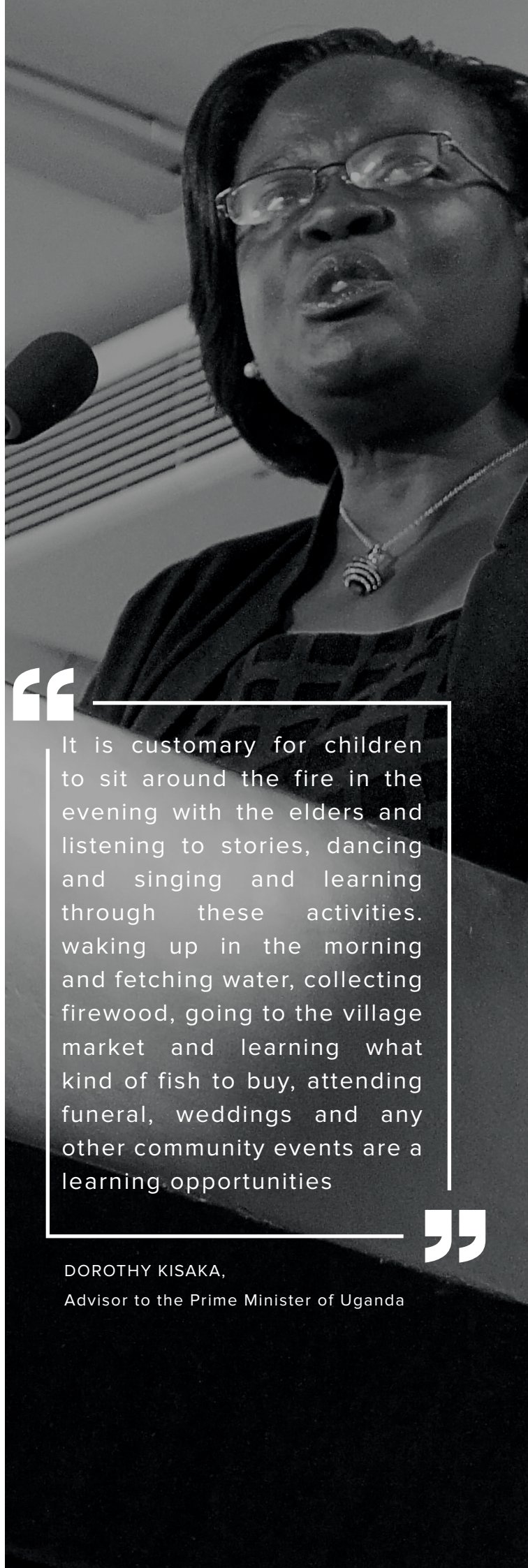
Key highlights from those sessions were:

- RELI members were challenged to come up with innovative approaches to identifying, reaching and supporting those left behind.
- The existence of legal and policy frameworks to promote inclusive and equitable education. While these frameworks are at various levels of development and implementation, they envision creating an environment for every child to realize the right to education, including those with special needs.
- RELI members need to understand decision-making structures to effectively engage with government at the country level.
- There is a demand for evidence by the government hence the call for RELI to tap into these opportunities to influence decision-making.



Building Tomorrow
@BldgTomorrow

"Fairness does not mean everyone gets the same. Fairness means everyone gets what they need." - Riordan #RELISummit2019



“

It is customary for children to sit around the fire in the evening with the elders and listening to stories, dancing and singing and learning through these activities. waking up in the morning and fetching water, collecting firewood, going to the village market and learning what kind of fish to buy, attending funeral, weddings and any other community events are a learning opportunities

”

DOROTHY KISAKA,

Advisor to the Prime Minister of Uganda

THE LEARNERS LEFT BEHIND

In reflecting on those learners who are left behind, it is important to understand that barriers to learning affect children differently. However, it does not matter the type of barrier because all children are positioned to learn if the systems are supportive and aim at eliminating related barriers. This takes the form of a journey of imagination to understand those left behind, how far they are from those who are not left behind, and how equitable and inclusive education systems are (or can be) to bring them all to par.

The 2019 regional convening highlighted gender, tribalism, poor family background, and low self-esteem as the four main reasons for exclusion. Participants highlighted support from family and teachers, determination and resilience as possible ways of overcoming these forms of exclusion.

The keynote speaker challenged the participants to think deeply and unpack the meaning of 'those left behind' and create innovative holistic approaches to reach them. These approaches do not necessarily need to be very complex and should appreciate the role played by families and communities, that is, the approaches should be rooted in the theory of change and the transformation of mind. This may involve working with communities to establish formal classrooms infused with informal education, thereby involving communities in issues affecting their children's education and participate in seeking possible solutions. Thriving of communities is an assurance of reaching the furthest behind. By so doing, the connections between the quality of community and learning outcomes are created.



Michael Babu
@Babu_Michael

As rain brings hope, so should education, Just like a Tree, we all need roots, All children, belong to us, ROAR!! The power of the community, Visions of success, on the horizon Like Mountains, Our Children shall rise 🙌🙌🙌🙌 @ReliAfrica Teamwork #LearningForAll #relisummit2019



HOW CAN RELI MEMBERS ADDRESS EQUITY ISSUES?

Equity and inclusion in the realization of SDG 4 on education is a topical area with global interest. During the 2019 regional convening, equity was defined as justice for all with appropriate and differentiated support being provided to all those who need it in order to overcome barriers using affirmative/ deliberate actions. Inclusion was defined as an attempt to bring those learners who are disadvantaged, because of one reason or the other, on board and supporting them to remain in school.

Based on these definitions, the following were highlighted as emerging issues in the East African region;

- Policy blindness on equity and inclusion in many education policies in the three countries;
- Challenges in the distribution of teachers in formal schools and Alternative Education programs (AEPs);
- While the number of children missing out on

education is lower than it has been in years, there is a risk of losing out on the gains made due to inadequate funding;

- The transition of learners from AEP to formal education system is slow and there are no formal structures to support the transition.



UN Photo- JC McIlwaine

HOW ARE RELI MEMBERS ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THOSE LEFT BEHIND?

- Through effective community engagement to ensure disadvantaged children are identified and given the necessary support to enable them to access quality education.
- Testing innovative and appropriate teaching and learning approaches such as child-centered teaching methodology and strengthening social and learning support systems.
- Mentoring disadvantaged children and supporting them to build resilience.
- Unpacking those left behind by mapping out the different categories focusing efforts to address specific needs identified

While RELI members are actively working and contributing to the above-mentioned areas,

discussions ought to be guided by a set of key questions:

- What does equity and inclusion mean in different contexts for a common understanding?
- What can we learn from each country's attempts at bridging the gaps?
- What innovative ways can lead to the realization of equity and inclusion?



POLICY PRIORITIES AND FRAMEWORKS (WITHIN THE INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES AND IN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY, EAC)

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have in the last two decades put in place legal and policy frameworks to guide the realization of universal education. While the efforts for universal basic education in the 1990s were largely directed toward the provision of primary education by the abolition of school levies, this has increasingly been extended to secondary education so as to increase the level of education acquired by all children. While the results were positive with increased enrolment rates, the challenges of quality and equity emerged. Moreover, the efforts were at the country level, with minimal attention to the regional level.

From the 2019 regional meeting, with the participation of EAC and respective countries policymakers, the following opportunities were identified for joint action and collaboration:

1. Engagement with the East African Community (EAC)

The EAC provides a great opportunity on

both national and regional level issues. For instance, EAC will host a stakeholder's forum in 2020 and RELI was given an opportunity to sit in the planning committee. This will be in line with the identified need by EAC to bring on board the private sector and civil society organizations. RELI has an opportunity to influence specific priorities in the East Africa Community education agenda.

2. Tapping into education reform opportunities across the region

There have been concerns on the level of public and civil society participation in various reform activities in the education sector in the different countries such as the roll-out of the new education curriculum in Kenya, policy on inclusion in Uganda and the review of life skills education strategy in United Republic of Tanzania. It is critical for members to identify new and innovative ways of continuous engagement with policymakers on these and other priority issues.

3. Harmonization of the education system

Though East African countries have different systems of education, there is a need for harmonization of standards to appreciate competencies attained under these various education systems. There is an opportunity for RELI to provide the evidence as well as sit in the steering committee developing the guidelines.

4. Reaching the furthest behind

Despite the efforts and progress made by governments in East Africa more so in providing the legislative framework to reach every child, there are still learners who are not accessing quality education. To shed light on this, RELI members can collaborate and work with policy stakeholders to understand who these learners are their educational needs, barriers to accessing quality

education and possible solutions. To set the ball rolling, the EAC has a concept note on reaching children furthest behind with the potential to enhance inclusion, quality, and collaboration.



MOVING FOWARD

- Carry out policy mapping across the region to identify opportunities, gaps, and commonalities.
- Constitute a working committee to champion the gaps in the different policies and create synergies and learning opportunities for the members.
- Leverage on RELI thematic and country leadership across the region to engage policymakers using research evidence generated by a member.
- Support learning institutions to develop strong systems to ensure all learners access quality education and are retained in school until they complete the basic education.
- Develop abridged versions of available policies to guide organizations dissemination and monitor progress of implementation at the country level.

THE POWER OF RESILIENCE

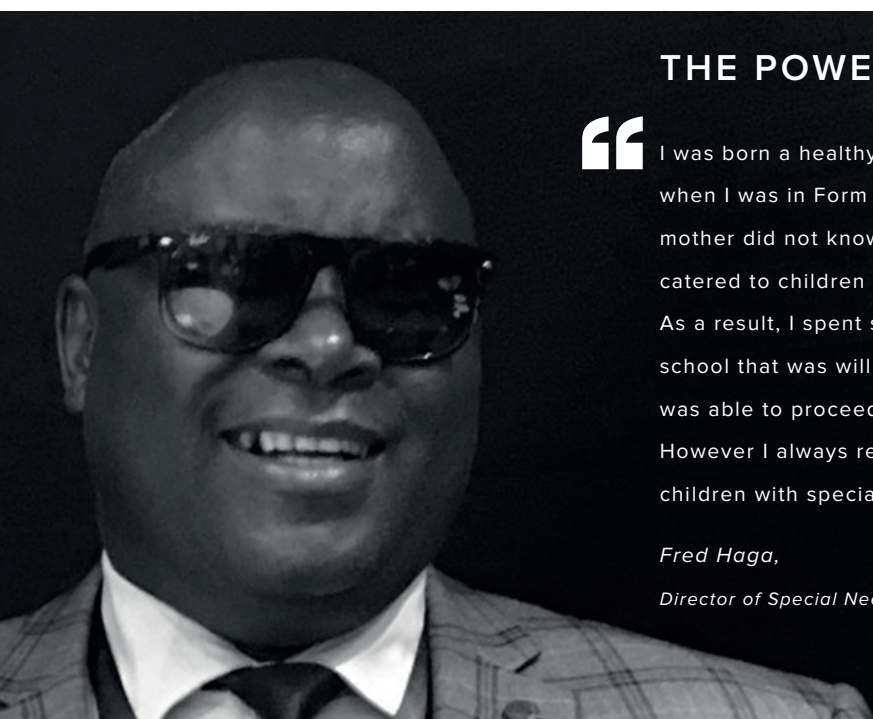


I was born a healthy baby and had a pretty normal childhood. However when I was in Form Three (Grade 10), I suddenly lost my sight. My mother did not know what to do and there weren't many schools that catered to children with special needs, including the visually impaired. As a result, I spent seven years out of school. I eventually found a school that was willing to let me complete my secondary education. I was able to proceed for my undergraduate and post-graduate studies. However I always remember how much I struggled and how other children with special needs continue to struggle.



Fred Haga,

Director of Special Needs Education - Ministry of Education Kenya





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