



# Eco-Schools in Africa

A case-study evaluation using Social Return on Investment Analysis  
in Uganda and Tanzania for the Danish Outdoor Council

**Olivia Copsey** December 2019



“Projects implemented at community level have become a spiral. Community members are learning from their neighbours, there has been positive change especially for low-income earners who are striving to learn new skills.”

**Semakula Mayanja,  
Parent, Queen of Peace, Kampala**



# How can Eco-Schools help achieve Quality Education (Goal 4) and Sustainable Development targets?

32.2 million children of primary age are still out-of-school in sub-Saharan Africa. The latest data from September 2019 shows that three years after the promise to provide universal primary and secondary education (SDG 4), there has been no progress in reducing this figure<sup>1</sup>. Progress in terms of increasing proficiency in literacy and maths in sub-Saharan Africa is also limited or stalled<sup>2</sup>, and many schools still lack basic infrastructure and facilities to provide effective learning environments. This learning crisis perpetuates poverty cycles, as the lack of quality education not only threatens an individual's ability to climb out of poverty, it also jeopardizes the economic future of entire nations as they struggle to compete in a global marketplace with less-than-skilled human resources .

While national governments and the international community still struggle with the challenge of providing equal and quality education for all, Education for Sustainable Development programmes such as Eco-Schools will be seen as 'nice-to-have', but a low priority.

## What if ESD initiatives held answers which could help reverse some of the complex and contextual issues which are preventing progress in education quality, or access of children into education?

A recent evaluation carried out by the Danish Outdoor Council and their partner organisations Conservation Efforts for Community and Development (CECOD) in Uganda and the Tanzanian Forest Conservation Group (TFCG) revealed several processes and mechanisms by which the rights-based Eco-Schools programme is transforming Quality Education provision (Goal 4) inside schools, including raising academic performance, enrolment and retention, and acting as a conduit for other SDGs outside schools.

## Investigating Eco-Schools impacts in East Africa

To achieve a detailed but holistic understanding of the change processes at work, the study used Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis which measures social and environmental, as well as economic costs and benefits (e.g. micro-project income, time saved by teachers, extra teachers funded by parents, time volunteered to school, materials donated to school, extra sponsorship for Eco-Schools projects from new partnerships) in three successful Eco-Schools in Tanzania and three in Uganda. An SROI ratio which expresses the number of dollars realised to every dollar spent on programme implementation was calculated for each school. The SROI was supported by mixed methods including academic statistics, qualitative interviews and tracer studies. This has enabled us to track the Eco-Schools programme results, from the initial investment and immediate tangible impacts in schools, to the broader change in provision of quality education (SDG 4), to wider change felt within the community (e.g. SDGs 1, 3, 6, 11, 15, 16 & 17), and long-term positive outcomes for the individuals and communities involved.

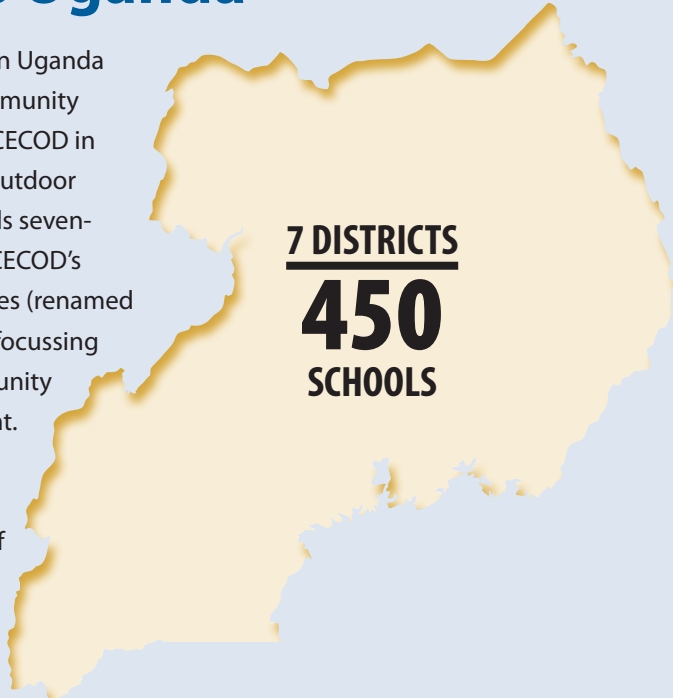
<sup>1</sup> <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/new-methodology-shows-258-million-children-adolescents-and-youth-are-out-school.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/progress-chart.pdf>

# Eco-Schools Uganda

The Eco-Schools programme in Uganda started in 2006 as an Eco-Community School project developed by CECOD in partnership with the Danish Outdoor Council (DOC). The Eco-Schools seven-steps were integrated within CECOD's Eco-Community methodologies (renamed ELIMU For the Goals in 2019), focussing on schools as a hub for community engagement and development. Children are familiarised with their rights, and rights issues are incorporated at all levels of teaching and learning (rights-based learning). Both the way learners are taught and the learning environments themselves are transformed using ESD principles and action-based learning methodologies such as IVAC (Investigate, Vision, Action, Change).

CECOD now operates in around 450 schools in 4 districts around Mbarara, and 3 districts in the Eastern and Central regions.



**7 DISTRICTS**  
**450**  
**SCHOOLS**

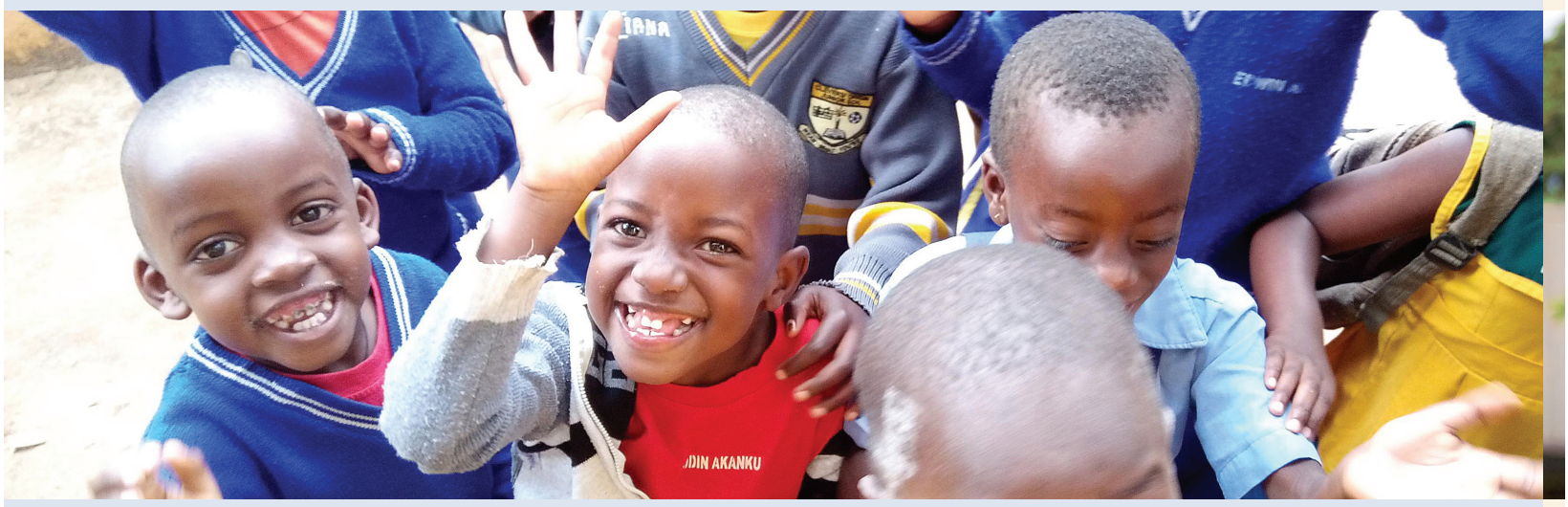
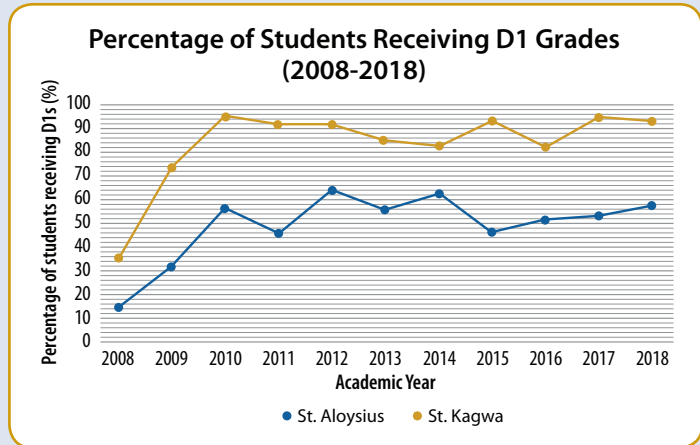
**AVERAGE COST OF IMPLEMENTATION**  
APPROX **\$4000** PER SCHOOL

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**AVERAGE TOTAL SOCIAL RETURN**  
**\$153,650**

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**AVERAGE SROI**  
**47:1**



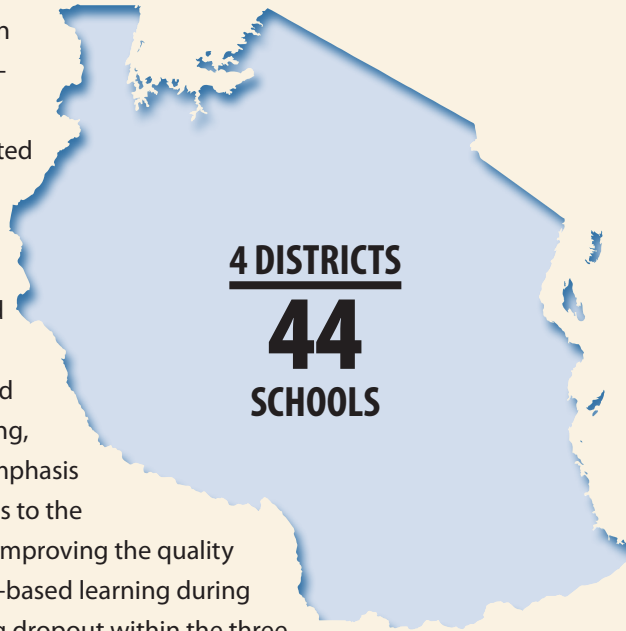
# Eco-Schools Tanzania

Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG) joined the Eco-Schools programme in July 2015. TFCG's mission is reflected in the sustainable natural resource management and sustainable agriculture micro-projects implemented in the schools (e.g.

beekeeping, agroforestry and tree nurseries, banana farming, and fish farming), and the emphasis on transference of these skills to the local community. As well as improving the quality of education through action-based learning during micro-projects, and reducing dropout within the three

case-study primary schools, the community focus of TFCG has achieved a high level of replication which has improved local incomes and quality of life, whilst reducing forest fires, and pressure on local forests.

TFCG currently implements Eco-Schools activities in 4 districts in Morogoro and Iringa regions. TFCG works with 44 schools (including 8 secondary schools) situated close to the Eastern Arc Mountain forests, where TFCG implements conservation interventions.



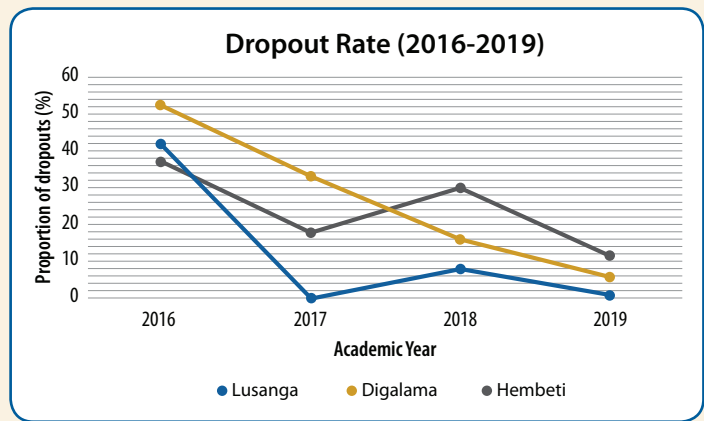
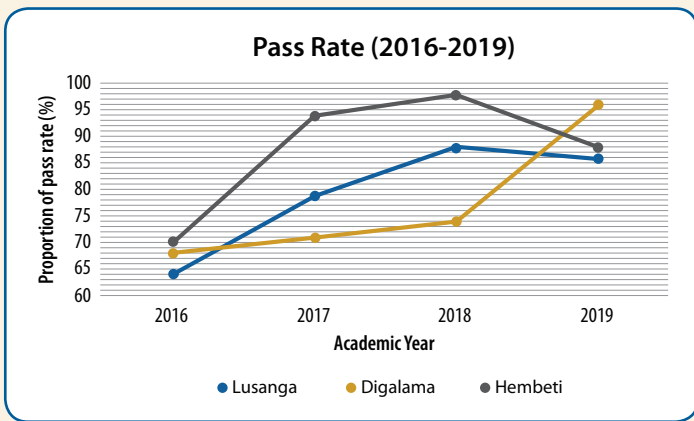
**AVERAGE COST OF IMPLEMENTATION**  
APPROX **\$5850**  
PER SCHOOL

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**AVERAGE TOTAL SOCIAL RETURN**  
**\$117,000**

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**AVERAGE SROI**  
**20:1**





## Eco-Schools and Quality Education (Goal 4)

- The Eco-Schools programme guides the learners and teachers to identify and address critical issues within the learning environment which are affecting wellbeing and stopping them coming to school. Resolving these issues through sustainable natural resource management micro-projects therefore increases learner attendance and prevents dropout. Better teacher attendance and retention is improving education quality and attainment.



“The Eco-schools programme influenced and enhanced my school attendance due to the fact that I had an opportunity of acquiring new life skills that were so instrumental to my life. This approach made me pursue with schools and now I am in secondary education.”

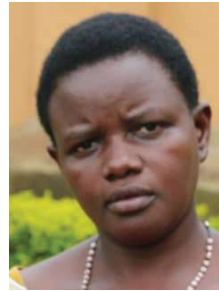
**Juliani Daniel, 16. Former pupil at Digalama Primary School.**

- The training of teachers in action-based teaching methodologies (particularly IVAC) and introduction of sustainable livelihood skills through participation in micro-projects, improves the experience of learners at school by making learning more practical, relevant, fun and easier to understand. This is improving the quality of teaching, increasing retention of the knowledge gained, motivating learners to come to school, improving academic performance and preventing dropout.
- Micro-project income generated at school is paying for better educational facilities (e.g. computer labs) and extra teachers. This is improving education provision in schools, raising both attainment and enrolment.



“I conducted a capacity building and awareness raising exercise to my parents on the cassava farming. My parents have harvested cassava from their land and they bought shoes and school uniform for me. My parents have been also getting food from the cassava farming”.

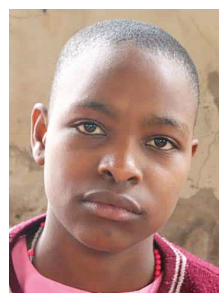
**Asnath Yusuf, 15. Former of Digalama Primary School, Tanzania.**



“Through their children, parents have acquired skills like sack farming and smart agriculture, land-use management, water harvesting, planting trees in lines and sorting waste. I have also learned the art of saving money through VSLA. There is improved sanitation around homes and there is great community cooperation”.

**Caroline Arinaitwe, St. Kagwa parent, Uganda.**

- Mechanisms to involve parents (e.g. Eco-Parents Associations and community training) relieve pressure on schools by bringing financial and practical support from parents. It also encourages parent attitudes to, and follow-up of, their children's education. This is also having a positive effect on attainment and decreasing dropout.
- Providing ways for learners to share these skills with families and neighbours through community events and eco-parents associations, means that through schools, new sources of income are being found, and local quality of life is improved. Increased prosperity of parents and learners makes them better able to pay school costs, preventing dropout and increasing likelihood of attending secondary education. Improved general health of children reduces absences due to illness.



“When I reach home and start for example mulching our garden, most of our neighbours children normally ask where I got these skills from and as a result a number of them have joined me at this school.”

**Aine Nganzi Patience, 12. St. Aloysius pupil, Uganda.**

- Engaging parents and local community members in capacity building and training for micro-project management is creating a new role for schools within technical and vocational lifelong-learning.
- Seeing micro-projects and skills replication in the community is encouraging other community members to send their children to the schools to gain useful skills. This may be affecting numbers of local 'out-of-school' children.

# Eco-Schools contribution to other Development Goals

## No Poverty (Goal 1)



The focus on developing skills specifically tailored to meet the needs in the communities surrounding schools have made a significant difference to the livelihoods and incomes of parents and other community members, increasing local prosperity. One parent described this as a spiral effect whereby community members are learning from their neighbours.

## No Hunger (Goal 2)



New technical knowledge of agricultural skills and best-practices such as vegetable and fruit growing, banana plantations, cassava production, poultry and rabbit keeping, and fish farming are improving nutrition and providing a sustainable means of food production.

## Good Health and Wellbeing (Goal 3)



Through an increased confidence and understanding of their own ability to create change, learners have carried out advocacy in their communities and achieved significant improvements in areas such as waste management and sanitation. Chest complaints caused by smoke and dust in the school compounds have also reduced. Agricultural and agroforestry skills in their homes to improve their nutrition, health and standard of life.

## Clean water and sanitation (Goal 6)



Access to a reliable supply of clean water through rainwater harvesting micro-projects, has had a dramatic effect on the health of the children, reducing waterborne diseases and danger from drowning while collecting water from the river. Schools are successfully sharing the technology and many other schools, and households now practice rainwater-harvesting.

## Life on Land (Goal 15)



Micro projects such as agroforestry, woodlots, energy saving stoves and banana charcoal briquettes have a positive effect on local habitats and biodiversity. The Eco-Schools programme in Tanzania is notable for its impact on forestry conservation. Diversification and training in better agricultural practices has also reduced pressure on local habitats and forest fires.

## Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Goal 16)



The Eco-Schools programme has fostered closer relationships between pupils, teachers and parents. Parents report more involvement of children in decision-making at home and better quality of discussions between children and their parents. Children are actively sensitising community members about children's rights, and this has reduced instances of abuse. Parents also believe the programme has improved community cooperation through the community trainings, collective responsibility for micro-projects, and new advocacy structures created.

**Goals 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and Goal 13 (Climate action)** are cross-cutting as all Eco-Schools activities in schools are geared toward these two goals.



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