



Improving Transition to Secondary School among Girls in Urban Poor Settings

Briefing Paper
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While Kenya has made progress in increasing access to primary school education, secondary school participation remains low, with a gross enrolment ratio (GER)¹ of 58% in 2014. Secondary school participation is limited by a number of factors. The major ones are cost and poor performance at Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). In 2010, only 77% of the 2003 grade 1 cohort completed primary school with a subsequent transition to secondary school of 73%. However, in Nairobi, pupils who live in non-slum had both a higher primary school completion rate (92%) and transition to secondary school (72%) compared to their counterparts who live in slums, at 76% completion and 46% transition (Admassu, 2010). Despite the introduction of free day secondary education in 2008, intended to alleviate the cost barriers associated with enrolment in secondary schooling, 27% of pupils still do not transit.

Improving Girls Transition to Secondary School

Moreover, many pupils who do complete primary school do not attain or score half of the scores in KCPE i.e. 250 marks. Over the past ten years, the KCPE mean score has consistently been below 250 marks out of the possible 500 marks (Oketch & Mutisya, 2013). Poor exam performance is more common among poor households and girls, resulting to low transition to secondary as they (pupils) fail to meet the 250 score threshold. Worse, there are few secondary school spaces in Kenya's government secondary schools to accommodate all students who meet the 250 score threshold. Students without a secured government secondary school placement have three options: 1) attend a private secondary school- few poor families can afford this option due to the high tuition fees; 2) attend technical school, which limits one's career options and lifetime earning potential, or 3) exit the formal education system altogether.

1 GER is total enrolment in secondary education regardless of age and often expressed as a percentage of the eligible official secondary school-age population in a given school-year. In Kenya, the official secondary school age is 14 to 17 years. Given this, GER sometimes is greater than 100% when it includes learners under age 14 and over age 17.

What Works for Educating Urban Poor Girls

Little is known about patterns of secondary schooling among the urban poor. The data related to secondary school transition is not disaggregate by gender or by school type. APHRC collected data on an intervention study to understand transition to secondary school among the urban poor girls. The aim of the intervention study is to identify effective interventions for improving learning outcomes and transition to secondary for urban girls living in Korogocho and Viwandani which are the two urban slums in Nairobi. In 2012, about 63% of children living in two Nairobi urban slums were enrolled in low-cost private primary schools². Their enrolment has been driven by perceived low quality of education available in public schools³.

The study explores how parental and community support can address unequal access to education. The study design grants non-tuition subsidies to girls who score 250 marks and above in the KCPE examination to help meet costs of secondary schooling for girls in Korogocho and Viwandani at risk of not transitioning to secondary school. We compare transition results of the cohort of 2013 class 8 girls in the study with the national averages help fill the evidence gap as well as demonstrate what works in improving transition to secondary school among girls living in the slums.

2 Low cost private schools are mostly found in poor resources setting like slums; more recently are being referred to as complimentary schools for they offer the formal curriculum, and mostly not registered with Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) and lack basic infrastructure that characterize typical public or private schools.

3 Oketch, M., Mutisya, M., Ngware, M., & Ezech, A. C. (2010). Why are there proportionately more pupils enrolled in non-state schools in urban Kenya in spite of FPE policy? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30, 23-32. doi: doi:10.1016/j.ijedudev.2009.08.001

Transition Rate

Figure 1 shows transition rates in Korogocho and Viwandani among the 2013 grade 8 cohort of girls who participated in the 'Improving Learning Outcomes' project. Across the two study sites, 68% of girls transitioned, which was lower than the national average transition rate of 77% (among boys and girls⁴). The transition rate of 68% is 22 percentage points higher than what had been exhibited by children living in slums in 2010 (46%) (Admassu, 2010) and 9 percentage points lower than the national average in 2010. This therefore shows gains in closing the transition gap between urban slum children and the national average. Girls participating in the study and who scored 250 marks and above were awarded with a subsidy of Kes. 10, 000 (US\$100) to enable them meet some non-tuition related costs of joining secondary school and can partly explain the increased transition rate.

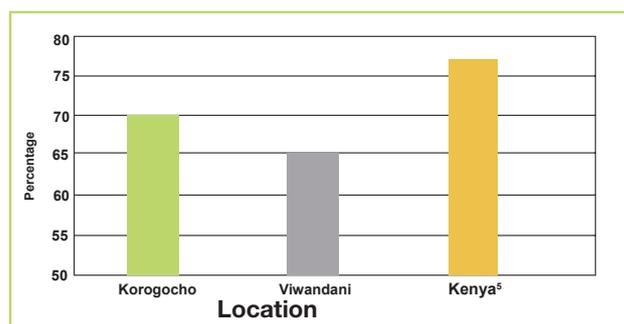


Figure 1: Transition rates in study sites and national average, 2013/14.

Secondary School Enrollment by School Type

Between 2004 and 2008, there was an increase in the proportion of students enrolled in private secondary schools from 9% to 14%. In the slums in 2010, the picture is different as shown in Figure 2. Overall, more girls transitioned to private secondary schools (43%), compared to the national average of the proportion of students (both girls and boys) which stood at 14%. There was a higher transition rate among pupils from the poorest families into private secondary schools (40%). The majority of the private secondary schools in Nairobi are day schools⁷.

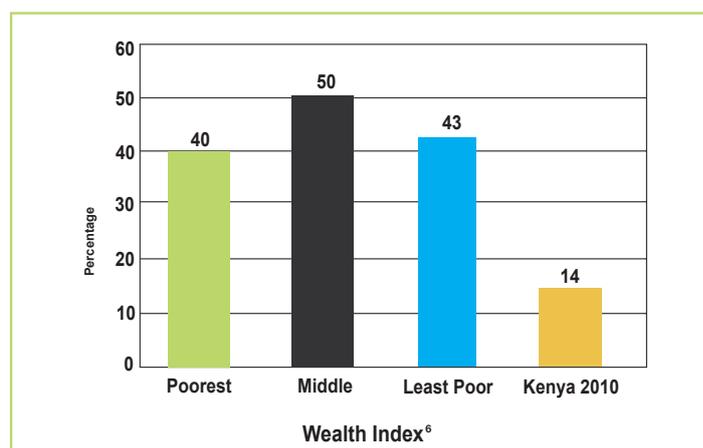


Figure 2: Girls enrolled in private secondary school by household wealth index, Korogocho & Viwandani, 2014

Policy Implications and Recommendations

How can we change the transition rates for children in the urban informal settlements?

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) recognizes education as a basic human right and offers a solid foundation for the government's commitment to education, and for extensive reforms in policy, legislation, and curriculum. The role of education in a country's social, economic and political development cannot be overemphasized.

Based on the initial findings of the 'Improving Learning Outcomes' project, efforts to increase transition rates from primary to secondary schools for girls in urban informal settlements in Kenya should take the following recommendations into account:

- National government to rethink the quota system of admission to secondary schools where even the low cost private schools mainly found in the slums are classified as private schools limiting transition to public secondary school among children from the poorest households in Nairobi. By so doing, the girls miss opportunities provided by the free day secondary schools.

4 The national transition rate of girls is higher than that of boys, and therefore expect the 2013 transition rates of girls to be over 77%.

- National and County Governments should establish a fund to support girls from urban informal settlements who attain 250 marks and above in KCPE to support their transition to secondary schools irrespective of the type of school they are enrolled in.
- There is need to embrace public-private partnership in addressing the transition to secondary schools among pupils, especially in support of girls living in urban informal settlements. Extending support by the County and National governments to private day schools in which most girls from urban informal settlements are enrolled will help to ensure that the disadvantaged benefit from government initiatives such as free secondary education. Establishment of such partnerships may increase the transition rates and may also serve to improve the quality of education and completion rates, ultimately, improving their livelihoods and those of their families.

5 'Kenya Economic Report 2013'

6 'Wealth index was calculate from household amenities and assets for all the households in the two study sites using the principle component analysis. Those completely deprived were categorized as poorest and those with highest wealth scores were ranked as least poor.'

7 'According to the Kenya Open Data, up to 63% of the private secondary schools in Nairobi were classified as secondary day schools, while 11% were both day and boarding (see <https://opendata.go.ke/views/mwa7-uese/rows.xls?accessType=DOWNLOAD>).'

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