

Socio-Cultural Constraints Facing Girl Child Education in Mochongoi Division of Baringo District, Kenya

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Abstract: *Female education especially at primary levels is increasingly being realized to provide immense social and economic benefits for the developing countries. However, participation of girls in education is more often constrained in some countries. As a result, gender gap persists in education despite the research evidence that girl’s formal education is the key determinant of women’s involvement in development for the above nations. In Kenya the government is committed to providing education to all its citizens. In spite of commitment girl’s low participation in primary education remain unresolved in some parts of the country. Therefore the concern of this study was to investigate the constraints facing girl-child education in Mochongoi Division of Baringo District. To this end, research questions were developed to gender relevant socio-cultural norms and practices, parental perceptions on girl’s education. The study involved a sample of 130 pupils (50 male, 80 females) 10 head teachers (All male) a total of 64 teachers (30 males 34 females). Data was collected through questionnaires administered to pupils, interviews with parents and head teachers, and focus group discussions held with selected teachers. The data was analyzed both qualitatively using simple descriptive analysis and quantitatively using inferential statistics. The following emerged as the main constraints facing girl’s primary education in the locale of the study; socio-cultural factors including, early marriages, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) initiation, and poor attitudes towards girls’ education, teenage pregnancies, and domestic responsibilities. It was also found that the government provides equal access to education for boys and girls but their participation differs. Girls are disadvantaged due to the socio-cultural constraints mentioned.*

Key words: *Socio-Cultural, Constraints, Girl Child Education*

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I. Introduction

In Kenya major studies have been made in education. The government has made substantial effort to achieve wider distribution of opportunities coupled with a great concern at primary school level. This is evident in a massive expansion at the above level at the tremendous increase in the number of pupils enrolled over the years, a number of policies have been supportive to these achievements. These include the abolition of primary school fees in the 70s, the introduction of school milk programme, nitrification of feeding programme and the construction of boarding facilities in the disadvantaged districts distribution of books among others (GOK, 1996).

Abagi et al (1998) note that while the girls boy ration is 49:51 the same greatly camouflages wide regional and gender disparities. Generally the girls are more disadvantaged in the arid districts, the urban and marginal rural areas where majority of the poor population are found (Abagi 1995; Wamahiu, 1995; Odaga and Henereld, 1995).

Table 1.1 Gender representations in primary school enrolment or Baringo and selected ASAL Districts, 1992-1995

District	1992		1993		1994		1995	
	% Boys	% Girls						
Baringo**	50.4	49.6	50.6	49.4	50.3	49.7	52.5	47.5
Narok	53.0	49.0	54.2	45.8	56.5	53.5	56.1	43.9
Samburu	63.1	36.9	63.9	36.1	63.1	36.8	63.6	36.4
W. Pokot	54.4	45.6	54.5	45.5	54.3	45.7	53.9	46.7
Turkana	64.5	35.5	60.3	39.7	61.^	38.9	61.8	38.2
Garissa	66.6	33.4	71.1	29.9	70.9	29.1	74.1	25.9
Wajir	67.5	32.5	69.9	30.1	66.0	34.0	68.2	31.8

Table 1.2 Enrolment in primary Schools by Gender and Division. Baringo Districts

	Boys	%	Girls	%	Boys	%	Girls	%	Boys	%	Girls	%
Kabarnet	7256	49.8	7338	50.2	7221	49.4	7587	50.1	6587	49.1	6854	50.9
Kabartojo	6960	48.1	7153	51.9	4971	49.4	5093	50.6	5129	49.7	5200	50.3
Sacho	1800	49.5	1835	50.5	1851	50.2	1832	49.8	2053	51.1	1969	48.9
Tenges	2219	47.3	2467	52.7	1402	49.4	1522	49.6	1522	49.9	1530	50.1
Kipsaram	4158	48.3	4447	51.6	3633	48.7	3830	51.3	3946	49.1	4092	40.9
Barwesa	-	-	-	-	2756	49.5	2817	50.5	2904	49.0	3027	51.0
Mochongoi*	1262	51.3	1150	47.7	1314	52.4	1196	47.6	1678	54.6	1395	45.4
Margat*	3933	56.1	2895	43.1	3828	56.0	3009	44.0	3937	56.2	2870	43.7
Tanglbei**	641	69.3	248	30.7	657	70.0	269	30.0	673	69.4	294	30.4
Nginyang**	588	64.0	331	36.0	549	61.2	346	38.2	560	60.9	361	39.1
Kolowa**	273	64.4	151	35.6	270	68.7	123	31.3	336	69.3	159	30.7

Source: Baringo District Education Office 1999

Key: * Low Girls' participation

** Extremely low Girls' Participation

From the above table 1.2, Gender disparity in a district with an impressive overall enrolment is a cause of concern worth investigation. This is specifically so in the with low girls' participation. These include Tangulbei, Nginyang, Kolluwa, and Marigat which will occupy the driest and low economically potential Baringo District.

In the above study Mochongoi is selected as good representation of the above disadvantaged parts of the district. Further, the divisions are coverage with the available resources at the researcher's disposal.

On the basis of the presiding background, it is evident that despite the government's commitments to provide basic education to all children low girls' participation will persist in some parts in the country. This is a drawback to the national goals of attaining universal primary education (UPE) in all districts, the full empowerment of women and the country's sustainable economic development. In Mochongoi division girl's low participation has serious implications on the various aspects of development. For instance due to low girls' participation the level of illiteracy remains' high to date. The recent statistics shows that there are 32 male primary school teachers with a qualification of ATS I in Mochongoi division while no female teacher with such qualification.

Taking the above indicator into consideration, girls' low participation in Mochongoi division is quite disturbing. However, there is little information if any to go to the various factors contributing to the above situation. Therefore the problem of the study was to investigate the constraints facing girl child education in Mochongoi Division of Baringo District.

1.1 Objective of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives.

- i. To determine the social, economic and cultural constraints facing girls child education.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by among others, the gender role ideology and investment theory, According to white (1984), gender role constitutes culturally and socially determined set of behaviour and personality characteristic expected of a person on the basis of sex. These roles are imparted through family as the socialization and further reinforced in avenues such as the school. Under this theory, gender forms the single most important criteria, government production and distribution of resources.

II. Literature Review

Since the UN decade for women (1975-1985), recent research has focused on African girls' education as the main avenue towards improving girls' lives. Some educational researchers, policy planners, and international development workers have focused on the effects of increasing girls' access to education in order to enhance their economic production and participation in national development (Bowman and Anderson, 1982, Derryck, 1979, standing 197, World bank, 1989). Educated African women, it is claimed, will have a lower demand for children and increased knowledge of an access to fertility rates and population growth decreases (Cochrance, 1982). Additionally, educated women tend to marry wealthier men and to be better mothers. These women obtain better health care for their families, are more knowledgeable about schooling opportunities for their children, and are more involved with the overall psychological development of their children (Levine 1982) outside the domestic sphere, educated girls have greater knowledge about modern agricultural jobs and technological advancements, and obtain high incomes in wage sector (Derryck, 1979, standing, 1976; World Bank, 1989). Therefore, access to education can assure that girls overcome traditional" or practical obstacles and obtain increased control over their lives, as well as actively participating in the development of the country.

while these benefits to girl's education has been well documented, recent research has shown that access alone has not reduced the gender gap in education and the gender gap- ideational returns (Boseup, 1990, House-Midamba, 1990, Hyde, 1989, 1993; Kelly and Elliot. 1982, Kibera, 1995; Odaga, 1994; Smock, 1981). In many African countries, girls receive fewer educational opportunities than boys and remain disadvantaged within the educational system. Specifically, girls tend to have low documented that Harambee school girls experience higher rates of sexual harassment has led to large number of girls becoming pregnant and having to drop out of school prematurely.

In addition to attending lower quality schools, girls also face gender biases in home and in the society. In Kenya, as in many African countries, most rural families cannot afford in terms of child's lost labor and school tuition fees to send their children to school and if they have the fees, they usually send their sons. They believe it will be their sons who will return after their education and help to compensate for the paid fees. On the other hand, their daughters will, after her schooling, get married and move to her husband's father's home, and thus her parents will have lost their educational investment. Additionally, some parents will have lost their educational investment. Additionally, some parents are more eager to marry off their daughter and obtain her dowry in terms of cattle, goats, household goods and money, than to pay fees to educate her. In order to better understand the problems and barriers girls face in their education, more research need to examine the extent to which this barriers the girls school experience .recent literature of the case of girls' education in Kenya has focused on detailing the type of barriers girls face in their schooling. However, little research has focused on whether these barriers differ across school type and on the ways in which these barriers affect girls attitude towards their learning. The following research was conducted to address these problems and to compare and contrast the barriers girls face at harambee schools with those at district and provincial schools .it was believed that girls at harambee schools would experienced more gender biased in their schools and home environment and experienced higher rates of sexual harassment, and be more negatively affected by this barriers than boys and girls as the other schools.

2.1 Socio-Cultural Factor

Girls are expected by, African tradition or culture .to learn to be motherly thus help their mother to take care of the home, to cook .to take care of the family members (kitchen specialist).on the other hand ,boys are supposed to specialize in out door duties which has not direct relationship with kitchen work or taking care of young siblings. Since gender role for girls are many and continuous , they have to leasing to work long hours as their mother and able to endure serve the boys first boys tend to have few gender related roles thus have to learn to keep themselves busy through entertainment or loitering. Such practices have direct effect on how boys and girls participate in education. As shown above girls tend to be begged down with household chores.

The household, gender rules, and the time they demand, limits the opportunities for girls to have access and complete their schooling as compared with boys. Generally, a girl -child starts school late compared to buy-child education and in most cases with drawn from school completely to stay home and fulfill the expected gender roles. Household's expectations for both girls and boys are perfected by the school as an organization and also as a social institution.

2.2 The Belief in Marriage and sons

African traditions and culture require that women should be married to quality as a good African woman, and must give birth to boys. This traditional belief put a lot of pressure on most African household - educated or not, rural or urban. Adult members children, particularly the girls, to master the skills of being a good wife. The informal and non-formal curricula for girls at home and in school are dominated by the marriage issues and the benefit of having male children. The marriage oriented socialization, have made some girls to "willingly" withdraw from school to get married because they are made to believe that there is nothing to gain from school. These area cases where girls/women have struggled to prove to their boy friends that they are fertile, thus good future wives. Such girls are bushed-out of school, and only to be abandoned by chauvinistic boy/men.

The belief in sons have justified and perpetuated polygamy among communities in 3aringo district. This traditional practice is also biased against girls. A wife who gives birth to only girls will be discriminated against by the husband, who will be justified to marry co-wives, in order to get boys. Where resources are scarce daughter of the first or second wives, usually are forced to for-go their education to realize limited resources to the sons of the second or third wife.

2.3 Extended Family Pressure

As witnessed in Baringo District, family hood is still very strong. The struggle to keep a family together and promote networking is not restricted to the immediate family-father, mother and children but it is also covers close and distant relatives, including even family friends. Among the poor, education of their children is directly or indirectly financed (sponsored) or influenced by extended family pressure. Economy of affection plays a significant role in this. Parents who have their children in school have the cultural obligation of meeting the social and economic needs of the extended family if need arise. For example, a father may find it traditionally fulfilling if he pulls his daughter out of school to release scarce resources to educate a son of her only cow. When her daughter passed K.C.P.E would sell the cow when one of her sons passes. Our study also indicate that school going girls, especially those in rural districts, are usually victims of extended family pressure which are related to the

community work. For example, girls are more likely than boys to be pulled out of school to go and fetch water of our firewood to be used in a funeral ceremony in their village. Also in most cases, it is the girls who are called upon to take care of their work or old relatives in another village this usually displace such girls from school.

2.4 THE LAND TENURE SYSTEM (RURAL DISTRICT ONLY)

The traditional land tenure system, also gives justification to the argument that girls/women are "outsiders", thus should not be trusted with family property like land. Girls have no right to inherit family land and women also have very limited right to sell family land to raise money for school fees or any pressing problem even if the husband is dead. She has to seek permission from men, preferably elders in the village. Even when a husband has refused to educate his girl-child, a woman who has been left in a rural village without much support cannot sell a piece of land which has been lying fallow for years to raise school fees to stop her daughter from dropping-out of school.

III. Methodology

This research adapted a descriptive case study design utilizing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A descriptive research presented what is or what was in a given social system. This include the conditions existing, relationships, opinions held processes going on, trends developing among others (Best and Kahn 1993, Abagi 1996). Mochongoi Division has a total of 27 primary schools with a total of 6575 student's population where 3368 are boys and 3207 are girls. There are a total of 214 teachers where 136 male and 78 are female.(Baringo District Statistics Office, January 2006). 10 primary schools was selected, 10 primary schools head teacher were selected who were all male, 64 primary school teachers and 130 primary school pupils were also selected, 80 female and 50 males were selected, 10 parents were also selected with 7 female and 3 males. The study utilized a mixture of instruments. These included pupils' questionnaire, focus group discussion, guides for teachers and interviews guides for head teacher and parents. Also the school provided documents and records on enrolment attendance and drop out.

IV. Research Findings and Discussion

4.1 Socio-cultural Factors that Constraints Girl Child Education

Information presented in section 4.2 in the previous chapter revealed that the main socio-cultural factors that constraints girl child education in Mochogoi Division of Barinao District include early marriage, FGM (initiation), poor attitudes towards girls education, teenager pregnancies and domestic responsibilities. Cultural practices which require huge bride price to be paid to the parents of the girl drive many parents to marry off their daughter at a tender age when they should still be in school. This phenomenon is compounded by the fact that most families in Baringo District are leaving below the poverty levels. The situation therefore drives such families to give away their daughters in the hope of gaining some income from the bride price paid to them. Apart from early marriage, cultural practice that requires girls to be circumcised at puberty is also a big inhibitor to girls' participation in education. Usually, the initiation (FGM) is an elaborate process that takes a number of days which means the initiates are withdrawn from school during the ceremony. Cultural practice also dictates that once the girl is initiated she is considered mature and ready for marriage. Many of these initiates therefore end up in marriage beds immediately after the initiation rather than returning to schools.

Another main contributor to girls' lack of participation in education is the general parents' poor attitude or lack of concern towards girl child education. Many parents particularly in the rural areas and more so among the pastoralists believe that girls do not need higher education because they will be married by men who have wealth or are educated. In fact some parents have the wrong misconception that an educated girl will miss prospective suitors because men do not like female partners who are more educated than themselves.

The results of the study further showed that early pregnancy (4.2%) was another socio-cultural factors that constraints girl child education in the study area. This factor is tied to cultural practice from the perspective

that the girls and boys to a large extent after undergoing traditional initiation come to believe that they are now ready to begin an adult life. Some begin engaging in sexual activity which leaves some girls pregnant at an age they should be attending school. Such girls are forced to pull out of school and many a times ends up getting married to elderly men.

Finally, domestic activities (4.2%) were another socio-cultural factors identified by the respondents to constraint girl child education in the study area. Cultural practices among the Tugen like with many other African societies dictates that girls perform household chore like fetching firewood, fetching water, cooking for the family, taking care of younger siblings among others. Some parents therefore find it easier to withdraw- their daughters from school to assist them with these chores. Poverty stricken families where parents toil all day to get some food to put on the family table compels some parents to leave the domestic chores to the daughters whom they withdraw from school.

education system. The end result of this is that very few role models exist for girls to emulate. The ratio of male to female teachers as presented in Table 4.18 in the previous chapter is tilted in favour of the males.(77.8%) From the sampled schools none was headed by a female teacher. Girls are generally not motivated to pursue education. There is therefore an entrenched female apathy towards education.

Performance is also an important factor that motivates or de-motivates pupils from having interest in education and in attending school frequently. As have already been pointed out, female children perform most of the domestic chores (87.5%) leaving them with hardly enough time to complete school work leave alone having time to revise. This contributes to poor performance in academic work. Consistent low achievement coupled with low motivation drives some girls to drop out of school and seek solace in marriage. Imbalance in enrolment between boys and girls was also pointed out as a constraining factor in girl child's participation in education. Some schools have very few girls enrolled, which acts as a discouragement to those attending school. The feeling such an environment creates is that of being out of place for the girls. This feeling perpetuates the urge to give up, leading to high rate of dropout by girls. This is not helped by the attitude of some teachers who create time to remind the girls that their place is not in the office or classroom but in the kitchen. Although such kinds of teachers are few, the impact of their negative attitude is felt far and wide.

4.2 Conclusion

The findings show that the main socio-cultural factors that constraints girl child education in Mochongoi Division of Baringo District include early marriage, FGM (initiation), poor attitudes towards girls education, teenage pregnancies and domestic responsibilities.

4.3 Recommendations

Based on the results, this study recommends the following:

- The government and other stakeholder in education should sensitize the community on the benefits of educating girls
- Women who have achieved high education and status in the society should come forward to talk to girls particularly from the arid regions
- Cultural practices that inhibit girls participation in education should be discouraged

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