

## **Primary School Enrolment in Somalia: What are the Enabling or Hindering Factors?**



Abdullahi Mohamoud Mohamed  
John Momanyi Ongubo

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### **Abstract**

*Somalia has one of the lowest primary school enrollment rates in Africa. This article analyzes the determinants of raising primary school enrollment in Somalia. The authors are focused on primary school enrollment of children aged between 6 and 14 years, and have engaged on pertinent aspects such as: child age, parental education, family size, wealth. Regional disparities also have a stake in enrollment of children to primary schools.*

*The authors are calling for policy interventions focusing on increasing adult literacy and income of households in rural and urban areas of Somalia to enhance the potential of primary school enrollment. It's also more prevalent the interventions to target improved educational resources allocation to the regions with low enrollments to support the overall wellbeing of the society.*

**Keywords:** Primary School, School Enrollment, Somalia, Education.

## **1.0 Introduction**

The 1990 World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand set the goal that every child in every country should have the chance to complete at least a primary education by 2000 (UNESCO, 2005). This was however not achieved leading to an extension during the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000. In the same year universal primary completion in primary and secondary education were set as Millennium Development Goals, (UNESCO, 2005).

In Africa school enrolment has been low compared to other regions of the world. Gross enrolment rates in Africa range from 160% for Madagascar to 33% for Somalia, at the bottom. Enrollment rates for some other countries of the region are as follows: Eritrea 48%, Djibouti 54%, Sudan (with South Sudan) 74%, Ethiopia 102%, Kenya 113%, Uganda 122%. There is also a difference in enrolments by gender (boys and girls); the highest gross enrolment rates for girls was in Madagascar (158) and the lowest was in Somalia (23). (World Bank, 2012).

After independence in 1960, Somalia's education sector developed rapidly. Primary and secondary schools was opened in the regions of the country. Other efforts include training of teachers, adoption of official script for Somali language, and successful implementation of an intensive government-sponsored literacy campaign for youth and adults in both rural and urban areas. Due to these efforts and free and compulsory education for children, literacy levels increased from 5 percentage in 1970 to 65 percentage in 1990.

The collapse of the state in 1991 led to division of the country into three zones namely; Puntland (PL), Somaliland (SL) and South Central (SC) zone. The national net primary school enrolment was 32 percentage in 2007. The enrolment rates seem correlate with zonal political stability.

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The enrolment rates are higher in Somaliland and Puntland than in South Central. Somaliland and Puntland are politically stable unlike South Central zone which was politically unstable for a longer duration of time.

Primary schooling enrolment rate is very low in Somalia compared to other African countries. Between 2007 and 2010 the average gross primary school enrollment was; 23 percentage for girls and 42 percentage for boys well below the average primary enrollment in the continent (World Bank, 2012). A variety of factors may explain this situation including poverty and opportunity cost of child's time.

However, few studies (Moyi, 2012a, 2012b) have investigated the determinants of raising primary school enrolment decision in Somalia and there are some gaps. They focus on conflict areas only (Moyi, 2012b) or the functional form estimated omit variables such as household size and time taken to fetch water that may determine school enrollments in Somalia. Also, they do not consider the nonlinear effect of a child's age on enrollment decisions, yet previous studies, (e.g. Glick & Sahn, 2000; Mariara & Mwabu, 2007; Al-Samarrai & Reilly, 2000), show that child's age can have important nonlinear effect related to late enrollment.

Low levels of education and training attainment are considered to be a major obstacle to economic growth and development (Glick & Sahn, 2000). The problem is a major concern in conflict and post conflict countries like Somalia aiming to revive their economies.

Human capital is considered as a means of increasing productivity and economic growth. One source of human capital is education which generates monetary and non-monetary benefits (Schultz, 2004). The new growth theory views human capital as knowledge and ideas which are non-rival and partly excludable, and a source of endogenous growth. Endogenous growth theory holds that investment in human capital

significantly contributes to long-run economic growth. Becker (1964) & Schultz (1961) argue that education is the major source of human capital. Investing in education generates monetary and non-monetary benefits to a country's economic development process. The monetary benefits include greater productivity, higher earnings to the educated and economic growth (Riddell, 2005). The non-monetary benefits on the other hand include improvements in health care, reduction in income inequality, poverty reduction as well as crime reduction (Glick & Sahn, 2000).

This paper focuses on primary education enrollment in Somalia. It aims to identify the factors influencing the raising or hindering of primary school enrollment in Somalia, examines differences in primary school enrollment and draws policy implications based on the findings of this study in order to raise the enrollment rate.

## **2.0 Education and Schooling Factors**

After the collapse of Somali State and total dismissing of the national education service in Somalia, efforts were inaugurated by the local communities and scholars, and began to reopen schools, particularly in urban centers in the early 1993. The situation of education in Somalia varies depending on the region, and is somewhat better in Somaliland and Puntland. Most of the schools can function based on school fees paid by parents, donations from Somalis living abroad and development agencies.

Challenges to access education in Somalia are multifaceted; ranging from the affordability as Somalia falls among the low level income countries in the Sub Saharan Africa recording limited chances for a child to be enrolled early in primary school. Besides there is poor school environment, crowded classes and poor quality of school services which are among the challenges to access for education. Limited trained

teachers are also among the main challenges in education sector in Somali.

## **2.1 Factors Determine Raising Primary School Enrolment**

A household decision to either enroll or not to enroll a child to formal schooling is usually a function of a number of factors. Factors identified by studies include; individual, household and community characteristics Glewwe & Jacoby (1994), Gertler & Glewwe, (1990). Khandker, Lavy & Filmer (1994) classify factors determining child schooling as either demand side factors or supply side factors. Individual, household and community variables fall under the demand side factors, while access to school, and quality of schools fall under supply factors.

### **2.1.1 Interactions with Household Characteristics**

Individual characteristics include age of the child, and age rank among siblings. The household characteristics include household size, income of the household and other assets, education of the parents, household head and composition of the household while the community characteristics include schooling quality and location productive potential.

Household size is also another significant determinant of school enrollment. Al-Samarrai & Reilly (2000) found in Tanzania positive and significant effect on primary school enrollment to a number of children in the household. The other significant determinant of school enrollment is parental education. Gertler & Glewwe (1990), Mariara & Mwabu, (2007) found similar results in rural Peru and Kenya respectively; that father's education is more important determinant of primary school enrollment than mother's education.

Age of a child is critical in primary school enrolment decision as Mariara & Mwabu (2007) found that a child's age is statically significant and positively linked to a primary school enrollment. The probability of being enrolled increases at a decreasing rate with the child age. Similarly Al Samarrai & Peasgood (1998) found in Tanzania that the probability of enrollment in primary school to be significant and positively associated with age of a child, both girls and boys. This implies that younger children are less likely to be enrolled in primary school. Ngware, Oketch & Ezeh (2008) also found a positive relation between the age of a child and primary school enrolment. Their study found that when a child's age increases by one year, then there is a 50 percentage chance of that child being enrolled to primary school in Kenya.

Household characteristics also hold importance; Moyi (2012a & 2012b) found that the probability of children from wealthier households to be enrolled in school is high. Glick & Sahn (2000) also found that there is a positive relationship between household income and children schooling in Guinea. Similarly an empirical result found in Pakistan and Peru shows that low household income is major reason leading to withdrawal of many children from schools (Ray, 2000). Glick & Sahn (2000) also found that children from those households with easier access to credit were more likely to be enrolled and to stay in school longer.

The wealthier family can hire house help which gives chance their daughters to be sent to school instead of helping in house work; on the other hand girls get a chance from school for meeting friends enhancing their interaction to society. In Somalia boys (6-14) in rural areas are 12.76 percentage less likely than urban boys to be enrolled while girls in rural areas are 8.78percentage less likely than urban girls to be enrolled in primary schools.

### **2.1.2 Community Characteristics**

Parental education determines the child enrollment decision of primary school. Boys and girls aged 6-14 whose fathers have no education are less likely to be enrolled than boys and girls aged 6-14 whose fathers have non curriculum education respectively. Boys whose fathers have primary and secondary education are more likely to be enrolled in primary school. On the other hand, girls whose fathers have primary and secondary education are less likely to be enrolled in primary school. The tertiary education for fathers is positively related to the chance of child being enrolled to primary school.

The mother's education level also has an effect though there is no effect for boys and girls aged 6-14 years. However, boys and girls whose mother has no education are 10 percentage and 21.7 percentage less likely to be enrolled than boys and girls whose mother has non curriculum education. Boys and girls whose mothers have primary, secondary and tertiary education are likely to be enrolled in primary school. Research has shown that mother's with primary, secondary and tertiary education has no effect for boys and girls to be enrolled. Other related research results agree that parent's education increasing the probability of enrolling a child to primary school, (Mariara & Mwabu (2007); Gertler & Glewe (1990)). In overall it can be see that Education attainment is very low among mothers compared to fathers in Somalia.

The economic situation of a household is another determinant of children primary school enrollment. Households that are wealthy have higher chances of enrolling their children to school. However, the wealth effect is larger for girls than boys. Studies have shown that girls from wealthy households have 22.46 percentage higher probability of being enrolled compared to 13.32 percentage for boys. Glick & Sahn, (2000) & Ray, (2000) also observed that there is a positive relationship between

enrollment to school and household income. However the difference in wealthier family for preference to girls can be explained in two ways when it comes to Somali community prospective first the wealthier family's boys may prefer to help family in their business instead of sending them to school or they drop the school because of seeing the education less opportunity to their future while they were offered everything from their parents.

**Table: 2.1: Primary school aged children enrolled by gender.**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Enrolled %</b>	<b>Never enrolled %</b>
Male	58.27%	41.93%
Female	41.73%	58.07%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Mohamed, (2013)*

**Table: 2.2: Primary school aged children enrolment in rural and urban area**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Enrolled %</b>	<b>Never enrolled</b>
Urban	49%	16%
Rural	50%	83.90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Mohamed, (2013)*

Table 2.1 above presents information regarding current enrollment of primary school aged children. 3750 School children aged between 6-14 years were attending school while 2528 were not. Almost half of the school aged girls were found to be out of primary school as compared to boys 33%. While 67% of school aged boys were attending school, only 52% of girls were attending school. Table 2.2 shows that 64% of the sample was drawn from the rural area. The urban area accounts for just



about 35% of the sample. Children in urban areas have higher probability of being enrolled to school as compared to their counterparts in the rural areas.

A study conducted by Mohamed, (2013) on determinants of school enrollment in Somalia revealed that out of the 6278 observations, 59 percent of the school aged children were enrolled to primary school. The percentage of boys enrolled stood at 67 percent while that of girls was 51 percent. About 52 percent of the sample is male children. About 15 percent of 16 percent of boys and girls respectively, are 6-7 years old. Similar proportions of the boys and girls were 14 years old. Most children in the sample were 8-9 years old.

Other studies have found that the region from where the child comes from is a key determinant of the probability of a child to be enrolled into primary school in Somalia. The marginal effect for boys from North East region is 0.1017 while that of girls is 0.1171. This implies that boys and girls from North East region are 10.17 and 11.71 percentage points that boys are more likely to be than boys than girls. Contrary girls in North West region are likely to be enrolled to primary schools than boys. The marginal effect for boys from South Central region is 0.0771 while that of girls is -0.01107. This implies that boys from South central are 7.71 percent more likely to be enrolled than boys from North West to North East. However girls from south central region are -1.107 percent a less likely enrollment than girls from North West to North East.

### **3.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Low primary school enrolment in Somalia coupled with gender gaps has remained mentioned as very serious issues of policy concern. The determinant of a child (boy or girl) being enrolled to school count on the child's age, parent's education, wealth, regions of origin, and area of

residence in Somalia. In terms of gender boys are more likely to be enrolled than girls. Children from wealthier households have higher chances of being enrolled to school than the children from poorer households. Besides, the parent's education has high influence on enrolment status of their children. Boys and girls whose parents have no education are less likely to be enrolled relative to boys and girls whose parents are educated. It is evident that in Somalia the literacy of mother and father determines the chance of enrolling a child to primary school. The region from where the children originate or are currently situated is another determinant. Children in rural areas are less likely to be enrolled than the urban children. Children in regions which were fairly stable such as North West (Somaliland) and North East (Puntland) have higher chances of being enrolled to primary school. In contrast, children in Central South region who have been living in politically unstable environment for some time are less likely to be enrolled. In north east girls have greater chances to be enrolled in primary school compared to girls from North West regions. Girls from central south are less likely to be enrolled compared to girls from North West regions. This is a situation that attracts policy intervention in order to give equal education rights to all children regardless of age, gender, their parent's education status and the region where they come from.

### **3.1 Recommendations**

Since the primary school enrollment is higher among children whose parents are literate, policies to raise literacy levels should be pursued in Somalia. This could be done by strengthening adult literacy programs in rural and urban areas of Somalia. Besides it is evident that children (6-14) from poorer households are less likely to be enrolled in primary school. Therefore, policies that improve the living conditions of households in Somalia would increase primary school enrolment for both boys and girls.

Further studies have revealed that boys of (6-14 years) have higher probability of being enrolled than girls. This requires education policies which target specifically girls have potential positive impact on their enrollment thereby decreasing the gender primary schooling gap. Due to the existence of regional disparities in primary school enrollment, it's important to target and channel education resources to regions with low enrollments taking into account the child's gender, owing to curb the gender differences in enrollments.

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