



Addressing Barriers for Out of Primary School Children in Tanzania: Case of Mara

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Executive Summary

Using data from Out of School Children (OOSC) of primary education in Mara region baseline study, the study highlights family and individual barriers as well as school specific challenges that affect children from accessing education right. Findings reveal that poverty, illnesses, disabilities, absence of one or both parents, lack of awareness on the importance of education, and socio-cultural factors impede children access to education at individual and family level. Further, school related challenges are infrastructure, safety and lack of psychotherapy services. Policy recommendations to address these shortcomings and strengthen existing strategies for enrolling and retaining out of school children (OOSC) are:

- Improving the national education programs such as MEMKWA/COBET and fee-free education to address educational needs for the OOSC;
- Improving education infrastructure for children with disabilities to access schools;
- Providing psychosocial support for children with mental disabilities to attend school and build satellite schools in communities to cater for little children who are unable to walk long distance;
- Putting in place poverty reduction and social protection mechanisms to abate the ominous situation for the OOSC that is likely to affect their studies; and,
- Implementing policies and interventions against sexual harassment and ensure safety in schools for teachers and children.

Context and Problem Statement

Education is an important component in national development and plays a critical role in socio-economic development and poverty reduction process at individual and community level. Despite its benefits, in Tanzania, the number of children and adolescents who are out of school has been surging. In 2015, a study undertaken by UNICEF revealed that there is a growing trend of OOSC globally to the tune of a dozen million, whilst Tanzania had an estimated 1 million out of school primary school children. UNICEF (2015c) highlighted some factors that contribute towards OOSC such as serial marriages, single parent-hood, social cultural practices, abject poverty, poor school facilities and school based violence. According to UNICEF (2015b) Mara Region had an estimated 59,690 OOSC of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school.

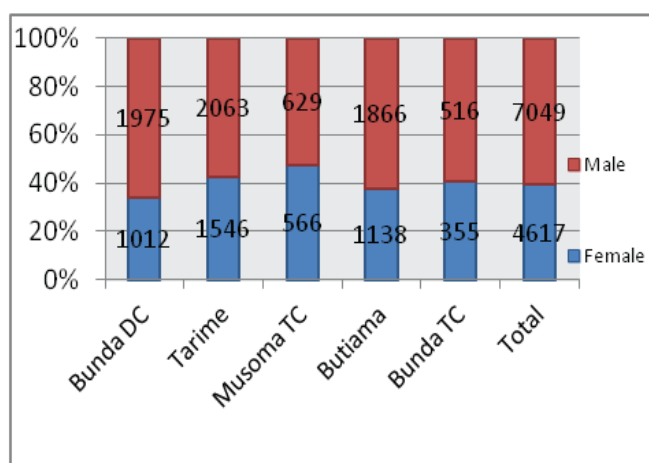
This baseline was undertaken by ESRF in the five Local Government Authorities (LGAs) of Mara namely Musoma Municipal Council; Bunda Town Council & District Council, Tarime District Council and Butiama District Council, profiling OOSC at primary level and primary schools in those LGAs. The study defined OOSC in primary as those of ages 7-17, categorized into two cohorts (i.e. 1st Cohort ages 7-13, and 2nd Cohort ages 14-17), the categorization provided for assessment of the availability and accessibility of schools for those of school going age and for those who are eligible for Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET). The baseline determined the vulnerability situation of each child and their families and provided the basis for which stakeholders would eventually put in place the interventions to ensure these children are enrolled, stay in school and graduate.

Barriers attributing to Out of School Children

In line with the Training and Education Policy (2014), the fifth phase government has introduced a policy addressed by *Education Circular no 5 of 2015* to ensure all school age children attend school for free starting the 2016 academic year. This effort was reported to bring about an increase in enrolment number of the children back to school by 5.1% in comparison to the previous year (URT, 2016b). This measure aimed to relieve the burden of the parent/caregiver monetary contribution towards the child's education with the exception of health expenses, school uniform, school supplies, food for day students, transport and bed mattress (Haki Elimu, 2017b). Despite massive enrollment of primary school children, teacher shortage, and infrastructures for accommodation of the newly registered students who took the opportunity are among the remaining challenges for schools.

Despite the introduction of fee free education in 2016, 11,666 OOSC were identified across the five districts whereby Tarime district seems to tally the largest number of OOSC in all the surveyed districts followed by Butiama district and the least number in Bunda TC as figure 1 below reveals. This highlighted problems of retention at the school level and also social economic challenges that caregivers have been unable to mitigate to ensure that their children have a

Figure 1 OOSC by Gender and by District



Source: Baseline study on Out of School Children in Primary Education System in Mara (2017)

chance to go to school. Contributions by Non Government Organizations and/or Civil Society Organizations in providing mainly material and infrastructure support to students and schools have not been sufficient to curb the prevailing high rate of OOSC. There is a need for concerted and sustained efforts from all stakeholders to remedy this situation.

Table 1: Vulnerability situation of Out of School Children

Vulnerability Situation	Total
Chronically Ill Parent(S)	463
Mother Deceased	387
Father Deceased	1711
Both Parents Deceased	895
Re-Married	264
Living With Differently Abled Parent(S)	475
Single Mother/Father	2071
Abandoned by Parents	490
Living in Economically Under Resourced Household	5822
Living in an Orphan Household (Non Orphan)	239
Total	12817*

* is larger than the actual number of children surveyed because some respondents recorded multiple vulnerabilities.

Table 2: Child's versus Caregiver's reasons on why child was not in school in %

Reason	Child's Reason (%)	Caregiver Reason (%)
Poverty and child labour	42	55.0
Disability and other disease of children	21	14.4
Lack of awareness in education (not sending child to school, drop out, absenteeism, no clear reason)	15	14.4
Illness/disability or death of parent(s) or guardian	8	6.2
Family conflicts, separation, divorce, drug addict, child misbehaviour and abandonment	7	5.0
Other (far from school, relocation, pregnancies, marriages and slow learner)	7	5.0
Total	100	100.0

- **Poverty:** Majority of the OOSC come from poor households, heavily reliant on agriculture at a commercial and subsistence level to sustain their livelihood. About 5822 (45%) were living in economically under-resourced households, while a total of 11562 (90%) identified farming as the major source of family income, followed by other sources of income with 898 (7%) and third by temporary employment 233 (2%) and pension (0.6%).
- **Disabilities and Other illnesses:** There were a significant number of children who had mental (7.6%) and/or physical disabilities(7.6%), and other illnesses. The inability of many schools to cater for pupils with special needs as a result of lack of trained professional and/or supporting facilities (such as accessibility ramps) impedes these students.
- **Single headed households:** The death of parents, especially fathers had derailed educational ambitions for many pupils. Out of 11,666 OOSC identified 22% of them had one parent present and 11% of them both parents were absent.
- **Educational attainment of parents and other family members and ignorance:** Family background contributes to OOSC as the majority of the caregivers had only attained or partly studied primary education. About 8,035 (70.5%) first caregivers had primary education followed by 2,954 (26%) who did not have any formal education while 322 (3%) had attained secondary education. Only 28 (0.2%) had tertiary education and 50 (0.4%) did not have any education. The highest level of education attained by the second caregivers was 3,849 (70%) primary education followed by 1,464 (27%) those who did not have any formal education while 149 (3%) had attained secondary education. Only 15 (0.3%) had tertiary education and 23 (0.4%) did not have any education. Further, there was lack of awareness on the part of the caregivers and immediate community on the long term consequences of accepting as a norm the state of having out of school children.
- Nevertheless, early pregnancies and marriages among school age children were acknowledged across all districts even though the percentages are low at 7 percent as affecting more girls from accessing education.
- School infrastructure in terms of adequate classrooms, facilities for the disabled, adequate toilet and school safety more so to stifle sexual harassment concerns in Mara Region is imperative. On average 16 schools out of 76 surveyed schools in the district mentioned safety to both children and teachers as a concern. Distance from school was cited as an impediment by both the children and the caregivers especially little children.
- Inadequate number of professional teachers and paraprofessionals to cater pupils with special needs and with physical/mental disabilities to be re-enrolled and implementation of COBET program.

Policy recommendations

This study identifies poverty as a key barrier for OOSC coupled with disability of children, single headed household, education attainment of parents and caregivers and socio-cultural norms and traditions which lead to child marriage and adolescent fertility. Community education and awareness on the importance of education and fee free education policy and its benefits could address deprivation of Mara children of their basic human rights to education and its importance to socioeconomic development from the individual level, to the community and national levels. Given the complex and numerous barriers for OOSC, GMT and Mara Alliance are pulling resources to eliminate these barriers and ensure OOSC are enrolled, stay in school and graduate.

The barriers that are identified in this report need to be addressed to reduce and end OOSC in Mara. Key policy messages informed by evidence from the baseline survey in Mara Region could be relevant to other places across the country to ensure the effective targeting mechanisms for the sake of re-enrolling and retention of primary school children until successful completion of their studies, include:

- Improve the national education programs such as MEMKWA/COBET and fee-free education to address educational needs for the OOSC, as not all returning students can be placed into regular classes.
- Raise awareness on the fee free education policy specifically the role of different stakeholders.
- Improve education infrastructure and provide psychosocial support and other services to support children with physical and mental disabilities.
- Put in place poverty reduction and social protection mechanisms such as TASAF to abate the ominous situation for the OOSC that is likely to affect their studies. The support for low income families who are unable to meet school expenses, other than fees, is crucial to ensure OOSC and their families are supported.
- Implement policy interventions against sexual harassment together with economic empowerment programmes to rural families.
- Create an environment to attract Non-Government Organizations and/or Community Based Organizations that work to support education accessibility for OOSC. These non state actors had aided a great deal in provisions of material and infrastructure support to primary schools and students notably in a couple of regions of the country.
- Create satellite schools in remote communities for children of tender ages who cannot walk over long distances to access education

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