



PSIPSE Regional Themes and Challenges: Prioritizing Girls' Secondary Education in East Africa

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The **Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE)** aims to accelerate innovation in secondary education programming, research, and development. It is led by a group of private donors and donor advisors, including Central Square Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies, Human Dignity Foundation, Intel Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Marshall Family Foundation, MasterCard Foundation, and an anonymous donor. Project durations are one to three years, and are located across East Africa (encompassing Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda), India, and Nigeria. Results for Development has been selected as learning partner, and will work with three local learning partners to monitor the funded projects, draw out and share important learnings from the efforts, and use these learnings to inform future programming.

Center for Social Sector Education and Policy Analysis (CSSEPA) is a public interest development organization founded in 2011 and specializing mainly in capacity development, project evaluations, policy reviews, action research, monitoring service delivery and reforms. CSSEPA serves as the East Africa local learning partner for PSIPSE.

Introduction and Background

Education is regarded as the driving force behind the development of an economically productive society. Governments and development organizations working in the education sector are increasingly recognizing that today's labor market demands workers who have strong thinking and interpersonal skills, such as critical thinking, communications, team work, and strong work ethics. It is for this reason that expanding and rethinking the nature of secondary education in Sub-Saharan African countries, traditionally reserved for elites and few others, are becoming crucial to successful individual and national participation in the global economy.¹

However, evidence shows that the education sector in Africa in general and the East African region in particular continue to face issues around relevance, access (particularly for girls), quality, and efficiency.² Education reforms across East Africa are using strategies that promote education and empowerment of girls and women across the system.

Over the years, the international community has paid much attention to basic education with a focus on universal primary education and transition to secondary education. Governments have committed to improving girls' education through application of different strategies and initiatives. This has been through ratifying international and regional instruments and enacting national legislation, policies and frameworks. In East Africa, significant strides have been made in the last decade in investing in basic primary and secondary education. However, adequate attention has not been paid to secondary education. In a UNESCO 2012 report on girls' education, mention of secondary schooling was quietly neglected,³ often squeezed between the more prominent topics of primary and tertiary education. Yet it is at this adolescent stage secondary education and literacy programs can play a catalytic role in empowering girls and women with necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to make qualitative improvements to their lives and to help them claim their rights.⁴

Issues, Challenges and Successes in Girls' Education

The benefits of girls' education cannot be understated. Girls with secondary education have shown improved economic status and earnings. Beyond economic benefit, girls with secondary education have improved problem solving and decision making skills. For example, girls with secondary education can better negotiate issues of reproductive health, such as mitigating against HIV/AIDS. Women with more years of schooling have fewer children with better health and nutrition, which can lower the infant mortality rate of a country.⁵

The UNESCO 2012 statistics report notes that the percentage of children globally enrolled in primary school stands at 81%. The commitment of governments of East Africa region show strides have been made in universal primary education, especially after increasing access

¹ As quoted in the Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 on Reforming Education and Training sectors in Kenya:

² Critical Perspective in Education and skills in Eastern Africa in Basic and post-basic Level. Network for International policies and cooperation in education 2003.

³ UNESCO 2012 From Access to Equality Empowering Girls and Women through Literacy and Secondary Education

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Keeping the promise 2006 Five Benefits of Girls Secondary Education

through implementing free primary education. All these efforts have been geared towards achievement of the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary school education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education not later than 2015.⁶

Primary Enrollment Rates in East Africa (2010) ⁷		
Country	Female	Male
Kenya	112%	115%
Tanzania	101%	103%
Uganda	120%	122%

Primary to Secondary Transition Rates in East Africa		
Country	Female	Male
Kenya (2010)	69.1%	64.1%
Tanzania (2011)	37%	45%
Uganda (2009)	67%	73%

In spite of the international community, governments, and local actors making strides in primary education and transition to secondary education since the UNESCO established Education for All (EFA), there are deeper barriers towards girls continuing in secondary education. Some of these include socio-cultural norms such as early marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). In rural areas, girls tend to do most of the household chores, leaving little time for learning and school. Poverty still remains the overriding challenge in the quest for improving access to quality secondary education for girls. Secondary education is not free and higher levels of education are not always highly valued in rural East Africa. Access to secondary education can be also difficult for girls when traveling to and from school is dangerous.

The Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) is supporting projects in East Africa that work to increase access to secondary education for marginalized girls living in low-income, rural, or post-conflict areas. These girls are at a higher risk of not accessing (let alone completing) secondary schooling. Socio-economic status can predispose adolescent girls to early marriage, pregnancy and involvement in labor to support families' livelihoods; in addition, girls are at risk for gender-based violence.

One example of a PSIPSE-supported project is the **International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)**, which is identifying barriers to accessing secondary education for girls living in conflict and post-conflict areas. Another project, the **Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)** in Uganda is working with existing post-conflict models of secondary education for girls to identify successful aspects of post-conflict education future replication of successful models. FAWE has prior experience building girls-only boarding schools, named Centers of Excellence, which are supported by governments and non-state actors.⁸ To increase girls' access and retention there are a number of local authorities and community based initiatives working with FAWE in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. These come together to form local committees for girls protection and education, especially those who are in danger of inhibitive social cultural issues such early marriage. In all the three

⁶ As agreed in the World Education Forum in the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) and the Global Compact on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, 2000):

⁷ UNESCO Statistics 2012 From Access to Equality Empowering Girls and Women through Literacy and Secondary Education

⁸ FAWE Center of Excellence (www.fawe.org) Kenya and Tanzania have success stories supporting a gender responsive school environment working with communities and a number of parameters.

countries FAWE has succeeded in campaigning and lobbying Ministries of Education to put in place re-entry policies which encourage parents to send their girls (teenage mothers) back to school after pregnancy. These have been adopted across the sub-region as affirmative actions to provide girls a second chance in their education instead of letting them drop out. The implementation currently seems to be weak, but with enforcement and robust implementation, these policy responses will go a long way in promoting access to and retention of girls in secondary schools across East Africa.

In Kenya, the **African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC)** is using its past research to target girls and their families living in urban informal settlements in Nairobi to improve support for education and learning outcomes. Using education interventions which have worked elsewhere in developing countries, APHRC seeks to bring about change in the urban slums of Nairobi. The intervention is focused at the point of entry to secondary education, with role models used to mentor and coach girls and their families.



Students at Pader Girls Secondary School in Uganda, a FAWE-U supported institution. <http://www.ccfpader.org/programs/education/Pader-Girls-Academy>

education in the next five years.⁹ The introduction of subsidized secondary education (SSE) five years ago and free primary education (FPE) ten years ago has greatly contributed to increase in girls' enrolment. Although Kenya achieved near gender parity nationally in primary and secondary education access, there are still significant gender and regional disparities with pastoralists and nomadic counties recording very low girls' participation in both secondary and primary schools. To address these challenges, Kenya has put in place legislative and policy interventions such as Education Act of 2012 and Nomadic Education Policy.

A number of state-led initiatives are also seen in the sub region. In Kenya, the Ministry of Education has developed the National Education Sector Support Plan (NESSP 2012-2017), which is a successor of the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP 2005-2010). NESSP represents Kenya's education sector development and delivery strategy with an integrated five year gender education investment programme. This programme outlines all Kenyan government strategies and investment proposals on driving girls' secondary

In Tanzania, the current education development plan (2012-2016) supported through a sector wide approach to planning like the previous plans (2007-2011 and 2002-2006),

⁹ Outlined and explained in the National Education Sector Support Plan (NESSP) of 2012, but ratified in July 2013.

incorporates such measures as construction of new schools, recruitment of teachers, campaigns by role models, quality improvement through child friendly teaching and learning and complimentary basic education (COBET).¹⁰ Similar efforts are going in Uganda.

In addition to state-led policies, there are many key players at both the regional, community, and district/county levels who are working to advance secondary education for girls.¹¹ For instance, a number of local authorities and community based initiatives work with FAWA in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. These groups come together to form local committees for girls protection and education, especially those who are in danger of inhibitive social cultural issues such early marriage. In all the three countries FAWA has succeeded in campaigning and lobbying Ministries of Education to put in place re-entry policies which encourage parents to send their girls (teenage mothers) back to school after pregnancy. These have been adopted across the sub-region as affirmative actions to provide girls a second chance in their education instead of letting them drop out. The implementation currently seems to be weak, but with enforcement and robust implementation, these policy responses will go a long way in promoting access to and retention of girls in secondary schools across East Africa.

Recommendations for Policymakers and other Stakeholders

The East African countries have signed a number of international commitments to address EFA and MDGs alongside other global compacts around girls and women empowerment. In order to realize these commitments, they will now have to not only put in place gender responsive policies and frameworks but also ensure they are fully implemented. Some of these will include gender sensitive planning and budgeting to engender all relevant public policies and plans. Stakeholders, especially civil societies and NGOs, will need to monitor such action plans and execution of attendant budgets with a view to holding the state authorities to account on their promises and commitments. The tracking of results should focus on education indicators, learning outcomes, and participation of stakeholders.

Public private partnerships (PPP) are yet another promising strategy. Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) is already piloting a PPP with the government of Uganda, and successes and lessons learnt should be disseminated to promote what works well and can be scaled up. Working through broad range stakeholders, CSOs, and NGOs should consolidate knowledge and learning to improve service delivery for girls in secondary education.

¹⁰ COBET is an initiative developed in 1997 to reach over-age children not enrolled in mainstreamed public schools and provides opportunities for out of school children to access quality basic education and survival skills and places very special and specific emphasis on girls' education.

¹¹ Key players who are championing secondary education for girls in the sub region include: FAWA, UNICEF, CIDA, DFID, USAID, ActionAid, Women Education Researchers of Kenya (WERK), Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), Care, Plan, Oxfam, Tanzania ECD Network, UNAIDS, ILO, Kiota Women's Health and Development Organization (KIWOHEDE), Save the Children, Youth Alive, Tanzania Gender Networking Programme, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Women, WFP, WHO, WB, private foundations/companies and relevant government ministries & departments among others. All these groups and agencies have been cited by the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI). For more information, see www.ungei.org. At community and district/county levels there have been numerous campaigns which have brought issues of girls to the fore front championed or led by national EFA coalitions Forum Education NGOs in Uganda, Tanzania Education Network/Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania (TEN/MET), Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC), and campaign networks like Girl Child Network (GCN), Girls' Education Movements, and Girl Guides Associations. For more on these initiatives and campaigns, see www.childfund.org/kenya/uganda.

Through increasing investments in girl-friendly environments (e.g. boarding schools in nomadic and arid zones), boosting female teachers to act as role models, installing water and sanitation in schools, and promoting female-focused clubs, mentorship schemes and adult education, CSOs and governments can consolidate their gains. To enhance girls' education, more emphasis should be placed on alternative provision of basic education outside the formal education systems to address communities that are marginalized and to implement gender sensitive curriculum.

Other areas for intervention may include working with local teachers and role models to engage with girls through enhancing their confidence, promoting learning/life skills and using gender responsive curriculum. After-school support initiatives are critical for low performing learners to improve their learning achievement and outcomes and to improve the number of girls transiting to secondary school. It is important to increase girls' participation in school governance so that their voices and views can be heard and incorporated in school development planning and decision making. Such spaces and opportunities have enhanced girl's confidence and leadership skills.

Successful interventions will build on evidence-based research as to what works and what does not work. Data or information from ongoing studies will then be used to inform planning and advocacy to influence policy at the national level and county or district levels. This calls for planned and continuous investment in research initiatives by government departments, research agencies, institutions of higher learning, think tanks, corporations, foundations and civil society groups.

Lastly, stakeholders must open more spaces and dedicate more sessions for engagement with parents and local communities to change their attitudes about girls' education. Genuine community participation in planning, implementation and monitoring of secondary education programmes will not only increase ownership in projects but will provide safety nets for the participation of their children in schools.

References

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National Education Sector Support Plan (NESSP) of 2012, but ratified in July 2013, Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Kenya.

Results for Development Institute (R4D, 2013 – www.resultsfordevelopment.org) PSIPSE (Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education) Project being supported by CSSEPA as a regional learning partner for East Africa (www.cssepa.org)

Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) – www.fawe.org – with special focus on chapters in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.