

Policy Brief

January 2016



EAC Education

Introduction

Article 10 of CEDAW states that; State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men and women in the field of education. Education is one of the basic rights for both girls and boys. Available estimates of literacy levels in the East African Community (EAC) countries show that literacy has improved greatly i.e.; Burundi at 85.6% (88.2% men, 88.2% women); Kenya at 78% (81.1% men and 74.9% women); Rwanda at 70.5% (73.2% men, 68% women); Uganda, 78.4% (85.3%, men, 71.5% women); and Tanzania 70.6 (75.9% men and 65.4%)¹. Despite these improvements, overall education of girls and women at higher levels remain far lower than that of boys and men.

Issues of Concern

- According to the various Country Demographic and Health Surveys in 4 partner states, women who have never been to school are more than the men (20% female, 13 % men in Uganda; 27% female and 18% men in Tanzania; 7% female , 3% men in Kenya; and, 22% female, 16% men in Rwanda.
- Enrolment and completion rates of formal education right from primary level shows big gaps especially for the girls. Although Tanzania and Uganda have gender parity in primary school enrolment, completion rates at higher levels remain low for girls; 19.5% for females and 32.7% for males at secondary level in Tanzania, and, Uganda's 47% enrolment for girls at secondary further declines to 28% at University level. Similarly, Rwanda's attainment of gender parity in enrolment, and better completion rate for girls (78% in 2012), is further challenged by secondary school enrolment for girls which was at 30%.²
- Despite significant gains in enrolment in East Africa, the education outcomes have been less favourable. It is indicated that pupils are not learning core skills expected at their age and grade level³
- While gender equity is realized in lower primary in the EAC partner states, there is a big gap between boys and girls as they go higher in the education ladder. Also fewer girls enroll for science subjects and in technical education. The implication is that fewer women will be able to meet the needs in the labour market due to lack of practical skills

1 EAC 2015

2 Country Situation analyses---

3 UWEZO 2013



- Deep-rooted stigmas against women's education, and the heavy burden of tuition costs, form what is commonly perceived as an unbreakable barrier to girls' education.⁴

Given that the population of women in each of the partner states is higher compared to that of men, disparities in enrolment and completion rates and quality considerations in formal education for girls and boys means that the rights of majority population continue to be denied and their potential is not being exploited. This will have long term implications on both national and regional development. As the region aims at promoting economic and political advancement, this is not likely to be attained since the biggest percentage of its population will remain semi-illiterate and semi skilled unless the situation changes

Benefits of education

Studies show that there is a direct relationship between education and health and that education affects an individual's demographics and health. Specifically, education level influences contraceptive use, fertility, general health status and mortality of children. Education is also recognized as a critical component of poverty reduction, improvement of maternal and child health. Higher levels of education for girls and women have strong positive impacts on their employment and earning potential and their contribution to society's development.⁵ Thus, targeted improvements in the education of both women and men and especially women will ignite quick development at social economic and health levels for the population in the EAC. It will have a positive snowball effect on the demographic challenges that partner states are currently grappling with in the health and economic sectors.

Policy Recommendations

Partner States should strengthen existing girl retention policies through a targeted tracking system and effectively address factors that contribute to their dropping out of school

Partner States should institute and implement punitive measures for parents who engage their children in early marriages by strengthening the linkages between local level administrative structures, police, and the ministries of Justice in the different Partner States

Partner States should make deliberate increments in investment for education for children especially those in rural areas, to ensure more girls from the rural poor areas access quality and practical education. More investments should be made to ensure improvements in scholastic materials, physical infrastructure (that are gender sensitive), and increase in teachers' salaries and other tested means of motivation for teachers working in rural areas.

Partner States should institute positive discrimination in enrollment for girls in practical /skills based education both in secondary and university education as well as technical education

4 <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>

5 EAC 2015

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