



## Pupil School Mobility in Urban Kenya

### Introduction

Kenya is one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa that has implemented a successful Free Primary Education (FPE) policy. However, in spite of improved access in primary education following the implementation of FPE policy in 2003, children living in urban informal settlements, usually referred to as 'slums' still face serious challenges in accessing free public education. Data collected by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in two major informal settlements in Nairobi - Korogocho and Viwandani has revealed that 44% or nearly half of primary school-going children in the study sample are enrolled in low-fees private informal schools. It is also apparent in the data that there is high mobility of pupils between schools.

This paper analyses school mobility in urban Kenya and presents a picture of how pupils move between schools and the types of schools which attract more in-transferring pupils. The hypothesis which guides this paper is that transfer into public schools is competitive, hence there will be

fewer in-transfer into public schools compared to transfers into private schools in the informal settlement.

The paper concludes that FPE has not altered significantly the slum conditions that inhibit utilisation of low-fees private informal schools by the poor itself a key reason for high mobility.

### School Availability within the Study Sites

Mobility can be driven by supply and demand; the supply of low-fees private schools in the slum areas may be influenced by the demand for these schools and the extent of public investment in the slums (i.e. availability of government schools). In spite of having large population of children of school going age, the two slums (Korogocho and Viwandani) where the research for this paper was undertaken only have two public free schools. Table 1 provides information on the supply of schools in the slums and those in the non-slum areas.

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**Table 1: School availability within the study site and neighboring areas, 2006**

Study site	No. of private	Private (%)	No. of public	Public (%)	Total schools
Korogocho study site	29	93.54	2	6.45	30
Larger Korogocho	4	80.00	1	20.00	5
Korogocho neighborhood	3	60.00	2	40.00	5
Viwandani study site	24	92.31	2	7.69	26
Larger Viwandani	6	75.00	2	25.00	8
Viwandani neighborhood	9	100.00	0	0.00	9
Jericho study site	2	50.00	2	50.00	4
Larger Jericho	1	33.33	2	66.67	3
Jericho's neighborhood	6	37.50	10	62.50	16
Harambee study site	2	66.67	1	33.33	3
Harambee neighborhood	1	20.00	4	80.00	5



## Why do Pupils Change Schools?

Table 2 contains information on reasons for transferring from one school to another. It shows that the most frequently cited reasons by parents when asked why they transferred their child from one school to

another were the performance of teachers, and pupil discipline in the school they transferred in to. It also shows that most transfers that occur due to schools not having appropriate grades or because the school transferred into was or benefited from FPE.

**Table 2: Important reasons for changing schools, n=478**

Reason for changing school	Total		% into Private schools	
	No	%	No	%
School cheaper or provides FPE	120	25.10	28	23.33
Teachers/school perform well or more disciplined	237	49.58	186	78.48
School buildings/facilities of good quality	9	1.88	5	55.56
School is near or it is easily accessible,	45	9.41	29	64.44
Lack of appropriate grade or level	32	6.69	13	40.63
Peer influence	9	1.88	8	88.89
(Relocation of family, Expelled from previous school; School on strike)	26	5.44	20	76.92

## Where is Mobility High?

Pupil school mobility is high among the private owned schools and within the slum residence. Most of the mobility is between private to private and public to private and not from private to public among the slum residence. The reason for this type of mobility is likely to be that those who move from one private school to another private school may be searching for a school which they perceive to be of better quality. The quality of the slum informal private schools is likely to vary, and this is a likely explanation for the transfers. The number of transfers in the non-slums is fewer and the likely explanation for this is that there is adequate supply of public schools to match demand and parents are able to make a choice between public and private schools depending on their disposable income.

## Policy Implication

Mobility is associated with private schools. Free primary education ought to have reduced the use of private schools, especially among the slum residents who by nature of their slum residency are already disadvantaged. This research paper however,

reveals that in spite of FPE, parents still searching for a 'good' school for their child.

There are some policy dilemmas to be drawn from the findings presented in this paper.

1. Should all the private schools in the informal settlements be recognised as acceptable, and therefore, incorporated as government schools?
2. How do those who run these informal private schools get compensated?
3. Would accepting the informal private schools be seen as endorsing 'second class' education since the structures in these schools are not fit for a school?
4. How does the government provide complete free education to pupils who live in the slums who apparently still utilise low-fees private schools?

It appears there is already a natural public-private partnership in Kenya's urban education context. How the government can tap into this so that the vulnerable are not left worse off by this natural public-private partnership is the main policy question.

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