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EDUCATING GIRLS IN KARAMOJA, UGANDA: BARRIERS, BENEFITS, AND TERMS OF INCLUSION IN THE PERSPECTIVES OF GIRLS, THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND THEIR TEACHERS

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Cover photo: Girls working to mine gold, Karamoja, Uganda. Photo courtesy of Karamoja Development Forum (KDF).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This scoping report investigates barriers, benefits, and "terms of inclusion" for girls' education in the Karamoja sub-region of Uganda. Karamoja has some of the lowest education indicators in the country, with females generally faring much worse than males. The report examines the experiences and perceptions of girls, male and female community members, and teachers about girls' education in the region, drawing on an assessment that took place from June to August 2022 in 10 sites in four districts: Amudat, Kaabong, Moroto, and Napak. The assessment was carried out by a team of young women from Karamoja using participatory methods in local languages, and this report intentionally prioritizes and focuses upon the voices of the participants themselves. It finds that the benefits of schooling are contested and that costs are often seen to outweigh the benefits of educating girls. Schooling comes to families on terms of inclusion that families negotiate in the contexts of sustaining a viable livelihood and of prevailing gender social norms that widely disadvantage girls. The report addresses the five key areas of concern for participants:

What are the costs of sending girls to school? Costs of sending girls to school are multifaceted and often outweigh the benefits for households. Girls are needed to contribute to domestic labor and to generate income; these contributions are greatly curtailed if a girl is in school. Financial costs for primary day school are low but rise exponentially and prohibitively at the secondary level. Sending girls to school can lead to a reduced amount of bridewealth upon marriage and can incur reputational risks to the girl and her family.

Who is in school? The data vary from one location to the next, with no clear pattern by gender as to who is in school and who is not in school when children of school-going age are taken as a whole. Differences by gender are more pronounced in three sub-counties at the secondary level, with many more boys than girls in secondary school. Rates are closer to equal in four other sub-counties, including one location in which no children were reported to be in secondary school.

Why are girls not in school? The main reasons given for why girls are not in school are: their help is needed at home; financial resources are inadequate to send children—especially girls—to school; cultural factors, including a focus on livestock acquisition, prioritization of bridewealth value, polygamy, and the absence of a tradition of education among parents; and distance and other access barriers.

Why do girls drop out of school? The primary factors leading to high drop-out rates of girls from school are: financial concerns; responsibilities at home; issues related to puberty and menstruation; marriage and pregnancy; the resumption of insecurity; poor academic performance; and COVID-19. Although our evidence is limited as to the time of withdrawal from school, information from two sites indicates a steep drop in enrollment for both boys and girls starting in Primary 2 and increasing throughout the primary years.

What are the benefits of sending girls to school? Benefits of sending girls to school that participants cited include economic, social, and broader society gains. On the economic side, most participants detailed the support they hoped that educated girls would provide to their families. We discussed the different activities likely to be undertaken by girls who had completed primary as compared to secondary education. We found that even when educated girls are performing the same tasks as those who are uneducated, girls who have been to school are believed to generally do a better job at managing these activities and to have greater financial success. Girls who went to school are felt to (at times) enjoy improved status and reputations, to effectively use their skills and knowledge to help their communities, and to be better able to negotiate marital outcomes. On a broader societal level, girls who were educated are believed to become role models for other girls, to hold leadership positions within their community or region, and to help lift their households and communities out of poverty.

This study finds that the biggest barrier to education for girls is opportunity cost, on intersecting financial, labor, and reputational levels. This assessment highlights that currently, education inclusion comes on terms that require families to negotiate often conflicting views on educating girls, such that boys' education is usually prioritized. The lack of decent jobs in the sub-region means there are few employment options even for girls who do complete secondary school. However, participants overwhelmingly spoke of the importance of girls' education and the need to encourage more girls to go to school and to stay in school. The report concludes with a summary of key issues and solutions that participants offered to increase girls' educational attainment in Karamoja, and suggestions for follow-up research and actions

INTRODUCTION

It is well established that educational enrollment and attainment in the Karamoja region lag far behind national averages; and that both the quality of formal schooling, and its relevance to rapidly changing livelihoods, require improvement. Demand-side explanations often focus on service users' poverty, mobile lifestyles, or limited awareness of the benefits of education, but tend to consider less closely what adjustments families need, and are able, to make if they are to enable sustained participation in schooling for all their children. On the supply side, the density of the schooling network, particularly at secondary level, is often insufficient to enable universal access, and there are often also constraints including shortages of appropriately qualified teachers, learning materials, and water and sanitation (WASH) facilities; and a language of instruction that is not familiar in the context. Girls are more adversely affected by demand- and supply-side constraints than boys, a situation that has been exacerbated by recent stresses, including the COVID-19 pandemic, recurrent drought, and a return to conflict, all of which have tended to increase poverty at the household level. Pastoralist, agro-pastoralist, and other families in Karamoja, therefore, find that schooling comes to them with various "terms of inclusion" that they have to negotiate in order to educate their children;[1] and those terms tend to be more disadvantageous for girls.

Such tensions are starkly evidenced in education indicators in the Karamoja sub-region. These are well below Uganda's national average: the net primary enrollment rate (NER) in 2019/2020 was 42.1%, compared to the national average of 80%. This was the lowest in the country by a factor of almost two, with the next lowest being Acholi, with a 73.9% NER. The secondary school NER for Karamoja is 12.1%, compared to a 27.3% national average; and Acholi is below Karamoja in secondary NER.[2] Females are enrolled in both primary and secondary school at approximately the same numbers as males in Karamoja, but girls' drop-out rate is much higher, and their attendance much lower, particularly in secondary school. This gives rise to gaps in years of formal education, with females in Karamoja having far fewer years than their male counterparts;[3] and in literacy levels: 40.3% of males over 10 years of age in Karamoja were literate compared to 22.6% of females.[4] The COVID-19 pandemic and the extended closure of schools in Uganda were predicted to lead to additional educational setbacks for both genders,[5] but with girls more likely to withdraw permanently from formal education for reasons discussed in this report.

This knowledge on low education indicators in Karamoja is not new. Numerous studies and initiatives have taken place over the past 15 years to boost school enrollment and attendance,[6] including those focused specifically on education for girls; but the measures taken so far have enabled only limited change. For this reason, in 2021, bilateral donors within the Karamoja Development Partners Group (KDPG) requested that the Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU) of Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University investigate continued barriers to girls' education in more depth.[7] The resulting outputs are three-pronged: this scoping report, a briefing paper on experiences with girls' education in pastoral areas,[8] and a stakeholder event to bring together national and regional actors with experience in drylands education.

This scoping report is based on a participatory field review in four districts of Karamoja and provides a preliminary overview of the main issues regarding the barriers to and

[1] C. Dyer, "Does Mobility Have to Mean Being Hard to Reach? Mobile Pastoralists and Education's 'Terms of Inclusion,'" *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 43, no. 5 (2013): 601–621.

[2] Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), "Uganda National Household Survey, 2019/2020" (UBOS, Kampala, Uganda, 2021).

[3] S. Crawford and M. Kasiko, "Support for Strategic Review and Planning to Strengthen DfID's Work on Gender Equality and Women and Girls Empowerment in Karamoja Region: Final Report" (Governance, Social Development, Conflict and Humanitarian PEAKS Consortium led by Coffey International Development, 2016), **http://www.gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IDEVFARR15005UG_Final-Report_Karamoja.pdf**.

[4] UBOS, "Uganda National Household Survey."

[5] J. Parkes, S. Datzberger, C. Howell, J. Kasidi, T. Kiwanuka, L. Knight, R. Nagawa, D. Naker, and K. Devries, "Young People, Inequality, and Violence during the COVID-19 Lockdown in Uganda" (SocArXiv, October 6, 2020), **https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/2p6hx/**.

[6] Numerous studies and initiatives are discussed in the accompanying briefing paper: C. Dyer, "Experiences with Girls' Education in Pastoralist Areas, with an Emphasis on East African Countries: A Briefing Paper" (Karamoja Resilience Support Unit (KRSU), Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Kampala, Uganda, 2022).

[7] The discussion with the KDPG on developing this assessment took place during the 77 weeks in which Ugandan schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and hence the fieldwork was only possible starting in the second quarter of 2022.

[8] C. Dyer, "Experiences with Girls' Education."

benefits of educating girls in Karamoja. We have taken a perspective that identifies terms of inclusion in communities' experience specifically from a gender perspective and prioritize in this report the perspectives and experiences of girls, members of their communities, and educators at primary and secondary schools in or near the selected data collection sites. This scoping assessment thus explores voices that are less heard; and while it is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, it offers rich and gender-focused insights. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the briefing paper: both provide evidence to inform the discussion of donors, policy makers, and programmers seeking to address obstacles to girls' education in the sub-region.

METHODS

The KRSU team conducted this assessment in four districts of Karamoja: Amudat, Kaabong, Moroto, and Napak. We purposively selected these districts and the sub-counties within them to reflect different livelihood systems, access to urban centers, and historical experiences with education. We designed the sampling to entail work in two villages in two sub-counties in each of the four districts, meaning a planned total of 16 villages. Various constraints required us to modify this plan, including insecurity in Kaabong, the need to move to additional villages to locate participants in all interview categories, and—due to earlier security delays—time constraints in the final district (Amudat). In total we conducted participatory data collection activities in 19 different villages in nine sub-counties: two sub-counties each in Moroto and Kaabong, four in Napak, and one in Amudat. In addition, we interviewed teachers in schools in different locations within the sub-counties. While the sampled locations are not representative of Karamoja more broadly, we believe that the patterns illustrated are broadly typical and as such, have wider resonance.

LOCATIONS

A short description of each sampled district is below. Annex A lists all the sites, and Annex B indicates the number of schools in each of the districts.

- **Amudat District** is a predominantly pastoral district on the border with Kenya. The Pokot ethnic group are the primary inhabitants, and many have relatives and assets in both Kenya and Uganda and move across the border regularly. Differences in language and culture keep the Pokot somewhat isolated from the Karimojong territorial units in southern Karamoja (i.e., Bokora, Matheniko, and Pian) but they do have a long-standing alliance with the Tepeth, their nearest neighbors in Uganda. Many Pokot practice female genital mutilation (FGM), and many girls marry in early adolescence.

- **Kaabong District** is in northern Karamoja and borders Karenga and Kotido Districts, South Sudan, and Kenya. The Dodoth are the majority ethnic group and practice both pastoralism and agro-pastoralism, depending on location. Strong cultural traditions dictate gender norms, and school attendance for females is lower than in other districts.

- **Moroto District** is found in the east-central portion of Karamoja. It is an agro-pastoral and pastoral district and home to the largest town in the sub-region, which serves as an important market hub.

- **Napak District** is in the southwestern part of the region and is agrarian and agro-pastoral, with strong social and economic ties to the Teso sub-region. Missionary presence was strong in the district, and the population began sending children to school earlier than elsewhere (in the 1980s). Lotome Boys Primary School and in Kangole Girls Secondary School were some of the first schools established in Karamoja.

PARTICIPANTS

The assessment team comprised a female Ugandan team leader from outside the region and eight young female researchers from the region with experience or training in using participatory methods. Participatory exercises and discussions took place in the local languages. In each location we conducted focus group discussions with different types of participants. These included:

- Girls who had no schooling or who had dropped out early in primary school;
- Girls who had completed primary school but not gone on to secondary school;
- Girls who had finished lower secondary (through Secondary 4 level);
- Adult men with children of school-going age;
- Adult women with children of school-going age;
- Mixed adults with children in school, for economic analysis.

METHODS

Focus groups included both participatory exercises and open-ended discussions. The tools used were:

Proportional piling: A simple exercise in which participants divide 100 small objects (in our case, small stones) into piles, with sizes of the piles illustrating relative importance or size of different aspects. We used proportional piling here to illustrate proportions of school-age children in school and not in school, with the categories listed in the chart below.

In school				Not in school			
Primary school		Secondary school		Never gone to school		Dropped out of school	
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls

In this activity, respondents would first divide the stones into piles representing proportions of children in school and not in school. The "in school" pile was then divided into "primary school" and "secondary school" piles, which were further split by gender. The "not in school" pile was split into "never gone to school" and "dropped out of school," and these two categories were again divided by gender. (The results of this exercise are presented in the "Who is in school?" section of the findings.)

After reaching consensus within the group regarding the proportion of children in school and not in school, we discussed the various factors that determined whether a child stayed home or went to school and, if they did attend, until what level.

Activity matrices: Focus groups of girls created activity matrices to illustrate the different activities that girls not in school typically perform over the course of a day. Participants listed all activities from the time of waking up until the time they went to sleep. Participants then went through the same activity list for girls who were in primary school and girls who were in secondary school.

Annual income and expenditure analysis: Mixed gender focus groups listed all the sources of income for a typical household in their village and then calculated the contribution of income to the household from each source. The exercise was then repeated for all expenses by a typical household in a typical year. Following these two steps, the focus group listed all the costs of sending a child to primary and secondary school.

Open-ended discussions: We incorporated open-ended discussions, using checklists for topics, into all of the above activities. This allowed for in-depth discussions of different responses and a thorough investigation of "why" questions, such as why some girls are in school and others are not, and why some activities are performed by some girls and other activities are not. Other topics included the reliability of different income sources, decision-making around expenditures, and the relative cost of education in comparison to income and other expenses.

Lastly, we conducted **key informant interviews** with 22 educators at local primary and secondary schools in each sub-county and with the District Education Officers (DEOs) of Kaabong and Amudat Districts. At each school we sought to interview the head teacher or deputy head teacher as well as the senior woman teacher, as individuals who might have particular insight into the challenges facing girl pupils. These interviews covered local enrollment, school costs, views on why families did or did not send children to school, the challenges that girl children faced while in school, and solutions to improve educational access and enrollment for girls.

Discussions with participants offered suggestions about a broad range of approaches as to how enrollment, attendance, and educational attainment for girls could be improved. These responses inform our analysis and conclusions. Annex E includes a list of solutions that participants suggested.

FINDINGS

This section sets out field findings. We start with a discussion of the financial, opportunity, and social costs of sending girls to school, since many participants cited the costs of sending children, and girls in particular, to school as a major barrier to enrollment and attendance. These costs were also seen to be a primary cause of girls dropping out. This discussion of costs provides a reference point for the discussion that follows: who is and is not in school, why girls drop out of school, and participant perspectives on the benefits of educating girls.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF SENDING GIRLS TO SCHOOL?

Financial costs

Prohibitive financial cost is the primary reason that participants gave for why children are not in school or why they do not complete school. To better understand these constraints, we sought to first document the cost of education per student per year as reported by teachers in the various assessment locations. Table 1 below shows the averages by location, including fees, learning materials, exam fees, and required additional items. The list of complete results is available in Annex C.

In addition to the information provided by teachers, a mixed gender group of adult participants in each sub-county created an economic matrix illustrating the total annual income and expenditure of a "typical" family. Participants then detailed the expenses required, per child per year, to attend school. Annex D includes an example of one such exercise. The results by sub-county are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Average reported education costs by teachers, per student/year

Level of schooling	Average cost, per student/year	
	Uganda shillings (UGX)	United States dollars (US$)[9]
Lower primary, day school	47,178	12.37
Lower primary, boarding	81,800	21.46
Upper primary, day school	112,966	29.63
Upper primary, boarding	160,950	42.22
Secondary school, boarding	1,037,620	272.16

Table 2. Typical annual household income, annual costs per child by school level, and proportion of income needed per child per year as reported by male and female community members with children in school

Location: district	Location: sub-county	Typical annual household income	Amount reported spent on education, per child by level, 2022		Proportion (%) of annual income needed per child per year (2022)
		UGX (US$ approx.)	UGX (US$ approx.)		
Moroto	Lotisan	4,714,000 ($1,234.00)	Primary day school	68,500 ($18.00)	1.5%
			Primary boarding school	152,500 ($40.00)	3.2%
	Tapac	2,496,000 ($654.00)	Primary, day	115,200 ($30.00)	4.6%
			Primary, boarding	474,300 ($124.00)	19%
			Secondary, boarding	2,152,950 ($564.00)	86%

Continued on next page

[9] Rates for all UGX to US$ conversions are from mid-September 2022.

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Location: district	Location: sub-county	Typical annual household income	Amount reported spent on education, per child by level, 2022		Proportion (%) of annual income needed per child per year (2022)
		UGX (US$ approx.)	UGX (US$ approx.)		
Napak	Kangole	2,347,000 ($614.00)	Primary, boarding	686,000 ($180.00)	29%
	Nabwal	4,064,000 ($1,064.00)	Primary, day	45,000 ($12.00)	1.1%
			Primary, boarding	571,000 ($150.00)	14%
Kaabong	Sidok	3,996,000 ($1,046.00)	Primary, boarding	688,900 ($180)	17%
			Secondary, boarding	937,300 ($245.00)	23%
	Kathile	4,072,000 ($1,066.00)	Primary, boarding	575,500 ($151.00)	14%
Amudat	Karita	8,248,000 ($2,158.00)	Primary, day	202,000 ($53.00)	2.4%
			Primary, boarding	716,000 ($187.00)	8.6%

Comparing Table 1 with the last columns in Table 2 above, we see only partial agreement in the estimates of participants of education costs and the averages drawn from teachers' responses. The higher costs listed by parents, particularly for primary boarding school, may include more expenses than those considered by teachers. These different understandings of costs may help explain why some teachers appear to struggle to understand why more students do not enroll.

Notable in Table 2 is the ratio of education costs per child to the estimated total income, especially for primary boarding (necessary when children live far from schools or are in upper primary) and for secondary school (which almost always involves boarding due to the distance to the limited secondary schools in each district). For instance, if a household in Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong had two children in primary school and two children in secondary school, the total cost per year would be $850 based on the community estimates (Table 2), or almost 80% of the estimated annual income of $1,064. Using the teachers' estimates, expenses would be approximately $587, still more than half of estimated annual income. This illustrates that, despite policies such as Universal Primary Education (UPE, the system of free primary education introduced in 1997) and Universal Secondary Education (USE, the system of reduced secondary fees introduced in 2007) that aim to reduce the economic costs of education for households,[10] the financial burden of education is still a very prohibitive term of inclusion for many families.

In addition to cash out of pocket, households also consider potential impacts of girls' education on marriageability and expected bridewealth at the time of marriage. Within pastoral societies, bridewealth is traditionally paid in cattle by the groom's family to the bride's family and clan members.[11] The exchange of bridewealth is an important means of securing both financial and social capital and involves intricate networks of reciprocity and expectation.[12] The birth of a girl child is celebrated due to the promise of future bridewealth, and many families raise their daughters with this end goal in mind. Households may feel pressure

[10] The 1997 UPE program aimed to improve primary school resources, increase access to and equity of primary education, and reduce poverty. The 2007 Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy aimed to offset costs in government-run secondary schools. According to the District Education Officer (DEO) of Amudat District, in Amudat this program provides UGX 25,000 (approximately US$ 6.50) per child per term to schools. This amount is reduced from the tuition paid by parents. Policies differ from one district to the next, and, in some locations, only students with high marks in Primary 7 qualify for the USE cost offset. Given the costs of education detailed here, the total offset of less than US$ 20/year/student does relatively little to help parents afford secondary school.

[11] Bridewealth is the transfer from the groom's side to the bride's side and is the norm in pastoral and agro-pastoral communities across Sub-Saharan Africa. This is different from dowry, which is a transfer from the bride's side to the groom's side (or financial assets that accompany the bride to her new home).

[12] See inter alia, P.H. Guliver, "Jie Marriage," *African Affairs* 52, no. 207 (1953): 149–155; W. Goldschmidt, "The Economics of Bridewealth among the Sebei in East Africa," Ethnology 13 (1974): 311–33; M. L. Fleisher and G. J. Holloway, "The Problem with Boys: Bridewealth Accumulation, Sibling Gender, and the Propensity to Participate in Cattle Raiding among the Kuria of Tanzania," *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 2 (2004): 284–28; R. Dyson-Hudson, D. Meekers, and N. Dyson-Hudson, "Children of the Dancing Ground, Children of the House: Costs and Benefits of Marriage Rules (South Turkana, Kenya)," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 54, no. 1 (1988): 19–47; M. Borgerhoff Mulder, "Bridewealth and Its Correlates: Quantifying Changes over Time," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 4 (1995): 573–603.

to marry girls both early and for the greatest possible bridewealth; these pressures are most pronounced for those who have earlier bridewealth debts (including for the marriage of the girls' mother) and those seeking to marry brothers (or fathers seeking another wife). If high bridewealth is the goal, then sending daughters to school entails a risk of pregnancy (and hence decreases bridewealth) and/or reputational damage (see below). In addition, multiple participants cited concerns that an educated girl was more likely to choose a mate who would not pay adequate bridewealth, either due to his being poor or from an ethnic group with different marital customs. These risks may create an economic disincentive to send a girl to school, but some participants reported that girls who are educated secure *higher* bridewealth. This occurs in cases when the groom's family includes a reimbursement for the girl's total school fees in the bridewealth amount. Such funds reimburse the girl's parents but do not benefit the larger clan, and hence this potential does not mitigate pressure for early marriage from clan members.[13] Bridewealth, therefore, is an important consideration in relation to social status and to schooling demand but plays out in different ways: it may create a resistance to schooling, or schooling can be a factor that enhances a girl's value.

Opportunity costs

For many households, the loss of labor or income when a girl goes to school is as substantial a blow as the monetary burden of school fees and related expenses. When a girl goes to school, either someone else within the household must fill the domestic labor needs or the girl herself must do these activities in addition to attending school and studying. Numerous girls discussed the difficulties of watching their mothers or other siblings take on extra work on their behalf. Teachers raised the issue of girls arriving to school exhausted after having done numerous household chores before school, or the inability of girls to study in the evenings due to their domestic obligations. According to participants, girls in their early adolescent years can make between UGX 3,000 and 5,000 per day doing *leje leje* (casual labor); this income is lost if they are in school. These heavy responsibilities on girls and women exist in numerous contexts and households and are exacerbated by inequitable gendered divisions of labor. In Karamoja, the shift in recent years towards women as the primary providers—as livestock ownership has become more inequitable and less common—has created additional burdens on women and girls to sustain their households,[14] with negative repercussions on girls' availability for schooling.

Social costs

One of the main costs of sending a girl to school is reputational. As discussed in more detail below, there *are* positive status and reputational boosts to formal education for girls, their families, and their communities. However, the long-standing association between education and prostitution does still exist among some segments of society. The association of education and prostitution was mentioned frequently, and by many different respondents, in line with the following example cited by a group of girls in Kaabong who had completed primary school:

> Some parents say the girls can be prostitutes if they go to school since their way of dressing changes—like putting on trousers, miniskirts, or if they don't put on [traditional] beads, etc. Another reason is that those who have gone to school end up pregnant, especially when they get influenced by the friends they get in school.[15]

As indicated in the quotation above, a closely related reputational factor is the risk of early pregnancy. Premarital sexual relations are permitted in Karamoja, but such relations are meant to take place with the girl's presumed eventual husband and in the adolescent's hut at her mother's homestead. Resulting pregnancies and births are celebrated as an indication of the girl's fertility and will increase the total amount of the bridewealth to be transferred to her father and clan.[16] In contrast, a girl who gets pregnant "while in school" is seen as acting in a clandestine fashion and normally without her parents' approval of the man. Such pregnancies mar, rather than boost, a girl's reputation and status. When a girl's reputation is damaged, she will not be able to secure as beneficial a marriage and will likely bring in less bridewealth, thereby resulting in both financial and social costs for her family.

This discussion of various costs illustrates that although schooling is widely regarded by providers as an intrinsic benefit, and education as a fundamental human right, it is also a "contested resource."[17] The findings we have reported here show that, with respect to girls in particular, benefits are often uncertain, and costs are high, and immediate.

[13] Interview with adult male participants, Lopelipel, Kathile Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 15, 2022.

[14] E. Stites and D. Akabwai, "'We are Now Reduced to Women': Impacts of Forced Disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda," *Nomadic Peoples* 14, no. 2 (2010): 24–43.

[15] Interview with girls who went to primary school, Nakwakou, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 25, 2022.

[16] E. Stites, 2013, "Identity Reconfigured: Karimojong Male Youth, Violence and Livelihoods" (PhD dissertation, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Medford, MA, 2013).

[17] B. Levinson and D. Holland, "The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: An Introduction," in *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*, eds. B. Levinson, D. Foley, and D. Holland (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

Both material and reputational issues are seen to be shaping how families negotiate schooling's terms of inclusion for the individual (girl) child and the household—all in the wider context of their community and its social norms and expectations.

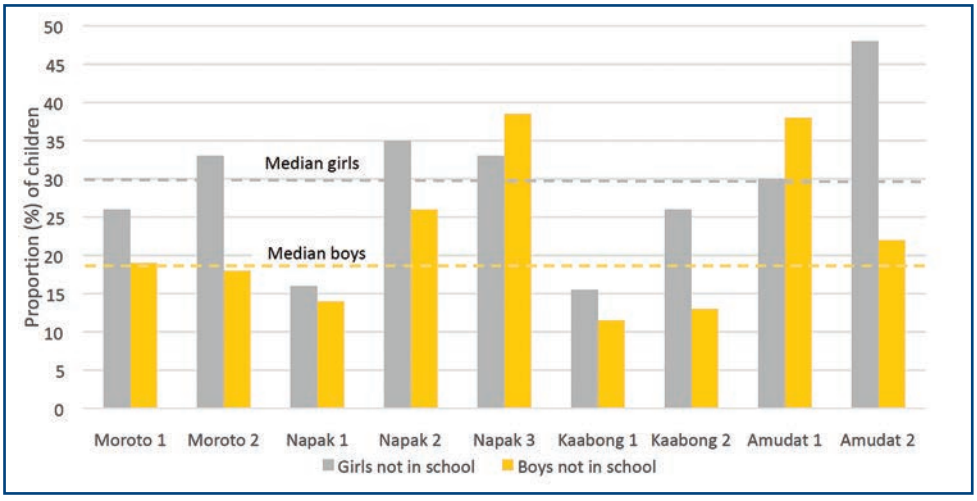
WHO IS IN SCHOOL?

The evidence from the participatory exercises on proportion of children in school by location confirms some trends from both hard and anecdotal data. As shown in the Uganda National Household Survey 2021/2022, primary school attendance is much higher than secondary school attendance for both genders, and girls' attendance drops more sharply than boys' at the secondary level. The data from the field review also show that school attendance varies from one location to the next; this reflects anecdotal information about variations by location in school quality, access, and community perceptions on and historical experience with education. However, the results illustrate some of the similarities and differences in select sampled locations. See Figure 1 below.

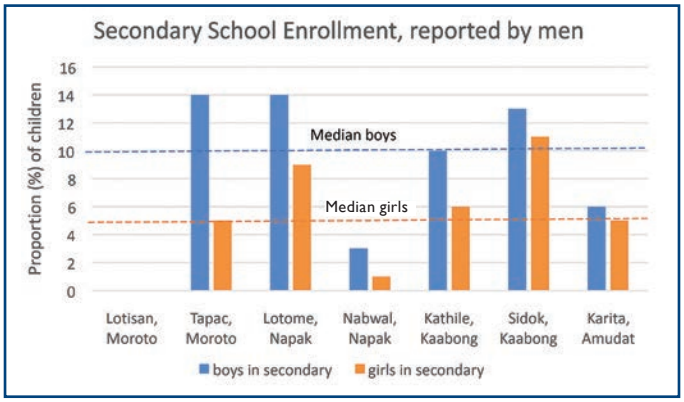
Figure 1 shows the wide variations in the data from the participatory activities, in some cases even within the same district and sub-county. In some locations, the number of boys in school is greater than girls; in others, it is the reverse or approximately equal. Overall, we see a high degree of variance and no clear patterns by gender when examining total number of children in the sampled locations.

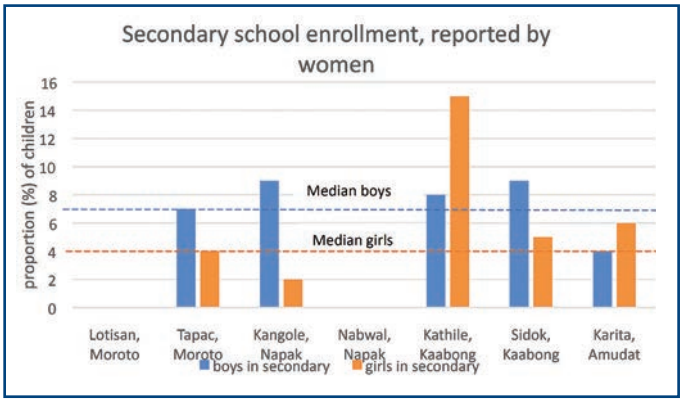
Gender differences are more pronounced at the secondary school level, but not uniformly. The figures below illustrate secondary school attendance as a proportion of total children in the community, shown by sub-county and gender of respondent group.[18]

Figure 1. Proportions (%) of girls and boys not in school by location.[19]



Figures 2 and 3. Secondary school enrollment proportion (%) gender by location, reported by men and by women.





[18] Both male and female participants in Lotisan Sub-County in Moroto and women in Nabwal, Napak reported that their village had no children in secondary school.

[19] The figure shows results from the nine locations in which this participatory activity was conducted. Some participants groups were male, and some were female. In some locations we have data from groups with both genders; in such instances, the median result is presented here. The locations are as follows: Lokaal village in Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto (Moroto 1), Lonyilik village in Tapac Sub-County, Moroto (Moroto 2), Akwapuwa village and Nagule-Angolo village in Lotome Sub-County, Napak (Napak 1 and 2), Kodike village in Nabwal Sub-County, Napak (Napak 3), Narwarot village in Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong (Kaabong 1), Lopelipel village in Kathile Sub-County in Kaabong (Kaabong 2), Apeiker village and Kodikidik village in Karita Sub-County, Amudat (Amudat 1 and 2).

Although differences exist by location and the gender of participants interviewed, the medians show that girls are in secondary school in significantly lower proportions than boys.

WHY ARE GIRLS NOT IN SCHOOL?

Participants discussed a wide range of factors as to why their girls were either not in school at present or had never gone to school. While many of these factors overlap, this section details the reasons why parents might opt to not enroll girls, and the next section covers reasons why students—particularly girls—drop out of school. Here we cover the following factors that contribute to girls not being in school at all.

Girls needed to help at home

According to almost all participants, the primary reason that children were not in school was because they were needed to help at home. This was the case for both boys and girls among pastoral and agro-pastoral households, with boys tasked with taking care of animals starting from approximately three or four years of age, with responsibilities increasing as they grow older. Girls had a more diverse list of domestic tasks, also starting from age three or four years, including caring for younger children, preparing food, gathering firewood or charcoal, fetching water, mudding houses, milking animals, cleaning the homestead, cultivating, and assisting with caring for the livestock. In short, from a young age a girl works closely with and in support of her mother within a realm of gendered tasks, and mothers may opt to keep a daughter at home past the age of school eligibility to provide assistance, especially if there are younger siblings at home. A group of secondary school girls in Kaabong explained the importance of childcare by girls within a household livelihood system:

> When parents are doing *leje leje* [casual labor] like cultivation in people's gardens and burning charcoal, they usually take their daughters around 7–10 years old to take care of their little children as they work. This is because—in people's gardens—women who go with babies are not allowed, because babies will keep disturbing them. This is why they take along their bigger daughters.[20]

The eldest daughter in a household is often the least likely to attend school due to her value in assisting her mother.

Beyond assisting with domestic and household tasks, children also engage in income generation. For girls, potential income-generating activities include selling bush products, brewing, engaging in *leje leje*, working in mines or quarries, or domestic labor such as washing clothes. Some girls may be sent farther away to find work: participants in various sites reported that girls starting at about age 12 were going in search of work to Acholi and Busia Districts as well as to Mbale, Kampala, and Nairobi.[21] Girls were reported to mostly find work as domestic help or in casual daily labor. The rise in artisanal mining and quarrying in the region serve as economic opportunities well suited to children, and a number of participants explained that the hope of quick money to be made in the gold mines was a factor in deciding not to send either girls or boys to school.

Some participants explained how parents might divide their children into those who would go to school and those who would help at home:

> In some families, children are divided by their parents to do different work. For example, if a family has four children, one girl will remain home to do domestic work, take care of the other siblings, and do some *leje leje* jobs like fetching water and washing clothes so as to support the family. … One boy goes to graze the cattle, another girl does garden work and collecting firewood/selling charcoal, and another boy is sent to school just to know how to read and write.[22]

As the above example illustrates, a family is more likely to have "surplus" labor in a boy child who can be sent to school, whereas there will always be needs for domestic or income-generating contributions by a girl. Domestic and productive labor needs often come first within a household, and any children who are not needed for these tasks might be sent to school. Taking this further, the deputy head teacher at Kaabong Secondary School (who is not from the region[23]) said that large families "tend to sacrifice some children, especially the girls, in favor of the boys" regarding education. The girl children, he explained, would work a variety of jobs to "raise some money that can be used to support their brothers in school."[24] Girls also discussed the pressures that they felt to help with the household chores as opposed to going to school. In a group of participants who were not in school, one girl explained the situation:

> The father may have the interest to take a [girl] child

[20] Interview with secondary school girls, Lopelipel, Kathile Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 18, 2022.

[21] Interview with deputy head teacher, Kodike Primary School, Nabwal Sub-County, Napak, July 8, 2022.

[22] Interview with adult female participants, Narwarot, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 22, 2022.

[23] We provided information on the teachers' place of origin to provide context regarding their perspective.

[24] Interview with deputy head teacher, Kaabong Secondary School, Kaabong Town Council, Kaabong District, July 26, 2022.

> to school, but the mother asks, "Who will help me with domestic work?" Then the child is taken to the bush to collect charcoal or firewood … or is left behind to take care of the home. … For example, when I want to go to school, I am asked to do household chores first, then go. When I am back in the evening, I have to do a lot of work. This may make one decide to be out of school to do the domestic chores instead.[25]

While this participant felt that it was mothers who kept girls from school, other girls reported the opposite, saying that fathers wanted to keep their daughters at home to ensure higher bridewealth payments, an unsullied reputation, and an early marriage.

Lack of financial resources to send children—especially girls—to school

As discussed in an earlier section, adult participants often cited lack of financial resources as a reason that children were not attending school. Here we discuss how this constraint is gendered. Parents, girls, and teachers all mentioned that a lack of financial resources means that families—especially those that are large—must choose whether to educate children and often which children to educate. Because girl children make diverse and valuable economic contributions to their households, they are often less likely to attend school than boys.

In addition, parents and teachers explained that the costs of sending girls to school is higher than sending boys, as schools require that girls bring extra items from home. For post-pubescent day students, these items include monthly sanitary supplies, while for boarders the list includes mandatory sanitary pads and other personal items not required for boy students. As explained by a group of women in Kaabong, these extras include "pads, knickers, and petticoats, which cost good money," which means that a family may opt to keep the girl at home and let "her brother study on her behalf." For many families, however, even the choice between two children is a luxury. The same group of female participants quoted above went on to explain, "Families are very poor … the little money the parents get can only feed their children and maybe cater for medical care. They see education as not something urgent—they can survive without it. Food is needed daily."[26] A group of girl participants in Napak who were not attending school gave their impression of the stark choice facing many households: "A parent works hard to make sure that children have food, and sometimes they even fail to get food. School fees and scholastic materials seem to be another burden, so they decide to feed the children [rather] than taking them to school."[27]

At the household level, then, parents find that girls are more expensive than boys to educate, which tips the balance towards sending a boy child to school, for whom there are lower associated costs for the household. We see, too, how the idea of education as an "individual" right is problematic in the context of household negotiations about how to manage costs—costs being one of schooling's most prominently cited terms of inclusion among our participants—and that decisions over costs tend to disadvantage girls.

Cultural factors

A number of participants discussed cultural factors that they felt influence female enrollment and attendance. We recognize the diversity of cultures that exist within the sub-region, as well as the fact that decisions at the household level are driven by a myriad of interconnecting issues, few of which can be ascribed solely to culture. That said, in this section we discuss aspects raised by participants that may relate to cultural views or practices. These include the importance of livestock acquisition, prioritization of bridewealth, polygamy, and the absence of a tradition of education in parents.

Several teachers blamed low enrollment and attendance rates on a cultural norm that—in their analysis—prioritizes accruing livestock over educating children. The head teacher of Pokot Girls' Seed Secondary School in Amudat—a man not from the Karamoja region—said, "Here people have a lot of animals, but they feel they cannot afford to pay school fees for their children. They prefer marrying them off to increase cattle in their kraals [mobile cattle camps]."[28] The senior woman teacher at Atedeoi Primary School in Moroto (also not from the region) discussed the perception that some wealthy families opted not to send their children to school: "Most well-off families are the ones that own a lot of cattle—like 100 cows and over 80 goats. These families embrace their cattle and goats, and they do not sell their cattle. They fear that they might exhaust their wealth with 'mere education' because it is very costly."[29] The head teacher of the same

[25] Interview with girls not in school, Lokaal, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto District, June 29, 2022.

[26] Interview with adult female participants, Lopelipel, Kathile Sub-County, Kaabong, July 18, 2022.

[27] Interview with girls not in school, Warrior village, Iriri Sub-County, Napak District, July 9, 2022.

[28] Interview with head teacher, Pokot Girls Seed Secondary School, Karita Sub-County, Amudat, August 2, 2022.

[29] Interview with senior woman teacher, Atedeoi Primary School, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto, July 1, 2022. To note, prior to the markets closing due to COVID-19, there was a robust and dynamic trade in livestock, with many animals sold by wealthy owners. In other words, animal owners *do* sell cattle, but not always on the terms that are expected by external observers.

school (a man not from the region) expressed similar confusion over what he saw as misplaced priorities of families who clearly had assets: "Like these families that are wanting to get cows … they already have money. They have resources, but they still do not want to send children to school. What do you think? There must be something deep that I don't understand."[30]

Outsiders, such as those cited above, were the most likely to point fingers at a "cattle culture" as a causal factor of low rates of attendance, especially for wealthy households. Participants in all groups, however, highlighted the role of girls in securing bridewealth for their families and clans as a major barrier to education. Girls who were not in school in Nabwal Sub-County in Napak explained: "In Karamoja, a girl is looked at as an asset to her family. She is to marry a man who can bring cattle [to her] home [in bridewealth]. … Hence a girl-child is denied to go to school."[31] Also in Napak, girls who were not in school in Kangole Sub-County provided their views on the connection between bridewealth and access to formal education: "Parents force girls to marry because [the parents] are not educated and they don't know the benefit of education. Instead, they keep a girl child at home so that, when she grows, she has to marry so as to bring cattle home. This is a [multi-] generational practice."[32] Male participants from Amudat explained that they may "get discouraged with an educated child because she ends up bringing a poor husband who cannot bring any benefit [in bridewealth] to the family, which is so painful."[33] As mentioned earlier, pressures from clan mates may also encourage a family to prioritize a girl's marriageability over her education. These factors were explained by a member of a group of male participants in Kaabong:

> A girl is kept at home so that when she gets married the cattle the husband brings can be used for marrying the brother's wife. If she goes to school she will waste many years there in the name of studying, yet an elder brother has to marry a woman. …Pressure from the clan members to get bridewealth … they say when uneducated girls gets married, the whole clan will benefit from the bridewealth, but when a girl gets educated it is only the parents that will benefit. For instance, when the educated girl builds a house for the parents it is not that all the clan members will benefit from that house.[34]

Most participants agreed that an educated girl would seek to support her parents, regardless of her marital status. This form of long-term investment was one of the primary reasons *for* educating girls, as they were seen as loyal to their parents even after marriage and likely to support them in their old age. However, some participants disagreed that parents would ultimately benefit from a girl's education and used the lack of benefits as a reason to keep girls home from school. A teacher in Kaabong (who is not from the region) explained that when she tried to encourage local parents to send their girls to school, they often said: "If you take a girl to school, she will take all her riches to her new home when she gets married. … It's better to educate a boy who will marry and bring his wife home. Then wealth is retained at home."[35] When weighed purely against bridewealth opportunities, there are few reasons that a family—regardless of wealth—*would* seek to educate a girl.

The practice of polygamy[36] was also raised by participants as a factor that limits school enrollment. If a male household head in a polygamous family opts to send the children of one wife to school, he will need to do the same for all his wives. A female teacher (not from the region) explained, "When a father has a lot of children from different women, most times these women will fight because a man may favor one woman's children and leave the others out of school."[37] The connection between polygamy and lack of attendance was confirmed by her colleague, a male deputy head teacher who was from Karamoja: "Most children in polygamous homes are not in school. These homes have five wives and many children and [the male household head] cannot afford to take them to school."[38] Having many wives and children was once a symbol of male wealth within communities, and patriarchs of these families often commanded vast herds of cattle. Recent research under another Feinstein project, however, indicated that today some people view having multiple

[30] Interview with head teacher, Atedeoi Primary School, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto, July 1, 2022.

[31] Interview with girls not in school, Kodike, Nabwal Sub-County, Napak District, July 9, 2022.

[32] Interview with girls not in school, Nasike, Kangole Sub-County, Napak District, July 14, 2022.

[33] Interview with adult male participants, Apeiker, Karita Sub-County, Amudat, August 2, 2022.

[34] Interview with adult male participants, Lopelipel, Kathile Sub-County, Kaabong, July 18, 2022.

[35] Interview with senior woman teacher, Kopoth Primary School, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong, July 25, 2022.

[36] The correct term is polygyny, as only men have multiple spouses, but "polygamy" is so widely used that the authors have retained this terminology.

[37] Interview with senior woman teacher, Kodike Primary School, Nabwal Sub-County, Napak District, July 8, 2022.

[38] Interview with deputy head teacher, Kodike Primary School, Nabwal Sub-County, Napak District, July 8, 2022

wives and children as a characteristic of poor households, due largely to difficulties meeting the high financial burden.[39]

One of the most important cultural factors influencing educational attainment in the region is the absence of a culture of formal education for older generations. Formal education was negatively associated with the colonial legacy and viewed as both unnecessary and irrelevant when pastoral livelihood systems were thriving.[40] The reach of schools and acceptance of formal education has expanded gradually in recent decades, but many adults have had little-to-no personal exposure to school. This gap was cited by many participants as a factor that curtailed enrollment and hindered the success of children of both genders who did go to school. A girl who was not in school in Napak said, "I can't go to school because my parents are not at all learned, and they want me to be the same like them. Even if I developed that heart [to want to attend school], nobody would give me fees, books, or a uniform. If I asked my parents they would say, 'Just be at home—no going to school.'"[41] A group of men, also in Napak, provided more insight into the perspectives of some adults: "Some parents who have never gone to school, they believe their children will survive the way they survived—without school. They see no need for their children to study, because, even them, they have never seen a blackboard."[42] The narrative of the deputy head teacher at Kaabong Secondary School provides an illustration of how this generational gap plays out at schools:

> Parents do not know why their children are in school, and they do not know the value of education. These parents do not have a child or anyone in the family background that has benefited from education, so they see no need to take any of their children to school. Two weeks ago, we had Visitation Day for parents to come and check on the performance of their children. Out of the 1,016 students, we had only nine students who were visited by their parents.[43]

The minimal presence of parents at Visitation Day is, of course, a complex dynamic driven by more than simply lacking an understanding of education. However, the fact that many parents remain separated from the world of formal schooling means that their children have limited moral, emotional, or practical support in their educational endeavors, even if finances are available or are covered via a scholarship. This lack of support at home and lack of adult role models within the community discourage children from attempting school and contribute to the high drop-out rate.

Distance and other access barriers

The number of schools and the extent of the road network have both expanded in Karamoja in the past decade. However, physical barriers to access still exist and are more pronounced for girls than boys. This is particularly the case for secondary school students, as secondary schools are fewer in number and are normally located in the larger towns. Students from rural areas, including most of the sites in the sample for this report, normally board at such schools, thereby increasing both the fees and the associated expenses. Importantly, the combination of reputational concerns for girls and the loss of a girl's labor once she is in boarding school likely combine to further reduce the ability of girls to attend secondary school. The head teacher (not from the region) at Pokot Seed Secondary Girls' School—one of only two secondary schools in the district—explained: "The parents may not be able to afford to take a child to a school that is this far away, so eventually they just get married."[44] He went on to explain that when families were migrating with animals, it became even more difficult to access education.

Lastly, physical barriers such as seasonal rivers are barriers to accessing day schools. The regularity of such hazards contributed to some families' decisions not to send their children to school at all. A group of girls in Moroto who were not in school described the situation in their community: "There is a seasonal river (the Komomatheniko River) that can flow for two to three months in the wet season. This makes many young children stay home because they cannot cross the river to go to Atedeoi Primary School."[45] Men in Napak told a similar story and felt it was the government's responsibility to address the issue: "The government should construct a good bridge over Nabwin River so that our children can be able to cross to go to Lotome primary schools. This river

[39] A. Marshak, E. Stites, M. Seaman, and B. Athieno, "Changes in and Perceptions of Wealth, Equality, and Food Security in Karamoja, Uganda" (Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, Boston, MA, forthcoming).

[40] V. Brown, M. Kelly, and T. Mabugu, "The Education System in Karamoja" (High-quality Technical Assistance for Results (HEART), 2017), **https://karamojaresilience.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/the_education_system_in_karamoja_revised_july_17_dfid.pdf**.

[41] Interview with girls not in school, Nasike, Kangole Sub-County, Napak District, July 14, 2022.

[42] Interview with adult men, Kodike, Nabwal Sub-County, Napak District, July 7, 2022.

[43] Interview with deputy head teacher, Kaabong Secondary School, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 26, 2022.

[44] Interview with head teacher, Pokot Girls Seed Secondary School, Karita, Amudat District, August 2, 2022.

[45] Interview with girls not in school, Lokaal, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto District, June 29, 2022.

has even carried children away when it is flooding, hence discouraging many of them from crossing and going to school."[46]

WHY DO GIRLS DROP OUT OF SCHOOL?

After discussing why some children did not attend school, we turned to why girls dropped out of school at various stages. This section covers some of the main issues discussed by girls, male and female community members, and teachers. These include lack of financial resources, responsibilities at home, issues related to puberty and/or menstruation, marriage and pregnancy, the resumption of insecurity, poor academic performance, and COVID-19-related issues. When comparing the extent of drop-outs by gender, however, we see that, overall, participants report girls and boys are dropping out at about the same rate based on the median (though keeping in mind that these data are not meant to be representative). Figure 4 below shows the relative proportion of drop-outs at any point in school by gender in all locations and with all groups with whom this participatory activity took place.

We recognize that girls may drop out of school for different reasons at different ages or grade levels. While we lack data from the participatory activities as to when girls are dropping out, several teachers did discuss this. Figure 5 below replicates the enrollment data for 2022 as provided by the senior woman teacher of Kopoth Primary School in Kaabong and the head teacher at Atedeoi Primary School in Moroto. These data show a precipitous drop in enrollment for both girls and boys throughout primary school, although girls drop out more quickly than boys. This figure does not show data on attendance, but the day that the team visited Atedeoi Primary School, less than half of students (both boys and girls) were in attendance in each grade level higher than Primary 1.

Figure 4. Relative drop-out proportion at any point in school by gender of student, for all groups.

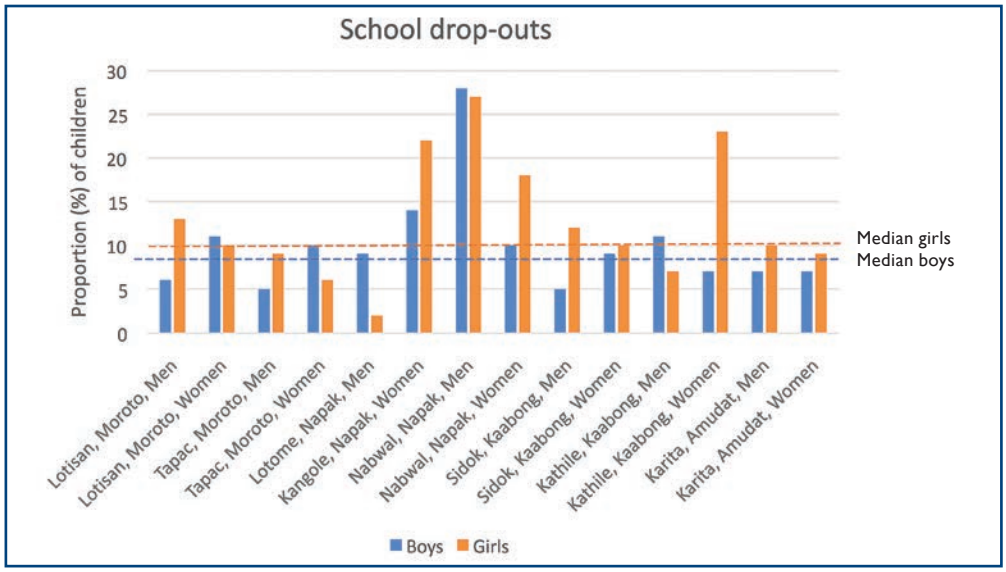
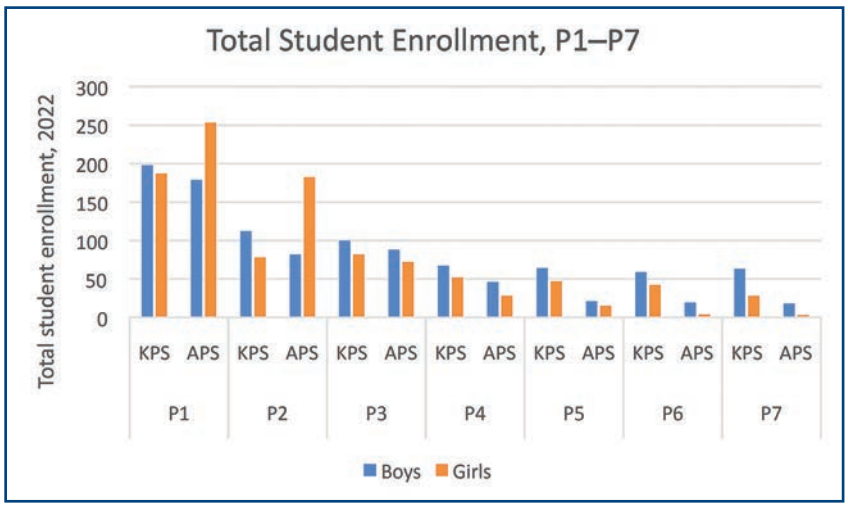


Figure 5. Primary school enrollment by grade level and gender, Kopoth Primary School (KPS) and Atedeoi Primary School (APS), 2022.



[46] Interview with adult male participants, Apkwapuwa, Lotome Sub-County, Napak District, July 12, 2022.

Financial concerns

Many participants cite inability to cover school fees and material requirements (including basic school supplies, uniforms, and required extras such as firewood, brooms, soap, etc.) as the primary reason that girls drop out of school at various levels.

Difficulty in meeting financial costs is most pronounced at the transition from primary to secondary school, which reflects the increase in expenses and cessation of the UPE program that provides nearly free access to primary schools (in contrast to the much more limited contribution made by USE). A teacher in Kaabong explained, that, when a child is in primary school, "a parent who sells charcoal can afford to pay for his or her children. … But in secondary it is expensive, like around 500,000 to 800,000 Ugandan shillings per term, which is too much for a middle-class family in Karamoja."[47] In addition, and as covered in the first section, most secondary schools in Karamoja are boarding schools, and boarding greatly increases costs. As noted earlier, too, requirements for girls are often greater than for boys in secondary (and some primary) schools, and not having required items can contribute to drop-out rates, as lamented by male participants in Amudat: "The requirements for the girls are very many, they need pads, knickers, and many clothes. If she does not get these things, she feels uncomfortable and decides to leave school."[48]

As discussed in the first section of this report, there is an almost ten-fold jump in costs from primary to secondary school. This steep increase goes a long way in explaining the sharp decline in female enrollment at the secondary level across Karamoja as shown in the National Ugandan Household Survey report[49] and reflected in over half of the assessment sites (Figures 2 and 3). Numerous participants explained that while primary school was affordable for at least some children in the household, secondary education was firmly out of reach.

Participants explained that recent shocks in the region had further undermined their ability to meet the financial demands of education. These included the prevalent insecurity in the form of livestock raids, leading to a reduction in available animals to sell to meet educational expenses. A group of adult male participants in Napak explained, "The insecurity has wiped away all our animals, which could have helped us in raising all the requirements for school. This is another reason why our children are staying at home, since we don't have any more animals to sell for them to get their education."[50] In addition, the desert locust invasion, repeated failed harvests, closure of markets due to COVID-19, and the rise in commodity prices served as further financial setbacks.

Numerous participants discussed a problem with short-term scholarships, a measure introduced to encourage enrollment. These scholarships will cover a student up to certain level—such as Primary 7—or for one or two years at the secondary level, but then they end, leaving the student and her family to cover the school fees and associated expenses. Girls, adults from their communities, and teachers all identified this practice as contributing to the drop-out rate while also having a negative impact on morale. A group of male participants explained that when the sponsorships stop before school is completed, it "discourages the children to continue with studies since their parents can't afford it. Parents also get discouraged because they had hopes for those children who were sponsored to finish with studies."[51] The deputy head teacher of Kangole Girls Secondary School confirmed: "Here we have many scholarships, but some are short term like up to Senior 4. …These scholarships end, maybe because of funding, but if they were to be long term there would be less school drop-out."[52] For girls, the cessation of support often meant they were unable to continue schooling, bringing deep disappointment and a sense of having worked hard for no reward.

Responsibilities at home

As discussed earlier, the responsibility to assist with tasks at home is one of the primary factors keeping children out of school and one of the main reasons why girls drop out of school. Many girl student participants expressed feeling guilty when seeing their family members, especially their mothers, struggle with labor demands while they are in school.

> We dropped out of school because we need to support our parents at home with domestic work and looking after the young siblings. For example, when a mother goes to burn charcoal in the bush, the young ones are left at home on their own, and they may stay hungry the whole day. We may also need to go and collect the

[47] Interview with senior woman teacher, Kaabong Secondary School, July 27, 2022.

[48] Focus group discussion with male participants, Apeiker Village, Karita Sub-County, Amudat, August 2, 2022.

[49] UBOS, "National Household Survey."

[50] Interview with male participants, Kodike, Nabwal Sub-County, Napak District, July 7, 2022

[51] Interview with male participants, Kodike, Nabwal Sub-County, Napak District, July 7, 2022.

[52] Interview with deputy head teacher, Kangole Girls' Secondary School, Kangole, Lotome Sub-County, Napak District, July 15, 2022.

> charcoal from the bush so that our mothers can be home with the children or stay home to take care of the children.[53]

Girls may stop attending for what they hope is a temporary period to assist with tasks such as cultivation, harvest, or caring for a new sibling. However, girls explained that they often have trouble catching up when they return to school, which can lead to discouragement and eventually quitting. For others, the experience of making money to support their families—such as brewing during the school holidays—may make them feel that school is no longer relevant to their needs or ambitions.

Ongoing stressors and sudden shocks also contribute to the drop-out rate for girls. These can include lack of support for education (as discussed above), the death of a family member, or a period of pronounced economic difficulty or food insecurity. Such burdens appear to fall more heavily upon girls than boys. A group of women explained how hard it could be for girls to remain in school when there is hardship at home: "If there is hunger at home—you know a girl child has a sympathetic heart—she can't let her siblings suffer from hunger while she continues to study. So, she drops out to look for some work that can provide her with some money to take care of the others with food."[54] The economic consequences of death, separation, or divorce within the household often falls most heavily upon the eldest girl, as explained by male participants in Kaabong: "When children lose both parents or even one, the eldest child becomes the head of the family and she has to provide other siblings with all the basic needs. She has no option but to drop out of school to take care of the younger ones."[55] While adolescent girls may decide on their own to leave school to assist their families, younger girls are more likely to be pulled from school by their parents.

Issues related to puberty and menstruation

Many participants in this assessment raised issues related to puberty and menstruation as contributing to the drop-out rate for girls. Several teachers explained that most girls start school at ages 10 to 12 years, as they remain home when younger to help with domestic chores. By the time they reach Primary 3 or 4, they are 14 to 15 years old and starting to feel self-conscious about their bodies and how different they are from younger girls in the same class. This was confirmed by female participants in Narwarot, Kaabong, who said, "Girls feel big when they start having breasts and … the young ones will shame them."[56] A head teacher in Napak confirmed the connection between puberty and dropping out of school: "They are big in size and have developed breasts, which makes them feel shy. They feel like they don't belong there; hence they give up on school."[57]

Menstruation is a major contributor to the female drop-out rate in many settings. Schools' inadequate sanitation facilities are a consistent structural barrier, and girls have limited access to the sanitary products that parents are meant to provide but are often unable to afford.[58] In an example to illustrate the extent of the problem, the DEO in Amudat explained that only two schools in the district (out of a total of 29 schools) had what he described as "effective" water, sanitation, and hygiene systems. Constructed by UNICEF, these facilities included improved toilets and bathrooms and incinerators to burn used sanitary towels.[59] A group of girls in Napak who had attended secondary school explained that the lack of adequate sanitation facilities and supplies "forces children out of school because a girl can't continue to stay in school when she is being humiliated by others when she is in her menstruation period."[60] A senior woman teacher in Kaabong (not from the region) said, "Lack of [these] requirements makes girls lose interest in school because they fear shame in case their menstruation starts and they have no pads."[61] Some girls lack support from their parents to deal with menstruation in a school environment. Girls who had finished primary school described the difficulties of asking parents for money for modern sanitary supplies: "When we ask for money for pads our parents tell us, 'Who are you to use pads?' as they didn't use them. [Our mothers say] that they didn't use pads,

[53] Interview with girls not in school, Lokaal, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto, June 29, 2022.

[54] Interview with female participants, Lonyilik, Tapac Sub-County, Moroto District, July 4, 2022.

[55] Interview with male participants, Lopelipel, Kathile Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 18, 2022.

[56] Interview with female participants, Narwarot, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 22, 2022.

[57] Interview with head teacher, Nadunget Secondary School, Nadunget Sub-County, Moroto District, July 11, 2022.

[58] S. Jewitt and H. Ryley, "It's a Girl Thing: Menstruation, School Attendance, Spatial Mobility and Wider Gender Inequalities in Kenya," *Geoforum* 56 (2014): 137–147.

[59] Phone interview with the DEO, Amudat, September 20, 2022.

[60] Interview with secondary school girls, Nasike, Kangole Sub-County, Napak District, July 14, 2022.

[61] Interview with senior woman teacher, Kaabong Secondary School, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 27, 2022.

and they could move around without them. They say, 'Just smear it on your thighs when it is flowing.'"[62] However, when modern supplies are not available, many girls opt to "stay at home for even a week or a week and a half"[63] each month, eventually falling behind and often withdrawing entirely from school.

These views illustrate that girls experience a lack of dignity, distress, and shame when they try to remain in schools where their needs are not adequately met. This is an emotionally costly term of inclusion for many girls, and one that boys simply do not have to face.

Marriage and pregnancy

Pregnancy and early marriage were major contributing factors to the girls' drop-out rate as reported by girls, parents, and educators. Rates of pregnancy and early marriage were reportedly exacerbated by the 77-week school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent guidelines on prevention and management of teenage pregnancy in school settings in Uganda by the Ministry of Education allows girls to attend school while pregnant and to be readmitted after giving birth,[64] and some students did reportedly return. However, girls report that few adolescent new mothers return, despite provisions in the new guidelines to allow breastfeeding in schools, due in part to their increased domestic responsibilities, marital expectations, and policies at boarding schools that allow girls only limited windows in which to go home. A girl in Amudat explained, "Many girls get pregnant while in school at an early age and end up leaving school. During the COVID-19 lockdown, many girls got pregnant, and they were taken by [moved in with] their husbands; therefore no girl in our community went back to school [after this occurred]."[65] A teacher in Amudat explained that the experience of pregnancy and motherhood often further alienated a girl from her classmates: "The pregnant girls fear to come back to school because they are now mothers and they are traumatized [harassed] at school by their fellow students."[66]

Besides early pregnancies, study participants reported that many girls drop out due to both early and forced marriage. The senior woman teacher (not from the region) at Kangole Girls Secondary School explained how the school tries to protect girls who did not wish to marry, often against great family pressure. She reported that forced early marriage was particularly a problem for girls from Amudat, where early marriage is common:

> In this current term our school has lost girls from Amudat to early marriage. One has been struggling with her very own brother who wanted her to get married. The brother organized a group of *boda-boda* [motorcycle taxi] men, who grabbed her from school. She was married off to a man last month with over 65 cows [paid in bridewealth]. As a school we tried to follow the case up—this is risky venture and challenging—but the case has reached the high court.[67]

Adult female participants in both Amudat and Moroto Districts blamed the pressure on girls to marry primarily upon the girls' fathers, who wish their daughters to marry in order to accrue bridewealth. However, women in Moroto discussed the culpability and motives of both parents, who "fear that if their daughter continues with school, she will age and no man will come for her, so she has to get married at 15 to 18 years to bring cattle."[68] They went on to describe instances in which suitors were encouraged to abduct a girl from school against her will, in line with the above account from the teacher who described a girl being grabbed from school.

Peer pressure was also cited in relationship to marriage, pregnancy, and perceived independence. Girls see friends who have boyfriends, are starting families, and are moving into adulthood, as explained by adult female participants in Napak:

> Girls who are in school are influenced by the ones that dropped out of school telling them how they are enjoying being outside school. The ones who are married and well taken care of by their husbands keep influencing the girls in school to also get married because they are enjoying staying in their own homes instead of being restricted by parents. That's why they drop out of school.[69]

[62] Interview with girls who finished primary school, Nakwakou, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 25, 2022.

[63] Interview with senior woman teacher, Atedeoi Primary School, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto District, July 1, 2022.

[64] Ministry of Education, "Revised Guidelines on Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School Settings in Uganda" (Ministry of Education, Kampala, Uganda, 2020).

[65] Interview with girls who finished primary school, Ashokonion, Karita Sub-County, Amudat District, August 2, 2022.

[66] Interview with senior woman teacher, Pokot Seed Secondary School, Amudat Town, Amudat District, August 4, 2022.

[67] Interview with senior woman teacher, Kangole Girls' Secondary School, Kangole, Lotome Sub-County, Napak District, July 15, 2022.

[68] Interview with female participants, Lokaal, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto, June 28, 2022.

[69] Interview with female participants, Nagule-Angolo, Kangole Sub-County, Napak District, July 15, 2022.

Others see their friends engaged in income-generating activities and desire the same economic freedom, as explained by a group of male participants in Moroto: "Our children get influenced by other friends who dropped out of schools. For example, when they see those who earlier dropped out of school making money with small casual labor jobs, they start feeling like living the same life."[70]

The resumption of insecurity

The resumption of insecurity since 2019 has reportedly contributed to an increase in the number of drop-outs in recent years, especially for young students who live far from school. As described by the head teacher at Nadunget Secondary School, "Insecurity has discouraged many children from going to school, especially the day scholars in primary level, who move to school early and leave school late. You find that the times they move to school is also the time the warriors are coming from raiding or going to raid. So, due to fear of meeting the warriors they give up on moving to and from school."[71] As mentioned earlier, the loss of livestock and other assets in raids and thefts undermines a household's economic base, making it more difficult to keep children in school.

Poor academic performance

A number of students cited academic demands and poor performance as contributing to girls dropping out. Uganda maintains an examination system, inherited from its British colonial past, which requires term and annual exams. Many UPE schools allow automatic promotion, regardless of the outcome of the annual exams, although seriously poor performance may result in repeating a grade level. Three key exams allow students to move to the next educational level: these take place at the end of Primary 7 (Primary Leaving Certificate, or PLE), at the end of Lower Secondary in Secondary 4 (Uganda Certificate of Education, or UCE), and at the end of Upper Secondary in Secondary 6 (Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education, UACE).[72] The many issues that girls struggle with, as explored earlier, lead to frequent absences from school that, in turn, often result in girls falling behind in their lessons and doing poorly in their exams. This is coupled with other issues noted earlier about domestic responsibilities and limitations in families' ability to support learning at home. Testing by schools aside, girls who struggle academically end up feeling inadequate, and parents may encourage them to withdraw, as explained by a focus group participant in Napak: "I was dull in class and repeated P3 three times over, so my parents decided to contribute to another sibling who was alright at school. That is why I dropped out of school."[73] Girls in secondary school in Kaabong explained, "Poor academic performance usually demoralizes parents and the student herself. Most parents find it hard to keep educating the children who repeat the same class, so they usually tell them to stay home and let the rest [of the siblings] study."[74] These, then, are ways in which girls may internalize negative images of themselves, through no faults of their own. Rather, schools lack the requisite flexibility required to mitigate the effects of interrupted attendance on girls' ability to sustain participation and academic performance.

COVID-19

The closure of schools for almost two years during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to high drop-out rates in Karamoja. Some girls explained that many who had dropped out of school lost hope of ever returning during the extended closure, and several participant groups described hearing a rumor that the schools would stay shut permanently. Many focused on generating income to contribute to their families, such as through mining, selling tobacco, and brewing. Others said that they had grown up during this time and, by the time school resumed, felt that they were too old to be in school. Teachers in all locations reported decreased enrollment, especially for girls, when schools resumed. As discussed above, many girls became pregnant or married during the pandemic, prompting a government directive to encourage pregnant or breastfeeding girls to return to school. One girl in Napak who had been in primary school when the pandemic began told her story:

> My parents were able to pay for my school fees, and they made sure I was in school. But when COVID came, schools were closed and then reopened after some time. I reported to school then but, after a short while, the schools closed again. People started saying that schools will not [ever] reopen. I saw most of my friends marrying and I decided to do the same. I think if it were not for COVID, I would still be in school.[75]

Numerous other girls told similar stories of their own experience or that of their friends and relatives.

[70] Interview with male participants, Lokaal, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto District, June 28, 2022.

[71] Interview with head teacher, Nadunget Secondary School, Nadunget Sub-County, Moroto District, July 2, 2022.

[72] A. Kanjee and S. Acana, "Developing the Enabling Context for Student Assessment in Uganda" (SABER–Student Assessment Working Paper No. 8, World Bank, Washington, DC, 2013).

[73] Interview with girls not in school, Nasike, Kangole Sub-County, Napak District, July 14, 2022.

[74] Interview with secondary school girls, Lopelipel, Kathile Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 20, 2022.

[75] Interview with primary school girls, Nasike, Kangole Sub-County, Napak, July 14, 2022.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SENDING GIRLS TO SCHOOL?

This section covers some of the benefits of sending girls to school discussed by girls, male and female community members, and teachers. These include economic and social benefits that accrue to girls, their parents, families, and communities. Focus group participants discussed specific economic and social benefits of sending girls to school, including income opportunities, better business skills, increased status for girls and families, and better marital outcomes for girls. In addition, some participants discussed broader societal gains that may emerge when girls are educated.

Economic benefits

Income opportunities and resulting support to the household

Participants reported that one of the most important benefits of sending a girl to school is that she may be able to get a job that enables her to support her natal family. The main assistance that families hoped for from education daughters were food expenses, educational costs for younger siblings, and payment of medical expenses. Although many participants reported that there were few jobs available for school leavers, we asked for examples of the different types of jobs that *were* secured by girls who had finished primary or lower secondary school. These are displayed in Table 3 below.

Many girls do not, however, complete primary school or reach secondary school. We enquired about the economic activities performed by such girls as well as by those who may have completed a level but not found a paying job. Many of these girls were doing the same activities as their uneducated counterparts, including selling local brew, doing casual garden labor, selling charcoal, selling firewood, gold mining, cultivating, doing casual daily domestic jobs (*leje leje*), selling prepared foods, engaging in petty trade, collecting and selling bush products (such as tamarind and aloe vera), quarrying stones, trading animals, and selling milk.

Better business operations

Many girls who have several years or even more of education find themselves toiling in the same activities as their uneducated neighbors. From the outside this reality would appear to nullify the value of education, but numerous participants explained otherwise. They revealed that, regardless of the level of education, many girls who have been to school possess better business skills than those who have never attended school. Primary among these skills is the ability to make good financial decisions, which participants said was evident in the greater success often realized by such girls, even in those endeavors with extremely small margins of returns. Examples of small-scale business in which educated girls were able to make greater profits than those with no education included: small shops, petty vegetable trade, brewing, baking, and even mining and farming. In addition, when compared to

Table 3. Jobs secured by girls with different levels of education, as reported by participants

Education level	Type of employment
Completed primary school	• Village savings and loan association (VSLA) secretaries • Village health workers (VHTs) • Community mobilizers • Translators and field facilitators for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) • Restaurant workers and bar attendants
Completed lower secondary levels (UCE)	• Part-time teachers in primary schools • Early childhood development (ECD) teachers • Office attendants • Office cleaners • Election workers • Directing vehicles at road construction sites • Security officers • Prison warders • Police and army officers • Elected parish and sub-county leaders

those without any schooling, girls who had some schooling were said to practice better hygiene in activities such as brewing and preparing cooked food to sell, to have better customer relations, to keep better records, and to be able to communicate in English. A student participant who had completed Primary 7 explained her experience:

> I can sell local brew, and it sells out first. This is due to my customer care, language, and my personal hygiene. The area I am selling from and the equipment that I use for selling my beer are clean. This attracts more customers to me, compared to those who come to sell local beer when they smell since they don't bathe. Also, I make sure that I dilute my beer so that I can get more profits.[76]

An adult male participant confirmed these traits and skills, saying that girls who had some schooling can "operate small-scale retail shops within the village because they have learned some skills and acquired knowledge on how to maintain the business through customer care, balancing the books, and how to save their profits."[77] A teacher said that he saw girls with some education applying their knowledge to farming as well: "When cultivating, they apply agricultural skills, especially when planting in rows while others broadcast [scatter seeds]. They even plant onions and tomatoes to sell while the non-school goers sell local tomatoes that grow in the bush."[78]

Social benefits

Improved status and reputation

We discussed the potentially negative impacts of education on a girl's reputation above. However, some participants mentioned that sending a girl to school can also make a family feel proud. This is particularly the case if the girl is able to secure a job and improve her parents' living conditions in a visible way, such as acquiring land or constructing iron-roofed or permanent houses.[79] These actions help boost both the family's and the girl's status. Other girls may also admire a girl with education, as explained in a focus group with girls who were not in school: "Educated girls can buy land and build a house for her parents because she earns money from the bank since she finished school. Educated girls know business well. She can buy a *boda-boda*, unlike an uneducated girl who only thinks of fetching water to sell."[80] Being able to read and write secures a girl not only status but also a useful role in her community, as she is able to provide information regarding services, help mobilize people for NGO or government programs, and read prescriptions and medical information. A group of men in Napak explained that a family that educated their children would be referred to as the "learned family" in the village and that this status could help motivate others who wanted to gain similar prestige to send their children to school.[81]

Using skills and knowledge to help the community

Participants who had completed primary school explained how integral their skills were to the household: "When a child is sick at home, we get the [medical record] books and instead of carrying all [the books] to the health center, we can help in reading the names so that the right patient's book will be taken to the health center."[82] Others described translating English, helping people with letters or petitions, and managing finances for local groups.

Girls were seen as likely to use skills and knowledge acquired through education to benefit their communities in the longer term. For instance, female participants in Moroto who had been to primary school explained that girls should be educated in order to "get a good job as a nurse who treats malaria." Such outcomes, they added, would enable the girl's family to "feel proud of educating a girl child and to gain pride in the community."[83]

Better marital outcomes for girls

Some girl participants discussed the positive role that education can play for girls in relation to marriage. Participants in Napak who had not gone to school said that parents who did *not* want girls to marry young used school to help achieve this goal: "Some parents take their children to school because school helps them keep children from getting married too soon. School acts to postpone marriage for their children."[84] This view is in line with the earlier discussion that parents (especially fathers) who are eager for bridewealth opt not to send girls to school because they fear they will marry too late. Another girl participant, who had completed primary school, felt that going to school for longer could help a girl have more say

[76] Focus group discussion with girls who completed primary school level, Nakwakou Village, Sidok Sub-County, Kabong District, July 26, 2022.

[77] Interview with adult male participants, Lokaal Village, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto District, June 28, 2022.

[78] Interview with head teacher, Kathile Primary School, Kathile Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 21, 2022.

[79] Interview with girls with no school, Warrior Village, Iriri Sub-County, Napak District, July 9, 2022.

[80] Interview with girls with no school, Nasike Village, Lotome Sub-County, Napak District, July 14, 2022.

[81] Interview with adult male participants, Kodike, Nabwal Sub-County, Napak District, July 7, 2022.

[82] Interview with girls who completed primary school, Lokaal Village, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto District, June 29, 2022.

[83] Interview with girls who completed primary school, Lomunyen Kipurat, Tapac Sub-County, Moroto District, July 6, 2022.

[84] Interview with girls with no school, Warrior Village, Iriri Sub-County, Napak District, July 9, 2022.

in her marriage when it did take place: "More girls should go beyond primary … so that they don't suffer the way I did by marrying the person I didn't want to marry. It is good if they continue with education because they will have a mind of their own and decide when to get married or not to get married."[85] The idea that being educated would enable a girl to marry a man of her choice was repeated in another discussion with girls who had not gone to school: "If a girl continues with her studies, she can even marry the man of her choice, a good man who is also learned."[86] We note that associations between better marital outcomes and education were made by girls with no or limited education. Additional investigation would help discern if girls who have completed more years of school feel that these associations hold true.

Broader societal gains

As discussed above, most adult participants initially highlighted the benefits that an educated girl would provide directly to her family or, in some instances, her community. However, a smaller number of parents as well as some girls spoke of the broader societal gains that could arise from improving education for girls. First, participants—and especially girls themselves—highlighted the connection between educating females and reducing poverty at both the individual household and the community level. A group of girls in Kaabong explained:

> Taking a girl child to school will contribute to the reduction of poverty in our community. … It is mostly women who work hard for family welfare and to improve the health and living standards of the people at home. Therefore, if a girl goes to school, poverty will reduce in our homes because she will support in the development, and the living standard of the family members will change.[87]

Second, girls who were educated could stand as role models for others in their communities. This is an important function, as numerous teachers interviewed cited the absence of role models as a barrier to having more girls attend school. This need was recognized even by girls who weren't themselves in school, as stated by participants in Napak: "If girls are educated, they become role models to other girls. This will encourage these others to study and work hard in school."[88] Girls in primary school in Kaabong explained their own reactions when they met an educated girl from their area: "Some of us get inspired by those that have studied. When we see that they have succeeded and come to work in the same community or when we meet them [somewhere], we get encouraged to go back to school so as to be like those who are working."[89]

Third, several participants spoke of the importance of having females from the sub-region hold leadership positions. Girls in Napak who were not in school said, "Girls need to study and get good jobs, so that they can become our parish chief leaders who understand us better than others. We need female councilors from our community who can present our issues to the sub-county."[90] This same point was made by girls with primary school education in Moroto, who said, "We need to have women who can work for our own community, like primary teachers and our [local elected] leaders. Our councilor for Moroto District is female. We need to support girls by providing them with scholastic materials so that they can be like that councilor."[91]

[85] Interview with girls who completed primary school, Lorengai, Lotisan Sub-County, Moroto District, June 19, 2022.

[86] Interview with girls with no school, Lokariwon, Tapac Sub-County, Moroto District, July 6, 2022.

[87] Interview with girls with no school, Nakwakou, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 25, 2022.

[88] Interview with girls with no school, Nasike, Lotome Sub-County, Napak District, July 14, 2022.

[89] Interview with girls in primary school, Nakwakou, Sidok Sub-County, Kaabong District, July 26, 2022.

[90] Interview with girls with no school, Nasike, Lotome Sub-County, Napak District, July 14, 2022

[91] Interview with girls who completed primary school, Lomunyen Kipurat, Tapac Sub-County, Moroto District, July 6, 2022.

REFLECTIONS

Karamoja has witnessed profound changes to livelihoods systems in the past several decades. These changes include a much greater reach of the state, the expansion of road and telecommunication networks, the growth of the private sector, the expansion of towns and cities, periods of extreme instability, and shorter periods of relative peace. People have sought to adapt to these changes, including through the diversification of their livelihood systems at the household level.[92] A recognition of the value of education has increased in conjunction with this diversification, with a growing number of children attending school and parents willing to send their children to school. Families recognize education as one possible pathway for positive diversification of livelihoods for (potential) long-term gain. However, this pathway is gendered and is only partially open for girls. Structural and cultural constraints mean that economic and social pressures, gender norms, livestock and cash poverty, and the lack of high-quality relevant education contribute to the very high numbers of children who are either not in school or will not succeed in completing even the primary level. This balance is, again, weighted against girls. It is against this backdrop that we provide some additional reflections to the findings and analysis presented above.

Costs and benefits

Much of the evidence given above highlights the opportunity costs of education. Households with extremely limited means must decide how to use their available capital, and to what end. Girls have high value for their ability to carry out a diversity of domestic chores as well as assist in income-generating activities—both of which are essential to successful livelihood systems at the household level. Dedicating resources to send a girl to school not only detracts from these contributions but also has reputational risks, potentially diminishes the extent of bridewealth that can be expected, delays the inflow of bridewealth (for investment, repayment of existing debts, or marriage of brothers), and is believed by many parents to increase the risk of early pregnancy. In addition, most parents and girls see limited long-term gains from educating girls, given the very high drop-out rate prior to completing secondary school, the limited options for economic advancement within the region, and the fact that most girls with some education engage in the same livelihood activities as their uneducated sisters. When we combine this analysis of the opportunity cost with the fact that most parents themselves have little exposure to education, it is no surprise that, given the present circumstances, many parents see little merit in sending girls to school for the sake of education alone or because it has the inherent, intrinsic value that development discourses widely assume.

There is, nevertheless, ambivalence. Despite the high financial and opportunity costs of sending girls to school, nearly all participants highlighted the positive gains of increased female attendance. Some of this emphasis on the positive outcomes of education was likely driven by inherent biases in the assessment, whereby educated young females were conducting the interviews and asking the questions, a dynamic that is likely to have made participants more inclined to provide answers that favored female education. In addition, sensitization campaigns by national and international actors may also have contributed to the uniformity of some responses, especially those that were slightly more abstract, such as that educating females can alleviate poverty in communities over the longer term—when this consequence of education is not necessarily their lived experience. However, participants were still forthcoming about their concerns, such as that girls who go to school become (or as viewed as) prostitutes, that girls are too valuable at home to go to school, and that there is less to be lost in educating a boy than a girl. These are very important insights from participating communities on the terms of inclusion that they see when they consider schooling for their girl and boy children. The general willingness to share these concerns freely while also discussing the longer-term benefits of girls' education leads us to believe that many participants did strongly believe in and recognize the longer-term gains of sending girls to school. This recognition does not mean that such gains negate the short-term losses experienced or the reputational and economic risks perceived. It does mean, however, that households and communities recognize the value of girls' education and would like to be able to increase the number of girls who are both attending and completing school.

While many participants did discuss benefits to girls' education, these benefits are largely instrumental as opposed to intrinsic. Put another way, many adults think that girls should go to school in order to gain practical skills that will allow them to make more substantial contributions to their households. Many parents explain that they are educating one or more children with the expectation that these children will be able to support

[92] K. Bushby and E. Stites, "Cross-Border Dynamics in the Uganda-Kenya-South Sudan Borderlands Cluster," in "From Isolation to Integration: The Borderlands of the Horn of Africa," World Bank Group, Washington, DC, **http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/167291585597407280/pdf/The-Borderlands-of-the-Horn-of-Africa.pdf**.

them in their old age. There is little-to-no discussion of the intrinsic value of education in its own right, the intellectual skills that girls may gain, or the potential for education to expand a child's worldview, creativity, or dreams.

As illustrated by the data, parents weigh very real social and economic costs and benefits of education when choosing whether to educate girl children in Karamoja: they understand the terms by which schooling is offered to them and consider carefully when they can meet them for each and every child. As we have seen, the combination of high costs, failure to complete school, and the lack of economic opportunities upon leaving school combine to serve as a matrix of *disincentives* for parents who contemplate educating girls. Put another way, why remove a girl's valuable contribution from the home for an unknown and unlikely economic benefit down the road?

Programmatic efforts that focus on a financial cost-benefit analysis seek to reduce the costs of education for households through efforts to boost income for families, to support scholars with bursaries, to provide for girls' needs in school, to discourage practices such as child labor and early marriage, and to dispel concerns about the reputational costs for girls. When stakeholders focus on the benefits side of the equation, the work is often about sensitizing potentially reluctant populations to *better recognize* the benefits of education. Although helping parents in Karamoja understand what happens in schools is important, this approach overlooks the fact that the benefits may, in fact, not be relevant for many potential learners in the local education system, and/or that the education system is not able to deliver the benefits.

IMPLICATIONS

Our findings attest to the multiple barriers to girls' education in Karamoja, many of which are familiar from other research, both in the region and more widely among mobile pastoralist populations.[93] However, our deliberate focus on the perspective of girls and their parents has taken us beyond a presentation of barriers and enabled us to highlight some nuanced, intersecting, and often inadequately understood terms of inclusion for female participation in the formal education system. Drawing from themes in the solutions listed by participants (see Annex E), this final section examines implications from our findings. In so doing, we ask stakeholders to re-examine some of the prevailing views on improving formal education for girls in the Karamoja region. The following points are starting points for what we hope is a continuing discussion and debate.

- The formal education system as it currently functions in Karamoja fails to effectively meet the needs of local children, regardless of gender, to thrive within the pastoral, agropastoral, or diversified livelihood systems that exist within the region. That is, schooling comes on terms of inclusion that tend to detract from local livelihood systems, rather than working—as it should—to support these systems. Most children do not stay in school long enough to acquire adequate skills or knowledge likely to significantly improve their lives from an economic standpoint. Few economic opportunities exist within the region even for those who are able to complete school and/or develop a skill set. Parents largely focus on the instrumental as opposed to the intrinsic benefits of education; this focus means that they realize (or predict they will realize) few benefits by removing children from the household labor pool to send them to school. This finding is an important one, because it highlights a significant gap between policy and provider perspectives, and those of service users.

    - Addressing the current failure of the formal education system to effectively meet the needs of the local population requires investment in both the practical and pedagogical infrastructure of the formal education system. School facilities need to be improved, including boarding facilities, classrooms, and teacher housing. The curriculum needs to be reviewed and adjusted to be made relevant for the local population, guided by the global principle of ensuring that all children regardless of location or gender can access a twenty-first century education: that is, an education that responds to the economic, technological, and societal shifts that are happening at an ever-increasing pace.[94]

    - Teachers are widely not from the region, and often have limited understandings of household circumstances that lead to a gap in their understanding of how they could better respond to girl students' needs and support their schooling. Teachers need to experience pre-service and continuous professional development that closes this gap; they need to stay in their positions for longer, and they need to be versed in and respectful of the local culture and languages.

    - There are evident points in the system where external examinations attest to very low performance indicators. More intensive effort needs to be made to analyze the educational trajectories that lead to these statistics, rather than on reporting them. This report has shown, for example, that interrupted learning among girls often undermines their attainments and that the schooling system is largely unable to respond flexibly to the needs that result.

- The evidence makes it abundantly clear that many *adolescent* girls in Karamoja do not feel comfortable attending school. Menstruation causes humiliation for the many who cannot afford modern sanitary supplies; this is compounded by lack of effective sanitation systems in the schools. As a result, many girls opt to stay at home while menstruating each month. Girls who are old for their grade level are self-conscious about their changing bodies when surrounded by younger and less physically mature classmates. Parents, clan members, and brothers push adolescent girls to marry, at times kidnapping them from school. Some boarding schools provide a modicum of escape from these family pressures, but not from those male teachers who verbally intimidate, sexually harass, and at times assault and/or impregnate their female students. Girls who do

[93] C. Dyer, *Livelihoods and Learning: Education for All and the Marginalisation of Mobile Pastoralists* (London: Routledge, 2014).

[94] See, for example, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) report on twenty-first century education: UNESCO, "E2030: Education and Skills for the 21st Century" (Regional Meeting of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 24–25, 2017), **https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000250117_eng**.

become pregnant were, until recently, barred from attending school. Adolescent girls must navigate and negotiate these landscapes while also trying to raise adequate funds to attend school, to help their family members (and especially younger siblings), and to pursue their studies. Given this context, it is no wonder that many girls do not progress to secondary school or drop out after one or two years; and then too, they may acquire negative self-images and feelings of shame because of their schooling experience.

  - Addressing these issues will require both investments and adjustments within primary and secondary schools. Clean female-only latrines with adequate lighting, water, soap, and rubbish bins or incinerators are essential in all school settings. In boarding schoolings, greater attention needs to be paid to how girls experience inadequate facilities, and improvements need to be made accordingly.

  - Disposable sanitary supplies for dealing with menstruation are economically out of reach for most girls. Parents often see these modern amenities as an unnecessary cost that they are not willing to cover. At present, girls can either go to school while menstruating and face humiliation, or they can stay home for a set period each month and fall behind in school. The provision of sanitary supplies for those girls who cannot afford to purchase their own should be a matter of course.

  - School administrators will need to proactively encourage girls who fall pregnant or give birth to continue school, in line with the 2020 policy directive in this regard. Administrators and counsellors should follow up with girls who are pulled out of school by their families and work with the families to discourage early marriage.

- It is clear that adjustments are much needed to the gender culture of schools, though work on this is already being undertaken. Teachers or staff should be dismissed immediately for harassment of, or intimate relationships with, students. All students require support in recognizing the needs of adolescent girls, without stigma or fear of shame when their bodies change.

AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

In addition to the key issues, and suggestions for improvement made by participants in this assessment, we recommend that further research take place to collect evidence on the following topics:

- More evidence is needed on implementation and impact of the 2020 policy that allows girls who are pregnant and/or breastfeeding to attend school. How effective is this policy in retaining girls in school? How influential is this policy in shaping a culture of schooling that is, more widely, sensitive to girls' interrupted learning and able to respond effectively?

- More evidence is needed on the factors contributing to girls dropping out of school at different levels and how these factors compare to those contributing to boys dropping out. For instance, if a family needs to pull a child from primary school for financial reasons, which child do they pull and how do they decide? What about at the secondary level? For girls who are able to go to secondary school, what are the characteristics of these households/students and the factors that enable them to attend secondary school?

- What is the connection between early marriage (i.e., under age 18) and educational attainment? Are girls who stay in school effectively able to delay marriage? What factors determine this relationship?

- What are the drivers for girls dropping out of school at different ages or grade levels, and how might interventions better target these different factors?

- Who is involved in household decision-making around labor, education, and future investments: whose voices tend to count, and how can gendered concerns shaping decision-making be encouraged to shift in ways that better facilitate girls' schooling?

- How are views on education in Karamoja evolving in light of changing livelihood systems, and how does the schooling system inform itself about the changes in learning needs that are implied by changes to livelihood systems? How can the schooling system become better able to ensure that it is responsive to change driven by the local context and service user needs, rather than change being led by decontextualized, national-level initiatives?

ANNEXES

Annex A: Districts, sub-counties, and villages sampled for participatory data collection exercises

District	Sub-county	Villages where participatory exercises took place
Amudat	Karita	Kodikidik, Apeiker, Morunyang, Ashokonion
Kaabong	Kathile	Lopelipel, Kathile West
Kaabong	Sidok	Narwarot, Nakwakou
Moroto	Lotisan	Lokaal, Atedeoi, Lorengai
Moroto	Tapac	Lonyilik, Napak- Akimul, Lokariwon
Napak	Nabwal	Kodike
Napak	Iriri	Town Warrior
Napak	Lotome	Apkwapuwa
Napak	Kangole	Nasike, Nagule-Angolo

Annex B: Schools per participatory assessment district, as reported by the District Education Officers (DEOs) of Kaabong and Amudat

District	Number of primary schools	Number of secondary schools	Notes on secondary schools
Amudat	27	2	All coed
Kaabong	44	3	All coed
Moroto	33	5	2 are for boys only
Napak	51	4	1 of these is for girls only

Annex C: Approximate school cost in select locations as reported by teachers, per student per year

The table below shows total education costs as given by teachers at the various schools listed. We investigated these numbers in detail, and totals include all expenses listed, which usually included school fees, scholastic materials, boarding fees (where applicable), exam fees, and materials (including uniforms, sanitary pads, etc.). When more than one figure was reported (such as by the head teacher and the deputy head teacher) the table shows the median cost.

School and location	As reported by	Primary/secondary	Total per student/ year, UGX*
Atedeoi Primary, Moroto	Senior woman teacher	Lower primary, day/boarding	38,000/53,000
		Upper primary, day/ boarding	50,000/80,000
Tapac Primary, Moroto	Deputy head teacher	Lower primary, day	88,000
		Upper primary, day	208,000
Kodike Primary, Kaabong	Senior woman teacher/ deputy head teacher	Lower primary, day	41,000
Kathile Primary, Kaabong	Head teacher	Lower primary, day/ boarding	21,715/110,600
		Upper primary, day/ boarding	80,900/241,900
Moroto High School, Moroto	Senior woman teacher	Secondary, boarding	511,100**
Nadunget Senior High School, Morot	Senior woman teacher/ deputy head teacher	Secondary, boarding	1,168,500
Kangole Girls Secondary, Napak	Deputy head teacher	Secondary, boarding	1,025,000
Kaabong Secondary School, Kaabong	Senior woman teacher/ deputy headteacher	Secondary, boarding	1,237,500
Pokot Seed Secondary School, Amudat	Head teacher	Secondary, boarding	1,246,000

*US$ 1 = UGX 3,812 on September 6, 2022, meaning that UGX 1,000,000 = US$ 262.

** Did not include estimation of personal costs.

Annex D: Example of economic matrixes showing income, expenditure, and school costs as reported by a mixed gender group of adult participants

The tables below show an example of the results of an exercise to determine the total education costs as listed by male and female parents. We repeated this exercise in multiple locations with a range of results. These are shown in Table 2 in the section on "What are the costs of sending girls to school?"

Income: Sources of income for typical household in a typical year[95]

	Source of income	When accrued	Frequency of income accrued	How much per frequency accrued (UGX)	Total income from source (UGX)
1	Gold mining	9 months	weekly	60,000	540,000
2	Beekeeping (July, August, September)	3 months	monthly	350,000	1,050,000
3	Selling goats (2 goats)	2 months		100,000	200,000
4	Selling chickens	weekly	monthly	120,000	1,440,000
5	Selling of poles for construction	10 months	monthly	24,000	240,000
6	Labor in other people's gardens	2 months	weekly	18,000	144,000
7	Selling of beans (50 kgs)			3,000 per kg	150,000
8	Selling of maize (300 kgs)			2,500 per kg	750,000
9	Selling gourds (48 per year)	4 (monthly)	monthly	24,000	288,000
10	Selling of stirring sticks (15 monthly)	4 months	monthly	22,500	90,000
11	Selling of walking sticks (10 sticks weekly)	weekly	weekly	10,000	480,000
12	Selling of local stools (15 per year)	3 months: October, November, December	monthly	30,000	90,000
13	VSLA interest	annually		30,000	30,000
14	Plaiting hair (3 people weekly)	weekly	weekly	15,000	840,000
15	Sale of wild vegetables	weekly	2 (monthly)	48,000	96,000
16	Sale of vegetables (*sokoria*)	daily	5 months: October–February	90,000	450,000
17	Fencing of gardens	monthly	2 months January–February	150,000	300,000
18	Roofing of grass thatched houses (4 houses in a year)	monthly	4 months	10,000	40,000

Continued on next page

[95] We chose the example shown here because of the degree of detail but wish to point out two things. First, this comes from an Amudat site, where both income and expenditure are much higher than other locations. Second, this community was one in which alcohol was either not purchased or not consumed. In most other sites, expenses on traditional brew and hard liquor were a sizeable regular cost.

Continued from previous page

19	Selling of grass for roofing	monthly	4 months: October–January	45,000	180,000
20	Sale of salt mineral licks	monthly	4 months: October–January	30,000	150,000
21	Selling of a cow				500,000
22	Remittances from relatives	quarterly, in case of emergencies		50,000	150,000
23	Selling of aloe vera sap	monthly	4 months: October–January	10,000	50,000
	Total income				8,248,000

Total annual expenditure, typical household

	Expense	**Frequency of expenditure**	**How much per frequency spent (UGX)**	**Total expenditure (UGX)**
1	Food	daily	10,000	3,650,000
2	Clothes	yearly	100,000	100,000
3	Shoes	yearly	60,000	60,000
4	Soap	daily	2,000	730,000
5	Smearing oil for dry skin	monthly	1,500	18,000
6	Education	by term	70,000	210,000
7	Cell phone minutes	monthly	15,000	180,000
8	Medical care	yearly	600,000	600,000
9	Fundraising fees	yearly	500,000	500,000
10	Seeds	yearly	75,000	75,000
11	Paying for tractor	yearly	100,000	100,000
12	Casual labor	yearly	15,000	15,000
13	Plaiting hair	every second month	3,000	18,000
14	Animal drugs	three times/year	150,000	450,000
15	Transport	monthly	30,000	360,000
16	Buying gifts for friends	yearly	115,000	115,000
17	Underwear and sanitary pads	yearly	40,000	40,000
18	Utensils	monthly	40,000	480,000
19	Goats	yearly	100,000	100,000
20	Buy a calf			500,000
21	Bed			100,000
22	Mattress			120,000
23	Plastic chairs			75,000
24	Blanket			28,000
25	Curtains			15,000
				8,639,000

Expenditure for lower primary school, per student

ITEM	Day		Boarding	
	Per term (UGX)	Per year (UGX)	Per term (UGX)	Per year (UGX)
School fees	13,500	40,500	33,000	99,000
Examination fees	3,000	9,000	3,000	9,000
Scholastic materials	22,000	66,000	38,000	114,000
Uniform and shoes		52,000		70,000
Soap			24,000	72,000
Sanitary towels			20,000	60,000
Underwear/knickers				30,000
Smearing oil			10,000	30,000
Slippers			3,000	9,000
Basin/jerrican				10,000
Box				60,000
Bed sheets				18,000
Blanket				30,000
Plate, cup, spoon		2,000		2,000
Padlock				5,000
Laundry powder			6,000	18,000
Towel				10,000
Money for shaving hair			3,000	9,000
Pocket money			15,000	45,000
TOTAL	38,500	169,000	155,000	700,000

Expenditure for upper primary school, per student

ITEM	Day		Boarding	
	Per term (UGX)	Per year (UGX)	Per term (UGX)	Per year (UGX)
School fees	13,500	40,500	33,000	99,000
Examination fees	3,000	9,000	3,000	9,000
Scholastic materials	38,000	114,000	38,000	114,000
Uniform and shoes		70,000		102,000
Soap			24,000	72,000
Sanitary towels			20,000	60,000
Underwear/knickers				30,000
Smearing oil			10,000	30,000
Slippers			3,000	9,000
Basin/jerrican				10,000
Box				60,000
Bed sheets				18,000
Blanket				30,000
Plate, cup, spoon		2,000		2,000
Padlock				5,000
Omo			6,000	18,000
Towel				10,000
Money for shaving hair			3,000	9,000
Pocket money			15,000	45,000
TOTAL	54,500	235,000	172,000	732,000

Annex E: Solutions provided by participants to increase girls' enrollment, attendance, and educational attainment

The lists below contain the ideas generated by participants on how to increase girls' education. We categorize these ideas as efforts focusing on different levels: i) girl students; ii); schools; iii) parents and communities; and iv) policies and programs.

Focus on girl students

- Educate girls on their menstruation cycle and their bodies and also educate the boys on these topics. Puberty should be normalized in order to make it not be something to be ashamed of.
- Teach girls how to make reusable sanitary pads and provide them with the supplies to do so.
- Acknowledge and reward girls who attend regularly and who stay in school for the entire school year.
- Acknowledge and reward girls who complete Primary 7 to motivate them to continue into secondary school.
- Provide merit-based scholarships to girls who do well in Primary 7 or Secondary 4 to encourage them to continue.
- Expose girls in upper primary to girls in secondary school in other districts to provide them with more role models and motivate them to continue with school.
- Conduct back-to-school campaigns in every district on each holiday to encourage girls to return to school for the next term.
- Provide girls with life skills, including how to negotiate relationships, to recognize signs of unhealthy relationships, to avoid pregnancy, and to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases.
- Assign mentors to girls in school who can assist them to finish the year, complete assignments, and pass exams.
- Encourage girls to engage in nonacademic pursuits as well as academic ones, such as sports, so that they make friends and feel supported.
- Understand why specific girls drop out, and provide tailored support to help them stay in school.
- Provide girls from poor households with personal necessities such as sanitary pads, smearing oil, and uniforms to ensure that the are able to fit in and do not feel humiliated when they attend school.
- Support girls to engage in income-generating activities on holidays such as baking, craft making, and brewing to raise funds to support themselves in schools.

Focus on schools

- Improve sanitary facilities at schools for girls of all ages and in particular for post-pubescent girls.
- Support schools to run workshops for girls on making reusable sanitary pads.
- Provide schools with adequate sanitary materials for students to reduce the financial burden on girls and their families.
- Create partnerships with schools in other districts for exchange visits to promote role models for girl students.
- Encourage regular visits by female members of parliament and other successful women from the region to schools to speak to students.
- Establish more all-girl schools at various levels.
- Hire adequate numbers of teachers to serve as teachers, counsellors, and mentors.

- Improve boarding facilities at upper primary and secondary schools to encourage boarding. Living at school can minimize the burden of household tasks for girls, provide them with better conditions in which to learn and study, and offer safe spaces. Allow girls to remain at school during holidays if they wish.
- Dismiss and arrest teachers who have sexual relations with students.
- Enforce and support schools to adhere to the new regulation on allowing pregnant and breastfeeding girls to return to school. Work within schools to decrease stigma of these students.
- Strengthen guidance and counselling for girls and their parents on issues of puberty, reproductive health, and life skills in both schools and communities.
- Promote interschool clubs, teams, and exchanges to expose girls to other girls in school and create a broader community of girl students.
- Create early childhood development (ECD) programs at secondary schools to enable young mothers to put their children into ECD class while they return to school.
- Hire more female teachers.
- Train and hire more teachers and administrators from the sub-region. Incentivize teachers—especially female teachers—to stay at the schools for longer periods.

Focus on parents and communities

- Sensitize parents as to the benefits of educating girls, including working to dispel negative associations of education with prostitution. Work with local leaders, church representatives, and civil society organizations to consistently engage with communities in this regard.
- Educate parents as to what takes place in school and encourage parents to visit their children's schools and to take part in activities.
- Educate parents as to the type of home environment that is conducive for academic success.
- Sensitize communities as to the value of education for girls, their future children, and their communities.
- Target mothers specifically with messages about the benefits of girls' education. Help the mothers develop messages that they can convey to their husbands about the need to educate their daughters.
- Sensitize parents on the potential protection threats faced by girls who leave home to seek domestic work in other locations. Encourage these parents to keep their girls in school instead.
- Establish visits by educated parents to schools and communities in areas with historically less education to meet local parents, talk to them about the benefits of education, and explain what takes place in school.
- Introduce and promote community dialogues on the dangers of early marriage and early pregnancy.
- Encourage parent visitation days and work to make parents feel comfortable coming to their children's place of learning.
- Sensitize communities to the forms of child abuse and promote awareness to respond to situations or cases of abuse.
- Establish a system to promote role models of educated young women in the communities. Ensure that such women are visible and that they engage with girls, parents, and community members to display the benefits of keeping girls in school.
- Penalize parents who do not send their children to school or who marry girls at an early age.

- Encourage parents to dedicate income to school fees and expenses. Encourage parents to support their children's efforts to generate income for school expenses.
- Encourage parents to delay acceptance of bridewealth until a girl has completed school.

Focus on policies and programs

- Introduce and enforce compulsory school attendance laws.
- Enforce existing laws to prevent child abuse, such as child neglect, child labor, and sexual abuse, including early marriage.
- Ensure that scholarships and bursaries cover more than just one or two years. If girls drop out when on a scholarship, follow-up should occur to understand why and offer specific support.
- Ensure that the scholarship selection process takes place at the community level. Do not leave selection and implementation in the hands of politicians and businessmen, as the neediest students end up being ignored.
- Establish more vocational training programs in the districts so that students who cannot continue to senior secondary have options to learn practical skills and get jobs.
- Expand the number of secondary schools for girls in each district.
- Improve infrastructure such as bridges to allow year-round access to schools.
- Educate schools, communities, and families on the regulation that allows girls who are pregnant or breastfeeding to remain in or return to school.

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