

# Challenges Encountered in Implementing NGOs' Gender Parity Strategies in Secondary Schools of Kibera Informal Settlements

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## ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of gender disparities gap at the secondary education level in Kenya presents challenges of achieving Sustainable Development Goals. By these goals, elimination of gender disparities in education is to be through the efforts of educational partners including Governments, Agencies, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) among others. The purpose of this study was to establish challenges in implementing NGO's gender parity strategies (GPS) in informal settlement secondary schools of Kibera, Kenya. The study was guided by Adams Stacy's equity theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory. The study utilized a mixed methods design. The study was carried out in the Kibera informal settlement of Nairobi County. The study targeted secondary schools managed by NGOs. Purposive sampling was utilized to select NGOs' mixed secondary schools while stratified and simple random sampling was used to select the respondents. Quantitative data was collected by use of questionnaire while qualitative data was gathered through interviews. Data analysis techniques included frequencies and percentages and qualitative comprised of categorization of themes. Data was presented in form of tables, charts, figures, and percentages. The study established that the challenges encountered in the implementation of genders parity strategies include: Lack of training for leaders on gender parity strategies; inadequate school facilities and child labour among others. This study recommended that the Kenyan government strengthens the affirmative action in the admission of girls into secondary schools and public universities and address poverty as a major cause of gender disparity in secondary education in informal settlements.

**Keywords:** *Challenges, Gender parity and strategies.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Gender disparities gap in secondary education is a worldwide concern. In Kenya, gender disparities gap in secondary education has been consistent. [Chege and Sifuna \(2006\)](#) indicated that since independence in 1963, levels of gender disparity gaps between boys and girls in every sub-system of education in Kenya were consistent. In 2008, as a follow up of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Government of Kenya (GoK) introduced Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) that aimed at accelerating enrollment and quality secondary education in the country ([Odhiambo, 2010; Orodho, 2014](#)). The constitution of Kenya likewise promises all Kenyans to exploit the potential of education for each and every child ([Republic of Kenya \(RoK\), 2010](#)).

Currently, gender disparities gap in secondary education in Kenya is still alarming among the poor, underserved and marginalized communities living in; hard to reach rural areas, arid and semi-arid areas, refugee camps and in informal settlements located in urban centers. Similar challenges affect secondary education in informal settlements in Kenya. In many parts of Asia and Sub Saharan Africa including Kenya, secondary education partners and leaders are far from implementing all appropriate strategies to eradicate all gender disparities. The Education for All (EFA) goals aimed at the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. The goals intended to achieve gender equality in education at all levels by 2015 ([The UN, 2012](#)). The Sustainable Global Goals (SGG) of 2015, however, indicates that gender disparity in secondary education is still a concern in most developing countries. The government of Kenya is a signatory to major international conventions and agreements that address human rights and gender equality, including the right to equal and quality education. The government recommends strategies such as Provision of boarding facilities in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, affirmative action in admission into public universities and bursary allocation to poor children among others ([GoK, 2007](#)). Although some efforts are made towards implementing gender parity in secondary education in Kenya, the country is still facing many challenges in eradicating all disparities in secondary education. Although most corporations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and OXFAM have not been able to make concrete gender parity initiatives in education, they have played the role of the provision of funds to NGOs that implement different gender educational programs among the underserved ([Takala, 1998](#)). Despite the efforts of the NGOs in working for gender parity in education in Kenya, disparities at secondary education level are still a big concern in informal settlements including Kibera ([Sava and Orodho, 2014](#)).

It is apparent that gender disparities at the secondary education level are still alarming. This study therefore seeks to investigate determinants of implementation of NGOs' gender parity strategies in Kibera informal settlement.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Gender disparities gap in education is a global phenomenon. It hinders the realization of Education for All goals ([UNICEF, 2005; World Bank, 2007](#)). Unlike in developed countries that are near gender parity, developing countries are far from implementing all strategies that could eradicate gender disparities in secondary education. In Kenya, previous studies on gender disparities in education have not given attention to the determinant of implementation of NGOs' gender parity strategies in an informal settlement. This research, therefore, attempts to establish the challenges faced by administrators in implementing gender party strategies in a secondary school in the informal settlement of Kibera.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Challenges of Bridging Gender Disparities Gap in Secondary Education in Kenya**

The efforts of bridging gender disparities gap in secondary education are met with several challenges in the African region. While access and enrolment level in education continues to improve, gender parity and equality at different levels still face challenges. In Kenya, the challenges of gender disparities in education range from poverty in communities, cultural and religious biases, unclear policies from the government and lack of educational infrastructure.

#### **2.1.1. Poverty among Communities**

Some communities are faced with intense poverty issues that hinder access to education. In cases where there are fewer finances to send all children to school, some families make a choice to send boys to school and occupy girls with house chores. In pastoralist communities, where there is a need for protecting animals and family property from the enemies, the boys are denied education to protect the family property. Mudemb (2013) indicated that HIV/AIDS and death of parents also resulted into increased school dropout of girls and boys who had more domestic responsibilities of caring for their younger siblings and ailing family members. Where parents have died, students have not been able to meet the contributions needed to attend school. The County Development Fund (CDF) provided by the government for the poor has not been enough as the number of orphans and poor is far more than the allocated funds.

#### **2.1.2. Cultural and Religious Biases**

Cultural and religious biases have kept away girls and boys from accessing education. In such cultures, girls are believed to be created for physiological roles and that such roles do not need one to be educated, and as such are expected to be dependent on their fathers, brothers or husbands (Abdi, 2002). In other communities, boys and girls undergo different orientations that put emphasis on different aspects that inculcate gender differences in performance, a division of labour, use of artifacts such as cloth, toys, games and skill training for the adult role (Ndong-Jatta, 2006). Other cultures aim at keeping women in homes and not allowing them to participate in any public or national development roles.

Such retrogressive cultures and belief affected girl's enrollment as they ended up being discouraged to go to school with the belief that they will never need education and that the women will always be taken care of.

#### **2.1.3. Unclear Policies from the Government**

GoK (2007) recognized that the ministry of Education subsidized secondary education in Kenya. However, the amount of money contributed by parents is far too much when compared to the earnings of poor parents who have an average family of six children. Once any levy is required, children from poor backgrounds do not enroll in secondary schools. More poor children instead drop out in the middle of their studies. It is also observed that though Kenya Government is committed to free basic education, no strategies were put in place to follow up students who drop out of schools due to early pregnancy, lack of fees and other reasons. Neither does the government ensure that those who are not able to afford shared costs resume school when they dropout nor does it ensure that such students are retained in school. Provision of a bursary as a policy in GoK has been insensitive to gender parity in secondary education. Such policies that encouraged cost sharing of secondary education, rendered boys and girls from poor families uneducated and widened gender disparities gap in education. Girls and boys from poor families discontinue from school in case of cost sharing.

#### **2.1.4. Inadequate Educational Infrastructure among the Underserved Population**

In informal-settlement areas where there are some secondary schools, the population is far more than what schools can accommodate and if they do, the classrooms are congested. Congestion in classrooms creates a violent situation which makes most children uncomfortable and opting to drop out. GoK (2007) further indicated that inadequate physical facilities including desks, classrooms, sanitary blocks experienced in these areas create an un-conducive learning environment that very often leads to dropping out, low enrollment and poor performance.

#### **2.1.5. Importance of Gender Equality in Education**

Gagnon (2011) discussed why gender equality is important in education. He observed that gender equality is a human right for both women and men. Gagnon emphasized the importance of education in economic development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in health, education and social equality.

Although Kenya vision 2030 aimed at creating a science Technology policy; devoting more resources on Scientific research and technology related courses; teaching mathematics, science and Technology in schools, polytechnics, and Universities, not much is devoted on subjects which favor girls including arts subjects and languages. Providing girls with an education, on the other hand, helps in breaking the cycle of poverty among women as educated women, in turn, send their children to school. Gender disparity in informal settlements and other locations contributes to the delay of the accomplishment of millennium and Sustainable Global Goals.

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Study Location**

This study was conducted in twenty-two mixed secondary schools in Kibera informal settlement. Kibera is a division situated in Langata Sub-county-Nairobi County, Kenya. It is 5 kilometers South West from Nairobi city center, with a population of 634,491 people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2010). It has few public secondary schools. Secondary education is managed by CBO's and FBO.s (Allavida, 2012).

#### **3.2. Study Design**

This study applied a survey design. A survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2004; Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Orodho and Kombo also observed that a survey could be applied to quantitative information about people's attitudes, opinions or any of the variety of education or social issues. The design presents a clear picture of the challenges encountered in implementing NGOs' gender parity. Strategies in secondary schools of Kibera informal settlement

#### **3.3. Target Population**

The target population for this study was 330 secondary school leaders from 22 mixed secondary schools. The leaders were chosen because they had the experience of the phenomenon that was studied and they were better placed to give the required information as opposed to student and support staff.

#### **3.4. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

All the secondary school leaders were selected through stratified purposive sampling from NGO managed mixed secondary schools. They comprised of 4 categories of leaders: 22 Deputy Principals, 22 school bursars, 176 HOD's and 88 PTA class representatives. Out of a total of 308 respondents, 291 leaders responded. For the purpose

of determining the influence of demographic characteristics and perspective on implementation of GPS, 17 parents did not respond due to their unavailability.

### **3.5. Collection Instruments and Variables**

The study used self-administered questionnaires and the respondents filled the questionnaire in the absence of the researcher. The Likert scale was chosen for the study to help in capturing the perspective of the leaders on the implementation of GPS (Khan, 2008).

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1. Background Characteristics of the Study Population**

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents including gender, age, highest academic qualification, the category of school served in, responsibility in the school, and a number of years served in the school. The respondents represented a response rate of 94.8 %.

#### **4.1.1. Gender of the Respondents**

Results indicated that of the 291 respondents, a majority (64 %) were male while 36 % were female. The majority (40 %) of the respondents fell in the 25-30 years age bracket. 23 % were below 25 years; 19 % were aged 31-35 years; 7 % were aged 36-40 years; 6 % were aged 41-46 years; while 5 % were aged above 46 years.

#### **4.1.2. Highest Academic Qualification of the Respondents**

Majority (45 %) of the respondents had a Bachelors degree. 27 % of the respondents had attained the Diploma level of education; 21 % had attained the Certificate level of education; 5 % had attained a Masters degree; 1 % had Ph.D.; another 1 % had completed secondary school while another 1 % had completed primary school.

#### **4.1.3. Category of School Served by Respondents**

More than half (77 %) of the respondents served in schools categorized under CBO. 23 % served in FBO schools.

The majority (58 %) of the respondents were HODs. 28 % were PTA members, 8 % were Deputy Principals while only 6 % served as Bursars.

Results showed that the majority (61 %) of the respondents had served in their schools for 1-5 years. 25 % had served for less than 1 year; 11 % had served for 6-10 years; while only 3 % had served for over 10 years (Table 1).

**Table-1.** Summary of background characteristics of the study population

Variable	N=291	N%
<b>Gender</b>	186	63.9
Male	105	36.1
Female		
<b>Age in years</b>		
Below 25	68	23.4
25-30	116	39.9
31-35	54	18.6
36-40	20	6.9
41-46	19	6.5
Above 46	14	4.8
<b>Highest Academic Qualification</b>		
PhD	2	.7
Masters	14	4.8
Bachelors	132	45.4
Diploma	77	26.5
Certificate	63	21.6
Secondary School	2	.7
Primary School	1	.3
<b>School Category</b>		
CBO	224	77
FBO	67	23
<b>Responsibility in School</b>		
Deputy Principal	23	7.9
Head of Department (HOD)	170	58.4
Bursar	18	6.2
PTA	80	27.5
<b>Number of Years Served in the School</b>		
Less than 1 year	73	25.1
1-5 years	178	61.2
6-10 years	32	11.0
Over 10 years	8	2.7

Source: Research findings, 2017

#### 4.2. Challenges Secondary School Leaders Encounter in Implementing NGOs Gender Parity Strategies in Schools of Kibera Informal Settlement

Results indicated that the most outstanding challenge was lack of training for the teachers (73.8%) on gender parity strategies. This was followed by lack of teaching and learning materials (70.5%). Other challenges included; leaders' negative attitude (25.0%), Child labour (59.1%), expensive implementation of Gender Parity Strategies (34.7%), and overcrowding in school (27.9%) (Table 2).

Interviews with school principals revealed similar challenges and additional challenges that secondary school leaders' face in implementing NGOs gender parity strategies in the areas of administration, access, enrolment, attendance, retention, performance, choice of subjects, completion, and retention in secondary schools in Kibera informal settlement. According to the principals, two main challenges include lack of finances due to the inability of most parents to pay school fees and lack of cooperation and the negative attitude of some stakeholders. In schools that receive funding from donors, the Principals reported that such funding is not consistent, hence their inability to remain consistent in implementing different gender parity strategies that require financial input.

**Table-2.** Challenges faced in Implementation of genders parity strategies

Challenges	N =291	N %
<b>Leader's negative attitude towards NGO's gender parity strategies</b>		
Strongly Agree	4	8.2
Agree	49	16.8
Undecided	30	10.3
Disagree	118	40.5
Strongly Disagree	70	24.1
<b>NGOs' gender parity strategies are expensive to implement</b>		
Strongly Agree	32	11.0
Agree	69	23.7
Undecided	10	3.4
Disagree	133	45.7
Strongly Disagree	47	16.2
<b>Lack of training for teachers on gender parity issues</b>		
Strongly Agree	90	30.9
Agree	125	43.0
Undecided	17	5.8
Disagree	41	14.1
Strongly Disagree	18	6.2
<b>Overcrowding in school</b>		
Strongly Agree	34	11.7
Agree	47	16.2
Undecided	9	3.1
Disagree	110	37.8
Strongly Disagree	91	31.3
<b>Child labour</b>		
Strongly Agree	77	26.5
Agree	95	32.6
Undecided	3	1.0
Disagree	75	25.8
Strongly Disagree	41	14.1
<b>Lack of teaching and learning materials</b>		
Strongly Agree	93	32.0
Agree	112	38.5
Undecided	6	2.1
Disagree	51	17.5
Strongly Disagree	29	10.0

Source: Research findings, 2017

Lack of cooperation and negative attitude from some parents and other stakeholders was due to some parents failing to prioritize their role of providing a conducive home environment to their children. Overcrowding and inadequate school facilities and infrastructure was another major challenge with the challenge of posing an impediment to schools' admission and accommodation of more students. Though some schools were lucky to have built, such buildings are not permanent and not conducive for learning. [Hart and Hodson \(2004\)](#) also found that over crowdedness in classrooms, inadequate learning materials, lack of sanitary materials for girls, unfriendly sanitation structures, poor school infrastructure enhanced disparities gap in performance. Poverty was reported to equally lock out many students from accessing education since most parents living in Kibera informal settlement have low income. On the other hand school principals, as most of them reported, lacked the capacity to sponsor all students from poor backgrounds. Poor performance of girls in K.C.P.E was another great challenge. Girls that performed poorly in K.C.P.E were less likely to qualify for admission to secondary schools. These findings are consistent with the study results of [Kashu \(2014\)](#) which indicated that few girls than boys studied and performed better in core science subjects like Physics and Mathematics while more girls than boys chose and performed better in languages and humanities. The study results agree with a study done by [Allavida \(2012\)](#) who established that poverty, inadequate classrooms, and teaching and learning resources had a detrimental effect on access to secondary school education. High level of absenteeism among girls was another great challenge, which was caused by poverty and child labour. Girls missed school at least three days in a month because they could not afford sanitary towels. Child labour was also commonly reported as a challenge that resulted mostly in a high level of absenteeism among girls in the secondary schools. Girls were also not retained in school because of unwanted pregnancies, and lack of school fees. Different studies have also realized similar results in the areas of attendance, retention, and

performance. GoK (2007) and Kakonge (2000) found that in Kenya, boys performed better in K.C.S.E compared to girls.

Kashu (2014) reported that lack of facilities, inadequate teachers, and negative attitude towards the abilities of girls rooted in most cultures were some of the factors that influenced the choice of subjects among boys and girls. These findings on challenges to completion and retention are supported by Chege and Sifuna (2006) and Ruto *et al.* (2009) who indicated that fewer girls compared to boys complete school, and this was attributed to a higher drop-out level of girls compared to boys.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There are many challenges school leaders encounter while implementing NGOs' gender parity strategies in secondary schools of Kibera informal settlement. Negative attitude of school leaders towards NGOs gender parity strategies, overcrowding, inadequate school facilities and infrastructure, poverty, the poor performance of girls in K.C.P.E, child labour, early marriages, unwanted pregnancies, absenteeism among girls and the huge gender gap in performance is the key hindrance to implementing NGOs' gender parity strategies. These challenges should be addressed in order to achieve parity in secondary education in Kibera informal settlement.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Various policy implications can be drawn from the findings of the study. First, the Kenya government should continue strengthening the affirmative action of admitting girls into secondary schools and public universities. Second, the Kenya government should address poverty in the informal settlement as the main of gender disparity in education in informal settlements. It should empower families with income generating activities in order to cater to the basic education needs of their children. Third, most girls and vulnerable boys should be targeted for scholarships, bursaries, and provision of free sanitary towels and school basic needs. Fourth, the Government of Kenya should realize the implementation of free secondary education for both girls and boys in the informal settlements and eradicate any cost sharing implication such as tuition fees, cost of uniform, book, and supplies as these prevent poor families from sending children to school. Fifth, the government must also re-enforce strict observance of school leaders to readmit school-age girls who get pregnant while in school. Sixth, there is also need for the ministry of education to re-enforce laws that prohibit early marriages, child labour, and retrogressive culture of discriminating girls from obtaining a secondary education. Seventh, the mentorship program should be developed in schools specifically to empower the girls with skills that can help them to resist early marriages and unwanted pregnancies. Eighth, a guide for gender equality in teacher Education policy and practice need to be formulated to help teachers understand gender issues that affect the students at the secondary school level and implement the solutions. Finally, the Ministry of Education should increase the number of secondary schools in informal settlements, post trained teachers to secondary schools in informal settlements, learning materials to the students to improve performance and quality of education and reduce dropout of girls.

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