



Research & Professional Development Center

East Africa University - Garowe Campus



Ministry of Planning, Economic Development  
& International Cooperation

# LOOKING BEYOND NUMBERS



**EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE ENABLERS  
AND BARRIERS OF GIRLS' TRANSITION TO  
SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN  
PUNTLAND**

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**PUNTLAND STATE OF SOMALIA**

November 2021

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Puntland State  
of Somalia

## Looking Beyond Numbers

Exploratory study on the enablers and barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland

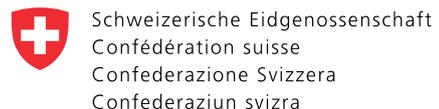
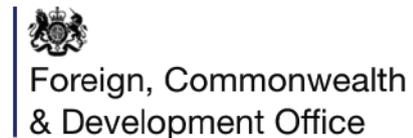
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## Abstract

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**Objectives:** The aim of this research was to explore the enablers and barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education, more specifically the socio-economic, education system, household, interpersonal and personal enabling factors and barriers.

**Methodology:** The qualitative research paradigm was opted throughout the research process, for purposes of in-depth understanding of respondents' ideas and attitudes. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were the data collection methods, guided by the same tool. The respondents were; secondary school girls, university girls, out of school girls, community elders, religious leaders, parents and key informants from the education and gender sectors in Puntland.

**Results:** The major enablers are: parents, principals, communities, government scholarships especially to girls from disadvantaged groups, favorable conditions for girls, government policies, increased access to education, increased awareness on girls' education in households, encouragement of girls to go higher in education, guidance and counseling in homes, household support to girls, motivation from teachers, fellow girls, husbands, personal interest in education, avoiding negative peer pressure, desire for a better future and high self-esteem.

**The major barriers are:** financial problems, long distance to schools and institutions, inadequate and unfavorable facilities for girls, poor implementation of education policies, inadequate government scholarships, early marriages, heavy house work, forced marriages, prioritizing boys' education, lack of enough guidance and counseling, negative peer influence, lack of encouragement from their husbands, bullying in schools, harassment from teachers, lack of enough female teachers, poor academic performance, inadequate knowledge about the importance of education, low self-esteem, domestic violence, illness and preference of marriage to education.

**Recommendations:** Availing affordable education for girls, setting a policy to discourage domestic injustices against girls, increasing the number of female teachers and establish more secondary schools and higher education institutions.

## Acronyms

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<b>EAU</b>	East Africa University
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institutions
<b>KIIs</b>	key Informant Interviews
<b>MoPEDIC</b>	Ministry of Planning, Economic Development, and International Cooperation
<b>SHDS</b>	Somali Health and Demographic Survey
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund

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# Introduction

## Background

It is widely accepted that education greatly benefits individuals and countries and is one of the most effective development investments nations and their partners can make (USAID, 2018). Education helps catalyze economic growth of a country by building human capital (Abuya et al., 2014). Countries with a higher number of educated individuals are more likely to be politically stable, have better life expectancy rates and significant improvements in health (USAID, 2018). Educating girls and boys produces similar outputs in terms of their subsequent earnings and future opportunities, however educating girls results in greater socioeconomic gains, which benefit entire communities (Fancy, 2012).

The level of education is an important characteristic, as it affects behavior, including health-related behaviors and choices made in relation to reproduction, contraceptive use, child health, and hygiene. Access to education is considered a human right that inherently influences the development of a country. It is one of the key national responses that would guarantee children from different backgrounds equal access to better lives as they grow up. Majority of the Somali women are yet to enjoy the benefits of formal education, which is known as an equalizer for people of different socioeconomic backgrounds (PLHDS, 2020).

Beyond these human capital arguments, education can help increase a girl's sense of agency and impact on her bargaining power within her household. On one level, this can give her, for example, a greater ability to make choices about her fertility and family size (Brown, 2012). Education can also reduce negative health outcomes for girls (Fancy, 2012).

Moreover, education brings better health and material benefits. Beyond girl's increased sense of agency, education empowers girls with critical thinking, deep understanding of one's self-esteem, and helps the girl child to earn an independent living (DeJaeghere and Wiger, 2013)

For these and other reasons; the Puntland Education Sector Strategic Plan, The National Development Plan, and the Sustainable Development Goals have all highlighted the importance and need for girls' education. However, despite progress made toward challenging targets, the latest UNICEF report on out-of-school children reports an estimated 58 million primary and lower secondary school-age children are not enrolled in school globally, with 31 million of these being girls (UNICEF, 2015).

In Puntland, only 14 percent of women have attended secondary or higher schooling, compared to 21 percent of men (PLHDS, 2020). On the same look, based on the findings of Puntland Education Sector Strategic Plan (2016), across all Higher Education Institutions women comprise only 39% of students.

Participation of girls in schooling is also a social justice issue. However, in some countries, girls remain disadvantaged in terms of access to school and experiences of it, and are likely to leave school earlier than boys. Where girls are additionally disadvantaged, for example by their social or economic status, they are further marginalized (Chismaya et al., 2012).

In order to address the problem of girl child's low transition to secondary schools and higher education, there's need to understand factors that promote or hinders girls from attending and completing secondary school.

## Rationale

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The SHDS (2020) reported that despite the progress made in the enrolment of girls and women in secondary and higher education, the enrolment rates remain lower compared to their male counterparts. In Puntland, only 14 percent of women have attended secondary or higher schooling, compared to 21 percent of men (PLHDS, 2020). Thus, enduring and persistent barriers to girls' education in Puntland present enormous challenges to girls' enrolment and retention.

Numerous barriers make it very difficult for them to proceed with education beyond primary school. These barriers are denying girls the right to education, undermining their economic and political potential for the society, and increasing their vulnerability to protection concerns.

It is important to have an in-depth understanding of the enablers and barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in order to provide relevant scientific information to inform policies and programs that target to promote the girl's education.

Looking beyond the numbers to understand the topic under investigation, it is intended that as much as possible the assessment will provide a comprehensive valuation of the enablers and barriers of girls' transition

to secondary and higher education attainment in light of the key findings from PLHDS.

## Study Objectives

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The main objective of this study is to provide an in-depth understanding of the observed low trends in the girls and women's secondary and higher education attainment from the findings of PLHDS. The study sought to understand what are the enablers and barriers to girls' secondary and higher education attainment. The study focused on the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the barriers to girls' secondary and higher education attainment
2. To identify and document enabling factors behind girls and women's attainment in both secondary and higher education.
3. To explore the social and cultural norms that limit girls' and women's participation in secondary and higher education
4. To understand family and community perceptions on girls' education and factors that would prompt them to allow girls to further their education.

## Study Limitations

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This study has faced numerous challenges with the biggest being limited time to conduct the study. Respondents' perspective was also a challenge since people sell their views in exchange for monetary benefits while others were not open enough to narrate full experiences and opinions due to security reasons and gender related factors. However, the study team has coordinated with the leaders of the communities and various organizations in the different towns who have really exerted a great deal of effort in convincing members to share their experiences and open up where necessary.

These combined challenges had chances to impact on the quality of the data but a couple number of strategies that have been applied have helped to overcome these challenges.



# 2

## Methodology

### Study Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach utilizing focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). The sample both the FGDs and KIIs was purposively selected. The FGDs and KIIs were conducted with the aim of understanding the observed trend in the girls' secondary and higher education attainment from the findings of PLHDS (2020). This approach was therefore selected because it allowed the study to comprehensively understand the experiences, enables and barriers of girls to transition to secondary and higher education beyond numbers.



### Study Participants

The study was conducted using FGDs and KIIs. Both FGDs and KIIs participants were purposively recruited from six Towns in Puntland namely; Bosaso, Carmo, Garowe, Kalabayr, Galkaio and Harfo. The FGDs participants were selected from girls in secondary schools, vocational training centers, universities, out-school girls, parents, teachers, religious leaders and community elders.

Key informants of this study, on the other hand, included education experts, school principals, Ministry of education local/district authorities, gender experts, women activists, civil society organizations, representatives from the ministry of women and family affairs, and education program officers from international organizations to provide further insights.

All towns had the same target FGD members except Kalabayr, Harfo and Carmo where university girls and religious leaders were not employed for this study due to lack of higher education establishments and the lack of existing structure for religious leaders within these locations. On the side of KIIs, Garowe had the highest number of respondents, unlike Carmo, Kalabayr and Harfo who had the least number of KIIs.

**Table 1** Focus Group Discussions

FGD	Teachers	Parents	Secondary School Girls	University Student Girls	Women Vocational Training center	Girls outside school	Religious Leaders	Community Elders	Number of FGD sessions	Number of People per group	Total
Garowe	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	6	48
Kalabaydh	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	4	6	24
Galkayo	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	7	6	42
Harfo	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	4	6	24
Bosaso	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	7	6	42
Carmo	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	4	6	24
									34		204

**Table 2** Key Informants Sample distribution

Key Informants	Education Experts	School Principles/Managers	Ministry of Education Local authorities	Gender Experts	Women Activists	Civil Society Organizations	Ministry of women	International organizations Education program officer	Total
Garowe	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	14
Kalabaydh	-	1	-						1
Galkaio	2	2	1			1		1	7
Harfo		1	-						1
Bosaso	2	2	1			1		1	7
Carmo		1							1
Total	6	9	4	2	2	3	2	3	31

## Data Collection

Three teams consisting of three interviewers and three note-takers were employed to collect data from the six towns that this study targeted. Every single team conducted the FGDs and KIIs in two towns. The data collection phase took 8 days from inception to completion.

Face to face interviews and group discussions were conducted in a quiet and relaxed environment without interference. FGDs lasted about 45-90 minutes per group while KIIs lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and were recorded with the participant's permission.

The FGDs were organized in small unified homogeneous groups of 6 people. The researcher explained the purpose, risks and benefits, rights of the participants and method of the study before starting the interview.

COVID-19 protocols were observed during both the key informant and the FGD sessions.

## Data analysis

Data were analyzed following a thematic analysis approach. Meaningful statements relevant to the experiences, opinions and feelings of participants were extracted. The data were transcribed on a regular basis as each interview was conducted and recorded using android audio recorder. The interviews were then repeatedly reviewed to obtain a complete understanding.

The raw data was coded and then taken through a process of grouping based on emerging themes. The transcripts were repeatedly checked and to ensure that the themes corresponded with the original meaning of the participants.

## 3

## Review of related literature

### Enablers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education

Increasing participation of girls in schooling is widely acknowledged to be beneficial to individuals and societies. While there exist hard to pass challenges that hinder girls from transitioning to secondary and higher education, considerable factors also help girls to furthering their educational journey to secondary schools and higher education.

It's been reported that the school curriculum that incorporates ICT facilities, work culture, values, and which emphasizes vocational skills helps girls to stay in school (Nanda et al., 2013). Similarly, government schemes that promote 'education for all', 'Early Childhood Care and Education', and national programs that target girls' empowerment have been reported to have enabled a conducive environment that helps girls to stay in school (Fancy, 2012).

On the same note, Abuya et al. (2014) found out that consistent government supplies of books and study materials together with grassroots innovations helps in keeping girls in school. Likewise, encouraging women to become legislators and politicians can be an enabler. This is because they can potentially focus on educational

development of girls and act as enablers (Halim, Yount, & Cunningham, 2016).

Similarly, access to school provides a safe space for girls to go to school which, in turn, acts as an enabler to participate in education and develop through the levels of education (Isac, 2011). Community involvement and family support have also been found to be key enablers in girl's schooling (Xavier, 2018). On the other hand, the supportive engagement of teachers has showed a positive effect on girls' transition to higher education (Chanana, 2017).

A study conducted in South-central Somalia by Nagira (2016) has subsequently presented a number of enablers for girls to transit to higher levels of education; starting with the right interpretation of religion followed by access to education, supportive teachers, financial aid, and a violence-free schools.

### Barriers to girls' transition to secondary and higher education

Beyond the question of access, there is considerable evidence that combined factors discourage female participation and learning (Isac, 2011). These factors

range from gendered social and schooling experiences to social attitudes, gendered discrimination and violence (Stromquist and Fischmann, 2009).

To address these concerns, it is important to understand the particularities of specific cultural and resource contexts, and to acknowledge the intersection of gender with other forms of disadvantage. Somalia is a salient case study, not only for its scale but for the complexities of the social realities. The socialization and development of girls in Somalia is framed by the existing complex socio-cultural environment (Nanda et al., 2013).

A previous study conducted by Mishra (2011) examined barriers to higher education (university or technical colleges) for girls and reported economic, institutional, social, and cultural constraints to girls pursuing higher education. Similar research studies have also been conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa (Abuya et al., 2014) with the findings also detailing numerous barriers to education for girls, commonly rooted in gender roles that are socially constructed.

Despite a focus on gender mainstreaming at the policy level (Unterhalter, 2007), social institutions are resilient, and discriminatory social norms affect demand as well as restrict the benefits of improved access such as, for example, delayed marriage and childbirth (UNESCO, 2014).

Among the most evident and the most damaging experiences is gendered and/or sexual violence. School is not necessarily a safe space, and the environment can be 'sexually charged' (Chismaya et al., 2012). Harassment and rape are prevalent internationally as part of girls' experiences of school (Leach et al., 2014). Where travel to school involves distance, security becomes an increased issue and cause for family concern (UNESCO, 2015).

Bhagavatheeswaran et al., (2016) reported in a study on the barriers and enablers to education among adolescent girls in India that girls drop from school citing more than one reason, with not being interested in school and lack of supportive family being prevalent.

Roby, Lambert, & Lambert (2009) also found out that early marriage, food insecurity, and child labour as major reasons discouraging girls from continuing education.

Poverty deepens disparities and is a strong determinant of girls' participation in secondary schooling, where parity is still elusive. It is in many ways easier to increase access at earlier stages than to address the multiple inequalities that are substantial barriers to retention beyond the basic stage (Chismaya et al., 2012).

Discrimination is expressed and experienced in a range of ways. Girls may be commodified within the family as sources of gendered labour, and are under pressure to marry early as their roles are defined to a large degree in terms of their marital status and childbearing potential (Siddhu, 2010). At school, teaching and learning processes may signal overtly or subtly that boys are superior learners, and the quality of their schooling and classroom experiences is particularly influential in terms of girls' decisions regarding staying in school (Siddhu, 2010).

On top of that, Somali society is highly patriarchal in its values and beliefs and gender discrimination often starts before a child is born. Sons are usually preferred over daughters, a phenomenon known as 'son preference', and this can disadvantage girls throughout their life (Amina & Guled, 2019; Nayar, 2011). Women and girls are expected to adhere to strict gender-related norms and departures from these expectations can bring shame upon a young woman and her family (KHPT, 2012).

Another study conducted in Pakistan has shown that family background, economic situations, marginalization, and preference of boys over girls contribute largely to barriers that girls face to continue with their education (Mamonah, 2014). School distance, quality of education and harassment by teachers and boys were also found to be challenging factors that hinder girls from transitioning to higher education (Bhagavatheeswaran et al., 2016).

In Somalia, limited related studies addressing the barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education remains existential. Nagira (2016) in a study on the barriers to girls' education in south central Somalia reported cultural influence, financial challenges, predominance of early marriage, lack of supportive parents, and heavy household chores as factors that can be attributed to the low girls' enrolment, retention and transition to higher levels of education.

Another more related study conducted in Puntland found out that FGM practice, early marriage, clan systems, preferential treatment of boys, poor English

language skills, and the lack of female role models as key obstacles to girls' transition to higher education in Puntland (Amina & Guled, 2019).

Research on barriers to girls' participation in school needs to be situated in the wider evidence on participation rates nationally and on regional basis. Progress in access to primary schooling for girls has shown significant acceleration as opposed to secondary and higher education prompting the need to subsequently study the barriers to girls' transition to secondary and higher education.





# 4

## Characteristics of Respondents



### Respondent Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the participants, namely gender, age, location, educational level, as well as marital status were descriptively analyzed (Tables 5, 6, 7 and 8).

In total, 172 respondents participated in 34 FGDs, while 24 participated in the study as KIIs. The majority of the respondents aged between 20-40, while most of them were married with an educational level of secondary and above.

## Response Rate

**Table 3** Response rate of FGD participants

No	FGD participants	Garowe		Bosaso		Galkaio	
		No of groups planned	Achieved	No of groups planned	Achieved	No of groups planned	Achieved
1	Teachers	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Parents	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	Secondary girls	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	University Girls	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	Women in Vocational training centers	1	1	1	1	1	1
6	Girl outside school	1	1	--	--	--	--
7	Religious leaders	1	1	1	1	1	1
8	Community elder	1	1	1	1	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>

No	FGD participants	Kalabayr		Carmo		Harfo	
		No of groups planned	Achieved	No of groups planned	Achieved	No of groups planned	Achieved
1	Teachers	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Parents	1	1	1	1	1	1
3	Secondary girls	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	Community elder	1	1	1	1	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

**Table 4** Response rate of KIIs participants

No	KIIs participants	Garowe		Bosaso		Galkaio	
		Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
1	Education experts	2	1	2	1	2	-
2	School Principal	2	2	2	2	2	1
3	Ministry of Education local Authority	2	1	1	1	1	1
4	Gender expert	2	1	-	-	-	-
5	Women activist	2	1	-	-	-	-
6	Civil society organization	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	Ministry of women	2	1	-	-	-	1
8	International organization Education program officer	1	1	1	-	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>

No	KIIs participants	Kalabayr		Carmo		Harfo	
		Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
1	School Principal	1	1	1	1	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

As can be seen in the tables 3 and 4 presented above, all the 34 FGDs anticipated to take part in the study has been realized by conducting all the sessions across the six towns that the study targeted. On the side of KIIs, out of the sampled 31 key informant interviews, 22 were conducted successfully. As earlier mentioned

in the study limitations, the short-fall of participants in both FGDs and KIIs can be attributed to various factors ranging from limited time, respondents' unwillingness to open up in such discussions, the summer season which has forced many people to shift from their settlement, and, in some towns, security reasons.

**Table 5** Characteristics of the FGDs

FGD Participants	Garowe			Bosaso			Galkaio		
	No	Sex	Age group	No	Sex	Age group	No	Sex	Age group
Teachers	4	M	20-40	6	M	20-40	4	M	20-40
Parents	5	M	30-50	6	M	30-50	6	M,F	30-50
Secondary girls	6	F	15-20	4	F	15-20	6	F	15-20
University Girls	6	F	20-30	4	F	20-30	6	F	20-30
Women in Vocational training centers	5	F	20-30	2	F	20-30	5	F	20-30
Girl outside school	5	F	15-30	-			-		
Religious leaders	4	M	20-50	5	M	30-50	5	M	30-50
Community elder	4	M	40-50	6	M	40-50	5	M	40-50
FGD Participants	Kalabayr			Carmo			Harfo		
	No	Sex	Age group	No	Sex	Age group	No	Sex	Age group
Teachers	1	M	20-40	6	M	20-40	7	M	20-40
Parents	5	M	30-50	6	M	30-50	6	F	30-50
Secondary girls	5	F	15-20	5	F	15-20	6	F	15-20
Community elder	4	M	40-50	6	M	40-50	6	M	40-60
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>			<b>56</b>			<b>62</b>		

**Table 6** Characteristics of KIIs participants

Key Informant Interview	Garowe			Bosaso			Galkaio		
	No	Sex	Age group	No	Sex	Age group	No	Sex	Age group
Education experts	1	M	20-40	1	M	20-40	-		20-40
School Principal	2	M	30-40	2	M	30-40	1	M	20-30
Ministry of Education local Authority	1	M	30-40	1	M	20-30	1	M	30-40
Gender expert	1	F	30-40	-		20-30	-		20-30
Women activist	1	F	20-30	-		20-30	-		20-30
Civil society organization	1	M	30-40	1	M	20-30	1	M	30-40
Ministry of women	1	F	30-40	-		30-40	1	F	30-40
International organization Education program officer	1	M	20-30	-		30-40	1	M	30-40
Key Informant Interview	Kalabayr			Carmo			Harfo		
	No	Sex	Age group	No	Sex	Age group	No	Sex	Age group
Education experts	1	M	20-40	1	M	20-40	-		20-40
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>			<b>6</b>			<b>8</b>		

Tables 5 and 6 present the sex and the age group of the FGDs participants and the KIIs respectively. The tables depict that both genders have been equally represented which helps the study gain reliable data. On the other hand, majority of the participants have been aged between 20-40 which translates that respondents have had enough experiences to share on girl's education in Puntland.

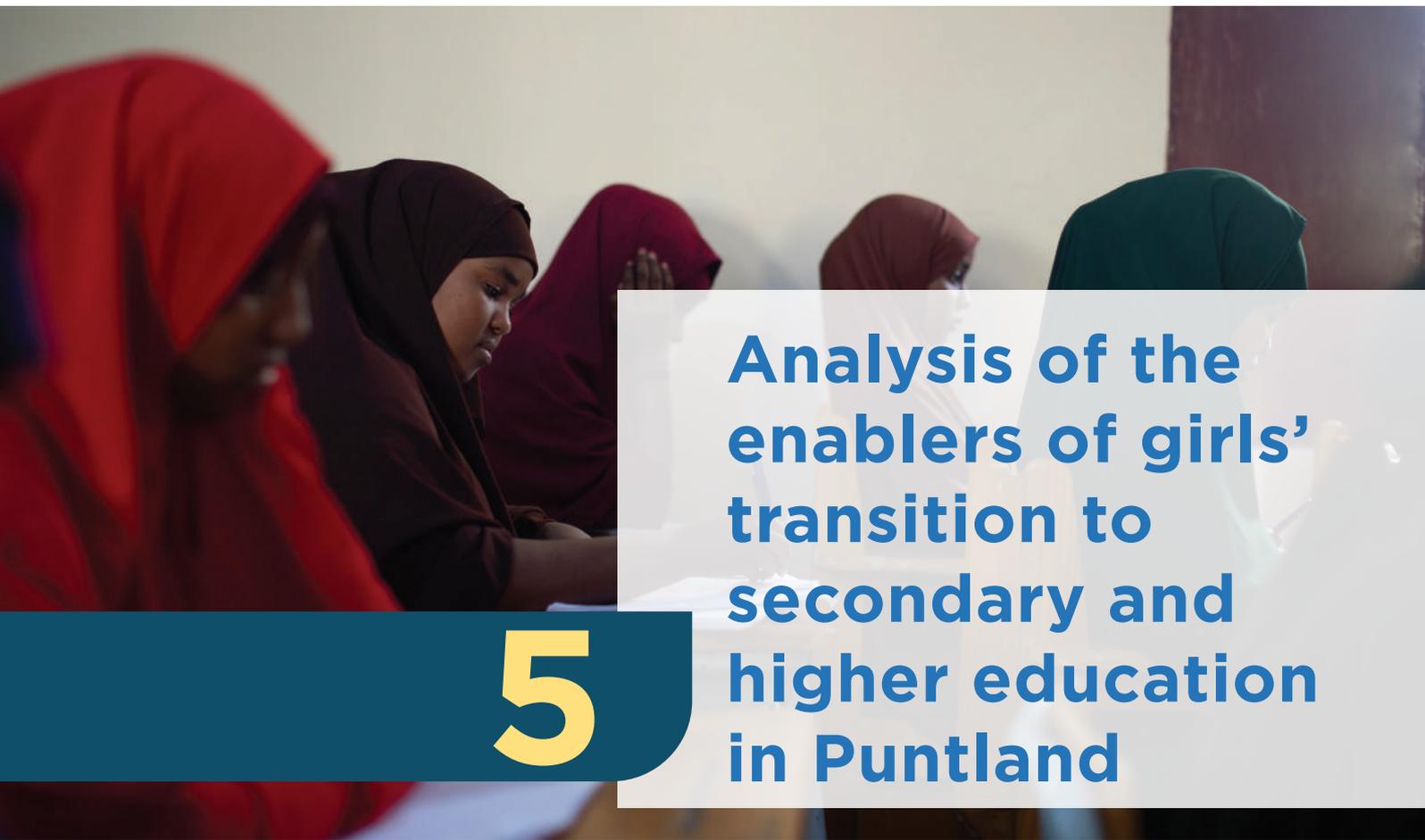
**Table 7** FGDs Marital Status and Educational Level

FGD Participants	No	Married	Secondary education and above
Teachers	28	19	28
Parents	34	34	20
Secondary girls	32	0	32
University Girls	16	4	16
Women in Vocational training centers	12	4	10
Girl outside school	5	0	3
Religious leaders	14	13	10
Community elder	31	31	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>131</b>

**Table 8** KIIs Marital Status and Educational Level

FGD Participants	No	Married	Secondary education and above
Education experts	2	2	2
School Principal	8	6	8
Ministry of Education local Authority	3	2	3
Gender expert	2	1	2
Women activist	2	1	2
Civil society organization	3	2	3
Ministry of women	2	2	2
International organization education program officer	2	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>

The tables 7 and 8 above present relevant information on the marital status and education levels of respondents. The data collected shows that majority of the respondents have attained secondary education and above. This helps the study connect respondents' experiences on education with the enablers and barriers to girls' transition to higher education in Puntland.



# 5

## Analysis of the enablers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland

### Introduction

The information from the study on enablers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland was generated from eight categories of respondents and these were: secondary school girls, university girls, out of school girls, women in vocational training centers, community elders, religious leaders, parents and key informants from education and gender sectors. Data collected was analyzed qualitatively focusing on the socio-economic factors, education-system, household factors, interpersonal and personal enablers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland, a state in the Federal Republic of Somalia.

### Socio-economic Enablers

Socio-economic factors play a key role in girls' transition to secondary and higher education. Encouragement from home and school are key issues that secondary school girls reported as great enablers for their transition to secondary education. At home, parents and in particular fathers are great influencers for girls' education outcomes. In school, the school management and particularly the encouragement from the school principal was viewed as a major motivation for girls to attain secondary and higher education.

*"If the family encourages the girl child, she may reach a higher level in education and if the family discourage the girl, she may dropout from schooling. Teachers and school management are also other influential factors. If they encourage, guide and counsel the girl, she may succeed in her education journey" - Secondary school girl, Galkaio.*

University girls mainly expressed that their parents are the major socio-economic enablers for their transition to university education, since there are very few scholarships awarded by universities. Parents are viewed to be the largest providers of moral support and financial assistance. This therefore, goes on to show the clear socio-economic enablement that is provided largely by parents for girls to transit to secondary and university education.

*"Parents play a significant role in girl's education. If the parents are aware that educated girls can as well achieve her goals, and can be self-sufficient; this supports and enables them in proceeding further with their education" - University student, Bosaso.*

The community elders largely expressed that parents and the communities are the major source of socio-economic enablement of girls' transition to secondary

and university education. Views from these respondents mainly pointed at parents as the greater enablers.

*“There are parents that support their girls not only in school fees but also in giving them revisions for their lessons. This helps them greatly in understanding the value of education and in achieving higher level degrees”*  
- Community elder, Galkaio.

The religious leaders and parents equally revealed that parents and scholarships are the socio-economic enablers of girls’ transition to secondary and university education. However, they stressed the role of parents. This confirms the parents’ lead in providing socio-economic support to girls’ attainment of secondary and university education levels.

The key informants who happened to be influential people in education and gender sectors, also recognized the role of parents but also the scholarships to the girls from the minority groups as great enablers of girls’ transition to secondary and university education. They therefore stressed parents and government scholarship support as enablers of girls’ education in Puntland.

## Education System

Secondary school girls, university girls, community elders, religious leaders, parents and key informants reported that some of secondary schools and universities provide friendly and favorable conditions for girls especially toiletries, common rooms and cafeterias. However, this study noticed that, parents specifically, pointed out that such favorable conditions and facilities for girls are available mainly in universities. This therefore confirms that universities unlike secondary schools are the greatest providers of favorable conditions and facilities for girls as enablers of their education.

Religious leaders and key informants added that the government has enabling policies that promote girls’ transition to secondary and university education. One of the policies mentioned by a religious leader was: community girls’ education awareness campaign.

*“If you educate a girl, you have educated the society, and if you educate a boy, you have educated one person”*-  
Religious leader, Garowe.

One of the key informants reported that there is increased access to education by girls following enactment of an enablement policy and this policy is called “gender education policy” that begun from 2012, hence making strategic development of girls’ education. This is indicative that the religious teachings and the government policies in place have enabled the girls’ education and transition to higher academic levels.

According to all responses from the study respondents, there has been a positive paradigm shift in the level of access to education by girls in Puntland. They appreciated that more schools and institutions have been established in the last twenty years.

*“The number of schools increased, colleges increased, and also universities increased in the last years. Previous years, access to education was hard, and the girls took long time to move the distances to schools and universities”*- Secondary school girl, Bosaso.

This therefore reveals that better access to education is an important existing education system enabler of girls’ transition to secondary and tertiary education within Puntland.

## House-hold Enablers

The information attained from secondary and university girls showed that house-hold enablers of their extension to secondary and university education include: house-holds’ awareness on girls’ education, encouragement by their parents to go higher in education, provision of education materials and payment of tuition. Therefore, the encouragement and facilitation by families are key house-hold enablers of girls’ transition to secondary and university education in Puntland.

*“The family’s constant motivation is the main thing that can help girls to enroll, attain, and proceed to higher levels education. On the other hand, lack of family support and enough awareness of girls’ education can promote dropouts”* - University student, Bosaso.

Responses from community elders and religious leaders revealed that most families nowadays support their girls’ education to higher levels because these family members especially parents are aware that the girls are equally good for education and can achieve like boys. This denotes that house-holds’ awareness of the girls’

potential to succeed in education is a great house-hold enabler of girls' transition to secondary and university education.

The parents in this study expressed that they provide guidance and counseling to their daughters concerning education. This guidance to the girls has enabled these girls to extend to secondary and higher education. Such findings therefore mean that the provision of education guidance and counseling by house-holds is another facilitator of girls' transition to secondary and higher education.

Information from the key informants in this study clearly puts it that few house-holds support their girls' education up to higher education levels. Those few families that do it provide tuition, transport cost, dressing and learning materials like computers and smart phones. Such data means that there is vivid enablement of girls' education at secondary and higher levels by their house-holds.

*"Once families take the role to cater for students' needs, their girls step up and continue with education" - A member of civil society organization, Bosaso.*

## Inter-personal Enablers

Secondary and university girls constantly responded that encouragement from their teachers and fellow student girls were the common interpersonal enablers of their transition to secondary and higher education. Both categories of respondents revealed it that this motivation is from other girls in class and society who are interested in education. These findings therefore confirm that teachers and fellow girl students were very influential in providing interpersonal enablers of girls' transition to secondary and higher institutions of learning in Puntland.

The community elders pointed out that advice and encouragement from teachers, parents, husbands and members of the community played an interpersonal substantial role in enabling girls to enroll and accomplish secondary and higher education. However, the religious leaders' responses stressed the role of communities in motivating the girls to pursue their education up to secondary and higher institutions of learning. Such findings confirm that teachers, parents, husbands and members of the community of the girls in the study enabled those girls' education to transition to secondary and higher institutions of learning.



*“Only families are not responsible for their girls, the community also have responsibility in helping girls attain higher degrees of studies. If the community provides a safe environment for girls, it can really help them transit to higher levels of education”* - Community elder, Garowe.

Parents on the other hand mainly reported that the Islamic religion in Puntland gives high priority to girl's education through encouraging girls and their parents to attain higher education. The parents who were probed in focused groups said that Islam openly encourages secondary and higher education for girls. This research finding asserts that Islam is another crucial interpersonal enabler of girls' transition to secondary and higher education.

*“Our Islamic religion encourage girls in attaining education. It is an Islamic obligation but our community don't encourage girl child's education. If girls were educated, many bad habits in the community would have decreased a lot because educated mothers bring out children with good moral campus”*- Parent, Harfo.

Information from key informant interviews mainly expressed that peers among the girls can influence each other positively to stay in school and attain higher levels in education. These findings therefore point out that positive peer pressure is another interpersonal enabler of girls' transition to secondary and higher education.

*“The peer pressure is not only negative, the positive friends can advise fellow girls to study hard”* - Key Informant, Galkaio.

## Personal Enablers

Secondary school girls mainly articulated from the focus group interviews that personal interest for secondary education and good academic performance enabled them to transition to such a level. Such a finding is important in revealing that being self-motivated who achieves good academic performance acts as a key personal enabler of girls' transition to secondary education.

The university students in this study generally mentioned that avoiding peer pressure from their fellow girls who dropped-out of school was key in enabling them to continue to university education. This information

therefore suggests that learning from and avoiding the bad example and experience of school drop-outs among girls inspires them to transition to higher education in Puntland.

*“Peer pressure can be a factor that affects girls' education. If most of the girls in the same class got married, others will also take the same action and marry. If the majority of the girls in the class have self-confidence and want to continue with their education, others will also take the same route and attain secondary school or university”* - University student, Bosaso.

Community elders and parents who were interviewed to inform this study asserted that confidence among girls that they can achieve in education was a personal enabler of the girls' transition to secondary and higher education. This denotes that the determination, will and self-belief in the girls' academic ability is key in enabling girls to advance to secondary and higher education in this part of Somalia.

The religious leaders that were contacted to participate in this study expressed the view that valuing the importance of education by the girls themselves has enabled them to stay in school until secondary and higher education. This clearly shows that the value and importance attached to secondary and higher education is an important personal enabler of girls' transition to such higher education levels.

*“Those who value the importance of the success from education are the ones who want to continue with their education...”*- Religious leader, Galkaio.

The key informants in the interviews scheduled for each of them generally mentioned that the admiration for future better life among girls is a drive towards their enrolment to secondary and higher education. The several views from informants expressed that girls admire good life that educated women enjoy and this is a factor for their hard work in school. These views from the key informants shows that the girls' hope for success in life as a result of high education is a personal enabler of these girls to enroll for secondary and higher education.

*“Confidence, ambition, the way of thinking and her patience are the individual factors that contribute to continue her education”* - School principal, Galkaio.



# 6

## Analysis of barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland

### Introduction

The information from the study on barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland was generated from eight categories of respondents and these were: secondary school girls, university girls, community elders, out of school girls, women in vocational training centers, religious leaders, parents and key informants. Data was collected, translated, coded, themed and analyzed qualitatively focusing on the: socio-economic, education-system, house-hold, interpersonal and personal barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland, a State in the Federal Republic of Somalia.

### Socio-economic Barriers

Responses from secondary school girls, university girls, community elders, religious leaders, parents and key informants concurred that the major socio-economic barrier of girls' transition to secondary and higher education was a financial problem. This makes parents, sponsors and guardians to see the cost of education as high, given that most of them come from low-income families. This can be attributed to the lack

of public schooling systems and the absence of financial incentives to support girl child's education. However, parents in particular added that transport cost for their girls makes families challenged to afford meeting other needs of the girls such as dressing and learning materials. Such findings suggest that financial problems to cater for tuition and other education expenses is the major socio-economic obstacle of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in the Somali State of Puntland.

*"School cost is the main factor, much as schools are expensive, there are also other related costs such as books, exam fees etc. This forces many girls to dropout because families cannot afford"- Elder, Galkaio.*

*"Due to prevailing harsh economic situation, many girls are forced not to proceed with education, since their families cannot meet with the costs" - Education expert, Garowe.*

### Education System Barriers

Findings indicate that the education-system challenge commonly reported was the issue of long distances

covered by the girls due to scattered and few schools and higher education institutions in Puntland. Girls whose families can't afford descent transportation are forced to walk long kilometers to attend schools and this prompts higher risks on girls than boys such as rape, harassment and robbery.

The secondary school girls added that there is a general lack of enough friendly school environment for girls and also no state policies to support girls' education. This information means that on top of the general education system challenge of distant schools, most of secondary schools do not have enough friendly school environment and the government is not in support of secondary school girls' education in Puntland.

*"It is rare to get friendly environment in our schools. Girls need special rooms to rest, in Yemen, girls have large halls and rooms where they can change clothes and rest, but here, girls don't get that service"*- Parent, Galkaio.

"In general schools and universities have some facilities for both boys and girls but there are no specialized services for girls, there is a gap that requires to be filled"- School Principal, Bosaso.

The religious leaders contacted in this study added the challenge of poor implementation of education policies in Puntland. They complained that there could be good education system policies on girls' education, but they are never implemented well or at all. This is another education system barrier of girls' transition to secondary and higher education.

The key informants in this research who included top officials from the Puntland State Ministries of Education and Gender added that there is a challenge of inadequate scholarships for girls and there are no special organizations to advocate for girls' education. This implies that the government and other stakeholders lack enough scholarship funds and advocacy to promote girls' transition to secondary and higher education.

## Household Barriers

The common household barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education were early marriages and heavy house work, according to the secondary school girls, university girls, community elders, religious leaders, parents and key informants who participated in this study.

Secondary school girls, university girls and key informants gave more household barriers however, secondary school girls mentioned that they suffer forced marriages. This means that, apart from parents subjecting their daughters to early marriages, they also force these girls into these marriages.

University girls on the other hand added that parents instead favor and prioritize boys' education to thrive.

*"If funds are not enough at home, the boy will be given the chance of being taken to the secondary school or university, not the girl"*- University student, Garowe.

Key informants of this research specifically mentioned that lack of enough guidance and counseling on education from parents at home is another issue hindering girls to proceed to secondary and higher education. Many girls lack encouraging and inspirational guidance from home which could motivate them to reach far in education. This suggests that inadequate guidance and counseling on education at home is a serious household barrier of girls' transition to secondary and tertiary education.

*"The family's support is the main thing that can help girls to enroll and transit to higher levels of education. On the other hand, lack of family support, inspiration and encouragement can let many girls dropout from schooling"* - University student, Bosaso.

## Interpersonal Barriers

Secondary and university girls who were interviewed expressed that negative influence from girls who drop out of school is a serious interpersonal barrier of girls' transition to secondary and higher education institutions. In their responses, it was noted that many girls follow the footsteps of their friends who have dropped out of school, hence, failing to proceed with education to secondary and higher training. Such findings show that negative influence from drop-outs is an interpersonal barrier of girls' attainment of higher education levels in Puntland.

Community elders and parents noted that husbands don't encourage their young wives to continue with education. Responses continued to show that such husbands concentrated more on the marriage than education for their spouses. This information suggests that the negative attitude of the husbands towards

the education of their young wives is a threat to girls' transition to higher academic levels.

*"Once husbands don't attach much value to wife's education, many young women see themselves to not belong to the learning community. Husbands play a major role in helping their wives proceed with education even after marriage"* - Parent, Garowe.

Religious leaders severally asserted that bullying by boys and harassment from teachers have caused girls to drop out from school. The information picked from their ideas reveal that these are more common in secondary schools. Such revelation means that bullying by boys and harassment by teachers are interpersonal barriers of girls' transition to secondary and tertiary education.

*"Nothing is more challenging than unsafe environment in school. It even gets worse, when there exists harassment from teachers"* - Religious leader, Bosaso.

Interviews with key informants revealed that very few female teachers to inspire the girls in schools and lack of counseling for the girls in schools are big issues in causing failure of girls' transition to secondary and tertiary education. This goes without saying that, few female teachers in schools who would serve as role models and inadequate counseling to girls are barriers of girls' higher education attainment.

## Personal Barriers

Research conducted among the secondary school girls uncovered four personal barriers to girls' transition to secondary education. These were: poor academic performance, inadequate knowledge about the importance of education, low self-esteem of girls from minority groups and low interest for education among girls. Therefore, internal factors within the girls themselves are key in hindering them to move on with higher education.

Information emerging from university girls asserted that domestic violence, illness and less value attached to education among girls are big personal barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education. Therefore, personal factors are also challenges to girls' prosperity in education.



*"There are individual factors that force girls to dropout from schools and higher education. These include illness, poor performance of exams, loving of someone, and psychological factors like believing that she doesn't have the ability to accomplish education"*- Woman in vocational training center, Garowe.

Community elders, religious leaders and key informants mentioned similar views on the personal barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education. They identified: low self-esteem among girls from minority groups and preference of marriage to education. Such a report indicates that many girls drop out of school because of feeling inferior and sometimes because of loving marriage than education.



## Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

### Introduction

The focus here is to compare the findings of this particular study with earlier related researches to establish similarities and differences in the findings in order to determine the direction other related researches should take. Final interpretations of the findings are given below together with recommended actions or decisions which should be undertaken by the users of this research.

### Discussion

#### Enablers of Girls' Transition to Secondary and Higher Education

The study at hand has found out that community support and guidance to the girls by house-holds have enabled girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland. Additionally, it has been found out again in this research that families that provide socio-economic and household support like: tuition, transport cost, dressing and learning materials like computers and smart phones have enabled girls' education to reach secondary and higher education. These findings agree with Xavier (2018) who found out that Community involvement and family support are key enablers in girl's schooling.

In this study, it has been discovered that the government policies in Puntland are enablers of girls' transition to secondary and university education. One of the government policies mentioned by a respondent was: community girls' education awareness campaign. Another respondent reported that there is another government policy of increased access to education by girls and this policy is called "gender education policy" that begun from 2012 and it has enabled the girls' transition to higher academic levels. These findings concur with the outlines of Puntland Education Sector Strategic Plan (2016) which presents various policies aimed at keeping girls in school. The findings are also in line with Abuya et al. (2014) who found out that consistent government support together with grassroot innovations help to keep girls in school, just as focusing on educational development of girls can enable girls to stay at school and achieve higher education (Halim, Yount, & Cunningham, 2016). The findings in this particular research go ahead to correspond with Fancy (2012) who equally asserts that national programs that target girls' empowerment have been reported to enable girls to stay in school.

## **Barriers of Girls' Transition to Secondary and Higher Education**

According to this research, the major education system challenge reported as a barrier of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland was the issue of long distances covered by the girls due to scattered and few schools and higher education institutions. These findings correspond to the report by UNESCO (2015), which found out that, where travel to school involves distance, security becomes an increased issue and cause for family concern leading to increased number of adolescents dropping out of school. The finding also reminds us of Bhagavatheeswaran et al (2016) who equally found out that long distance to schools influenced girls' enrolment in schools.

This research exposed that the common household barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education was early marriages, heavy house work, forced marriages and prioritizing boys' education to thrive. These findings match with Amina & Guled, 2019; Camfield (2011); Tanye (2008); Roby et al (2009) which also detail out numerous barriers to education for girls, commonly rooted in gender roles that are socially constructed. The findings of this study still agree with Stromquist and Fischmann (2009) who contend that the barriers of girls' education range from social experiences, social attitudes and gendered discrimination (Stromquist and Fischmann, 2009). Household barriers revealed in this study further correspond with Mamonah (2014) who registers that marginalization of girls and preference of boys over girls contribute largely to barriers that girls face to continue with their education.

Information generated by this research shows that the major socio-economic barrier of girls' transition to secondary and higher education in Puntland is financial problem. This makes parents, sponsors and guardians to perceive the cost of education as high, given that most of them come from low-income families. However, parents in particular research added that transport cost for their girls makes families challenged to afford meeting other needs of the girls such as dressing and learning materials. These findings clearly tally with Nagira (2016) and Chismaya et al (2012) who articulates that poverty deepens disparities and is a strong determinant of girls' participation in secondary schooling beyond the basic stage.

## **Conclusion**

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### **Enablers of Girls' Transition to Secondary and Higher Education**

It can therefore be concluded that in Puntland, the major socio-economic enablers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education are: parents, principals, communities and government scholarships especially to girls from minority groups. The education system enablers are: favorable conditions for girls, government policies and increased access to education. The household enablers are: increased awareness on girls' education in households, encouragement of girls to go higher in education, guidance and counseling in homes and household socio-economic support to girls. The interpersonal enablers are: motivation from teachers, fellow girls, husbands, parents and community. The personal enablers are: personal interest in education, avoiding negative peer pressure, admiring a better future and high self-esteem.

### **Barriers of Girls' Transition to Secondary and Higher Education**

The study concludes that the socio-economic barriers of girls' transition to secondary and higher education are: financial problems to cater for tuition and other education expenses. The education system barriers are: long distance to schools and institutions since they are few, inadequate favorable facilities for girls especially in secondary schools, poor implementation of education policies and inadequate government scholarships for girls. The household barriers are: early marriages, heavy house work, forced marriages, prioritizing boys' education and lack of enough guidance and counseling. The interpersonal barriers are: negative peer influence, lack of encouragement from their husbands, bullying in schools, harassment from teachers, lack of enough female teachers in schools to serve as role models and inadequate school counseling to girls. The personal barriers are: poor academic performance, inadequate knowledge about the importance of education, low self-esteem of girls from minority groups, domestic violence, illness and preference of marriage to education.

## Recommendations

Basing on the findings of this research, the study recommends the following:

The government of Puntland needs to design and implement subsidized or affordable education for girls in secondary and tertiary levels to cater for high cost of education hindering the girls' transition to secondary and higher education. A relatively lower cost in terms of tuition should be set for girls to encourage their enrolment.

More secondary schools and higher education institutions should be established and those in place should be strengthened to increase accessibility to education services since long distances to schools and institutions has been constantly raised by study respondents.

Deliberate efforts to create awareness and to discourage heavy domestic work, early marriages and forced marriages for girls should be undertaken by government through mass media, social media and government speeches and publications.

Increase the number of female teachers in secondary schools and tertiary institutions to serve as role models in inspiring and motivating girls' education. Inspiring, motivating and counseling girls should also be added on their professional job duties and responsibilities in schools and institutions.

Education in assertiveness, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-concept should be taught in schools to all girls as policy of government so as to improve the confidence and determination of girls in Puntland.



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# Appendix

## Appendix A: FGD/KII guide

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### General Factors

1. What are the barriers that prevent girls from attaining secondary and higher education levels? Probes; cost of education, gender norms, lack of sanitary facilities for girls, early marriage, distance to school etc.
2. Do you think the access to education of girls has changed compared to twenty years ago? Explain.
3. Are the reasons for girls not enrolling or dropping out of secondary schools and higher education different from those for boys? If yes, explain the differences
4. What are the enablers that support girls to attain secondary and higher education? Probes; government schemes, proper facilities, access to learning institutions in terms of distance, supportive family etc.
5. Are there policies that promote the girl's education? What are they? How are they implemented? Probes: Emphasis on equality in access to education, measures to keep girls in school, promotion of safe schooling environment for girls

### Socio Economic Factors

1. Do you think that educating girls has a strong influence to the community development? Explain?
2. What is your opinion on educating girls to attain secondary and higher levels of education?
3. Do you hold the opinion that educating boys has more value than girls? If yes explain. If no explain.
4. Are there community/society related reasons for girls dropping out of secondary and higher education? (Probe: Harassment by teachers and teasing by boys, GBV related factors etc).
5. In your opinion do you think schooling cost is factor contributing girl's drop-out from secondary and higher education? Explain.
6. How does the prevailing economic situation within families and the greater community affect the education of girls?
7. If the family has limited resources, who would they likely prefer to take to school? Why?
8. What can be done by the community and other stakeholders to ensure that girls enrol and stay in school until they complete secondary and higher levels of education?
9. Is there any fear of educating girls in the community? If yes explain (Probes; engage in behaviours deemed inappropriate within the cultural context).
10. Are girls from minorities or marginalized groups more likely to drop out of school than other groups? (Probe, girls less value, social discrimination etc) If yes why?

11. What is the impact of religion on girl's education in your community?
12. How can religion be a tool for promoting girls to secondary and higher education attainment?
13. In your opinion, do you think there is an increase in dropout rates for girls in secondary and higher education due to the onset of COVID-19? Has this changed now? Explain.

### **Education-system factors**

1. Do you think that distance to school affects girl's retention in secondary and higher education? If yes, explain (probe: insecurity, lack of transport, GBV etc).
2. Do the schools/institutions of higher learning have an environment that is friendly to girls? If yes/no, explain? probe; toilet facility for girls, guidance and counselling).

### **Household factors;**

1. What are some of the household level factors that may contribute to the dropout of girls from secondary and higher education? Probe: chores, family preference of boys, marrying off school girls prematurely etc.

### **Interpersonal factors**

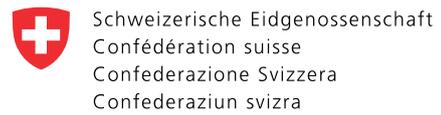
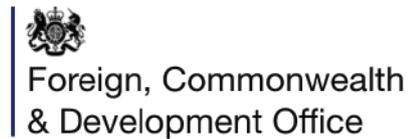
1. In your opinion, does early marriage of girls contribute to their dropout from secondary and higher education? If yes/no, how? (if no, who supports the girls to continue their studies?)
2. How does family support or lack of support hinder girls' participation in secondary and higher education? (Probes; lack of support from them, physical abuse from the parents, forcing girl to work in early age)
3. How does peer pressure affect girls' participation in secondary and higher education?
4. How does confidence/girl's opinion of education affect girls' participation in high school and higher education?

### **Personal Factors**

1. What are the individual factors that contribute to girls' dropout from secondary and higher education? Probe: not valuing education, illness, physiological factors, poor performance of the girls, class repetition etc.



Puntland State of Somalia



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