

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN INITIATIVE

ERITREA COUNTRY STUDY (Final Draft)

Ministry of Education, Asmara.



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Preface

The creation of a modern technologically advanced and internationally competitive economy is the cornerstone of Eritrea's development objective. Ensuring self-reliance and social justice through providing equitable social services is another leading policy objective of the Government of the State of Eritrea (GoSE). To achieve these overriding economic and social development objectives, Eritrea considers education as a priority of all priorities. To this end, considerable human and financial resource is being invested in education. As a result significant progress has been achieved in rehabilitating, expanding and improving the education system.

However, in spite of the efforts made to meet national and international commitments and the declaration of free education at all levels, the pace of achieving EFA and MDGs has been rather slow. The figures from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) indicate that there still remain significant numbers of school-age children who are out of school. The highest concentration of out-of-school children is at pre-primary, lower secondary and secondary levels of education. Children from remote rural communities, children from nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, children with disabilities, and the girl child are among those excluded from the system.

This country study on out-of-school children initiated by UNICEF /UNESCO-UIS and the GoSE will not only identify who and where the out of school children are, but will also offer a platform for discussion on how to address the barriers and bottlenecks that are creating exclusion. This initiative is an integral part of the broader objective of providing education to all.

We expect that the results of this country study on out of school children will come up with constructive and practical recommendations for guiding existing and emerging policies and strategies with a view of tackling the impediments to children's participation in education. Within this context, our deepest gratitude goes to all individuals and organizations who have contributed to make this country study a success.

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Eritrea OOSCI Study

Technical Team

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Acronyms

5DE's	5 Dimensions of Exclusion
CCGs	Community Care Giving Centers
CEE	Complementary Elementary Education
CMF	Conceptual and Methodological Framework
DAME	Department of Adult and Media Education
DGE	Department of General Education
DRHRD	Department of Research and Human Resources
DTVET	Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training
ECCE	Early Child Care & Education
EDI	EFA Development Index
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPHS	Eritrea Population and Health Survey
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
ETA	Eritrean Teachers Association
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GoSE	Government of the State of Eritrea
GPI	Gender Parity Index
ICOLL	Integrated Content and Language Learning
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
KG	Kindergarten
LCIP	Learner Centered and Interactive Pedagogy
MLA	Monitoring Learning Achievement
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MML	Minimum Mastery Level
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLHW	Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare
MoND	Ministry of National Development
MoRES	Monitoring of Results for Equity System
NE	Nomadic Education
NER	Net Enrôlement Ratio

NEP	National Education Policy
NRS	Northern Red Sea
NSO	National Statistics Office
NUEW	National Union of Eritrean Women
NUEYS	National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students
OM	Operational Manual
OOSC	Out Of School Children
OOSCI	Out Of School Children Initiative
PFDJ	People’s Front for Democracy and Justice
PGE	Provisional Government of Eritrea
PRC	Pedagogic Resource Centre
PTSA	Parent, Teachers, and Student Association
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPCF	Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework
SRS	Southern Red Sea
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UPE	Universal Primary Education
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene for Schools

Executive Summary

1. Eritrean Education in Context

The process of educational policy and provision in Eritrea is guided by the country's long standing principle of social justice. This principle is enshrined in a number of government social and economic policy documents. The Macro-Policy (1994), for example, perceives education as a key input towards equitable socio-economic development and human capital formation. Within this framework, the National Education Policy (2011) has mapped out strategies and interventions to facilitate equitable access to quality learning. Educational provision in Eritrea is also guided by the country's commitment to international obligations such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals.

Against this background, it can be claimed that considerable achievements have been made to improve the education system, both in terms of access and quality. Within the parameter of access, concerted efforts have been made to build more schools, enroll more students and recruit more teachers. In formal schools, enrolments increased from 244,450 in 1992/93 to 615,547 in 2012/13, a growth of 152%. Disaggregated, this means an increase of 100%, 447% and 250% at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools respectively. Within this context, the focal concern of the Ministry of Education has been to extend priority to rural and other educationally disadvantaged areas of the country. These efforts have created a situation where today 80% of primary schools and 72% of lower secondary schools are located in rural communities (MOE, 2013).

The response in terms of quality has primarily focused on reforming the curriculum, supplying appropriate textbooks and upgrading the academic and professional competence of teachers. In addition, efforts have been made to improve student-teacher ratios and to ensure (through an increase of instructional time) that students remain in school long enough to complete the requirements of the curriculum, including the acquisition of basic skills.

Despite the progress made in rehabilitating and expanding the education system in the last two decades, there are still critical issues and overriding concerns such as: low level of learner participation in pre-primary educational provision, regional disparities in student enrolments at all levels in the school system, wide gender disparity in access to schooling among the regions, limited access and progression in respect to children with disabilities, children from nomadic communities and children living in geographically hard to reach areas, and below target levels of learner performance in national assessment surveys.

Such concerns correspond with the wider task of achieving basic education for all. This in turn reinforces the need for the development of evidence based policy and program intervention with a view of addressing the barriers which keep children away from school.

2. Purpose and Research Procedures of the Out of School- Children Country Study

The overall purpose of the study is to support the government's objective of reducing the number of out-of-school children all over the country through identifying their distribution and the critical barriers for their exclusion. The study is consistent with the Global Initiative for Out of School children mounted by UNESCO-UIS and UNICEF. This model involves the following inter-related tasks: developing comprehensive profiles of excluded children using innovative procedures; linking these profiles to the barriers that lead to exclusion; Identifying, promoting and implementing sound policies and strategies that address exclusion and its attendant causes.

Based on the procedures set out in the Operational Manual (OM), the research study covered the following parameters:

Dimension 1: Children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school.

Dimension2: Children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school.

Dimension 3: Children of lower secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school.

Dimension 4: Children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out.

Dimension 5: Children who are in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out.

The specific methodologies employed to obtain data for the study are desk review of quantitative data, review of available documents and reports, review of educational policies and strategies, and field survey.

3. Summary of the Findings

3.1. Profiles of Excluded Children

- Nationally, 73% of pre-primary school age children (age 5) are estimated to be out-of-school.
- Household wealth, region and place of residence affect 5 year old children's participation in school.
- There are more out-of-school children at lower secondary level (91,000) compared to primary level (65,000) suggesting largely supply side constraints.
- There are more female children of primary and lower secondary school age who are out-of-school in comparison to male children.
- Primary and lower secondary school age children from rural areas are more likely to be out of school than urban children of the same age groups.
- More children of primary and lower secondary age from poorer families tend to be out of school in comparison with children from richer families.

- There is a strong correlation between parental level of education and school enrolment at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school levels (i.e. increases in parental education lead to decreases in out-of-school cases)
- In the context of Dimensions 4 and 5, the group profiles of the children who are at risk of dropping out include:
 - Children with no early learning opportunities.
 - Overage children (particularly those who are older than the grade level by 2 or more years).
 - Children with disabilities
 - Repeaters.
 - Children travelling long distances to school.

3.2. Barriers and Bottlenecks to Exclusion

The study identified the barriers and bottlenecks that lead to exclusion from and within school, and provides analyses of existing policies that affect each of the critical barriers identified. The barriers are analysed using four major domains: *enabling environment, supply, demand and quality*.

In terms of **enabling environment**, the analysis shows that in general there is a strong political will to support the policy priority of making basic education available to all. This is reflected in most of the policy documents issued by the government and in the country's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international obligations such as the EFA and MDGs.

However, there is policy gap in respect in the status of pre-primary education within the Eritrean education system. Although, pre-primary education is “part and parcel” of basic education, it is apparent that this provision is not free and compulsory for all children aged four to five. This policy ambiguity has led to a two-tier pre-primary education provision with the private sector and local communities largely operating in urban areas and the government focusing its efforts in rural and disadvantaged areas.

From the perspective of the **demand side**, the determinants of exclusion or being at risk of exclusion from school are household poverty, negative socio-cultural beliefs and practices (particularly in relation to girls), low levels of parental and community awareness on the value of education, child marriage and the nomadic/semi-nomadic lifestyle of some communities. Most of these barriers affect rural communities and they do interact to contribute to a multiplicity of barriers which rural children encounter in accessing to and staying in school.

Nomadic communities tend to be largely rural poor with little or no education. For most of them the imperatives of survival come before children's education. Socio-cultural norms and opportunity costs weigh heavily in favor of keeping children, particularly girls, at home instead

of sending them to school. Similarly, poverty, socio-cultural attitudes and living in rural areas add to the invisibility of children with disabilities.

With respect to **supply**, shortage of schools and classrooms is a major barrier to educational participation. This is particularly so at pre-primary and lower secondary school levels. Although efforts have been made to expand access to schooling in rural areas, there are remote villages and scattered settlements which are still undeserved. In such cases, distance of school from home emerges as a key impediment to schooling. This particular barrier affects female children more than boys mainly due to socio-cultural based concerns about girls 'safety to walk or travel long distances' to be in school. The prospect of travelling long distances to school also adversely affects the participation of children with disabilities. Distance of school from home is one more example of a supply side barrier interacting with demand side barriers to generate multi-dimensional challenges to the education of girls and children with disabilities.

Other supply side barrier affecting children's participation in school is the recruitment and deployment of inadequate number of teachers. While this is a general challenge, schools in some rural areas face the additional challenge of securing female and local teachers as role models. Inadequate supply of educational materials and resources also emerge as obstacles to meaningful learning in classrooms.

Learning becomes even more meaningful if **quality** is placed at the heart of educational provision. The analyses of data on barriers related to quality show that there are a number of make shift schools in rural areas, particularly in Anseba, Gash-Barka, Northern Red Sea and Southern Red Sea regions. Another challenge linked to school infrastructure is the inadequate supply of functioning water and sanitation facilities. This affects all children but particularly adolescent girls.

Shortage of professionally qualified and motivated teachers and limitations in the provision of adequately trained professional school management and supervision personnel constitute part of the quality related bottlenecks identified in the study. These constraints, along with insufficient supply of appropriate learning facilities and resources, can have the effect of undermining student progression and achievement in school. Low achievement can lead to class repetition and being overage for the grade which are risk factors for dropping out.

Although, in general, the policy environment in Eritrea supports improvements in access to equitable quality education, there are still challenges to the effective implementation of relevant programs and interventions. Financial constraints have always been critical, but lack of desired coordination of efforts and shortage of appropriately trained and deployed personnel at local administration levels tend to impede the implementation of social programs targeting the needs of excluded children from and within school.

3.3. Key Conclusions and Recommendations.

The findings of the study indicate that almost a quarter of a million (220,596) children aged 5-13 are out of school. The magnitude of exclusion is more acute at the pre-primary and lower secondary levels where 73% and 41% of the relevant school age children respectively are out of school. In comparison, 19% of primary school age children (6-10 years) are estimated to be out of school.

The study has shown that there is lack of adequate and reliable information on particular social groups such as children with disabilities, children from nomadic communities and working children. Accordingly, there is a need for comprehensive and systematic data on such vulnerable groups in EPHS and EMIS surveys so that relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies can track their needs and target resources in more rationale and equitable ways.

The National Policy on Education recognizes pre-primary education as “part and parcel of basic education”. However, there are discrepancies in the implementation of pre-primary educational provision for children aged four to five (e.g. one year; two years). Hence, it is necessary to unambiguously and unequivocally place pre-primary education within the basic education cycle and commit the funding required to support this position.

Multiple demand side barriers (e.g. household poverty, low level of parental education, negative socio-cultural beliefs/ practices, nomadic / semi nomadic life styles) impede children’s participation in education in a number of rural communities. In the long term, such demand side barriers require multi-sectoral and multi-pronged program interventions. In the short term, it will be necessary to continue or scale up existing incentives (in cash or kind) to targeted girl students, children with disabilities and other deserving children.

All the children who are currently out-of- school need to be in school because education is a fundamental human right and a means for achieving equity (PGE, 1991). Within the framework of this long standing government principle, there is a need to continue investing in school infrastructure through the construction of new schools and the rehabilitation of existing ones, particularly in rural and educationally underserved areas of the country.

A key factor in the delivery of equitable access to quality education is the teacher. This delivery becomes more meaningful if the teacher is well trained and motivated. The development of this kind of teacher professionalism requires a range of inter-related interventions such as improved salary structure, career progression, opportunities for continuous in-service training and supportive school management and supervision systems.

Within the parameter of the above conclusions and recommendations, the following outstanding issues merit special consideration.

Pre- Primary education provision

- Commitment to make pre-primary education compulsory for all children aged 5.
- Consider the use of primary school premises (by building extra classrooms) to offer pre-primary learning provision for children aged five.
- Build more pre-primary schools with ample infrastructure and learning facilities.

Primary education provision

- Diversify education provision with flexible calendar and modes of delivery to address the learning needs of children in nomadic and scattered settlements
- Expand and enhance the existing Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) initiatives to promote equitable access to education with a view of reaching overage children in remote and underserved areas.

Improving Enrolment in Lower Secondary Schools

- Ensure the effective utilization of existing boarding schools and provide para-boarding facilities in areas of need with particular attention to girls' education.
- Encourage and support local communities to open lower secondary classes in primary school premises on the basis of feasibility and careful planning
- Provide functional WASH facilities in the existing schools.

The education of children with disabilities

- Obtain regular and reliable data on children with disabilities in EPHS and EMIS surveys.
- Invest in the opening of more special schools to support children with hearing and visual impairments and in the operation of special education classes in mainstream schools.
- Offer incentives (in cash and/or kind) to children with disabilities from poor households.

Raising parental/ community awareness on the value of their children's education

- Continue with sensitization and mobilization campaigns.
- Offer more parenting and adult education programs.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Country Context

1.1.1 Geographic and Demographic Features

The State of Eritrea is located in the Horn of Africa, and lies north of the equator between latitudes 12°22' N and 18°02' N, and longitudes 36°26'E and 43°13' E. It has an area of 120,000 square kilometers. Eritrea shares borders with Djibouti on the south east, Ethiopia on the south and Sudan on the north and west. To the east the country is bordered by the Red Sea extending 1,212 kilometers. The two main ports of Eritrea, Massawa and Assab, are situated along the Red Sea coastline.

Fig 1.1. Political map of Eritrea.



The Eritrean land form is highly diversified containing mountain ranges, deep gorges, lowland areas, coastal plains and offshore islands. It has a high central plateau that varies from 1,800 meters to 3,000 meters above sea level. Coastal plains, western lowlands, and some 350 islands comprise the remainder of Eritrea's land mass.

Changes in topography can easily be noticed within a few hours of travel from west to east and vice-versa. This physical diversity offers diverse climatic features with highland areas getting

relatively more rain and cooler weather as compared to the lowland areas. The proximity of the climatic diversity is reflected in the Ministry of Tourism slogan ‘three seasons in two hours’.

In addition, Eritrea’s physical and climatic diversity has direct influence on the socio- economic lifestyles of many communities. In general, communities living in physically hard to reach and drought prone areas tend to lead pastoral and nomadic lifestyles. This compounds the challenge of distance in terms of the provision of integrated social services, including education.

Since the attainment of *de jure* independence in 1993, no comprehensive national census has been conducted in Eritrea. Based on the 1995 and 2002 EPHS age-sex structure and population dynamics, the EPHS 2010 estimated the resident population of Eritrea to be 3.2 million¹. However, adjustments made by the NSO relying on the population dynamics reported in EPHS 2010 corrected the population figure for the year 2010 to be 3.0 million. The population projections based on cohort component method indicated 3.14 million and 3.23 million for 2012 and 2013². These population estimates revealed an annual growth rate of 2.9% between 2010 and 2013.

As indicated in the table below, most of Eritrea’s population is young and outside the economically active group. This amounts to substantial dependency burden (86.4%) on the working population. It also suggests a challenge and an opportunity in terms of developing a substantial pool of human resources for the country.

Table 1.1: Eritrean population by age group

Age Group	Percentage
0-14	47
15-64	46
65+	7
Total	100

Source: NSO (2010), Eritrea Population Health Survey.

Average fertility rate in Eritrea is 4.8 children per woman. There was a decline in average fertility rate between 1996 and 2002, dropping from 6.1 children to 4.8 percent children per woman. The situation has remained more or less the same since 2002. Fertility rates are lower in urban areas which is 4.3 children per woman than in rural areas which is 5.6. In Asmara, the capital city, the fertility rate (2.9 per woman) is even lower than the national average. The rate of fertility likewise decreases as the level of education increases. The fertility rate for women with no education at all is 5.5 children per woman and is significantly higher than women with some secondary education which is 3.1 children per woman. There is also marked variation in

¹ NSO(2010) Eritrea Population and Health Survey

² MoND(2013)

fertility according to wealth index. Women in the lowest wealth quintile have total fertility rate of 6.1. This figure is almost double in comparison with the fertility rate of women in the highest wealth quintile- 3.2³.

1.1.2. Historical, Cultural and Administrative Profile.

Eritrea's history, and its struggle for survival, is intertwined with its strategic position on the Red Sea. For hundreds of years, external invaders such as the Turks and Egyptians used the Red Sea coast in an attempt to secure a foothold in the Eritrean hinterland. Using the port of Assab as a springboard, another category of invaders, the Italians, managed to establish a colony in Eritrea in 1890. Following the defeat of Italy during the Second World War, the British took over the administration of Eritrea until 1952. This was followed by United Nations imposed federal union with Ethiopia but the abrogation of the federal arrangement in 1962 led to a long and protracted struggle for liberation. The war of liberation came to an end in 1991 and two years later, in 1993, on the basis of a United Nations supervised referendum, Eritrea emerged as an independent and sovereign state.

Eritrea is a multi-ethnic society with nine different ethnic groups speaking nine different languages and professing two major religions, namely, Christianity and Islam. These are Afar, Bedawiet, Bilen, Kunama, Nara, Rashaida, Saho, Tigre, and Tigrigna. These groups speak languages which belong to two world language families (Afro-Asiatic and Nilo-Saharan). However, there are structural linkages and common bonds among them mainly due to collective historical and cultural experiences. These linkages and bonds were further solidified during the 30 years' war for liberation.

Eritrea operates an administrative structure comprising 6 regions, 58 sub-regions, 704 local administrative areas and 2580 villages. Public participation in decision making processes is facilitated through elected assemblies and community based local administrative and court systems. Nationally, decentralization as a mechanism for transferring certain level of responsibility and authority to local administrations has been operational since the proclamation of Decree No.86 in 1996. Within the framework of this decree, regional administrations have been empowered to take decisions on a wide range of issues including education and other social services in consultation with local communities.

1.1.3. Socio-Economic and Development Context

Soon after the *de facto* independence in 1991, Eritrea formulated and implemented socio-economic development policies and strategies, attaining an average annual growth of 7% in GDP. Marked improvements were made in other key sectors for the period up to 1997. However, a border dispute with neighboring Ethiopia (1998-2000), which escalated into a full-scale war, reversed the gains and GDP dropped sharply to an estimated 1% to 2% for the period

³ NSO (2010) Eritrea Population and Health Survey, p.69

2007/2008⁴. The unresolved no-peace-no-war border stalemate remains a major impediment to the government's development efforts as a number of possible national socio-economic initiatives and resources remain tied to the border stalemate. However, more recently, there have been signs of good economic prospects as investments in the mining sector continue to grow, with GDP growth projections of 6% in 2012 and 7% in 2013⁵.

Eritrea is believed to possess considerable deposits of precious and base minerals such as gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, nickel and iron. High quality marble and granite are known to exist in sizeable quantities and deposits of industrial minerals such as salt, sulphur, potash and silica are found in different parts of the country⁶.

Eritrea is located in the Horn of Africa region, where arid and semi-arid climatic conditions prevail. The country is therefore vulnerable to adverse effects of climate variability, recurring droughts and environmental degradation hampering development efforts. The economy is largely based on subsistence agriculture, with 80% of the population depending on farming and herding. And yet, arable land accounts for only 12% of available land. Persistent drought has had adverse effects particularly on vulnerable communities, groups and households (especially the female-headed). The country's socio-economic conditions (livelihoods, food security, and national budget), environment (land degradation, desertification) also suffer from drought effects. Furthermore, the border conflict has left large areas of land unused due to unexploded landmines especially the prime fertile agricultural regions of Gash-Barka and Debub considered to be the 'bread baskets' of Eritrea⁷.

Eritrea's development aspiration is to achieve rapid, balanced, home-grown and sustainable economic growth with social equity and justice, anchored in the principle of self-reliance. Moreover, the government places emphasis on community and individual rights as well as issues of social justice, such as equitable access to social services including education.

1.2 Overview of the Eritrean Education System

1.2.1 Policy Context

In 1991 the Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE) adopted the goal of "Education for All" since it represented its long time principle of social justice. In its Declaration of Policies on Education in Eritrea, the new government clearly reaffirmed its belief that education is a fundamental human right and a process for achieving equity:

⁴ World Bank Estimates, cited in SPCF (2013-2016), November 2012, p.7.

⁵ Economic Intelligence Unit (2013): (<http://country.eiu.com/Eritrea>)

⁶ Gold and Copper extraction started in 2011 and 2013 respectively at Bisha Mining Site.

⁷ GoSE- UN (2012) – strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework.

“...Every citizen has the full right to be schooled. But attending schools is not only one’s right but also one’s duty, a must....Currently, the Provisional Government has set in order the compulsory educational duration this way: to aid the adults to be able to write and to read; and assist the young to at least complete the Middle School....As such policy is being rendered practical, special attention will be paid to those quarters of Eritrea which, so far, have not had much schooling opportunities.”⁸

In a way this policy on equitable access to basic education reflects the adaptation of the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) field experience of the past to the realities and challenges of the present. A subsequent government policy statement perceived education not only as a right but also as an instrument for individual and national development.

*“In the light of the decisive role played by young men and women during the war of liberation, in view of the necessity to conserve and sustain the experiences and gains of the liberation struggle, and **since the question of the youth is the question of our future**, there is a need to map out concrete plans for the development of generations of hard working, productive and creative citizens imbued with love of country and people and nurtured by respect for justice and the truth.”⁹*

This emphasis on the development of productive, patriotic and tolerant citizens is reiterated in the Government’s Macro-Policy¹⁰.

“Every effort will be made to cultivate in youth love and respect for country; dedication towards work and self-reliance; excellence in the arts, sciences and sports; and awareness for the need of tolerance, justice and democracy in the context of national political pluralism and cultural diversity.”

The National Education and Training Survey (MoE, 1998) provided more evidence of the desire to use education as a tool for the realization of national development goals. The development of a self-confident, investigative and creative personality also emerged as an equally important priority of education in the survey. At the heart of this priority is the belief that well educated, trained and skilled individuals are necessary to support national development efforts.

In 2002, the Government of Eritrea circulated a Concept Paper for the Rapid Transformation of the Eritrean Education System. This document reiterated the government’s determination to provide accessible quality and relevant education to all:¹¹

⁸ PGE (1991).Declaration of Policies on Education in Eritrea,p.3

⁹PFDJ (1994).National Charter p.22-3

¹⁰ GoSE (1994). Macro Policy. p. 44.

¹¹ GoSE (2002). Concept Paper on the Rapid Transformation of the Education System Eritrea

- All doors and opportunities must be open to all Eritreans to develop their potential both professionally and personally
- Education must be employment oriented such that at the end of any level of education any person can find gainful employment...
- The standards and quality of education and training must be high enough so that products of the education system would have a high degree of acceptability in the international arena of education and employment.

The policy statements issued by the Government of Eritrea during the first decade after independence underline the interface between education and human resources development. If education is viewed as an essential component of human resources development, it then becomes necessary to devise a strategy of promoting equitable access to quality education. This entails addressing the educational needs of all children, including specific groups such as girls and out of school children. Section 1.2.3 examines the trends towards education for all in Eritrea over the last twenty years. But prior to that it is necessary to present brief statements about how education is managed and financed in Eritrea.

1.2.2 Education Management and Finance

In the context of Eritrea, government schools are schools administered and financed by the Ministry of Education. Non-government schools are schools administered and financed by private institutions and individuals. The second category includes community schools, Mahad schools (administered by Awkaf, Islamic Religious Association), Mission schools (administered by Coptic, Catholic and Protestant churches) and private schools owned by individuals.

At present, the government is the major provider of education in the country. As can be seen from the table below, apart from the pre-primary level, the proportion of schools managed and financed by non-government institutions at all levels in the school system is less than 10%. This imposes a heavy financial burden on the government.

Table 1.2. School ownership by level

Level ¹²	Government	Non-Government	Total	% of government schools from total
Pre-Primary	321	162	483	66.5%
Primary (G1-5)	824	84	908	91.0%
Lower Secondary (G6 - 8)	311	29	340	92.0%
Upper Secondary (G9-12)	91	9	100	91.0%
Total	1547	284	1837	84.2%

Source: MoE. (2013) Essential Education Indicators

¹² In the context of the structure of formal education system in Eritrea, pre-primary level, primary or elementary level, lower secondary or middle school and upper secondary or just secondary level correspond to the UIS criteria for classifying formal education programs as ISCED 0, ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3

The commitment to achieve universal basic education and to implement a range of quality learning policy initiatives at all levels in the school system inevitably adds to the costs of educational provision. The government on its own cannot possibly sustain the current and future levels of funding. Indeed the Macro- Policy of the Government of Eritrea is emphatic about the need for diversifying funding sources:

“The government, the community and the direct beneficiaries will be made to contribute varying amounts towards financing education costs. The government may resort to levying surcharges to meet part of the cost of education.”¹³

Such a multi- pronged approach to educational funding is intended to broaden the financial base of the education system and to ease the budgetary burden of the central government. It is also concerned with the promotion of a more balanced sharing of responsibilities between parents, local communities, the private sector and the national government.

1.2.3 Towards Education for All: Accomplishments and Constraints on the Ground.

As indicated earlier, providing education to all is an overriding policy objective of the Government of Eritrea. This policy objective is guided by the principle that education in Eritrea is a fundamental human right. It is also guided by Eritrea’s commitments to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international obligations such as the EFA and MDG goals.

The government firmly believes that Early Childhood Development is an integral part of the wider educational process. To this end, the MoE has developed policies and strategies to support the growth and expansion of the pre- primary school education system. This support is being provided in the form of partnership involving families, communities and government institutions. Within the context of this partnership, government efforts have focused on providing early leaning services to the most disadvantaged children in order to reduce equity gaps in access to schooling. During the academic year of 2012/2013, the majority (64%) of pre-schools and other early learning centers were located in rural areas¹⁴.

Accordingly, gross enrolment ratio (GER) in pre- primary schools (for age group 5-6) increased from 9.7% in 2002/03 to 24.8% (for the adjusted age group of 4-5) in 2012/13. In respect to net enrolment ratio (NER), the recorded increase was from 6.9% in 2002/03 to 20.7% in 2012/13. In spite of the progress made at the national level, participation in this critical level of learning is still very low and there are wide disparities in pre-primary school provision among the administrative regions. Against this back ground, there is an urgent need to redouble these efforts considering that pre-primary education is a crucial preparatory stage for primary schooling and that early learning experiences are critical for reducing dropout rates and for improving the internal efficiency of primary education.

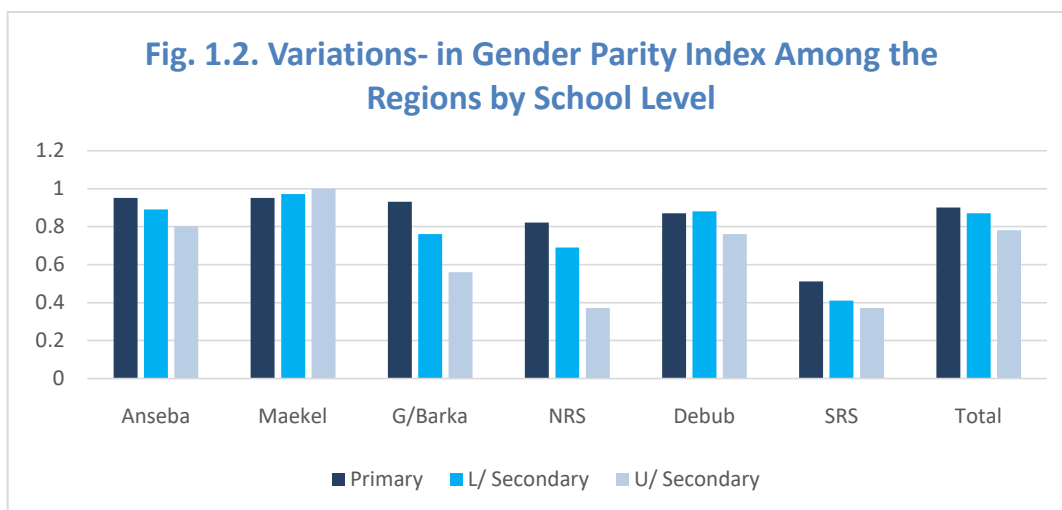
¹³ GoSE (1994). Macro Policy. P: 40.

¹⁴ MoE (2013). Essential Education Indicators

The Macro-Policy of the Government of Eritrea (1994) makes it clear that human capital formation is a major component of the government’s development strategy. Capital formation includes investment in education and training. As part of this process, the government has been expanding access to education in the various cycles of the school system. In formal general education schools, enrolments increased from 519,260 in 2002/03 to 615,547 in 2012/13 (a growth of 120%).

Despite the rapid expansion of the school system, a very large number of children and youth do not have access to education. Among the challenges facing the MoE is the wide disparity in education opportunity among the various administrative regions. The MoE has been making strenuous efforts to redress the imbalance by focusing on and giving priority to the needs of the more educationally disadvantaged areas. These efforts have also created a situation where today 80% of primary schools and 72% of lower secondary schools are located in rural communities.¹⁵

Another imbalance which needs to be addressed and redressed is that of girl’s education. A close analysis of the education system reveals that gender disparity increases along with an increase in school levels. Besides, Gender Parity Index (GPI) analysis by single age reveals that gender disparity widens along with an increase in age. The GPI for primary and lower secondary levels during the academic year 2012/2013 were 0.90 and 0.87 respectively.



Source: MoE (2013) Essential Education Indicators

As indicated in Fig. 1.2, in almost all the regions gender parity decreases along with an increase in school level. The only exception to this trend is the case of Maekel Region where the level of gender parity increases in line with the increase in school level. The demand for girls’ household chores at home, long walking distances to school, coupled with the social construct of gender

¹⁵ MoE (2013). Essential Education Indicators

and traditional norms and beliefs (e.g. underage marriage) are among factors militating against greater participation of girls in the school system.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing education and training to learners with special needs and abilities. The guiding principle informing this policy is that schools should accommodate **all children** irrespective of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional or other conditions¹⁶. This includes disabled children, street children and orphans, children from remote and nomadic populations, and children from other disadvantaged areas and communities.

Currently there are three primary educational institutions exclusively catering for the needs of children with disabilities in Eritrea: the Abraha Bahta School for the Blind located in Asmara and two schools for the deaf, one located in Asmara and the other in Keren. In the 2012-13 academic session, 52 children with visual impairment were enrolled in the School for the Blind and 131 children with hearing impairment were enrolled in the two schools for the deaf. As part of the drive towards inclusive education at the post-primary level, opportunities are available for these children to continue their education in main stream lower and upper secondary schools. However, very little is known about the transition and survival rates of such children within mainstream schooling.

There are many other children and young people with moderate or less severe disabilities in Eritrea today. In 2008, the MoE introduced policy and strategy on inclusive education with a view of addressing the learning needs of such children. To this end, 25 special needs resource rooms have been built in 25 primary schools on pilot basis to cater for the needs of children with special needs within the context of inclusive education. The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together wherever possible regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. This, of course, should be complemented by a continuum of support and services to match the range of special needs required at every level in the school system. If this is not done, the risk of disabled children being excluded from learning within schools will remain high.

Adult education is an integral part of Education for All. In the context of Eritrea, adult education is an essential component of basic education. Adult literacy was launched as a national program in 1998, using the mother tongue as the language of education. The number of participants on adult literacy programs grew from 20,873 in 1998 to 46, 745 in 2013 (an increase of 124%). In the case of the 2013 figure, the vast majority of the participants (88%) were women. In general terms, a typical literacy program covers three phases, each lasting six months. At the end of the first phase, participants are expected to attain basic levels of literacy and numeracy. The main thrust of literacy provision at phase two and three levels is the consolidation of previously acquired skills, and the preparation for vocational and enterprise training in an area of need or interest.

¹⁶ MoE (2008). Policy and Strategy on Inclusive Education in Eritrea. P. 12.

Currently, at national level, the rate of literacy is estimated to be 76%.¹⁷ The most recent literacy rate for the population 15 years and older in the UIS data base for the year 2010 indicates that it is 67.8% and is projected to be 73.3% in 2015¹⁸. The status of literacy in Eritrea, as in many other countries, is the output of two separate initiatives - formal basic education aimed at, among other things, eradicating illiteracy at the root, and special adult literacy programs and campaigns aimed at those who have not had the opportunity to attend or complete basic education. In general literacy rates mirror the pattern of school enrolment rates and these two variables interact to provide an overall picture of the development of basic education.

A needs based learning provision for nomadic children has been operational for the last seven to eight years. This provision takes into consideration the highly mobile and semi-settled nature of nomadic communities, and is partly dependent on intensive community sensitization and empowerment efforts to stimulate and sustain demand for education. The program itself started on pilot basis in 2005 in eight schools (accommodating 1016 students) in Anseba, Gash-Barka, NRS and SRS regions. Currently there are over 120 nomadic schools with a total of 14,109 learners of which 30% are girls in various remote locations in the above mentioned administrative regions¹⁹.

Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) program, a special three year learning program for overage out-of-school children of 9-14 years of age range was also launched in 2007. The purpose of this program is to enable OOSC to join and re-join mainstream schooling or to opt for an opportunity in vocational skills training. So far, over 100 CEE centers in four targeted regions (Anseba, Gash-Barka, NRS and SRS) are functioning. Between 2007 and 2013, these centers enrolled 29,623 out-of-school children of which 45.5% of the totals were girls. Completion rate at the CEE centers during this time was estimated to be 74 %²⁰.

1.2.4 Current Structure of the School System

In 2002 the government introduced a series of education reforms focusing on the structure of the school system and the curriculum. Within the context of these reforms, the school cycle was extended to last 12 years which previously was 11 years, bringing the duration of the basic education phase to 8 years (see Table 1.4 for details):

¹⁷ MoE(2015). Information from the Department of Adult and Media Education

¹⁸ UNESCO (2012) Adult and Youth Literacy Rate, 1990-2015: Analysis of Data for 41 Selected Countries.

¹⁹ MoE (2013).Department of General Education Report

²⁰ MoE (2013).Department of Adult and media Education Report

Table 1:3 Structure of the school (including pre-primary) system

Level	Grade	Age range	ISCED Equivalence
Pre-primary	Year 1-2	4-5 years	ISCED 0
Primary	1-5	6-10 years	ISCED 1
Lower secondary	6-8	11-13 years	ISCED 2
Upper secondary	9-12	14-17 years	ISCED 3

In the Eritrean education system, the mother tongue is used as the language of instruction at the pre-primary and primary levels. For this purpose all languages of the 9 ethno-linguistic groups that make up the country are used as medium of instruction. This is consistent with the government’s position on the equality of all Eritrean languages (social justice) and also with the universal assumption that the use of the mother tongue at the initial stages of learning improves accessibility to the curriculum, thus addressing a possible barrier which keeps children away from school. The language of instruction from lower secondary school level and above is English. There is a national examination at the end of the lower secondary school level, and a school leaving certificate examination at the end of the upper secondary school level.

1.2.5 Quality Issues in Teaching and Learning

In 2000, the Dakar Framework for Action affirmed that access to quality education was the right of every child. Indeed Goal 2 of the Framework commits nations to the provision of quality primary education, and Goal 6 of the Framework entails commitments to improve “all aspects of education quality so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all.”²¹ The Framework also expanded the parameter of quality to include teacher competence, content and process of learning, classroom organization and learning outcomes.

Quality is one of the pillars underpinning the system of education in Eritrea. In 2001, the Ministry of Education issued statements indicating that there was no inherent contradiction between provision for access and equity on the one hand and provision for quality education on the other hand since “access and equity would facilitate the necessary base for quality”²². Two years later, in 2003, statements were included in the Draft Policy on Education conceptually linking the quantitative expansion of schooling to the qualitative dimension of learning²³.

Accordingly, strenuous efforts have been made to improve classroom environments in the expectation that this would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of schooling. EMIS 2012/2013 show that student – teacher ratio is 1:40 at primary and lower secondary levels, and

²¹ UNESCO (2005).EFA Global Monitoring Report, p.19.

²² MoE (2001). Our People are Our Future

²³ MoE. (2003). Draft Education Policy

1:36 at the upper secondary level²⁴. During the same period, primary and lower secondary completion rates were 69% and 56% respectively²⁵. The average length of study per graduate at primary level decreased from 7.9 years in 2005/2006 to 5.7 years in 2012-2013.

It is of course reasonable to expect that school efficiency and effectiveness inputs are reflected in students learning outcomes. Although there have been improvements in student –teacher ratios and in the proportion of children reaching the end of primary school, these improvements have not been matched by improvements in learning outcomes. In the first two Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA, 2001; MLA, 2008) surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education in a sample of 60 primary schools at grades 3 and 5 levels, the Minimum Mastery Level (MML) target of 80% of the learners scoring 50% or above was not achieved in each of the subject areas tested.

At the heart of the provision of quality education is the teacher. The Dakar Framework clearly stated that investing in teachers is essential in providing basic education of good quality for all. Providing equitable education itself is linked to the equitable deployment of properly qualified teachers. In Eritrea, the most recent figures indicate that the rate of qualified teachers at pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels is 50.4%, 79.8%, 86.2% and 80.0% respectively²⁶.

These figures are encouraging but more teachers are needed to meet current and future demands as student enrolment increases at all levels in the school system. More work is also needed to upgrade the knowledge and skills of untrained and undertrained teachers through on-going in-service training programs. Until recently (2013), the primary teacher training institute offered a one year pre-service program combining educational and subject related courses. Although this arrangement yielded a faster and cost-effective way of addressing teacher shortages, the teacher outputs themselves tended to be undertrained and without the desired levels of professional competence.

1.2.6 Challenges

Like many other developing countries, Eritrea faces the dual challenge of increasing access to educational opportunity while at the same time improving the quality of education at all levels in the school system. Unlike many other countries, Eritrea has faced the added challenge of evolving education and training policies to address the needs of reconstruction and to help attain the vision of post-war “modern, technologically advanced and economically competitive nation”²⁷.

²⁴ During 2005/2006, student –teacher ratios at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels were 1:47, 1:59 and 1:50 respectively.

²⁵ Published completion rates for earlier periods are not available

²⁶ MoE(2013). Essential Education Indicators

²⁷ GoSE (1994). Macro-Policy of the Government of Eritrea, p.2

Significant progress has been recorded in rehabilitating and expanding the education system in the last twenty years after independence. Nevertheless, from the review of the country profile and overview of the education system presented in previous sections of this chapter, the following issues stand out as overriding concerns:

- Limited access to early childhood education opportunities.
- Regional disparities in school participation at all levels of the school system.
- Wide gender disparity among regions in school enrolment and participation.
- Educational exclusion in respect to children with disabilities, children from nomadic communities and children living in geographically hard to reach areas.
- Low performance of learners in national assessment surveys.

1.3 The Global Out-of-School Children Initiative (OOSCI)

1.3.1 Overview

The Jomtien Declaration (1990) makes it clear that basic education is not an end by itself but the foundation for lifelong learning and the development of human resources. Consequently, at the global level a lot has been achieved in sending more children to school, particularly since the Dakar Declaration in the beginning of this century. The percentage of children of primary school age not attending school fell by 42% between 2000 and 2012.²⁸

And yet, In spite of the notable advances made towards universal primary education and the continued rise in enrolment and completion rates, 58 million children of primary school age were out of school worldwide in 2012²⁹. The situation has been equally challenging at the lower secondary level. In 2012, 63 million children of lower secondary age were out of school.³⁰

These figures described above cover three categories of out of school children. The first category includes those who have not been to school at all and are likely to be in the same situation in the future. The second category includes those who have not been enrolled in the past but are likely to enroll in the future, most probably at an older age. The third category includes those who were enrolled in the past but withdrew or dropped out.

According to a recent UNESCO report, 33 million primary school age children who are excluded from school live in Sub-Saharan Africa. The UNESCO report also shows that in some African countries, including Nigeria and other conflict prone regions, the rate of exclusion has been getting worse than better. While the situation varies from country to country and from location to location (e.g. rural to urban), overall more than half (56%) of the out-of-school children are girls³¹.

²⁸ UNESCO-UNICEF (2015). Fixing the Broken Promises of Education for All

²⁹ UNESCO- UNICEF (2015). Fixing the Broken Promises of Education for All

³⁰ UNESCO-UNICEF (2015). Fixing the Broken Promises of Education for All, 2015

³¹ Cited in UNDPI (April 2015). "Keeping Girls in School", Africa Renewal

In addition to girls, the most disadvantaged groups of children (e.g. orphans, street vendors, nomads, the disabled) continue to be excluded from primary and lower secondary schools. Globally, barriers linked to exclusion from school include pervasive household poverty, exposure to child labor, persistent conflict and natural disasters, location, distance from home to school and poor learning conditions, gender bias, HIV and AIDS, disability, ethnicity, language, and religion. These represent major barriers to schooling and put even those countries able to improve access to and completion of education at risk of not achieving universal primary education (UPE).

In the drive towards achieving the MDG 2- universal primary education and to “reach the unreached” the global education community has been focused on actions needed to ensure that all children complete a full cycle of primary education and reduce the number of out of school children. Consequently, in 2010, UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) launched the global out-of-school children initiative (OOSCI) in order to add momentum for efforts to attain the goal of universal primary education by 2015.

The objective of the initiative is “to achieve a breakthrough in reducing the number of out-of-school children”³². This is an integral part of Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s), Education for ALL (EFA) and more recently of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s). The initiative aims at working with countries to improve statistical information, analyze factors contributing to children being out of school, identify existing policies to develop a robust perspective on OOSC, and assess the existing policy gaps with a view of constructing realistic solutions and interventions. The intent is to establish a more systemic approach to address the problem of educationally excluded children and steer concrete and effective education sector reforms in those participating countries of which Eritrea is a part.

1.3.2 The ‘Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DEs)’.

The term ‘exclusion’ can have a broader meaning in the context of OOSCI. Children who are out-of-school are excluded *from education*; Children who are at risk of dropping out may be excluded *within education*. In accordance with the procedures set out in the Operational Manual, the research study will cover the following dimensions of exclusion³³:

- Dimension 1 represents children of pre-primary school age (5 year olds) who are not in pre-primary and primary school.
- Dimension 2 represents out-of-school children of primary school age (6-10 years of age) who are not either in primary or lower secondary school.
- Dimension 3 represents out-of-school children of lower secondary school age (11-13 years of age) who are not either in primary or secondary school.

³² UNESCO-UNICEF (2011). Conceptual and Methodological Framework,p.4

³³ UNESCO-UIS (2013). Operational Manual.

- Dimension 4 represents children in primary school but at risk of dropping out.
- Dimension 5 represents children in lower secondary school but at risk of dropping out.

As indicated above, the *Five Dimensions of Exclusion* model targets groups of children for data and policy analysis, covering three levels of schooling (pre-primary, primary and lower secondary) that form together the basic education package which is free and compulsory in Eritrea and two different population groups: children who are out of school, and those who are in school but at risk of dropping out.

The *Five Dimensions of Exclusion* (5DEs) model also presents profiles of out-of-school children by disaggregating data according to variables such as gender, age group, location, disability and economic background. In addition, it explores the interaction between these variables which generate complex and mutually reinforcing patterns of disadvantage and barriers to schooling.

1.4 Country Study Procedure.

1.4.1 Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of the country study is to support the Government of Eritrea's objective of reducing the number of out-of-school children by constructing profiles of excluded children and analyzing the barriers and bottlenecks that lead to exclusion. This is consistent with the government's long term goal of "providing basic education to all". More specifically the study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. Develop specific profiles of excluded children and those at risk of exclusion in Eritrea, in accordance with the OOSC initiative Operational Manual and the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DEs).
2. Link the profiles to the barriers and bottlenecks that lead to exclusion
3. Analyze existing education policies and interventions and establish whether they are adequately responding to the complex needs of OOSC and,
4. Based on these analyses, propose recommendations on how to address the issues linked to OOSC and provide input to support the development and implementation of sound policies and strategies.

1.4.2 Methodology and Data Sources

The study makes use of available data sources and is mainly based on desk research. Documents and materials relevant to the study were identified and reviewed. A major undertaking involved collecting, collating, and computing quantitative data on out-of-school children with a view of establishing the profiles of OOSC. The study also included field visits to sampled areas in order to conduct face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with respondents and stakeholders on barriers and bottlenecks to exclusion (qualitative dimension). These research tools are multi-faceted and are expected to generate multiple sources of data

for triangulation purposes. A breakdown of the specific methodology employed and the data sources used in the study is stated below:

Quantitative Data Analysis

To generate profiles of excluded children under the 5 DEs in Eritrea, UIS typology data tables for analysis of Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 and analysis of children in school but at risk of exclusion under Dimension 4 and 5 were utilized. This required review and analysis of current administrative data sources from the Education Management Information System (EMIS 2012/2013) on age specific enrolment and participation in education and population census data sources for single age population estimate and other possible disaggregation from the National Statistics Office (NSO) data base and the Eritrean Population and Health Survey (EPHS 2010).

Desk Review of Documents and Reports

As a follow up to the development of profiles of excluded children, a range of documents and reports emanating from local and national government institutions as well as from global organizations were analyzed to get an understanding of the causes of educational exclusion. This analysis was extended to obtain a deeper understanding of the scale and severity of the barriers/ bottlenecks in relation to the five dimensions of exclusion. Besides, the review process also focused on education sector policies and strategies as well as on social protection systems provided by related sectors and agencies.

Qualitative Survey

In accordance with country study process and action plan, the study was designed to apply both quantitative and qualitative methods sequentially. The qualitative survey was carried out with the purpose of filling the gaps arising from the rather limited information obtained from the desk review and analysis of secondary data sources in respect to barriers to school participation.³⁴ The objective of the survey was to explore key barriers and bottlenecks that emanate from the supply, demand, quality and enabling environment and analyze policy issues that push children to be out of school. It involved key informant interviews and focus group discussions with a total of 412 (120 females) respondents in 36 schools and 12 sub-regions of the six regions of the country. The following respondent groups served as resource people for the qualitative study:

- Regional and sub-regional administration authorities
- Regional and sub -regional assembly members
- Regional and sub-regional education officers (including supervisors)
- Regional and sub-regional social service officers
- Representatives of the Peoples' Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), National Union of Eritrean Women(NUEW) and National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students(NUEYS)

³⁴ Instruments for the survey were pre-tested in a sample of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools in Gash –Barka Region.

- Community leaders and members of Parent, Teacher and Student Associations (PTSA)
- Head teachers
- Teachers
- Students (regular, at risk of dropping out, dropouts)

1.4.3 Over all Data Gaps and Limitations

Quantitative Data

Obtaining a reliable estimate of out of school children is dependent on a reliable estimate of the number of school age population. This in turn is dependent on the results of reliable population census figures. As indicated earlier in this chapter, no national population census has so far been conducted in Eritrea. Detailed challenges arising from this constraint and the procedures applied to address the issue are given in the next chapter.

Qualitative Data

The numbers of male and female student respondents for the individual and group student interviews were more or less the same. It was not possible to secure the same gender balance in respect to the other respondent groups. This may have affected the perspectives of some of the findings of the qualitative survey.

2. PROFILES OF EXCLUDED CHILDREN

2.1. Overview and Analysis of Data Sources

This section of the report presents a profile of excluded children in each of the 5 Dimensions of Exclusion (5 DEs) as per the global initiative on out-of-school children. The data and information used were gathered and analyzed from multiple data sources as no single data source can provide a complete profile of out-of-school children in Eritrea. Below is a clarification of data and information sources used and a brief explanation of how these were utilized.

2.1.1 Population Survey Data

As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, no comprehensive national population census has been conducted in Eritrea since 1991. To determine the national population size, estimates and projections are made taking into account the sample based demographic and health surveys (i.e DHS,1995; EPHS, 2002, 2010) conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the periodic population registry prepared by the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG). In 2010, the NSO estimated the total population of Eritrea to be 3.2 million³⁵ based on the 2009 population size from the MoLG registry, the DHS 1995 and EPHS 2002 age-sex structure and population dynamics. The cohort component method was used for this projection. Later, the NSO made adjustments to population estimates and projections based on the population dynamics reported in EPHS 2010 and publicized a national population estimate of 3.0 million for 2010.

For this study, based on the NSO total population projection, a national population estimate of 3.14 million was used to establish the school age population estimate by single age cohort for the out-of-school children survey year 2012- 2013. Besides, to understand details of the characteristics of children in the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5 DE), disaggregated analysis was conducted based on the population survey data structure, EPHS 2010. The purpose of this procedure is to identify groups of children that face the higher rates of exclusion or risk of exclusion, to analyze the specific barriers they face, and propose solutions to target them. However, such household surveys in Eritrea are conducted every 7 to 8 years and the dissemination of findings is a lengthy process. In addition, the sampling, analysis and disaggregation made are limited by the purpose and the design of the survey, which do not exclusively focus on out-of-school children issues.

The relative margin of error for national demographic surveys ranges between 4% and 7%, which is statistically accepted for planning purposes. In the case of EPHS 2010 the relative margin of error was 5% and the confidence level was 95%.³⁶

³⁵ NSO (2010). Eritrea Population and Health Survey, p405

³⁶ NSO(2010) .Eritrea Population and Health Survey p. 405

2.1.2 Administrative Data Sources.

The national Education Management Information System (EMIS) is responsible for collecting and disseminating data on a range of education issues. The information obtained is used to inform policy planning and implementation and to support the monitoring and evaluation of the education system in Eritrea.

For this study, the Department of Research and Human Resource Development of the Ministry of Education 16th official annual education publications, the **Basic Education Statistics**, the **Essential Education Indicators**, and the national age specific population estimates of the National Statistics Office were used as secondary sources of data on enrollment. The source of the two MoE publications is the annual school census carried out by the six administrative regions through standard questionnaires. As indicated in these documents, all the schools and educational institutions complete the questionnaires and return the routine November data on enrollment.

These publications reveal school age population and age specific enrolment by level and gender which assisted in determining the number of excluded children in categories of Dimension 1- 3. The documents also present enrollment trends and relevant education indicators to support analysis of segments of excluded children in Dimension 4 and 5 that are at risk of dropping out.

As envisioned in the Operational Manual (OM) of the Global study on out of school children, it is the combination of both the survey-based population data and EMIS documenting administrative enrolment data that allow for the most comprehensive analyses of barriers and successes in education. These data sources provide the overall circumstances of the education system inclusive of disaggregated population of children enrolled across all levels of education, children's living arrangements in regions, location (rural-urban) and wealth quintiles.

2.1.3 Major Data Limitation Issues.

Due to the lack of national population census in Eritrea, various population estimates and projections have been used on global monitoring reports (for which the country repeatedly disputed the figures). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division provided a national population estimate of 4.84 million and 4.94 million for 2012 and 2013 respectively³⁷. The out-of-school children initiative (OOSCI), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Regional Report 2013, referring to World Bank Metadata and Human Development report of 2009 estimated the total population of Eritrea to be 5,073,279. The same report also revealed that 37.2% (230,961) of primary age children in Eritrea were out-of-school. Besides, International Statistics from the UIS for monitoring EFA and related global goals categorized Eritrea along with other eastern and southern African countries with more than 0.5 million out-of-school children of primary school age³⁸. The report disclosed that 518,000

³⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: <http://countrymeter.info/en/Eritrea>

³⁸UNESCO-UNICEF (2015) Fixing the Broken Promises of Education for All p.22 .

children (of which 68% females) of primary age were out of school. Surely, there is considerable discrepancy between the two UN agencies in their estimates of primary school age children who are out of school in Eritrea.

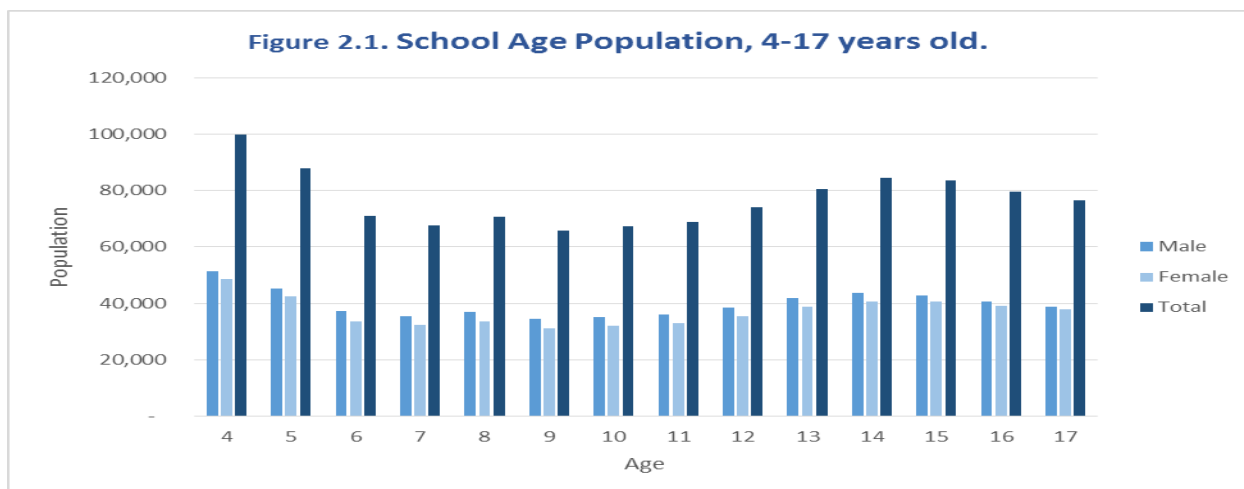
However, for the purpose of this study, the estimates are based on population projections prepared by the National Statistics Office (NSO). The NSO used the cohort component method of projection on the 2009 population size obtained from the administrative regions to work out the projections. It was however, adjusted taking into account routine population dynamics (fertility, early childhood mortality, adult mortality). The population was estimated to have annual population growth rate of 2.9% between 2010 and 2013. As per the projection done, the population size of Eritrea is estimated at 3.1 million in 2012 and 3.2 million in 2013. The year 2012 population structure was employed in this study as a base year for all the education indicators. In addition, to understand details of the characteristics of children in the Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5 DE) disaggregated analysis was conducted based on the population survey data structure, EPHS 2010.

The other challenges faced during the out-of-school country study process concern the population survey data (EPHS 2010) that is rather limited in terms of education relevant data. Furthermore, as such surveys are not normally conducted annually and are sample based, their precision and level of disaggregation is limited. More specifically, typical to population data derived from descriptive statistics, the NSO single age and sex population estimate is prone to 'age hipping' on ages ending in digits '0' and '5'. Because of this the single age –sex structure of specific age group structure was smoothed to correct conflicts between age specific population and enrolment rates. Besides, technical assistance from NSO experts enabled disaggregation of OOSC as required for the country study.

2.2. Overview of Children in School

The age specific population estimate of the National Statistics Office (NSO) for 2013, as adjusted based on the EPHS-2010 population structure depicts Eritrea as a young population,³⁹ with a large proportion of the population in the younger age groups. The school age population that ranges from 4 to 17 years of age constitute 31% out of the total population estimate of 3.14 million.

³⁹ NSO(2010). Eritrea Population and Health Survey p. 12.



Source: National Statistics Office, Age Specific population data, 2013.

In Eritrea, 662,035 students were enrolled in formal schools in 2012/2013 academic year irrespective of age at the four levels of education, pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary.

Level	Male	Female	Total
Pre-primary	23,797	22,691	46,488
Primary	192,118	157,534	349,652
Lower Secondary	86,586	68,940	155,526
Upper Secondary	62,881	47,488	110,369
Total	365,382	296,653	662,035

Source: MoE, EMIS- Essential education indicators, 2012/2013.

The school population data presented above embraces enrollment of children living in remote rural areas and those from nomadic and semi-nomadic communities enrolled in the Nomadic Education (NE) program. However, enrolment in non-formal Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) is not included in the school population data presented as this is not yet captured in EMIS. As mentioned in Chapter 1, CEE is a non-formal three year basic education program equivalent to five years of elementary school education and aims at providing out-of-school, overage boys and girls (9-14 year olds) with the necessary skills and knowledge that will allow mainstreaming into formal primary or lower secondary school, or access to vocational skills training.

During the survey year (2013) enrolment data from the Department of Adult and Media education (DAME) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) indicates that 7,235 overage children (43.1% girls) were enrolled in 103 CEE learning centers. Between 2007 and 2013, more than

20,000 children were enrolled in CEE schools and over 800 children were mainstreamed to the formal lower secondary level⁴⁰.

As noted from the table below, analysis of overall enrolment in formal schools and enrolment of students at the official age range for a level reveal a notable discrepancy and provides a picture of the magnitude of students older than their grade at each level.

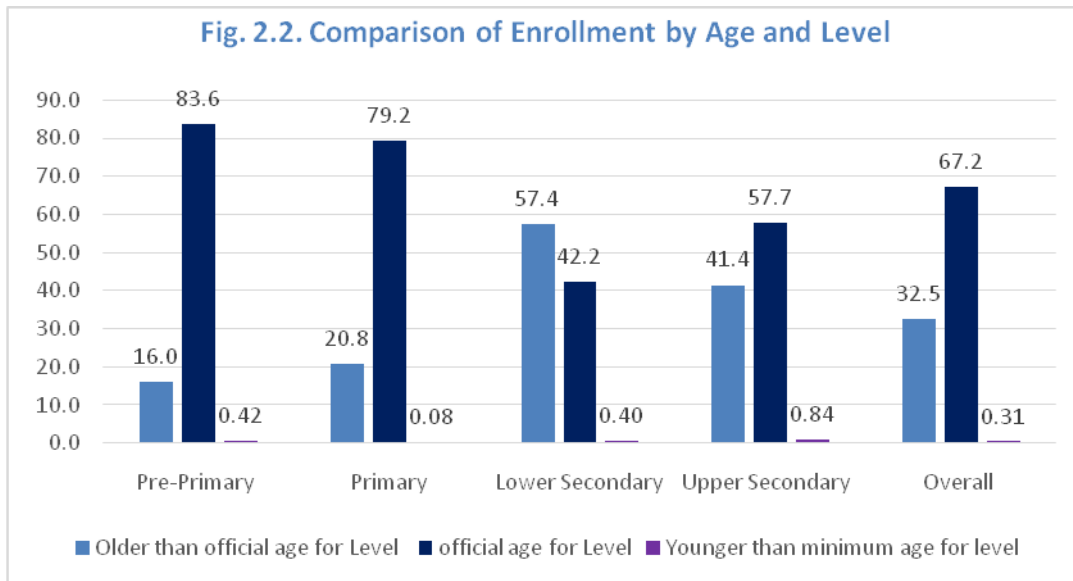
Table 2.2 Enrolment by age and level

Level	Overall			Older than official age for Level			Official age for Level			Younger than minimum age for level		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total (%)	Male	Female	Total (%)	Male	Female	Total (%)
Pre-Primary	23,797	22,691	46,488	3,788	3,637	7,425 (16.0%)	19,905	18,964	38,869 (83.6%)	104	90	194 (0.4%)
Primary	192,118	157,534	349,652	43,377	29,219	72,596 (20.8%)	148,577	128,185	276,762 (79.2%)	164	130	294 (0.1%)
Lower Secondary	86,586	68,940	155,526	51,841	37,440	89,281 (57.4%)	34,443	31,178	65,621 (42.2%)	302	322	624 (0.4%)
Upper Secondary	62,881	47,488	110,369	27,843	17,870	45,713 (41.4%)	34,506	29,223	63,729 (57.7%)	532	395	927 (0.8%)
Total	365,382	296,653	662,035	126,849	88,166	215,015 (32.5%)	237,431	207,550	444,981 (67.2%)	1,102	937	2,039 (0.3%)

Source: MoE; Essential Education Indicators, EMIS 2012/2013.

As shown in the figure below, it is clear that there is a negligible percentage of underage students at all levels. The percentage of overage children in primary level (20.8%) and upper secondary level (41.4%) as compared to the percentage of children at the rightful age is substantial and in lower secondary level the percentage of older children to the level (57.4%) overweighs those at the official age (42.2%).

⁴⁰ MoE (2015). Eritrea: EFA End Decade Assessment, p.1

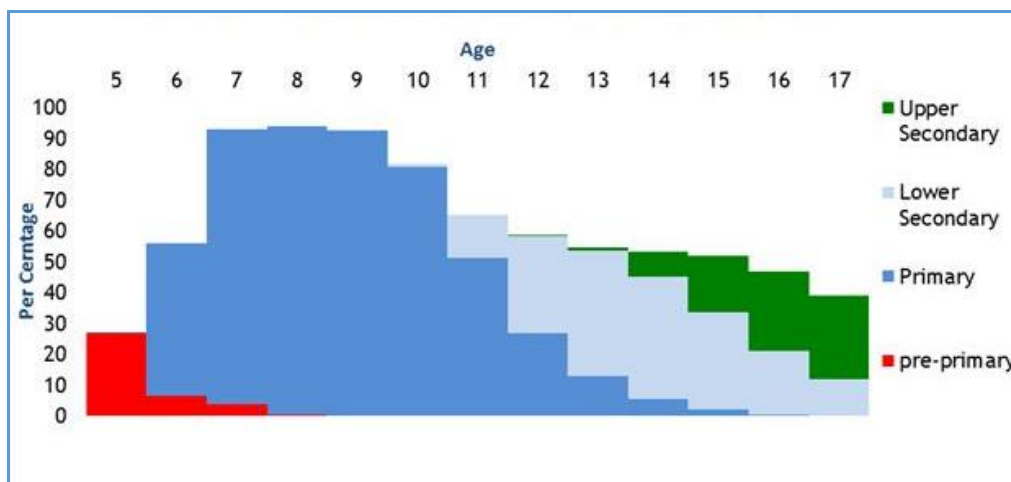


Source: MoE; Essential Education Indicators, EMIS 2012/2013

Overage children in a given level are more likely those who started schooling late or low achievers who have repeated a grade level. As it is widely known, most of overage children are prone to dropping out of school because school becomes less attractive when students find they must attend class with peers they perceive as less physically and socially mature than they are.

In general, very few children attend pre-school and the number of children enrolled in lower and upper secondary schools also decreases with an increase in age. Specifically, it is noteworthy that children frequently do not attend the grade that would be appropriate to their age (see the figure below).

Fig. 2.3. Enrolment by Single age and Education Level.



Source: MoE; Essential Education Indicators, EMIS 2012/2013

This is chiefly visible in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels in Eritrea and is mainly due to late entrance which is a real constraint to school participation in the country. Furthermore, roughly only one fourth of five year old children and 45% of age six children are in school. Enrolment peaks for children seven to nine years old. In this age group nearly 90% of children attend school. For children younger than seven and older than nine, enrolment rates are comparatively low. (For details see *Figure 2.3*).

2.3. The Five Dimensions of Exclusion in Eritrea

This part of the profiles chapter provides data on the scale of the problem of out-of-school children in Eritrea and highlights individual and household characteristics by creating statistical profiles for each of the five dimensions of exclusion (5 DE). The overall purpose is to inform policy responses based on evidence to remove barriers to schooling. Within the Five Dimensions of Exclusion framework, children are defined as being out of school if they are of official school age for pre-primary to lower secondary school (5-13 years) but are not attending formal school. The profiles of out-of-school children are descriptive and do not reveal the causes of school exclusion which will be the focus of Chapter 3.

The estimates of out-of-school children in Eritrea are based on review and analysis of current administrative data sources (EMIS 2009-2013) on age specific enrolment and relevant education indicators and the age specific population estimate of the NSO derived from the population structure of EPHS 2010. Therefore, based on the analysis conducted and as per the out-of-school definition provided by UIS and UNICEF, there are 220,596 out of school children. This amounts to 37.7% of the relevant school age population (5-13 year).

Categories	Total Population of school age (5-13)	In School	Out of School	% of Out of School
Children age 5 years	87,849	23,726	64,123	73.0
Children age 6-10 years	342,449	277,386	65,063	19.0
Children Age 11-13 years	223,618	132,208	91,410	40.9
	653,916	433,320	220,596	33.7

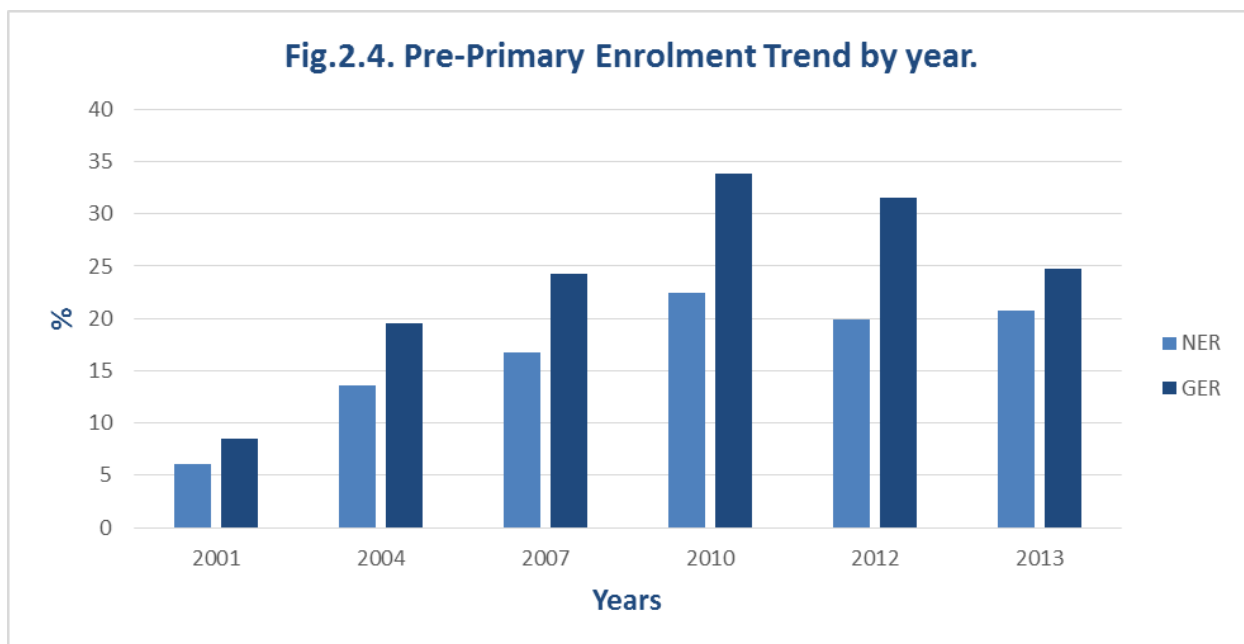
Source: MoE; Essential Education Indicators, EMIS 2012/2013 and NSO 2013.

2.3.1 Profiles of Out of School Children in Dimension 1

In the year 2000, the Government of the State of Eritrea taking all strategic trends and dimensions into consideration and in light of the social and economic conditions of the society, embarked on extensive project called 'Eritrean Integrated Early Childhood Development Program' through the World Bank credit scheme⁴¹. This program enabled to expand early childhood education services, which had been confined to few towns, to the most

⁴¹ MoE(2001). Early Childhood Care and Education Policy

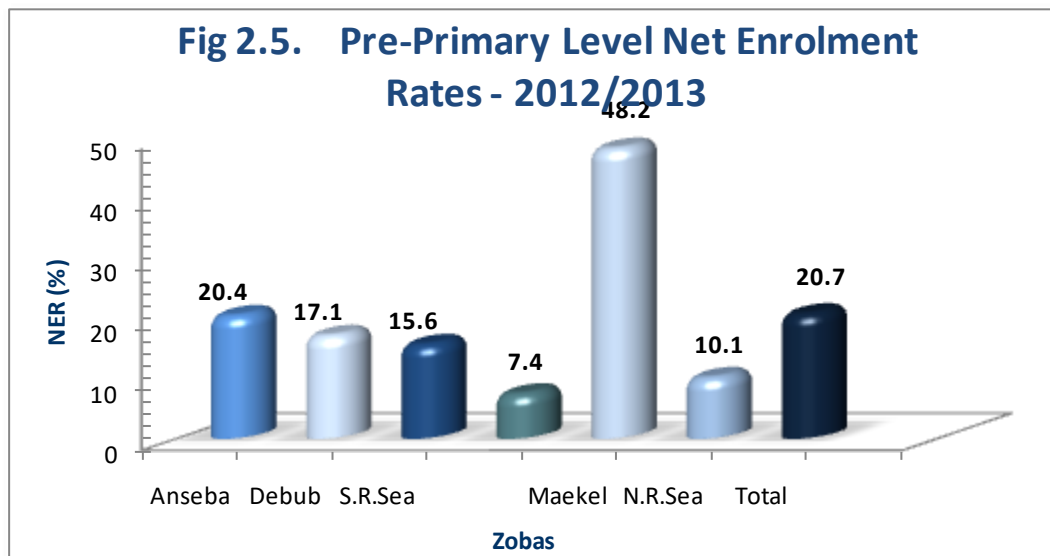
disadvantaged areas of the country, including semi- rural areas and villages. As a result, the number of early childhood learning centers increased from 90 in 1999 to 483 in 2013 and the Gross Enrolment and Net Enrolment Ratios of pre-primary school age group increased from 8.5% and 6.1% in 2002 to 24.8% and 20.7% in 2013 respectively.



Source: MoE; Essential Education Indicators, EMIS 2012/2013

Analysis of pre-primary school enrolment trend based on EMIS data reveals a constant increment especially as of 2002 but declined as of 2010. This drop in number of children enrolled is officially recognized mainly because of the decline in total fertility rate since 2002⁴². Besides, the reduced enrolment rate in 2012/2013, when compared with enrolment rates in 2011/2012, is mainly attributed to the change in the national definition of the official age range for pre-primary level from 5-6 years of age to 4-5 years of age in 2012/2013.

⁴² NSO(1995; 2000). Eritrea Demographic and Health Survey; NSO(2010). Eritrea Population and Health Survey



Source: MoE; Essential Education Indicators, EMIS 2012/2013

However, as compared to the total population of pre-primary school age children in the country, participation is still very low and the number of ECCE centers owned by the government and private sector are inadequate to meet the demand. Besides, 55% of pre-primary school centers are situated in only two regions (Maekel and Debub) out of the six administrative regions of the country, signifying imbalance in access. The disparity among regions is high with Maekel having gross and net enrolment rates of 51.0% and 48.2% while in Gash Barka the figures are 9.7% and 7.4% respectively⁴³.

As envisioned in the CMF of the global initiative on out-of-school children, children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary (ISCED 02) or primary (ISCED 1) education correspond to the Dimension 1 of the Five Dimensions of Exclusion model. The importance of pre-primary enrolment and attendance in a child's preparation for primary education and for better learning achievement makes it critical for education policy makers to understand the profiles of pre-primary school age children who are out of school. In accordance with the research parameter of pre-primary education set by the OM of the global study of OOSC, (the single year immediately preceding the official entry age into primary education) the number of pre-primary school age children (5 years old) who are out of school is estimated to be 73.0% (64,123) of which 73.1% (33,121) are boys and 72.9% (31,002) are girls.

⁴³ Essential Education Indicators, 2012/2013, Ministry of Education, Eritrea.

Table 2.4. % of Pre-primary School Age Children Out-of-school (DE 1) by Gender and Other characteristics					
		Not Attending School	Attending Pre-primary School	Attending Primary School	Attending Either pre-primary or primary
Male					
Residence	Rural	84.33	15.35	0.31	15.67
	Urban	47.54	51.98	0.48	52.46
Wealth Index Quintile	Poorest	26.4	73.60	0.00	73.60
	Second	24.7	75.30	0.00	75.30
	Middle	18.1	81.90	0.00	81.90
	Fourth	7.8	92.20	0.00	92.20
	Richest	3.9	96.10	0.00	96.10
Region	Anseba	70.23	29.77	0.00	29.77
	Debub	77.54	22.46	0.00	22.46
	Southern Red Sea	81.65	18.35	0.00	18.35
	Gash Barka	90.53	9.47	0.00	9.47
	Maekel	38.85	61.15	0.00	61.15
	Northern Red Sea	86.00	14.00	0.00	14.00
		Not Attending School	Attending Pre-primary School	Attending Primary School	Attending Either pre-primary or primary
Female					
Residence	Rural	83.47	16.28	0.25	16.53
	Urban	49.57	50.00	0.44	50.43
Wealth Index Quintile	Poorest	30.5	69.5	0.00	69.50
	Second	26.8	73.2	0.00	73.20
	Middle	20.2	79.8	0.00	79.80
	Fourth	9.7	90.3	0.00	90.30
	Richest	3.9	96.1	0.00	96.10
Region	Anseba	68.22	31.78	0.00	31.78
	Debub	77.20	22.80	0.00	22.80
	Southern Red Sea	82.70	17.30	0.00	17.30
	Gash Barka	90.43	9.57	0.00	9.57
	Maekel	41.92	58.08	0.00	58.08
	Northern Red Sea	85.72	14.28	0.00	14.28
Total					
		Not Attending School	Attending Pre-primary School	Attending Primary School	Attending Either pre-primary or primary
Residence	Rural	83.92	15.80	0.28	16.08
	Urban	48.53	51.01	0.46	51.47
Wealth Index Quintile	Poorest	28.54	71.46	0.00	71.46
	Second	25.74	74.26	0.00	74.26
	Middle	19.15	80.85	0.00	80.85
	Fourth	8.75	91.25	0.00	91.25
	Richest	3.88	96.12	0.00	96.12
Region	Anseba	69.26	30.74	0.00	30.74
	Debub	77.38	22.62	0.00	22.62
	Southern Red Sea	82.17	17.83	0.00	17.83
	Gash Barka	90.48	9.52	0.00	9.52
	Maekel	40.42	59.58	0.00	59.58
	Northern Red Sea	85.86	14.14	0.00	14.14

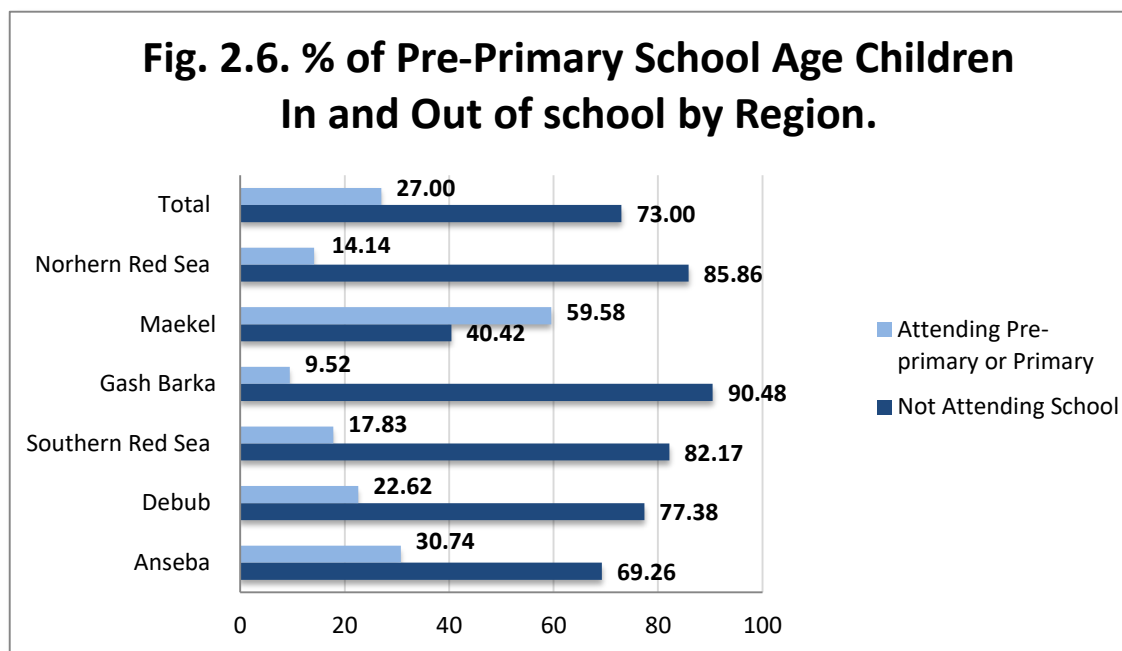
Source: NSO population Estimate and Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

The table presented above illustrates that household wealth and place of residence (rural verses urban) affects 5 year old children's enrolment and participation in pre-primary schools.

Largely, children who are not benefiting from pre-primary education and who may not be adequately prepared for primary education are from the poorest wealth quintiles and from rural areas. More specifically, 28.5% of children from the poorest wealth quintiles (as compared to the 3.9% children from the richest wealth quintiles) are not attending pre-primary education, demonstrating that children from the poorest wealth quintiles are seven times more likely to be out-of-school than their peers in the richest quintiles.

Furthermore, there is a direct correlation between place of residence (in terms of rural and urban locations) and exclusion from pre-primary enrolment and attendance. Pre-primary school aged children who reside in rural areas have a non-attendance rate of 83.9% as compared to 48.5% non-attendance rate of pre-primary school age children in urban areas, indicating children of age 5 years who live in the rural areas have a non-attendance rate of about twice more than their peers from urban areas.

Regional disparities are also found to be very significant in terms of pre-primary enrolment and attendance. (Fig. 2.6)



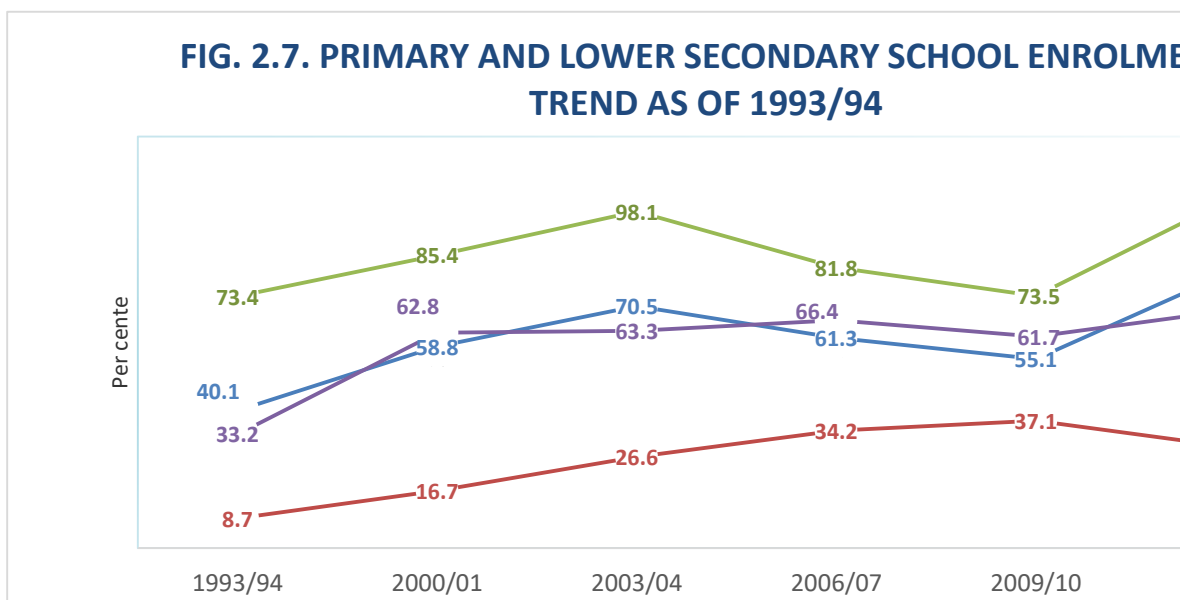
Source: NSO population Estimate and Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

Based on the analysis, as shown in the figure above, the problem of pre-primary age out of school children is prevalent across the entire country. It is only in Maekel region that the percentage of in-school pre-primary school age children (59.6%) is more than those out of school (40.4%). It is notable that the problem of pre-primary age children out of school is particularly severe in Gash Barka with 90.5%, Northern Red Sea with 85.9%, Southern Red Sea with 82.2%, Debub with 77.4% and Anseba 69.67%.

Therefore, this is an area where government policies and strategies need to focus to prioritize the provision of access and implementation of innovative approaches in disadvantaged communities to expand early learning opportunities in the country.

2.3.2 Profiles of Out of School Children in Dimension 2 and Dimension 3.

As in many developing countries, Eritrea documented an impressive stride in expanding access to basic education. The GER and NER advanced from 85.4% and 58.8% in 2000/01 to 102.5% and 81.1% in 2012/13 respectively. In lower secondary school the GER and NER expanded from 62.8% and 16.7% in 2000/01 to 69.5% and 29.3% in 2012/13 respectively. Gross and net enrolment rates in primary and lower secondary level over the years 1993/94 and 2012/2013 are presented below to demonstrate progress trends.

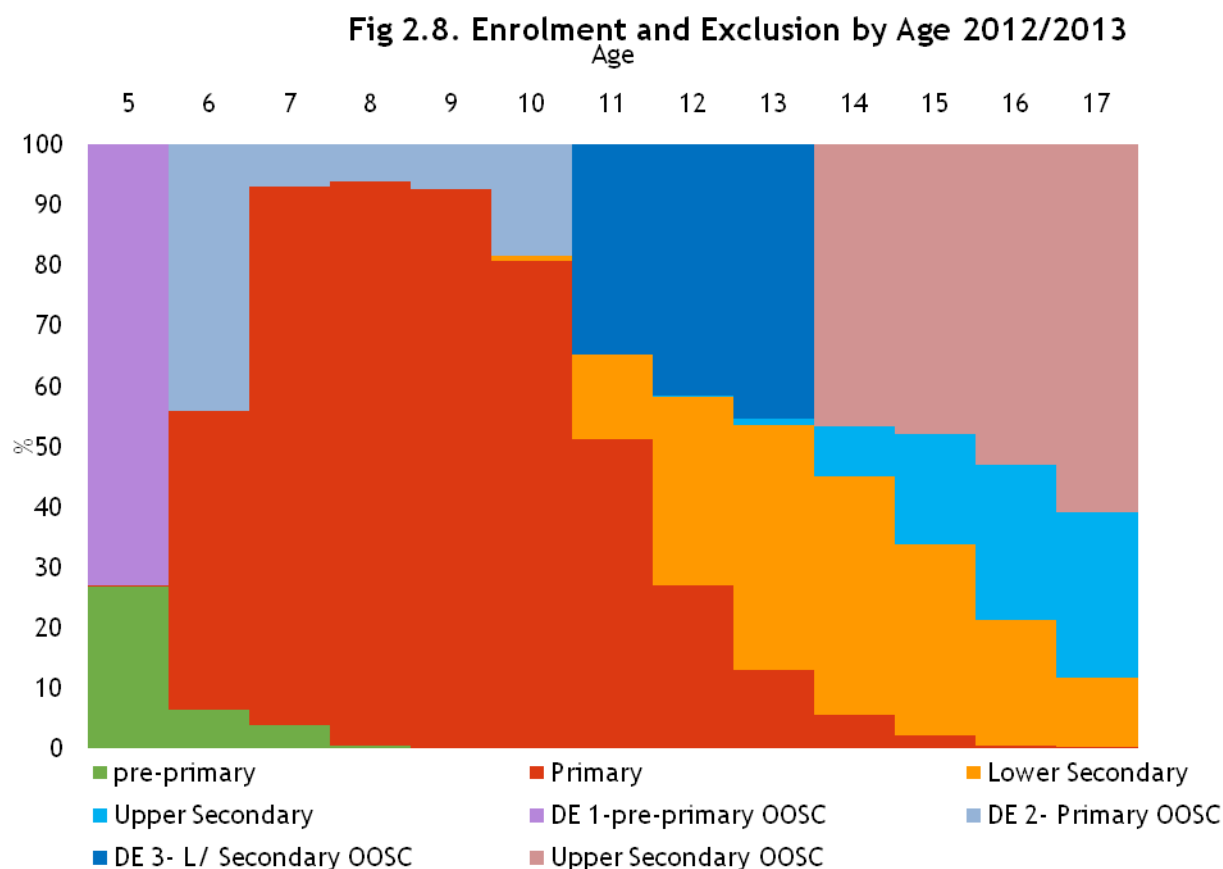


Source: MoE, Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data.

However, the sharp discrepancy between the GER and NER both in primary and lower secondary level can be noticed from the above graph (Fig. 2.7). This signposts the magnitude of overage children enrolled both in primary and lower secondary level due to either late entry into first grade or due to lack of normal progression, arising from repetition through the grades.

In this section the current administrative data sources (EMIS 2012/2013) on age specific enrolment and the age specific population estimate of the National Statistics Office (NSO) derived from the population structure of EPHS 2010 have been used to estimate the number of primary school age children who are not in primary and secondary school (DE 2) and the number of lower secondary school age children who are not in primary and secondary school (DE 3).

Based on the definition of the official age range of the education system of Eritrea, children of 6 to 10 years of age, (ISCED 1) and children of 11 to 13 years of age, (ISCED 2) are formally recognized as primary and lower secondary school age groups respectively.



Source: NSO population Estimate and Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013.

A close scrutiny of the enrolment data presented in the above figure demonstrates the magnitude of the problem of out-of-school children across education levels and age specific populations. Based on the breakdown, only 49.5% of children who are age 6 are enrolled in primary school, denoting roughly that 50.5% (35,794) of them are out of school. The analysis of enrolment versus exclusion shows that school enrolment is particularly low at age 5 and 6, and beyond age 11. However, school enrolment peaks at age 7, 8 and 9 where enrolment rate exceeds 90% but rapidly dwindles beyond these ages as children dropout.

Consistent with the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children and the suggested methodological framework, an attempt was made to estimate the number of out-of-school children in DE 2 and DE 3 using an adaptation of NER. The adaptation requires the use of an alternative numerator calculation which includes the number of children enrolled in either primary or secondary school. This is felt to be a more “honest” measure since children who are enrolled in secondary school but are of primary school age and children who are enrolled in

primary but are of secondary school age should not be considered out side the system and therefore should be included in the count.

		Male	Female	Total
Number of Out of School children		30,613	34,450	65,063
% of out of School Children		17.06	21.14	19.00
Age	6	50.53	50.40	50.47
	7	9.68	11.98	10.78
	8	3.82	9.74	6.64
	9	5.14	9.81	7.36
	10	14.64	22.65	18.46
Residence	Urban	8.66	8.67	8.66
	Rural	18.04	28.73	23.25
Wealth index Quintile	Poorest	26.4	30.5	28.54
	Second	24.7	26.8	25.74
	Middle	18.1	20.2	19.15
	Fourth	7.8	9.7	8.75
	Richest	3.9	3.9	3.88
Region	Anseba	19.04	19.90	19.44
	Debub	13.14	19.73	16.31
	Southern Red Sea	19.86	29.87	24.87
	Gash Barka	26.77	28.09	27.39
	Maekel	4.40	5.73	5.05
	Northern Red Sea	14.40	27.99	20.80

Source: Eritrea; NSO population Estimate and Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013.

Table 2.5 clearly illuminates the percentage and number of primary school age children out-of-school by age, gender and other characteristics.

Based on these analyses, 19.0 % (65,063) of primary school age children, comprising 17.06% (30,613) males and 21.14% (34,450) females are out-of-school. The overall primary gender parity index (GPI) of 0.86 implies that girls are under-represented in primary levels and the percentage of primary school age out-of-school female children overweighs that of their male counter parts.

Furthermore, as can be noted from the Table 2.5 above, regional disparities in primary level exclusion rates are high. With the exception of Maekel region which has 5.05% (2,485) out of school children, the highest proportion of children in DE 2 are found in regions recognized as the domiciles of most of the nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, such as Gash Barka region with 27.39%, Southern Red Sea with 24.87%, Northern Red Sea with 20.80% and Anseba with 19.44%. In Debub region, although the proportion of children under DE 2 is lower than the national average, the number of out-of-school children is significant among the remote rural communities, which is 16.31%.

The analysis presented in the table above also clearly indicates that there are larger proportions of out-of-school children in rural areas (23.25%) than in urban areas (8.66%). In rural areas the likelihood of girls to be out-of-school (28.73%) is significantly higher than their male counterparts (18.04%). Furthermore, there are clear disparities in rates of exclusion from primary education by wealth index quintile. The figures in Table 2.5 show an inverse correlation between the proportion of out-of-school children and family wealth status. While the proportion of out-of-school children at primary school age stands at 28.54% among the poorest households, it is only 3.88% among the richest households.

However, national efforts to meet the EFA Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015 and further the EFA Development Index (EDI) of primary net enrolment ratio (NER), which measures the percentage of primary school age children who are enrolled in either primary or secondary schools, seem to show encouraging trends. The table below summarizes progress made in reducing the number and proportions of out of school children over the past three years.

**Table 2.6. Percent and Number of Primary School-age children out of school
(Years with Available data)**

	Male		Female		Total	
	%	Number of OOSC	%	Number of OOSC	%	Number of OOSC
	51.31	11,5471	54.43	113,609	52.81	229,080
2010/2011	29.41	52,678	33.63	55,004	31.42	107,682
2011/2012	19.59	34,122	24.00	38,092	21.69	72,214
2012/2013	17.06	30,613	21.14	34,450	19.00	65,063

Source: NSO population Estimate and Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013.

Correspondingly, analysis conducted to portray exclusion rates for children in DE 3 reveals that children are more likely to be out-of-school by the time they reach lower secondary school age with 40.88% in DE 3 compared to 19.00 % in DE 2. Out of the lower secondary school age children who are in school, around half (65,660) are still enrolled overage in primary level, while the remaining half (65,621) are in lower secondary level. The percentage of lower secondary school age out-of-school female children (45.25%) overweighs that of their male counter parts (36.85%) significantly. Moreover, the overall lower secondary gender parity index (GPI) of 0.80 implies that girls are under-represented in lower secondary level.

Table 2.7. Percent and number of Lower Secondary School-age Children out-of-school by Age, gender and other characteristics (DE 3).				
		Male	Female	Total
Number of Out of School children		42,913	48,497	91,410
% of out of School Children		36.85	45.25	40.88
Age	11	31.76	38.30	34.88
	12	37.39	46.04	41.54
	13	40.74	50.42	45.40
Residence	Rural	52.47	62.58	57.32
	Urban	9.20	11.30	10.60
Wealth index Quintile	Poorest	80.55	88.45	84.25
	Second	59.99	65.59	62.79
	Middle	27.26	30.76	28.76
	Fourth	8.10	7.10	7.60
	Richest	3.57	3.57	3.57
Region/ Zoba	Anseba	36.95	42.31	39.48
	Debub	15.75	27.79	21.55
	Southern Red Sea	61.47	81.91	71.40
	Gash Barka	83.15	85.99	84.48
	Maekel	1.86	3.67	2.75
	Northern Red Sea	44.32	59.78	51.62

Source: NSO population Estimate and Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013.

The Table above illustrates the proportion and number of lower secondary school age children out-of-school by age, gender and other characteristics.

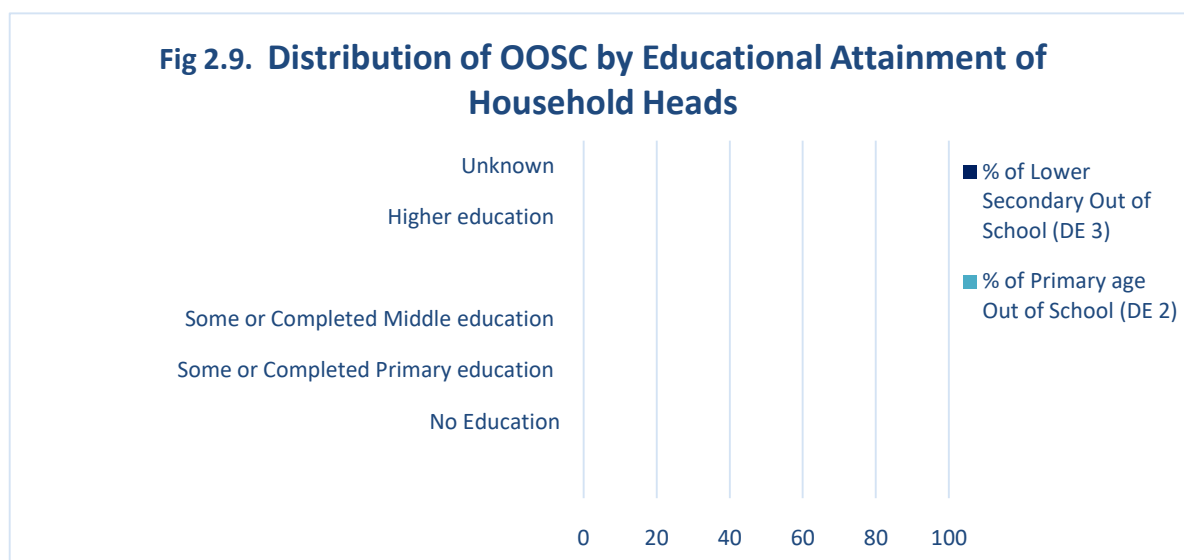
The analysis reveals that regional disparities in lower secondary school exclusion rates are remarkable. The proportion of out-of-school lower secondary school age children in the disadvantaged regions such as Gash Barka, Southern Red Sea and Northern Red Sea is as high as 84.48%, 71.40% and 51.62% respectively. The percentages of lower secondary school age out-of-school children in Anesba (39.4%) and Debub (21.25%) are smaller than the national average (40.88%), while the figure for Maekel region is markedly smaller (2.75%)

The analysis presented in the table above clearly indicates that the percentages of excluded lower secondary school age children from rural areas (57.32%) are significantly higher than those from urban areas (10.60%). Rural children of lower secondary school age are nearly six times more likely to be out of school than their urban counterparts. Besides, in rural areas the likelihood of the girl child to be out-of-school (62.58%) is higher than her male counterpart (52.47%).

Disparities analysis in rates of exclusion from lower secondary education by wealth index quintile reveals an inverse correlation between the proportion of out-of-school children and family wealth status. While the figure of out-of-school children at lower secondary school age stands at 84.25 % per cent among the poorest households, it is only 3.57% per cent among the richest households.

Parental level of education has a recognized impact on children’s school enrolment. In this study attempts were made to correlate parental level of education and school exclusion of children of primary and lower secondary school age. The analysis reveals that children whose parents had at least some or completed primary education are less likely to be out-of-school than children whose parents had no education at all.

In general, 75.69% of children of primary school age whose parents had received no education at all are out-of-school, compared to around 15.42% of children whose parents have received at least some or completed primary education. Similarly, 86.50% of children of lower secondary school age whose parents had received no education at all are out-of-school, compared to around 9.29% of children whose parents have received at least some or completed primary education.



Source: NSO population Estimate and MoE, Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013.

The proportion of out-of-school children of both primary and lower secondary school age declines drastically with an increase in the household head’s educational attainment. In general, in the education system of Eritrea, it is estimated that about 65,063 primary school age children of which 30,613 male and 34,450 female under dimension 2 (DE2) and 91,410 lower secondary school age children of which 42,913 male and 48,497 female under dimension 3 (DE3) are out of school.

However, these out of school children have different experiences of school exposure. The global initiative on out-of-school children framework recognizes two groups of out-of-school children with respect to their school exposure to education as those who have yet to start school and those who have dropped out before reaching the theoretical completion age for primary and lower secondary education level. The first group can again be further sub grouped in terms of the probability of future school participation as those who especially at younger age

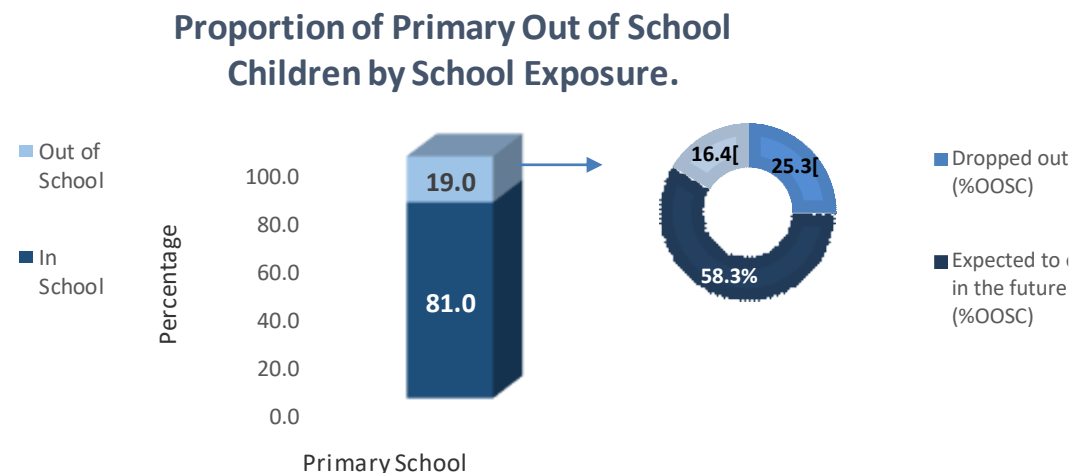
will start school at some point in the future and those who will never begin schooling before age 17.

This UIS’s typology framework is of assistance to frame policies and innovative strategies aimed at reducing the different out-of-school children by providing access to those excluded from the school system, to ensure that children start school in time or ensure that they complete a full cycle of basic education.

Therefore, based on UIS’s typology calculation spreadsheet integrated with EMIS and EPHS data sources, out-of-school children in DE 2 and DE 3 are categorized as those who dropped out of school, those expected to enter primary and lower secondary school in the future and those expected to never enter primary and lower secondary school as follows:

The analysis shows that 25.3% of the primary out-of-school children (31.6% boys, 19.7% girls) have been to school but dropped out. The majority of these primary age children out-of-school (58.3%) are expected to enter in the future before age 17 and only 16.4% are expected to never enter.

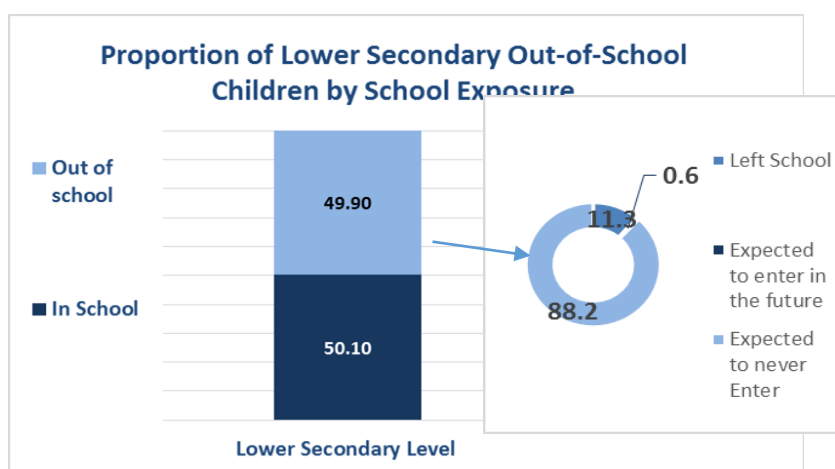
Fig 2.10



Source: NSO Population Estimate and MoE, Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

Correspondingly, the analysis conducted on typology of lower secondary out-of-school children indicates that a very small proportion of lower secondary school age children who are out of school (0.6%) are expected to enter in the future. The proportion of those who have left school before the last grade of lower secondary level is 11.3%, of which the figure for boys (15.2%) overweighs the figure for girls (8.0%).

Fig 2.11



Source: NSO Population Estimate and MoE, Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

2.3.3 Profiles of Out of School Children in Dimension 4 and Dimension 5.

Estimating the number of children in school who are at risk of dropping out is less straightforward than counting children who are out-of-school because all children in school face some risk of dropping out. As per the Global OOSCI framework, an expanded survival rate indicator is recommended to capture early leavers in all grades of primary and lower secondary.

Thus based on survival rate to the last grade, the most widely used indicator to measure the retention capacity and internal efficiency of an education system, in Eritrea 86.5% of children entering grade 1 will eventually reach the last grade of primary level, in this case grade 5. Likewise, 94.03% of children entering grade 6 finally will complete the last grade of lower secondary level, which is grade 8.

Table 2.8. Survival Rate to the Last Grade of Primary Education				
	Male	Female	Total	GPI
Survival Rate to the Last Grade of primary Education (%)	87.03	85.86	86.51	0.99

Table 2.9. Survival Rate to the Last Grade of Lower Secondary Education				
	Male	Female	Total	GPI
Survival Rate to the Last Grade of primary Education (%)	92.10	96.57	94.03	1.05

Source: EMIS data 2012/2013 as calculated based on UIS cohort flow spreadsheet.

Therefore, as the survival rate provides information on the cumulative dropout of cohort students over a cycle of schooling, it is estimated that 13.49% (38,564) of children entering grade 1 will not reach grade 5 (DE 4). Similarly, it is also estimated that 5.97% (6,093) of children entering grade 6 will not reach grade 8 (DE 5).

Furthermore, the GPI for the survival rate at primary level (0.99) indicates no appreciable difference in the probability of girls and boys reaching grade 5. On the other hand, at lower secondary level the GPI for the survival rate (1.05) reveals disparity in favour of girls and that more boys are likely to drop out before reaching grade 8.

Table 2.10. Percent and Number of Children in Primary Education Expected to Drop out before the last Grade (Dimension 4) (Years with Available Data)

Years	Male		Female		Total	
	%	Number expected to drop out	%	Number expected to drop out	%	Number expected to drop out
2009	20.34	26,729	21.25	22,948	20.75	49,677
2010	1.3	1,660	8.65	9,125	4.63	10,785
2011	7.77	11,226	9.66	11,346	8.62	22,572
2012	12.97	20,349	14.14	18,170	13.49	38,564

As presented in Table 2.10, analysis of the share and number of primary school children expected rate of drop out over the past four years indicates a decreasing trend between 2009 and 2011 but with a marked increase in 2012. Besides, (according to the calculations made using the UIS spreadsheet) in 2010 female primary students were nearly seven times more likely to drop out than males.

Table 2.11. Percent and Number of Children in Lower secondary Education Expected to Drop out before the last Grade (Dimension 5) (Years with Available Data)

Years	Male		Female		Total	
	%	Number expected to drop out	%	Number expected to drop out	%	Number expected to drop out
2009	19.72	12,062	8.80	3,900	15.13	15,962
2010	10.90	6,517	6.37	2,952	8.92	9,469
2011	6.24	3,674	3.22	1,482	4.92	5,156
2012	7.90	4,578	3.43	1,515	5.97	6,093

In respect to lower secondary education, the number and proportion of students expected to drop out showed signs of reduction between 2009 and 2012. Within this parameter, the expected drop out rates for males outstripped those for females.

The scale of the problem of children at risk of dropping out in dimension 4 and 5 can also be conceived by considering indicators for the most important risk factors associated with early school leaving such as lack of early childhood education, being overage for one's grade, repetition and absenteeism, etc.

2.3.3.1. Lack of Early Childhood Education

One of the major risk factors for dropping out, with particular reference to Dimension 4, and a basis for disparities in school related performance, is non-participation in early childhood care and education. In Eritrea, the proportion of pre-primary school age children (5 year olds) in school is very low, i.e. 27.0% (26.9% males and 27.1% females). Consequently, the proportion and number of children entering primary education without pre-primary experience is very high, 61.74% (46,815). This is linked largely to the list of supply side barriers that lead to exclusion.

As indicated in Table 2.12, the proportion and number of children from rural areas entering grade 1 of primary education without exposure to early learning (73.66%; 37,344) surpass that of urban areas (40.13% ;10,506). In addition, regional disparities in early learning experience among new entrants to primary education are very wide. The percentage of new entrants to primary education without pre-primary experience is high in Gash Barka (86.90) and Northern Red Sea (75.35). Although the percentages for Southern Red Sea (67.83), Debub (64.68) and Anseba(54.66) are also substantial, the figure for Maekel region is comparatively small (12.1%).

These disparities need to be addressed for reasons of equity. If not, it is likely that children with no early learning experience prior to primary education will be vulnerable to risks associated with low school performance, repetition and dropping out.

Table 2.12. Percent and Number of New Entrants to Primary Education Without Early Childhood Education, By Gender and Zone of Residence.

	Male		Female		Total	
	Number of Children	%	Number of Children	%	Number of Children	%
Residence						
Rural	21167	75.73	16177	71.13	37344	73.66
Urban	5566	40.91	4940	39.29	10506	40.13
Region						
Anseba	3247	57.92	2451	50.87	5698	54.66
Debub	8591	66.31	6871	62.74	15462	64.68

Southern Red Sea	629	73.65	229	55.72	858	67.83
Gash Barka	9748	87.84	8007	85.79	17755	86.90
Maekel	1266	18.46	241	4.31	1507	12.10
Northern Red Sea	3217	77.72	2318	72.28	5535	75.35
Total	26698	64.31	20117	58.62	46815	61.74

Source: EMIS data 2012/2013

2.3.3.2. Over Age Children

The magnitude of the problem of overage children, a widely recognized risk factor for dropping out at both primary and lower secondary levels, is notable. Figures from EMIS 2012/2013 indicate that 60.1% (61.5% boys and 58.5% girls) in grade 1 are over age. In general, 20.8% (72,596) and 56.7% (89,281) of children enrolled in primary and lower secondary level respectively are older than level. This pattern is more pronounced among boys with 11, 12 and 13 years of age attending primary school and 14 to 18 years of age attending lower secondary school.

Tables 2.13 and 2.14 below demonstrate the percentages of children in primary and lower secondary education, who are underage at the official age and overage to their level of education by gender.

Table 2.13. Percent of children in primary Education who are underage, at the official age, or overage for their level of education by gender.

	Male %	Female %	Total %
Underage	0.09	0.08	0.08
Official Age	77.34	81.37	79.16
Official Age + 1 year	10.35	9.80	10.10
Overage (2 or more years)	12.22	8.75	10.66

Table 2.14. Percent of children in lower secondary education who are underage, at the official age, or overage for their level of education by gender.

	Male %	Female %	Total %
Underage	0.36	0.48	0.41
Official Age	41.08	46.20	43.36
Official Age + 1 year	21.98	22.20	22.08
Overage (2 or more years)	36.58	31.12	34.14

Source: NSO Population Estimate and Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

In primary level, 10.66% of children and in lower secondary level around one third of children were two years or more above the expected age of their grade. The tables below (Tables 2.15 & 2.16) also indicate that there are more overage boys than girls, and boys tend to dropout more likely than girls both in primary and lower secondary levels. In general, there is a need to understand the bottlenecks with regard to late enrolment as well as grade repetition and their effects on dropping out to enable authorities address the problems and implement appropriate policy responses.

2.3.3.3. Dropout Rate

One way to analyze the population of children at risk of dropping out is to look at the at-risk children of yesterday, that is, children who recently dropped out of school. Understanding the profiles of children whose risk of dropping out was captured, provides an insight into the profiles of children currently at risk. Thus, EMIS from 2012/2013 is applied to present and analyze dropout rates at the primary and lower secondary levels by grade, sex and region so as to get useful information on the profile of children who leave school earlier.

In Table 2.15 the number and percentage of primary school children who have dropped out of school is presented. The data computed from gross primary enrolment is used to give insight into children enrolled in primary who are at risk of dropping out of school – Dimension 4 (DE 4).

Table 2.15. Number and Proportion of Children who Dropped Out of Primary Schools by Single Age and Gender.									
Age	Male			Female			Total		
	No. of Students	No. of Dropouts	%	No. of Students	No. of Dropouts	%	No. of Students	No. of Dropouts	%
5	164	30	18.2	130	23	17.6	294	53	17.9
6	18,434	1,364	7.4	16,691	1,001	6.0	35,125	2,366	6.7
7	32,045	1,923	6.0	28,386	1,334	4.7	60,431	3,257	5.4
8	35,522	1,812	5.1	30,394	1,125	3.7	65,916	2,936	4.5
9	32,821	1,411	4.3	28,192	874	3.1	61,013	2,285	3.7
10	29,755	1,220	4.1	24,522	760	3.1	54,277	1,980	3.6
11	19,883	935	4.7	15,438	525	3.4	35,321	1,459	4.1
12	11,999	744	6.2	7,979	383	4.8	19,978	1,127	5.6
13	6,672	567	8.5	3,689	247	6.7	10,361	814	7.9
14	3,169	168	5.3	1,411	128	9.1	4,580	296	6.5
15	1,310	-	0	531	199	37.5	1,841	199	10.8
16	277	-	0	139	28	20.0	416	28	6.7
Total	192,051	10,173	5.3	157,502	6,628	4.2	349,553	16,801	4.8

Source: Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

Generally, 4.8% of children (60.5% male; 39.5% female) enrolled in primary school dropped out of school in 2012/2013. Besides, overage children (both male and female,) in primary level dropped out exceptionally at a higher proportion. More interesting, only 6.7% of children

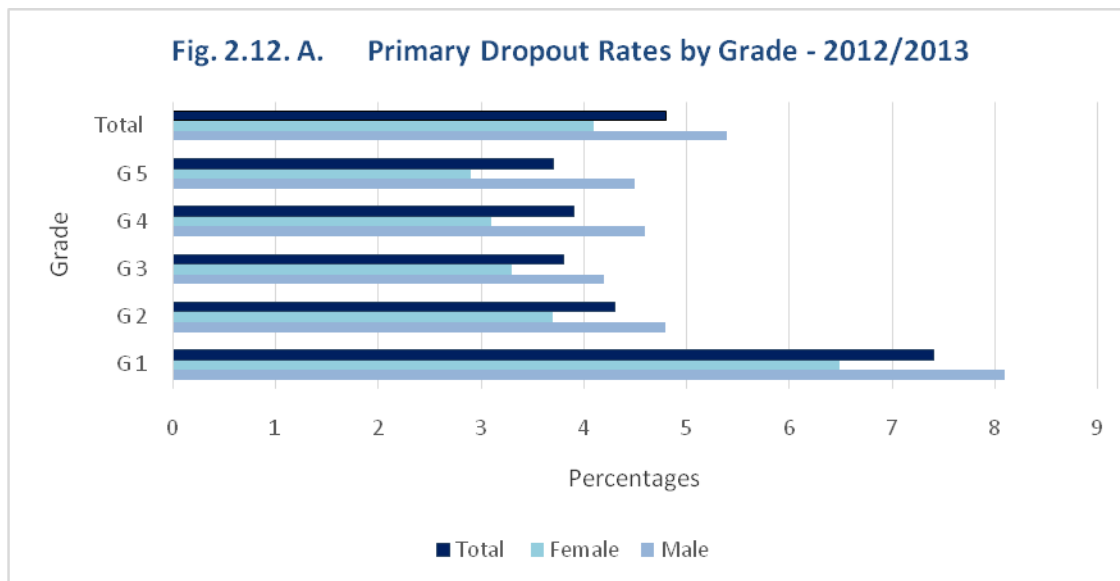
enrolled at the official admission age to primary level (age 6) dropped out of school. This may be due to the lack of pre-primary education experience affecting children's school readiness, the mostly mountainous and demanding terrain of remote areas coupled with distance to school and the nomadic and semi-nomadic life style of communities.

Age	Male			Female			Total		
	No. of Students	No. of Dropouts	%	No. of Students	No. of Dropouts	%	No. of Students	No. of Dropouts	%
10	302	9	2.9	322	9	2.7	624	17	2.8
11	4,688	202	4.3	4,861	112	2.3	9,549	313	3.3
12	12,165	584	4.8	11,186	291	2.6	23,351	875	3.7
13	17,590	932	5.3	15,131	484	3.2	32,721	1,416	4.3
14	18,431	1,143	6.2	14,985	599	4.0	33,416	1,742	5.2
15	15,125	1,210	8.0	11,213	594	5.3	26,338	1,804	6.9
16	9,917	1,021	10.3	6,505	488	7.5	16,422	1,509	9.2
17	5,623	759	13.5	3,283	374	11.4	8,906	1,133	12.7
18	2,481	305	12.3	1,281	152	11.9	3,762	458	12.2
Total	86,322	6,165	7.1	68,767	3,104	4.5	155,089	9,269	6.0

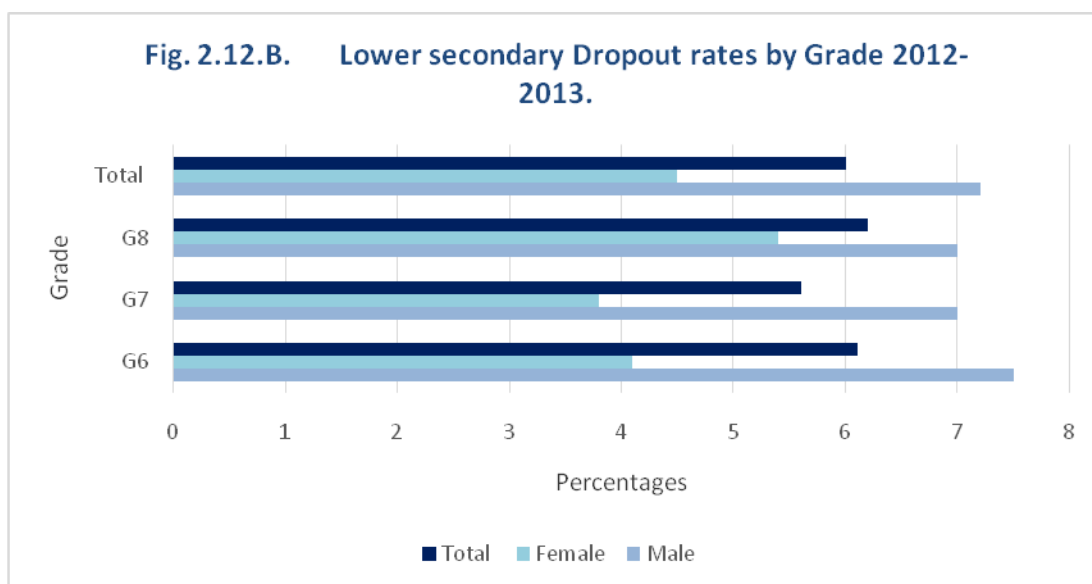
Source: Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

In lower secondary level, 6.0% of students (7.1% males and 4.5% females) are at risk of dropping out. Similar to the primary level, males are more at risk of dropping out than females and children older to the level are more at risk of dropping out.

In addition, Figures from the MoE, *Essential Indicators(2012-2013)*, disaggregated by region, grade and sex show that male students are more at risk of dropping out than female students across all regions in both primary and lower secondary levels. More specifically, the dropout rate in regions such as Gash Barka (12.1% male and 9.5% female), Southern Red Sea (10.6% male and 9.8% female) and Northern Red Sea (9.8% male and 8.0% female) at the initial phase of primary education is higher than in the other regions. Besides, the dropout rate of children, especially male students, in Southern Red Sea, Debub, Northern Red sea and Gash Barka is higher than the national average. This calls for appropriate policy and program interventions geared towards improving retention in both primary and lower secondary levels.



Source: Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013



Source: Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

The data in Figure 2.12A and 2.12B provide a summary of drop out rates by grade level in primary and lower secondary education. From the data, it is clear that the percentage of drop out rates is higher in grade 1 and 2 at primary level and in grade 6 and 8 at lower secondary level.

2.3.3.4. Repetition Rates

Another way to analyze the at-risk population is to examine performance indicators linked to children in school. One of these indicators is repetition rate at primary and lower secondary level of education. This indicator measures the proportion of students who have remained in the same grade for two or more consecutive years. Repetition commonly leads towards a loss

of confidence and low self-esteem for children because of the social stigma associated with failure. Ultimately, unable to cope up with the repeated failure, the child drops out from the education system.

Table 2.17 summarizes the repetition rates by grade level and region to highlight the points at which children are not progressing in school.

Table 2.17. Repetition Rate by Grade at the Primary and Lower Secondary Level of Education, by Sex and Region									
Sex	Region	Primary					Lower Secondary		
		G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8
Male	Anseba	17.6	24.0	17.3	17.2	12.2	21.6	14.8	21.9
	Debub	11.7	16.3	11.6	11.2	7.4	16.2	10.9	16.8
	S/ Red Sea	17.9	13.6	11.5	7.8	6.0	24.3	17.1	15.3
	Gash Barka	16.8	21.6	15.8	15.4	9.2	24.5	12.7	21.6
	Maekel	9.8	12.2	9.6	10.4	7.8	19.0	10.1	17.4
	N/ Red Sea	13.4	17.7	14.3	14.1	10.4	16.4	10.5	24.6
Total		13.9	18.0	13.2	13.0	8.7	19.3	11.6	18.9
Female	Anseba	14.5	20.1	12.9	11.4	8.5	13.3	10.7	12.0
	Debub	9.1	13.3	9.0	6.9	4.6	10.1	6.8	7.1
	S/ Red Sea	23.9	17.0	13.2	6.7	5.1	16.8	8.3	10.8
	Gash Barka	16.8	22.8	16.9	15.8	8.4	21.7	10.0	18.7
	Maekel	6.9	7.5	5.3	5.3	3.2	11.1	4.8	9.9
	N/ Red Sea	13.9	19.1	13.1	11.5	7.8	12.7	8.4	20.9
Total		12.2	16.1	10.9	9.2	5.7	13.0	7.4	10.6
Total	Anseba	16.2	22.2	15.3	14.6	10.5	18.1	13.0	17.3
	Debub	10.5	15.0	10.4	9.3	6.2	13.6	9.0	12.2
	S/ Red Sea	19.9	14.7	12.1	7.5	5.7	22.4	14.3	14.0
	Gash Barka	16.8	22.2	16.3	15.6	8.9	23.4	11.6	20.4
	Maekel	8.4	9.9	7.6	8.0	5.6	15.3	7.6	13.6
	N/ Red Sea	13.6	18.3	13.8	13.0	9.3	15.0	9.7	23.3
Total		13.1	17.1	12.2	11.3	7.4	16.6	9.8	15.1

Source: Essential Education Indicators, EMIS data 2012/2013

Repetition rate widely varies by grade, region and gender. When compared across grade, the data presented in the table indicates specific grades for which there is higher repetition, hence requiring more in-depth study of causes and possible remedies. For instance relatively higher repetition rate is observed in early grades of primary level (grades 1 and 2 with 13.1% and 17.1% respectively) and in grade 6 and 8 of lower secondary level with 16.6% and 15.1% respectively. The lowest repetition rate is registered in grade 5 and 7. As regards to sex variation, the repetition rate of male students is higher than that of female students across all grades at both primary and lower secondary level.

Furthermore the repetition rates both at the primary and lower secondary levels shows significant variation among regions. Higher repetition rates are recorded in Gash Barka, Anseba,

Northern Red Sea and Southern Red Sea, but the situation relatively improves in Maekel and Debub regions.

Overall, the data presented in the table above indicates that substantial proportion of children in primary and lower secondary levels are not promoted to the next higher grade. Lack of regular attendance and extended absenteeism affect the learning performance of many of these children. In particular, groups of children belonging to the disadvantaged communities and living in remote areas are vulnerable to this phenomenon.

2.4. Analytical Summary

In this chapter, Dimensions 1-3 show the profile of excluded children based on data of school age population and age specific enrolment by level and gender. Dimensions 4-5 show the enrollment, survival trends and relevant education indicators to determine the segments of children who are at risk of dropping out.

The criteria that define disaggregated data in this study (children enrolled at all levels, urban-rural, wealth quintiles, and children's living arrangements) are determined by the Operational Manual of the global study on OOSC. It is a combination of the Eritrean Education Management Information System EMIS (2009-2013) administrative enrolment data, and the survey based population data (EPHS 2010), which facilitated the development of profiles of out-of-school children in the education system of Eritrea. Based on the analysis conducted, and as per the out-of-school definition provided by UIS and UNICEF, 33.7% of school age children between the ages of 5-13 years are out of school.

Within the parameter of this age range, Dimension 1 represents pre-primary school age children (age 5) who are not in pre-primary or primary school. It is clear that the vast majority (73%) of age 5 children are excluded from early childhood education and other school readiness programs. There are marginally more male children (73.1%) in this age group who are out of school in comparison with female children (72.9%) of the same age group. There is a considerable difference between rural and urban areas, with almost 84% of pre-primary school age children out of school in rural locations in comparison with urban locations (48.5%). In addition, almost 29% of children from the poorest wealth quintiles are not attending pre-primary education as compared to only 4% of children from the richest wealth quintiles.

Dimensions 2 and 3 of the exclusion framework deal with primary and lower secondary school age children who are not either in primary or secondary school. The percentage of primary school children who are out of school (19%) is markedly lower than the figure for lower secondary school (40.9%), suggesting supply side constraints at the lower secondary school level. Within the context of this situation, the rural-urban dichotomy is very apparent. In both primary and lower secondary school levels, significantly more rural children (23% primary; 57% lower secondary) are out of school in comparison with urban children (9% primary; 11% lower secondary). In addition there are disparities in rates of exclusion by wealth with more

children from poorer backgrounds (29% primary; 84% lower secondary) out of school as compared to children from richer households (4% primary; 4% lower secondary).In terms of gender, there is a gap between the percentage of males (17%) and females (21%) but this gap widens at lower secondary school level I(male 37%; female 45%).

Dimensions 4 and 5 represent children in primary and lower secondary school who may be at risk of dropping out. On the basis of the analysis conducted earlier in this chapter,it is estimated that 13.5% of children entering grade 1 will not reach grade 5 (the last grade in primary school). It is also estimated that almost 6% of children entering grade 6 will not reach grade 8 (the last grade in lower secondary school).

On the basis of the GPI for the survival rate at primary level (0.99), there is no appreciable difference in the probability of male and female children reaching grade 5. In addition, the percentage of children expected to drop out before the last grade in primary school is more all less the same for girls (13.5%) as for boys (13%). At the lower secondary school level, more boys (8%) than girls (6%) are likely to drop out before completing grade 8. In terms of actual drop out rates,in 2012-13, a total of 4.8% (male 5.4%;female 4.1%) dropped out from primary school, while the drop out rate at the lower secondary level was 6% (male 7.2%; female 4.5%).

3. Barriers and Policies/Strategies

3.1. Overview

This chapter identifies the barriers and bottlenecks that lead to exclusion from and within school, and provides analyses of existing policies that affect each of the critical barriers identified. The framework for identifying and categorizing the barriers and bottlenecks was guided by the Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES) developed by UNICEF. MoRES is based on a determinant framework to identify barriers, bottlenecks and enabling factors which either constrain or advance the achievement of desired outcomes for disadvantaged children.

For the purpose of this study, the barriers and bottlenecks to school participation identified from the desk review and the field study in relation to the profiles of children under each of the Five Dimensions of Exclusion were entered into excel sheet and analyzed for frequency appearances. This offered a list of critical barriers which were then inserted into the respective MoRES domains as indicated in the OOSC guidance note (for details see Annex 6).

The four MoRES categories of determinants that served as a conceptual framework of analysis in each of the Five Dimensions of Exclusion are: ⁴⁴

Enabling environment: The sociocultural, political, budgetary, and institutional factors that either promote or undermine the achievement of objectives related to out-of-school children.

Supply: The capacity and effective functioning of the systems required to deliver desired services or to promote desired practices among priority populations.

Demand: The geographic, financial, social, and cultural factors that encourage or discourage the use of existing services or the adoption of desirable practices among priority groups.

Quality: While quality is subject to interpretation across contexts, quality here entails adherence to the minimum required standards for services or care practices, as defined by national or international norms.

The critical barriers along with their domains and constituent categories resulted in a revised framework containing the domains, the barriers, the profiles affected, existing policies, policy effectiveness and recommendations. Therefore, based on the mapping exercise of barriers conducted by the study team the main factors impacting out-of-school children are household poverty, levels of societal awareness on education, nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle, social construct of gender, child marriage, domestic labor, school infrastructure, distance of school from home, local coordination problems and funding gaps.

⁴⁴ UNICEF (2001). Monitoring of Results for Equity System.

3.2. Barriers in the Enabling Environment

3.2.1. Policies and Legislation

As indicated in Chapter I of this report, the Provisional Government of Eritrea, soon after the attainment of de facto independence in May 1991, adopted the goal of “education for all” in line with its long standing principle of social justice. In the Declaration of Policies on Education in Eritrea, the new government also announced that “every citizen has the full right to at least complete middle school” (lower secondary education). The Declaration also highlighted the equity dimension in the provision of education: “... special attention will be paid to those quartets of Eritrea which, so far, have not had much schooling opportunities”.⁴⁵

The need to extend educational opportunity to all Eritreans is reiterated in the Macro-Policy: the government seeks “to make basic education available to all”⁴⁶ and in the Concept Paper for the Rapid Transformation of Education: “All doors and opportunities must be open for all Eritreans to develop their potential both professionally and personally”⁴⁷. Such policy objectives are critical to the attainment of national development goals and, at the global level, to EFA and MDG’s.

The National Education Policy (NEP) in its draft (2003) and revised (2011) version has fostered an enabling environment for Eritrea to clarify its education policy objectives and to map out strategies and routes to achieve the policy priority of making basic education available to all. The policy initiatives identified in the revised version of NEP include:⁴⁸

- Primary education shall be free to all citizens and compulsory for all primary age children
- Entry age for Grade 1 shall be six years. In some remote areas and disadvantaged communities, however, the entry age for Grade 1 shall continue to be up to eight years.
- Lower secondary education shall be free for all citizens and compulsory for all lower secondary age children.

The National Education Policy acknowledges that in spite of the rapid improvements in access to schooling, many children are excluded from education. Indeed the plight and challenge of out of school children is mentioned several times in the document within the context of equitable access to schooling, repetition/dropout cases, overage children and the need to create alternative routes for older children to complete basic education.

⁴⁵ PGE (1991). Declaration of Policies on Education in Eritrea, p.3

⁴⁶ GoSE (1994). Macro Policy, p.39

⁴⁷ GoSE(2002).Concept Paper on the Rapid Transformation of the Education System in Eritrea p.5

⁴⁸ MoE (2011). National Education Policy, p.17-18

As part of the section on cross cutting issues, the NEP refers to the “current low enrolment and achievement levels in respect to girls, and other social groups such as nomads, orphans and children with special educational needs.”⁴⁹ To address this challenge, the NEP issued some policy statements including:

1. The education of girls, disadvantaged and special needs groups shall continue to be a focal concern of the MoE.
2. The principles of equity and inclusiveness shall guide the strategic actions needed to reach those children, youth and adults who are currently out of the reach of education or at risk of being so.

In addition to NEP, the dissemination and endorsement of the Early Childhood Care and Education Policy and Strategy (2001), the Gender Education Policy(2005), the National Policy and Strategy on Inclusive Education(2008), the National Communication Strategy to Increase Girls’ and other Disadvantaged Groups Access to Primary Education(2010) and the Nomadic Education Policy(2011) have offered an enabling environment to address the needs of excluded and disadvantaged children. *The bottleneck is that such policy and strategic frameworks have not often been complemented by concrete implementation plans and the necessary resources to back these plans.*

There are variations in respect to the implementation of pre-primary education within the Eritrean education system. The National Policy on Education stipulates that pre-primary education “is part and parcel of basic education”.⁵⁰ However, the document is silent on the crucial issue whether pre-primary education is free and compulsory for all children aged four to five. This policy implementation gap has generated a situation where parents, in some rural areas in particular, skip the pre-primary route and instead enroll their children directly in primary schools.

Eritrea is signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on Child Rights and Welfare. Eritrea has also developed a comprehensive national child policy (2011) with provision for child rights and welfare, education and health, and social protection services. There are Children’s’ Rights Committees in all the six regions of Eritrea, and efforts are being made to operate similar committees at sub-regional and local administration levels.

In respect to working children, a legal framework known as Decree 118/2001 proclaims that “it is prohibited to employ a person under the age of fourteen years”. In addition, the decree stipulates that young employees (presumably youth aged 14-17) may not be made to work for more than seven hours per day, and if they have to work the stated hours, they may not be

⁴⁹ MoE(2011). National Education Policy, p.38-39

⁵⁰ MoE (2011). National Education Policy,p.16

assigned to work between 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM.⁵¹In addition, Article 143(1) of the Labor Law empowers the labor inspection service to monitor the implementation of the labor proclamation in workplaces. ⁵²It is not clear if potential child work sites such as farms, shops and apprenticeship training sites are included in this inspection.

3.2.2. Financial Commitment and Expenditure

The amount of resources which governments spend on education is often a measure of their commitment to human resources development. This process in turn depends on the ability of these governments to develop an overall development strategy in which educational development forms a central part. In the case of Eritrea, the Macro Policy considers education a critical priority area and launching pad for human capital formation. The National Policy on Education reaffirms this priority with this statement: “Education is a national concern, a major force for nation building and social change”⁵³.

In this regard, the government is responsible for identifying national educational needs and priorities, and for the allocation of sufficient resources for their implementation. In line with this commitment, government spending on education increased from 51 million USD in 2008 to 85 million USD in 2013. Education expenditure as a share from total government expenditure increased from 8% in 2008 to 12% in 2013. However there has been a decrease in education spending as percentage of GDP-from 4% in 2008 to 2% in 2013⁵⁴

The 4% education spending from the national GDP recorded for Eritrea in 2008 is consistent with global recommendations. In 2006, a high level task force on EFA proposed that governments should spend between 4% and 6% of GNP on education and that, within the framework of government budgets, between 15% and 20% should be allocated for education with focus on the provision of basic education⁵⁵

Within the context of the education expenditure in Eritrea, the basic education sub-sector has been the principal beneficiary. Expenditure on basic education increased from 13 million USD in 2008 to 41 million USD in 2013. In the case of the 2013 figure, the share of basic education spending from the total of government education expenditure amounted to 48%. Within this parameter, the non-salary percentage of basic education expenditure was estimated to be 42%.⁵⁶

This level of spending reflects the government’s commitment to the universalization of basic education in line with national policy objectives and international obligations such as EFA and MD goals. Although basic education is a core government responsibility, local communities and

⁵¹ GoSE (2001).The Labour Proclamation of Eritrea

⁵² GoSE (2001). The Labor Proclamation of Eritrea

⁵³ MoE (1994). Macro Policy, p.43

⁵⁴ GoSE-GPE (2013). Financing Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education for Social Justice, p.5

⁵⁵ UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report

⁵⁶ MoE (2013). Education Sector Development Plan, p.4

Parent Teacher and Student Associations (PTSA's) raise resources (in cash, in kind and labor) to support the construction of classrooms, the purchase of badly needed school equipment. Funds raised by PTSA's are also used to pay for school recurrent costs, including water and electricity bills.

As indicated in Chapter 1 of this report, pre-primary learning provision is not the sole responsibility of the government. Local communities, religious organizations and private individuals own and manage pre-primary schools. This arrangement has allowed the government to redirect its efforts and resources to the opening of kindergartens (KG's) and community care giving centers (CCG's) in rural and disadvantaged areas. In addition the government prepares the curriculum, trains teachers for the pre-primary school sub-sector and pays the salaries of teachers in most government owned pre-primary schools.

However, there is a common perception that pre-primary education in Eritrea is underfunded as in many countries. This is a serious bottleneck considering that early childhood education is a pre-requisite for laying a solid foundation for school readiness. In 2012, the average global spending on pre-primary education as percentage of total government expenditure on education was 4.9%. During the same year, Sub-Saharan Africa spent only 0.3% on pre- primary education from the total government expenditure on education.⁵⁷

3.2.3. Institutional Management and Coordination

The objective of providing equitable access to quality education cannot be successfully achieved without a well-organized, flexible and locally responsive management and coordination system. This in turn calls for the development of an efficient and devolved system of management and a mechanism for stronger coordination between and within the different entities at the national, regional, sub-regional and local levels.

Decentralization as a mechanism for transferring certain level of authority and responsibility to regional administrations has been operational since the proclamation of Decree No 86 in 1996. Within the framework of this decree, regional administrations have been empowered to take decisions on a wide range of issues, including education, in consultation with local communities. The rationale behind this decree is clear. Firstly, it is assumed that regional and sub-regional administrations can improve the delivery of services since they are close to the local communities who need and use these services. Secondly, decentralization can increase the efficiency of the central government by releasing national authorities from the pressures of continuously dealing with routine local issues.

The decentralization initiative, however, has been moving rather slowly. Lack of appropriately trained and deployed personnel at regional and sub-regional levels and the operation of a

⁵⁷ UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report

centralized budget⁵⁸ have been the main constraints for the lack of progress in the decentralization process. Although efforts have been made to upgrade the skill levels of local authorities, more investment is required in capacity building to enhance the planning and implementation of social programs and to facilitate the equitable distribution of resources. This is crucial for any initiative to address the needs of excluded children from and within school.

In respect to the education sector, the NEP document states that “overarching educational regulations and standards shall be formulated at the central level while devolving implementation issues to regional and sub-regional administration levels”.⁵⁹ The document also states that effective coordination and harmonization within the overall education sector shall be promoted. In addition, the NEP notes that educational development becomes more effective in the context of an “appropriate synchronization of efforts involving the government, the community, development partners, the private sector, and relevant professional associations”⁶⁰.

Synchronization of efforts as a policy intention needs to be translated into action with concrete implementation and follow up mechanisms. There is little evidence that this is effectively happening on the ground, particularly in respect to pre-primary education and the education of socially disadvantaged children such as girls, children with disabilities and children from nomadic and semi-nomadic communities. FGD participants in almost all the regions complained about the inability of local communities, stakeholders and local administrators to promote the cause of pre-primary education and to support and monitor the entry and retention of children from disadvantaged groups.

Although in theory the provision of basic education services comes under the management jurisdiction of local administrations, this area of responsibility, particularly pre-primary education, is often neglected mainly due to lack of meaningful engagement on the part of local administrators. As a senior, community and opinion leader in Kerkebet sub-region (Anseba) observed: “Uneducated local administrators cannot be expected to advocate and facilitate improvements in access to education”. Similar sentiments were expressed by the head teacher of a pre-primary school on the outskirts of Adikeih (Debub Region): “Enrolment in the KG could not progress partly because of the lack of cooperation from the local administration”.

In spite of such impediments, coordination of efforts is a necessary condition to track and target the needs of out- of -school children. The process of tracking and targeting needs depends on the operation of an effective data collection and management system. The MoE’s Education Management and information System records statistical data on student enrolment and progression, disaggregated according to gender, geographical location, ownership, etc.

⁵⁸ Whether this is due to a considered government position or the result of regional administrations’ inability to pay for salaries and social services is difficult to say.

⁵⁹ MoE .(2011). National Education Policy, p.42

⁶⁰ MoE (2011). National Education Policy, p.43

Attempts are also made to provide an estimate of out-of-school children by using data on enrolments and school age populations.

At regional level, the task of EMIS data collection is carried out by the research and training unit of the regional education office. Within the context of the regional administration, the education office operates under the ambit of the social services department headed by a director-general. Therefore it can be said that a management structure does exist for the three social service offices (education, health, and human welfare) to share information on issues such as children who have never been to school, drop-out cases and students at risk of dropping out due to personal or family illness, poverty and socio-cultural pressures.

In spite of the existence of such structures, little progress has been made to collect and share systematic and comprehensive data on vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities and working children. Although attempts are made to obtain some information on the situation of socially disadvantaged children at regional and sub-regional levels, it is difficult to get accurate and timely data on the scale of disability and child work at national level. It is even more difficult to get reliable information on children with disabilities and working children in rural and geographically remote areas where low levels of education and prevailing social norms compound the problem of lack of data on such issues.

3.2.4. Policies and Strategies on Enabling Environment

3.2.4.1. Legislation and Policy

The analyses of national policy documents in Section 3.2.1 clearly show that there is a strong government commitment to the goal of “education for all” underpinned by the principle of social justice. Within this context of the long term goal to extend educational opportunity to all, the policy priority is to make basic education available to all.

Existing policy recognizes pre-primary education as “part and parcel of basic education” but there are variations in the implementation of pre-primary education for children aged four to five. This implementation gap has left a considerable number of pre-primary school age children without early learning opportunities. Because of the lack of pre-primary learning provision in some areas, particularly rural areas, parents send their children directly to primary schools. In view of the head start advantages it offers for school readiness, it is important to clarify the status of pre-primary education within the basic education cycle.

3.2.4.2. Financial Commitment and Expenditure

Recently, there has been a substantial increase in education expenditure as a share from total government expenditure, although the decreasing trend in education expenditure as a percentage of GDP since 2008 has been evident. Within this framework, the principal beneficiary has been the basic education sub-sector. The National Policy on Education reaffirms this commitment with this statement: “The government shall continue to play a key role in

funding public education... by increasing the share of education in the national budget”⁶¹. The projects identified for implementation in the GPE and ESDP initiatives reflect the government’s funding priorities.

It is difficult to give an estimate of the overall spending on pre-primary education since the providers include the government, the private sector and diverse community groups. Some amount of money is allocated by the government to this sub-sector in the Education Sector Development Plan (2013-2017) but there is a common consensus that this spending level is inadequate. Against this background, it is absolutely necessary to invest more resources in pre-primary education and to foster public –private partnerships in the implementation of this learning provision since the net national enrolment ratio at this level is only 21%.

3.2.4.3. Institutional Management and Coordination

The government proclamation on decentralization (Decree No 86/ 1996) offers an enabling environment for regional and sub-regional administrations to improve the delivery of services since they are close to the local communities who need and use the services. This is a necessary condition to plan and implement social programs aimed at addressing the needs of excluded children, including those who are out of school.

At regional administration level, a management structure exists to coordinate the tasks of education, health and social welfare sectors. This mechanism assists regional authorities to share information and concerns on issues such as children who have never been to school, drop out cases and children at risk of dropping out due to personal or family illness, poverty and other socio-cultural pressures.

Eritrea has also developed a comprehensive national child policy under the guidance of the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare (MoLHW). There are Children’s Rights Committees (CRCs) at regional levels and initiatives are being taken to set up similar committees at sub-regional levels. Typically CRC’s include representatives from the regional or sub-regional offices of the Ministries of Labor & Human Welfare, Education, Health, as well as from the Police, NUEW, NUEYS and PFDJ. The main objective of the CRC’s is to monitor the progress of children in the local area with a view of identifying and supporting children who face economic and social disadvantages.

The process of tracking and identifying the needs of children who are economically and socially excluded would require the operation of effective and comprehensive social protection strategies that incorporate an integrated data collection and management system. In this context, EMIS publication outputs need to make adaptations so that the exact numbers of school children with various disabilities are captured. There is also a need for relevant sectoral

⁶¹ MoE .(2011). National Education Policy, p.45

institutions and stakeholders to coordinate their efforts in order to develop data base on working children and children with disabilities.

Coordination of efforts is particularly needed at the local level in relation to the management of pre-primary education. There are concerns about the inability of local communities, stakeholders and local administrators to coordinate and promote the cause of pre-primary education in the country. This calls for capacity building with a view of forging or strengthening coordination within the framework collectively framed and agreed action plans, including the implementation of innovative approaches to expand early learning opportunities.

3.3. Demand Side Barriers.

3.3.1. Levels of Awareness and Value to Education

As indicated in Chapters 1 and 3 of this report, successive Government of Eritrea policy documents, (PGE, 1991; GoSE, 1994; GoSE, 2002) have emphasized the principle that education is not only a basic human right but also a necessary tool for nation building. The level of acceptance of this principle, however, depends to a large extent on the level of parental and community awareness in respect to the value of education.

The data in the Profiles Chapter of this study has clearly shown that there is a close relationship between parental level of education and student participation in school. A considerable proportion (76%) of children of primary school age whose parents had no education at all are out of school. A larger proportion (87%) of children of lower secondary school age whose parents had received no education at all is out- of- school.

In virtually all the FGD sessions carried out during the course of the qualitative study, low level of parental and community awareness on the value of education emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned barriers to school participation. This particular demand side barrier cuts across all the three categories of children who are excluded from and within school (i.e. those who have never been to school, those who have dropped out and those who are at risk of dropping out) as these comments from the FGD respondents seem to indicate:

“There is a relationship between the parents’ level of education and the value they put on their children’s education. Those with no education are not likely to send their children to school” (Director of a primary school).”

“If those who are expected to go to school do not go to school, the damage which follows is not only personal but also national. Parents’ level of awareness on education matters a lot”. (PTSA chair of pre-primary school).

“Our parents lack interest in education, There is hardly any parent who says: ‘Tell me what you have learnt today’ “(Female grade 5 Student) “

“There is a glaring weakness on the part of parents mainly due to their educational background. They don’t take initiatives to monitor their children’s progress in school, and this is detrimental to student retention and achievement” (School administrator in lower secondary school).

These statements further suggest that there is a relationship between parental education levels on the one hand and student enrolment and achievement in school on the other hand. This is in fact supported by empirical studies in a number of developing countries. For example, in a study conducted in Uganda, Tamasuza concluded that “parents’ education is positively correlated with school attendance”.⁶² In a related study on the Philippines, Maligalig et.al (cited in David and Albert) found that parents’ educational level positively affects different outcome indicators, including school participation and achievement⁶³.

In Eritrea, as noted earlier, low level of parental and community awareness on the value of education is a major reason for exclusion from school, but it becomes more powerful in relation to specific profiles of out of school children. Pre-primary school age children, girls, children with disabilities and children from remote rural communities shoulder the heaviest costs of exclusion mainly due to parental lack of awareness on education.

FDG participants almost invariably proposed that parental interest in education could be enhanced through sensitization and awareness raising campaigns (knowledge—awareness—interest). This process is necessary but not always sufficient condition for parents to support their children’s enrolment and progression in school as this comment by the PTA chair in a primary school suggests: “There is a limit on the benefits of sensitization and mobilization programs. At the end of the day education is for those who want it”.

The challenge is therefore to make individuals and communities demand education. The PTSA chair mentioned above did succeed in motivating his ‘at risk of dropping out’ daughter to continue her education. His extraordinary story is summarized in the box below:

When I realized that my daughter was not doing well in school and at risk of dropping out at the end of grade six (first year of lower secondary education), I, also a grade six complete, decided to give up my bakery business to join her in school as grade seven student. Together we continued our studies until we completed grade 12. We sat for the Eritrean Secondary School Education Examination. She obtained the results (but I didn’t) which enabled her to join one of the colleges of higher education. Mission accomplished, I went back to my bakery business.

⁶² Tamasuza,A.(2011) Leaving School Early: The Quest for Universal Primary Education in Uganda....p. 135

⁶³ Maligalig et.al cited in David and Albert (2012). Primary Education: Barriers to Entry and Bottlenecks to Completion...

This of course is an exceptional case of an exceptional individual who clearly understood the intrinsic value of education. Most of the parents who do not want to send their children to school or encourage them to stay at school tend to be poor and illiterate, struggling to live in a harsh socio-economic environment. As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, many of the children who are out of school in Dimensions 1, 2 and 3 come from poor and rural backgrounds.

This brings into focus the crucial issue of education and poverty. In general, for poor households the imperatives of survival come before children's education. The interaction between lack of education and poverty breeds a self-perpetuating cycle where poverty leads to exclusion from education, and lack of education reinforces poverty.

3.3.2. Household Poverty

In Eritrea, as in many developing countries, household poverty is a major determinant of exclusion from education. The analysis of data in the preceding chapter has demonstrated that there are more children from poor rural communities who are out of school as compared to children from well to do urban areas. The scale of household poverty as a barrier to student participation is examined below according to school levels.

Pre-Primary Education

Education at this level is not free for all. In urban areas, KGs are managed by local communities and private individuals. The government, for reasons of equity and social justice, has been focusing its efforts on the provision of pre-primary education in rural and disadvantaged areas. In urban areas, tuition fees range from the exorbitant (1,000 Nakfa per child per month) to the reasonable (80 Nakfa per child per month). Even the 'reasonable' fees are too much to bear for poor families in urban areas as this statement from an education supervisor in Adi-keih town (Debub Region) suggests: "KG education has become unaffordable in this town". As a result of the cost burden, some parents in urban locations (e.g. Akria , Asmara, Maekel Region) choose to send their children to one year KG facility.

Primary and Lower Secondary Education

Education at primary and lower secondary school levels is free. However, there are some indirect costs (uniforms, stationery, and transport) which affect the ability of poor families to send and keep their children in school. The cost burden becomes heavier in situations where families have to educate a number of children simultaneously.

To be sure, wearing uniforms is not compulsory in rural areas but the prospect of incurring opportunity cost as a result children being in school and not working is a disincentive as far as some poor families are concerned. For the poorest families, the contributions from working

children can be critical. Furthermore, as children grow older, the opportunity cost of schooling increases significantly along with the pressure to work or get married.⁶⁴

Even among the children who are enrolled in school, there is pressure on them to stay at home to assist their families during harvest time. Reports from regional education offices express concerns about student absenteeism in rural schools during the harvest season.⁶⁵ Similar concerns were raised at the FGDs in respect to seasonal absenteeism in rural areas. The danger with this kind of practice is that temporary absences can lead to prolonged withdrawals and eventually to permanent drop outs.

The recurrent drought in parts of Eritrea has put constraints on the resourcing ability of households to send and maintain children in school. During the course of the FGDs, some community members in the rural areas of western and eastern parts of the country voiced fears that primary schools in their localities were facing “enrolment crises” associated with the recent drought. Other rural communities described how the recurrent drought has dislocated families and their herds in the areas.

Poverty interacts with certain value systems on the ground to sharpen conflicts between the pull factor of the home culture and the push factor of the school culture. This was an issue of concern to students at the FGD in a rural lower secondary school in Anseba region. A 17 years old grade 6 male student articulated the dilemma in this way:

I don't believe there is a child who doesn't want to go to school. However, the interest of parents in education is extremely low. I have been a prize winner but my father keeps asking me to supplement the family income by concentrating on farming and cattle herding. This has started to affect my progress in school.

3.3.3. Socio Cultural Beliefs and Practices

Socio-cultural beliefs and practices pose a serious barrier to school participation, particularly in the rural areas of Eritrea. In yet another example of polarization between generational beliefs, students in a rural lower secondary school in Gash Barka referred to lack of support from families: “ Parental attitudes towards education is negative. They repeatedly tell us what benefits can you get from going to school?”

In terms of gender, girls carry most of the burden of the of negative socio-cultural attitudes towards education. The practice of keeping girls at home in all probability emanates from the patriarchal family structure prevalent in most parts of Eritrea. Within the framework of this traditional gendered family structure, male children are channeled to become heads of households while girls are expected to marry at an early age, become housewives and bear

⁶⁴ UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report

⁶⁵ MoE (2012; 2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

children. The context for the perpetuation of traditional values and attitudes inimical to the progress of women is clearly expressed in the National Education Gender Policy and Strategic Framework of Action:⁶⁶

“Eritrea is predominantly a patriarchal society where women, despite their larger labor input into the productive economic sectors and social management, are marginalized citizens in all rights and benefits. Women have very limited access to assets including land and livestock. Ownership and control of the primary productive asset rest in the hands of the husbands and male heirs “.

Consequently many parents, particularly in rural communities, do not see the value of sending girls to school. Qualitative data from the FGDs indicates that there is socio-cultural pressure on female children not to enroll or to continue schooling in Kerkebet (Anseba), Dige (Gash-Barka), Sheeb (NRS), Tio (SRS) and parts of Hagaz (Anseba), Tserona and Adikeih (Dehub). For most of the female children who manage to enroll in primary schools in such areas, grade five signals the end of their educational journey.

In some areas, parents make the conscious decision to send male children to school while keeping female children at home. In the words of the chair of the National Union of Eritrean Women in a sub region in Southern Region “If a choice is to be made between sending a boy or girl to school, some parents would like the boy to go to school and the girl to stay at home”. In other areas there is a subtle but insidious attempt to discourage girls from going to school. At the FGD session with senior administration and education authorities in Mendefera (Dehub Region), it was revealed that “certain community leaders” have not been actively supporting female enrolment particularly in Hazemo and Ubel areas.”

The adverse effect of socio-cultural beliefs and practices on girls’ participation may be illustrated with following cases. In Amaliet Lower Secondary School, Kerkebet (Anseba), there was only one girl in November 2015 and she is from Tigrigna ethnic group. In 2002, there were 25 female students enrolled in Megalozula Primary School, Adikeih Sub-Region (Dehub Region). From these, 14 continued to lower secondary school and only 3 went to secondary school.

3.3.4. Child Marriage.

In many ways underage marriage is an extension of the wider negative socio- cultural attitudes towards females in general and the education of females in particular. In respect to Eritrea, Rena (2005) asserts that the country “faces generations of tradition that reinforce the belief in early marriage and keeping women in the home”⁶⁷. This assertion is an overgeneralization since the practice does not happen in all parts of Eritrea. However, underage marriage has been repeatedly mentioned in the annual regional education reports as a major cause of girls

⁶⁶ MoE (2005). National Education Gender Policy and Strategic Framework for Action, p.2

⁶⁷ Rena,R.(2005) Gender Disparity in Education: An Eritrean Perspective...p.6

dropping out from school in remote parts of rural Eritrea.⁶⁸ According to the EPHS (2010), 38.4% of females and 2.2% of males between the ages of 14 and 29 were not attending school because of marriage.⁶⁹ This is broadly compatible with the information obtained from the qualitative study:

“A girl aged 13-14 is considered marriageable” (Kerkebet, Anseba)

“Some parents believe that a girl aged 14-15 has reached womanhood and is therefore ready for marriage”(Dige, Gash-Barka)

“There are cases of young girls (under 18) getting married in Areza, Maimene, Maidma, Tserona, Adikeih and Ubel areas (Dehub Region)

“We have documented cases of 50-60 underage marriage happening every January (Chair, NUEW, Dehub Region)

Child marriage is essentially a rural phenomenon in Eritrea and in this context it does contribute to the multiplicity of barriers which rural girls face in accessing and staying in school. A considerable number of young girls continue to be affected by this barrier within the framework of DE’s 3, 4 and 5. This is consistent with the low participation rates of rural girls, particularly in lower and upper secondary school levels. Even in the case when a married girl returns to school, her chance of dropping out is very high because of newly acquired family responsibilities (pregnancy, child- birth, etc.).

International human rights agreements prohibit child marriage. At the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, participant countries agreed to enforce laws against child marriage. In addition, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the African Protocol on the Rights of Women (2004) commit governments to enact laws preventing child marriage.⁷⁰

In Eritrea child marriage is prohibited by law. The amended civil code (PGE: 1991) defines the legal age of marriage to be 18 for both females and males⁷¹. Despite this prohibition, child marriage is still deeply entrenched in the socio-cultural fabric of some rural communities in Eritrea. In places where child marriage is still practiced in the Dehub Region, women activists have been mobilized to counter this practice as they did with the FGM. In Dige (Gash-Barka) the local assembly adopted a resolution, the November 25/2015 resolution, to prohibit underage marriage. In Geleb (Anseba), underage marriage has been prohibited as a result of efforts made by local communities and authorities. These are encouraging initiatives but the problem is that some parents may replace the withdrawal for early marriage with the withdrawal for keeping girls at home.

⁶⁸MoE (2011; 2012;2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

⁶⁹ NSO (2010). Eritrea Population and Health Survey, p.21

⁷⁰ UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report

⁷¹ Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE), 1991: Eritrean Civil Code.

3.3.5. Nomadic-Semi Nomadic Life Style of Some communities

In broad terms, nomadic and pastoralist communities constitute ethnic and socio-economic groups who constantly migrate in large or small groups in search of a means of livelihood within a local area, country or across international boundaries.⁷² Since nomadic communities are by nature migratory, providing access to equitable quality education becomes a challenge both in terms of resources and logistics.

Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities are primarily found in the four lowland regions of Eritrea (Anseba, Gash-Barka, NRS and SRS) It is estimated that they represent “5-10 % of the population.”⁷³ Such communities migrate from place to place in search of pasture for their cattle and other herds. Mainly because of their life style, nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists find themselves excluded from social services, including education. School enrolments in the four regions inhabited or traversed by nomadic communities are considerably lower than the national average.

Globally, nomadic and pastoralist communities “remain among the most underserved”⁷⁴ by education services. Educational provision within the framework of the formal school system is simply not compatible with the migratory life style of nomadic and semi-nomadic communities. Virtually all the respondent groups in the FGDs in the four regions of the country identified the life style of nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists as a barrier to their children’s education.

Lack of participation in schooling due to migratory life style is further aggravated by broader socio-cultural beliefs and practices which undermine the value of education. In a study on nomadic communities in Kenya, Holland concluded that “parents see no value in education and no good coming out of it”⁷⁵. Furthermore, when opportunity costs are taken into consideration, many nomadic parents would prefer to take their children with them rather than send them to formal schools.

The lack of educational access experienced by children from nomadic and semi-nomadic groups has also been exacerbated by the recurrent drought. Faced with the ‘income shock’ arising from unfavorable environmental conditions, many nomadic parents would like their children’s direct assistance in the bid to survive. According to an official in the Shambuko-Sub-Regional Administration: “Parents would like to keep their children at home looking after herds and pastures as a coping mechanism during these hard times”.

3.3.6. Scattered Villages and Settlements

In parts of Eritrea, there are scattered villages and settlements with low density distribution of population. The inhabitants of these localities are not necessarily nomadic or migratory

⁷² Hailombe. (2011). Education Equity and Quality in Namibia...

⁷³ Cited in GoSE-GPE (2013). Financing Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education for Social Justice, p.27

⁷⁴ UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report, p. 98

⁷⁵ Cited in Hailombe.(2011). Education Equity and Quality in Namibia...p.49

communities. They live there on a sedentary basis in remote and sparsely populated settlements far away from education and other social services. Some of these areas are hard to reach because of the topography (e.g. the eastern escarpments on the border between Debu and Northern Red Sea regions). Others are geographically accessible but too isolated from main stream administrative and social services delivery points.

Scattered villages and settlements present a challenge to the provision of education services. Information obtained from annual MoE regional reports and qualitative data from the FGDs indicate that scattered settlements and hard to reach villages do not have the desired access to schooling. The problem is more acute in remote parts of Anseba, Gash-Barka, NRS, SRS and Debu regions of the country.

3.3.7. Student Motivation and Interest

In almost all the FGDs carried out in all the regions of the country, teacher and parent respondent groups expressed the concern that students these days lack the ‘motivation’ and ‘interest’ to learn, with the attendant disposition to dropout and migrate within and outside the country. This is a serious claim and in this context, the motivation and interest deficiency should not have been allowed to happen by all concerned, including teachers and parents. The annual regional education reports refer to this issue within the broader context of learner progress or lack of progress in school involving the students themselves, school management, teachers and parents.⁷⁶

The claim itself merits some scrutiny. As part of the introduction to the interview guide, student respondents were asked to explain why they go to school and what they want to be after completing their studies. Below is a summary of some of their responses:

- I want to improve my personal and family life
- To be able read, write and communicate
- To serve and help develop my country
- To reach higher level of education
- To continue my studies, although I lack parental support to do so

In answer to the second question many students said that they would like to be doctor, pilot, teacher, nurse, technician, etc. These statements demonstrate that the students do have the interest to learn in order to fulfill personal goals and aspirations. They also demonstrate that the students would like to continue their education and secure suitable jobs.

Quite often the desire to migrate has an economic motive behind it since there are cases of children and youth who leave home and school for another destination in an attempt to solve some personal and family problems. There could also be peer pressure at play to accentuate exclusion from school as this observation from a PTSA member in a lower secondary school

⁷⁶ MoE (2011; 2012; 2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

suggests: “Those who drop out are becoming causes for dropping out among those who have not dropped out”.

Therefore, it is not helpful to assume in blanket terms that ‘these days’ students lack motivation and interest to learn. The danger is that such parental and teacher expectation could fuel a feeling of despondency and fragility among school children which in turn fuels this expectation. This self-perpetuating cycle needs to be addressed in order to facilitate the articulation of student driven aspirations and career choices.

3.3.8. Late Entry and Enrolment in School

The analysis of data in the Profiles Chapter of the study shows that 20.8% of children enrolled in primary schools and 56.7% of children enrolled in lower secondary school are older than their level. The analysis also points out to cases of children, specifically boys, aged 13-14 enrolled, in primary school. In normal circumstances these children should have been in lower secondary school.

Late entry enrolment in school is a familiar occurrence in rural communities. It is also more prevalent in the four lowland regions (Anseba, Gash –Barka, NRS, and SRS) than in the two highland regions (Maekel, Debub).The National Policy on Education stipulates that entry age for grade one is six years. However, schools in rural and disadvantaged communities are allowed to flexibly increase the age of entry to eight. In some remote rural areas the flexibility, although not supported in official MoE regulations, is stretched further to allow older children (e.g. 9-10 years) to enroll in grade one.⁷⁷

One possible demand side reason for late entry in primary school is household poverty. According to the EPHS, helping family at home was one of the common reasons for not “currently attending school”, and this phenomenon is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas.⁷⁸ Some parents in rural areas delay their children’s enrolment in school so that they can assist them with farming and herding tasks. There is an element of opportunity cost at play in this process, and in the case of older children there is pressure on them to work longer to support the family income.

Prolonged engagement in household tasks also affects children who are already in school. This comes out clearly in the regional education reports and in the FDGs. According to a PTSA member in a rural lower secondary school, “Children who assist their families by looking after cattle/ camels and sheep/goats come to school late and they are at risk of dropping out”.

Although most children in rural communities are expected to perform such tasks, it is the older children who are normally assigned the heavier tasks. Coming late to school, after carrying out

⁷⁷ MoE(2011). National Education Policy

⁷⁸ NSO (2010).Eritrea Population and Health Survey. 21

a heavy task, can trigger lack of concentration in the classroom which in turn can interfere with academic progress. This in turn can lead to repetition and eventually to dropout.

3.3.9. Child Work and Apprenticeships

As mentioned in Section 1 of this Chapter, the labor law of Eritrea prohibits child labor. In this context a legal framework is in place to protect children from inhuman and exploitative practices. The National Comprehensive Child Policy (2013) makes a distinction between **child work**, including domestic chores and family income supplementing tasks, which is “part of the socialization process in the Eritrean social structure”, and **child labor** which is “hazardous, risky and exploitative... and detrimental to the normal growth and development of the child”.⁷⁹

On the basis of available evidence and from the experience of various communities in Eritrea, it can be said that child labor in the classical sense (underage children working in harsh and degrading conditions for regular meager wages)⁸⁰ does not exist. This is substantiated by qualitative data from the FGD respondent groups (including students) in all regions of the country. The consensus emerging from these discussions is that there are children who work either to supplement family income or to acquire practical skills by way of apprenticeships.

Perhaps the most common type of child work in Eritrea occurs at the household level. As pointed out earlier in this section, children help their families by looking after cattle and other herds, tilling the land, and harvesting the farms. They also help their families by fetching water and firewood. Children also work in family shops and other businesses. Commenting on this type of child work a sub -regional administrator said: “This is division of labor within the family and everyone is part of the work arrangement”.

Poverty forces some families to use their children to generate income. Almost all the FGDs agreed this happens in urban and semi urban areas. Examples of such activity include selling peanuts, fruits, bread, chewing gum, ice-cream and water using horse/ donkey carts. There are also cases of children working in teashops, restaurants and bakeries.

Some other children (mainly boys) work in vehicle repair workshops and other enterprises such as metal work, carpentry and woodwork, and tailoring and embroidery. The young workers do this within the framework of apprenticeships and skill training schemes under the tutelage of an older craft man or technician (usually the owner of an enterprise and a family member).

In terms of gender roles, much of the domestic work falls on the shoulders of girls. In addition to money earning tasks they may be asked to perform, girls often fetch water and fire wood, look after siblings, wash clothes, and clean houses and premises. While this situation does not exactly represent Whiting and Edwards’ claim that ‘girls work while boys play’⁸¹, it does,

⁷⁹ MoLHW (2013).National Comprehensive Child Policy, p.23-24

⁸⁰ Perhaps the closest phenomenon to child labour which happened recently in some parts of the country is traditional mining. The government prohibited the activity a couple of years ago.

⁸¹ Cited in MoE (1997).The Curriculum in Eritrean Schools: A Situation Analysis Report

however, illustrate where the burden of domestic household rests in the gender equation. This burden, however, tends to be less in large family units where there is some kind of division of labor among the siblings.

Whatever forms it takes (working on family farms/ shops, looking after herds, apprenticeships in workshops, vending in the streets), child work consumes a substantial time and energy. Children are faced with the prospect of divided attention and this, as mentioned earlier, can interfere with their educational progress. There could also be occasions when children are forced to be absent from school in order to attend to ‘pressing work commitments’. In general, child work, unless handled judiciously, exposes learners to risks of dropping out. According to a background paper prepared for EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2015: “The more hours children work per week, the less likely they are to attend school, and those who do attend are more likely to lag in the years of schooling they attain”.⁸²

3.3.10. Disability

It is estimated that at the global level between 93 and 150 million children live with some form of disability.⁸³ Having disability status can increase the risk of educational exclusion. In some countries the chances of a child with a disability not attending school are two times greater than a child without a disability⁸⁴

There is no comprehensive data on the number of children with disabilities in Eritrea. In a survey carried out by the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare in 2004, the number of children with disabilities was estimated to be 23, 000, “of whom many are out of school and live in rural areas.”⁸⁵ Another study conducted by the same institution (MoLHW) in 2009 estimates that there are over 10, 000 children and youth with disability in the age range 10-19⁸⁶.

The figure in the first study is rather out-dated and the figure in the second study refers to one age group only. Accordingly, the first step in the development of an out-of –school profile for children with disabilities is to establish how many children with disability status attend primary and lower secondary schools and how many are excluded from these learning provisions. The second step is to assess children with different types and levels of disability in order to address their particular needs.

The EPHS identifies disability as one of three most common reasons for not attending school.⁸⁷ Very limited information on children with disabilities was obtained from the FGDs. This by itself reflects lack of interest in the subject which is only one of the multiple barriers confronting

⁸² UNESCO(2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report, p. 117

⁸³ Cited in UNESCO(2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report, p.101

⁸⁴ UNESCO(2008). EFA Global Monitoring Report

⁸⁵ Cited in MoLHW (2011). Evaluation Report on the Donkey for School Project

⁸⁶ Cited in MoE-GPE(2013). Financing Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education for Social Justice, p.27

⁸⁷NSO(2010) Eritrean Public Health Survey

children with disability. The others include wider societal attitudes towards disability, fears of stigmatization on the part of families, medical fees and transport costs.

3.3.11. Policies and Strategies on Demand Side Barriers

3.3.11.1. Low levels of Awareness on the Value of Education

Low levels of parental awareness on the value of education continue to exist in a number of rural areas of the country. Within this context, the profiles most affected by this barrier tend to be girls and children with disabilities. Sensitization and awareness raising campaigns have been carried out to encourage and persuade parents and communities to send their children to school. However, these activities need to be reinforced by the provision of targeted adult education programs. This would assist parents not only to value and support education, but also to enable them to take an active interest in the education of their children (e.g. school visits, discussion with teachers, monitoring children's progress).

Parallel to sensitization and parental education programs, there will be a need to enforce the implementation of compulsory basic education in schools. Enforcing this policy would be more effective if it is supported by local and grassroots driven initiatives. A good example of this initiative is the memorandum of understanding reached on April 30, 2016 in Adi-keih Sub-Region(Dhub) committing all stakeholders to enforce compulsory primary education in the area.

3.3.11.2. Household Poverty

In Eritrea, particularly in the rural areas, household poverty is one of the principal barriers to school participation. Primary and lower secondary education is free but there are some indirect costs of education (e.g. uniforms, stationery, transport) which affect the education of children from poor families. This financial burden can become more severe in circumstances where families have to educate a number of siblings concurrently.

At the macro-level, poverty alleviation and eradication programs have been operating in various parts of the country, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Efforts have also been made to implement such programs within the context of community based initiatives in order to stimulate long term structural improvements in the resourcing power of parents.

In the short term, wearing of uniforms has been waived in rural schools. In some cases, stationery and supplementary reading materials are distributed free of charge to children by the government in collaboration with development partners such as UNICEF. In other cases, bicycles and cash incentives are given to girls and other deserving children by governmental and non-governmental institutions. It will be necessary to continue with these and other incentives (e.g. mid-day lunch/snack) in order to enable poorer families to send their children to school.

3.3.11.3. Socio-Cultural Beliefs and Practices

The negative effects of socio-cultural beliefs and practices on school participation are more prevalent in the rural areas of Eritrea. Once again girls are the principal victims of these attitudes. There are linkages between lack of education and the prevalence of negative socio-cultural attitudes. One strategy typically used to counter such beliefs and practices has been to plan and implement community sensitization programs involving the MoE, NUEW, local administrations and other stakeholders. This is highlighted in the National Communication Strategy to increase girls' and other disadvantaged groups' access to primary education in Eritrea⁸⁸.

Within the context of sensitization and awareness raising programs, it will be useful to make the school the focal point of attitudinal change. An integral part of this arrangement would be the development of institutional and social infrastructure focusing on improved linkages between the school and the community. The PTAs can play a vital role in this process.

3.3.11.4. Child Marriage

Underage marriage has the effect of constraining young girls' participation and progression in education. The practice of child marriage is prohibited at national level. However, it has continued to operate in some rural communities of the country. Each family arranged underage marriage may have its own particular reasons, but in general it is part of the broader negative socio-cultural attitudes undermining the participation of girls in education.

Legislation on child marriage needs to be tightened. In one of the most recent moves, Dige Sub-Region (Gash-Barka) local assembly adopted a resolution (the November 25' 2015 resolution) to ban underage marriage. Another strategy in place has been to mobilize women activists to counter the practice as they did with the FGM. While such strategies need to be pursued with vigor, the process of stopping child marriage requires a comprehensive package of policy initiative, advocacy and community mobilization programs.

3.3.11.5. Nomadic-Semi Nomadic Life Styles and Scattered Villages and Settlements

Mainly because of their migratory life style, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities find themselves excluded from educational services. Scattered villages and settlements (due to their geographical location or very low population density) also experience lack of easy access to schooling.

In an effort to increase participation in education, the government has taken measures to settle nomadic groups in areas where basic social services, including education, exist or can be provided. It has also taken measures to resettle communities from scattered villages and settlements in new convenient localities for easier delivery of social services. The resettlement areas have yielded more enrolment rates but some nomadic communities have continued with

⁸⁸ MoE((2010) National Communication Strategy...

their migratory life in search of water supply and grazing land. Careful planning is needed to cater for the educational needs of children from this group. The Nomadic Education Policy (2011) provides guidelines on educational provision for these communities.

3.3.11.6. Student Motivation and Interest

In respect to the claim that ‘students these days lack motivation and interest’, there is the danger that this could develop into a self-perpetuating cycle of expectation far removed from the students’ real need for progression in learning and career opportunities. If there are lapses in student motivation and interest, it is the responsibility of parents, teachers, education authorities and other stakeholders to provide an enabling environment in which students can experience success in school and in work contexts.

There is a mechanism for advising students on curriculum diversification and subject clustering at the end of grade ten in upper secondary schools. However, this advice service needs to be extended to cover the personal and social needs of students at all levels in the school system. It will also be necessary to develop a student support service system within the MoE headquarters and the regional/ sub-regional offices for purposes of offering guidance and counseling to students, particularly to those who are perceived to be at risk of dropping out from school.

3.3.11.7. Late Enrolment in School

Late enrolment is a common phenomenon in rural communities. This phenomenon generates a classroom situation in which some students are overage for their grade. It also represents an equity issue since many late entrants tend to come from poorer households. Accordingly, overage children in schools often feel the pressure to support their families by working. This practice normally leads to absenteeism and dropout.

Although household poverty is almost invariably the main reason for late entry in school, the lack of pre-primary school provision delays children’s enrolment in school. The provision of KG’s and CCG’s certainly leads to improvements in age appropriate entry at primary school level. The MoE has made arrangements for overage children (9-14) to study in CEE centers which are mainly located in rural areas. There are indications that the number of the CEE centers is decreasing, suggesting that some students are being integrated into regular schools. If this trend continues there will be a case for the centers to be absorbed into the primary school system.

3.3.11.8. Child Work and Apprenticeships

There is common perception in Eritrea that child work at the household level represents division of labor within the family. Outside this parameter, poorer families send their children to work in order to supplement the household income. In addition, some children (mainly boys) work as apprentices in a wide range of workshops and enterprises.

While accepting that household work is part of division of labor, parents have the responsibility to ensure that domestic chores do not interfere with the progress of their children's education. There is, however, a need to regulate the scale of income related child hired vending and apprenticeship work. The Eritrean labor law prohibits children under 14 from work but is silent on the number of hours (per day or week) which school children between 14 and 17 years should be allowed to work. This needs further legal framework in order to protect school children who need to do some part-time work.

3.3.11.9. Disability

Having disability increases the risk of getting excluded from education. This risk becomes more acute if the disabled child is poor, female and lives in a rural community. Addressing this mutually reinforcing disadvantage requires improvements in the visibility of such children through community awareness programs and using the social model of disability to offer inclusive education.

Both the National Education Policy and the Inclusive Education Policy highlight the importance of integrating children with disabilities in mainstream schools. To this end, a pilot project on the education of children with learning disabilities in special classrooms of mainstream schools was mounted in three regions of the country. A recent evaluation report of the pilot project concluded that this "form of provision has opened a promising and practical lesson for expansion".⁸⁹ This report should be studied carefully since it could assist policy makers to consider new possibilities for providing disability related inclusive education in regular schools

3.4. Supply Side Barriers.

3.4.1. Availability of Schools and Classrooms.

Within the parameter of supply side issues, availability of schools and enrolment trends are two sides of the same coin. The more schools are available, the more student enrolments happen and more schools are needed to cope with increases in student enrolments. Accordingly, for many countries investment in schools and classrooms has become an essential component of the strategy to address the needs of the rapidly growing school age population.

Recent research evidence has indicated that investment in infrastructural projects such as school construction yields "some of the largest impacts on education access."⁹⁰ In the context of Eritrea, increasing the supply of schools has been a key factor in increasing the number of student enrolments and in reducing the percentage of children who have never been to school. The number of pre-primary education schools increased from 104 in 2002-03 to 483 in 2012=13 (more than triple). During the academic session of 2002-03, there were 743 primary schools.

⁸⁹ Michael Asefaw (2015). Educating Children with Learning Disabilities in Special Classrooms of Regular Schools...p.72

⁹⁰ UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring Report, p.92

This figure rose to 908 (an increase of 22%) during the academic session of 2012-13. During the same period, the number of lower secondary schools increased by over 100% from 167 to 340.⁹¹

In spite of these notable increases, the supply of schools has not been able to match the demand for enrolment. There is an acute shortage of pre-primary school provision throughout the country. Almost two- third of pre-primary schools are located in rural areas and yet there are many rural and semi-rural localities which are currently not served by this provision. Focus group respondents in all the six regions of the country voiced concerns about the shortage of pre-primary schools, particularly in rural communities. This has created a situation where there are substantial numbers of overage children in rural primary schools.

At the national level, significant progress has been made in getting children enrolled in primary and lower secondary schools. As indicated in Chapters 1 and 2, there is uneven progress in educational provision among the regions and between urban and rural areas. Gash-Barka, for instance, is a large region with 843 villages but about half of these villages lack primary education services. In another example, in 2012, there were 14 local administrations in Anseba and 15 local administrations in NRS without educational services. The national average is one primary school per one local administration.⁹²

A number of communities in rural areas do not have access to a conveniently located lower secondary school. The lack of easy access to lower secondary school has been a major factor for many children to drop out after completing primary education. The construction of lower secondary schools is one possible solution but this assumes the availability of adequate resources (financial and human). In some areas, local communities have taken initiatives to construct lower secondary classrooms in primary school premises. To be sustainable, such initiatives need to be supported by local and regional administrations, and should comply with the MoE's guidelines on classroom sizes and ancillary facilities.

Even when schools are available, there could be shortage of classrooms to accommodate all the students enrolled. Faced with the prospect of acute overcrowding in the classrooms, particularly in urban areas, the MoE has taken measures to operate the double shift system. Although the double shift system has been used as a stopgap measure to address shortages in classroom space, its long term adverse effects on the delivery of quality education (in terms of reduced instructional hours, coverage of curriculum content) cannot be ignored.

As part of the long term supply side interventions, the Ministry of Education has prepared estimates of new classroom requirements to accommodate projected increases in enrolment numbers. These estimates are contained in the Education Sector Development Plan (2013-17). A summary of the projected requirements is given in Table 3.2 below.

⁹¹ MoE-EMIS (2003; 2013). Essential Education Indicators

⁹² MoE (2012). Annual Regional Education Reports, p.6

Table 3.1 Projections of classroom requirements by school level

Level	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Total
Pre-primary	161	183	180	139	83	746
Primary	616	786	968	972	754	4096
Lower-Secondary	42	42	76	202	269	631
Total	819	1011	1224	1313	1106	5473

Source: MoE (2013). Education Sector Development Plan

The figures in Table 3.2 indicate that most (75%) of the classrooms required during the five year plan (2012-17] focused on primary education, which still remains a key government policy priority. The low share of required classrooms for pre-primary and lower secondary school levels suggests that more funding is needed to facilitate more enrolment in these levels.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing the MoE is the supply of learning provision for children with disabilities, particularly the ones with severe disabilities. As mentioned earlier in Chapter I of this report there are four primary level special needs schools in the country. But clearly they are not enough to meet the needs of children in such circumstances. A recent Anseba Region education report referred to the case of overage children not being able to secure admission in the Primary School for the Deaf in Keren mainly because of lack of space.⁹³

The three primary level special education schools are located in two of the country's six regions (Maekel and Anseba). Although these schools accept applications for placement from all over the country, there is a need, on grounds of equity, for more or adaptations of these institutions in other parts of the country. Providing special education classes and schools with appropriately trained staff and suitable facilities is of course expensive. But not providing it is even more expensive. The social and economic costs in terms of adult care and dependency support would be enormous to families, communities and the nation at large.

3.4.2. Distance of School from Home

In most urban areas, students walk for less than three or two kilometers to reach school. In rural areas the situation is different. Although, as noted in the previous sub-section, significant strides have been made to expand access to schooling in rural areas, there are remote villages and scattered settlements which are still underserved. In such contexts, the distance of school from home emerges as a key barrier to educational participation. The EPHS lists distance of

⁹³ MoE (2012) Annual Regional Education Report

school from home as one factor affecting sustained access to and stay in school.⁹⁴The MoE regional education reports consider distance of school from home as a critical barrier to student participation in education in remote areas of the country.⁹⁵

This is substantiated by the findings from the qualitative field study. FGD respondents in almost all the regions referred to a list of catchment primary and lower secondary schools serving a cluster of villages, some of which are 8-10 kilometers away from the designated schools. In some areas (e.g.NRS and SRS regions) the problem of long distance to school is aggravated by environmental conditions such as severe temperatures and strong, dusty winds.

These areas do not have transport facilities and children have necessarily to walk to be in school. For poor households, this situation adds to the opportunity cost of sending children to school, which could increase as the child's distance to school increases. Even in areas where transport facilities exist, some families cannot afford to pay the costs. This poses a challenge for students wishing to pursue further education. Anseba, Gash Barka, NRS and SRS regions have two sub regions each without a secondary school⁹⁶. During the FGDs, students and PTSA members in rural lower secondary schools expressed the concern that the prospect of travelling to and staying in another place for secondary education will incur transport and accommodation costs which they cannot afford.

This supply side problem can initiate drop out cases particularly among children with disabilities. According to a recent study conducted by the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare, distance of home from school is the main reason given by the large majority (77%) of children with disabilities for dropping out from school. To ease this problem, the MoLHW in collaboration with UNICEF implemented the 'Donkey for School Project' between 2009 and 2010. The beneficiaries of the project were 870 children, especially girls with disabilities from disadvantaged communities. An evaluation of the project showed that the incentive scheme contributed to increased enrolment and attendance, and improved academic performance among the target group.⁹⁷

Distance to school from home also adversely affects girls' participation in education. For some girls in rural areas, primary education could be the end of their educational experience. This is mainly due to socio-cultural based concerns about girls' safety if they have to walk or travel long distances to be in school. According to a local administrator in Dige Sub-Region (Gash-Barka); "Girl students tend to discontinue their education after completing primary school due to lack of lower secondary school in the area. They find it difficult to go to boarding school in faraway places". This predicament is encapsulated in a statement made by a grade five female student in a primary school, in Dige Sub-Region (Gash-Barka):

⁹⁴ NSO (2010). Eritrean Population and Health Survey

⁹⁵ MoE (2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

⁹⁶ MoE (2013). Annual Regional Education Report.p.6

⁹⁷ MoLHW (2011). An Evaluation Report on the Donkey for School Project in Eritrea

I have the desire to continue my education but I don't think that is possible. I know I shall stop after completing grade five because my parents wouldn't want me to go to another place for further studies.

In some areas, local communities have taken measures to spare their children from walking long distances to attend school. The initiative of the local community in Hamish-Duba, Kerkebet (Anseba) is a case in point. Parents in the village have used their resources (financial, material labor) to build new classrooms in the primary school compound so that they can be used for lower secondary education.

3.4.3. School Environment and Infrastructure

A safe school environment is essential to facilitate and sustain enrolment at all levels in the education system. Among other things, this requires the supply of stable school buildings, fences around school compounds and protection from exposure to noise and other distractions. According to information obtained from the Ministry of Education, out of the 483 pre-primary schools in the country, the majority (51%) do not have fences.⁹⁸

The situation in primary and lower secondary schools is not different. There are a number of make shift primary and lower secondary schools with insecure fences in various parts of the country⁹⁹. Such infrastructures serve a purpose (facilitating access) but they do expose children to risks stemming from rain, wind and other elements. Some schools visited during the course of the field study have deep cracks in the walls and nearly collapsing ceilings. Others are exposed to noise coming from heavy tracks using nearby roads.

The provision of water and sanitation services is generally accepted as a stabilizing influence in terms of school participation. The provision of safe and separate sanitation facilities for girls in particular has been identified as “a key strategy for improving school attendance for girls and promoting more equitable school environments”¹⁰⁰. The rationale behind this strategy is the recognition of young girls’ need for privacy, particularly during the menstrual cycle which can act as an impediment to school attendance.

The School Guidelines on WASH facilities stipulate that sufficient and separate toilet provisions should be available to girls and boys.¹⁰¹ Most of the schools surveyed in the qualitative field study have separate latrines (for boys and girls) but almost all of them lack running water. This affects all children but particularly girls. As an education officer in the Dehub Regional Administration noted in the FGD: “ Our schools in general are not gender sensitive in terms of water and sanitation facilities”.

⁹⁸ MoE (2013). Basic Education Statistics, p.31

⁹⁹ MoE (2012;2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹⁰⁰ UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring, p.171

¹⁰¹ MoE (2014). School Guidelines on WASH Facilities

3.4.4. Supply of Teachers

The supply of insufficient number of teachers has been repeatedly mentioned as an obstacle to school attendance in recent regional education reports. The reports indicate that many CCGs are being closed because of lack of budget to pay the community based teacher assistants and that there is shortage of English and mathematics teachers in primary and lower secondary schools.¹⁰² These raise serious concerns since the reported closing of CCGs undermines the government's principle of achieving social justice through the provision of equitable access to education services in rural areas. The shortage of English and mathematics teachers is also worrying because these two subjects are core learning areas in the national curriculum and because English is the medium of instruction at the lower secondary school level and above.

In the Education Sector Development Plan mentioned earlier, the MoE made an estimate of the projected number of new teacher requirements between 2012-13 and 2016-17. As in the case of classroom requirements, the majority (55%) of the teachers required were for the primary school level (details in Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Projections of new teacher requirements by school level

Level	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Total
Pre-Primary	141	346	606	791	864	2748
Primary	941	958	1214	1105	1054	5272
Lower-Secondary	381	77	169	520	718	1865
Total	1463	1381	1989	2416	2636	9885

Source: MoE (2013) Education Sector Development Plan

Constraints in the flow of teacher supply are compounded by high teacher attrition rates. In the academic session of 2012-13 alone, a total of 1,306 teachers left the profession.¹⁰³ The combined teacher turnover from the current basic education teacher training institutes is about 1,200 per annum. This may be sufficient to replace the teachers who left the service but certainly not to meet the needs of the expanding basic education school system. Shortages in the supply of teachers are confirmed by qualitative data from the FGDs. In situations where teachers are not sufficiently available, there is a propensity for student absenteeism which can lead to drop out.

Within the framework of teacher supply, the strategy of recruiting and placing female teachers is often linked to strategies aimed at encouraging girls to enroll and stay in school. According to a recent UNESCO report, "the presence of female teachers can improve girls' enrolment and

¹⁰² MoE (2011;2012;2013).Annual Regional Education Reports

¹⁰³ MoE (2013). Annual Regional Education Reports, p.26

achievement especially in more conservative settings where the movement of life chances of girls and young women is restricted”.¹⁰⁴ The use of such strategies was raised at FGDs, particularly in Hagaz (Anseba), Dige (Gash-Barka), Adikeih (Dehub) and Foro (NRS) sub-regions. If carefully planned and implemented, these strategies can increase the proportion of female teachers which currently stands at 37% and 17% in primary and lower secondary schools respectively.¹⁰⁵

To raise female participation in the teaching service and to fill the gap in teacher output, the MoE came up with an innovative measure at the very beginning of the new millennium. This essentially entailed the training of demobilized female National Service participants in basic teacher education (formal and non-formal) in Mainefhi and other training centers. Over 3000 female candidates completed the training and were assigned to teach in various parts of the country.¹⁰⁶ It has not been possible to determine how many of these female recruits are still serving as teachers.

In areas where there is very low enrolment of children in school, the recruitment and deployment of teachers from local communities can provide a positive role model for children to participate in schooling. Local recruitment has additional advantages “such as teachers’ greater acceptance of a rural posting and reduced attrition.”¹⁰⁷ This kind of intervention was suggested in discussions with Afar, Bedawiet, Kunama, Nara, Saho and Tigre speaking communities. With specific reference to the Tigre community in Tekreret(Gash- Barka), the local administrator noted: “ Individuals from the area should be trained and assigned as teachers in schools to stimulate enrolment and sustain attendance.”

3.4.5. Availability of Educational Facilities and Materials

The shortage of educational facilities such as libraries, laboratories, workshops, special needs resources rooms and learning materials has been cited as a challenge in regional education reports¹⁰⁸. While this shortage affects all children in school, it poses additional challenge to children with disabilities. The Comprehensive National Child Policy (2013) acknowledges that children with disabilities have continued facing problems with “access to communication facilities such as Braille and sign languages”.¹⁰⁹ This is confirmed by a representative of the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare during the FGD in the Dehub Regional Administration: “Children with disabilities are finding it difficult to participate fully in education because of lack of relevant resources”.

This area of exclusion is yet another barrier adding to the ‘invisibility’ of children with disabilities. If mainstream schools are to offer credible inclusive education, they should try to

¹⁰⁴ UNESCO (2014). EFA Global Monitoring Report, p.235

¹⁰⁵ MoE (2013). Essential Education Indicators

¹⁰⁶ MoE (2001). Our People are Our Future...

¹⁰⁷ UNESCO (2014). EFA Global Monitoring Report, p.252

¹⁰⁸ MoE (2011; 2012;2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹⁰⁹ MoLHW (2013). Comprehensive National Child Policy, p.47

adapt whatever facility they have to the needs of children with a range of disability. Such needs based support can improve the accessibility of school facilities and resources to disabled children.

As in many developing countries, the textbook is the dominant learning material in Eritrean schools. Ministry of Education guidelines stipulate that textbooks in subject areas should be made available to schools on one book per child basis. However, this does not always happen mainly due to problems associated with logistics and distribution. In addition, information obtained from school head-teachers during the FDGs revealed that most of textbooks are getting old and that new prints are required so that their use in the classroom and at home can be sustainable.

The provision of textbooks must not only be sustainable but also adaptable to different situations. In Eritrean primary schools, the language of instruction is the mother tongue. Accordingly, textbooks are prepared in such a way that they are relevant to local cultures and social environments. This approach makes the curriculum more accessible and learning more meaningful to children, thereby reducing the possibility of dropouts and those at risk of dropping out. Similar curriculum and textbook adaptations can be made to suit the needs of disabled children and children from nomadic communities.

3.4.6. Policies and Strategies on Supply Side Barriers

3.4.6.1. Availability of Schools and Classrooms

A key strategy in the attainment of the government's commitment to make basic education available to all has been increasing the supply of schools. The centerpiece of this strategy has been to make pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools available in rural and underserved areas of the country. However, the current supply has not been able to match the demand, particularly at the pre-primary and lower secondary school levels. Even at the primary school level, there are variations in educational access among and within the regions.

The introduction of the double shift system, particularly in urban areas, has been used as a strategy to overcome the shortage of classrooms. Although this measure has adverse implications for the provision of quality learning in the classroom, it has offered many children access to educational opportunity. It is likely to remain as an ad-hoc supply side strategy for optimizing scarce resources against the background of funding gaps.

The National Education Policy makes allowance for private sector and community involvement in the provision of basic education. While the provision of basic education is essentially a core government responsibility, the current level of private sector and community participation in the supply of pre-primary education is likely to continue in the future. One innovative approach to the supply of pre-primary education being considered is enabling primary schools to operate a one year school readiness program within their premises.

3.4.6.2. Distance of School from Home

Distance of school from home particularly affects children living in remote villages and scattered settlements. Opening schools in every village or cluster of villages would be desirable but difficult in view of the prevailing financial and logistical constraints. The effects of distance of school from home have become more challenging in respect to lower secondary school age children living in rural areas. This factor puts additional pressure on girls in rural areas not to continue their education beyond the primary school level.

To mitigate the effects of distance of school from home in disadvantaged and underserved areas, the MoE has been operating feeder schools at primary school level and boarding facilities at lower secondary school level. The National Education Policy (MoE, 2011: 19) states that efforts shall be made to “expand boarding and para-boarding schools and other mechanisms in order to encourage the participation of girls, nomads and other disadvantaged groups”.¹¹⁰ There is a need to pursue this strategy with particular attention to the provision of boarding or para -boarding facilities for girls.

In areas where such facilities do not exist, children walk or travel long distances to be in school. This can be difficult for all children, culturally sensitive for girls (due to safety reasons) and an uphill task for children with disabilities. In such situations, it might be necessary to plan and implement targeted interventions with a view of alleviating children’s home-to-school transport problems through cash or in kind incentives (e.g. bicycles). This can reduce financial and opportunity costs of sending girls and other disadvantaged children to school.

3.4.6.3. School Infrastructure

The National Education Policy stipulates that schools shall be equipped with “necessary infrastructure and teaching-learning facilities.”¹¹¹ A similar statement is also expressed in another official document.¹¹² This of course is a policy intention and there is often discrepancy between policy intentions and implementation realities on the ground. Reports from regional education offices include references to fenceless schools and overcrowded classrooms.¹¹³

There is no absolute clarity on who is responsible for erecting school fences or adding classrooms in schools. In some cases, the Ministry of Education and regional administrations take responsibility for these tasks. In other cases, local communities raise money to install fences and to pay for classroom additions. It is also not clear whether school infrastructures take into consideration future contingencies such as the addition of pre-primary or lower secondary classes to a primary school.

¹¹⁰ MoE (2011). National Education Policy, p.19

¹¹¹ Mo E (2011). National Education Policy, p.17-18

¹¹² MoE (2004). Functional Requirements for Standard Schools in Eritrea.

¹¹³ MoE (2012;2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

The Ministry of Education has guidelines on the provision of water and sanitation facilities in schools. The WASH guidelines recommend “minimum standards” for the supply of water and use of toilets in schools. This is a positive development but focus on infrastructure alone is not enough. Continuous monitoring of water and toilet facilities will be necessary to establish if the facilities are functional and properly maintained.

3.4.6.4. Availability of Textbooks and other Learning Materials

The student-textbook ratio is an essential indicator of textbook availability in schools. Ministry of Education guidelines stipulate that textbooks in subject areas should be available to schools on one book per student basis. Textbooks are distributed free of charge to all students in primary and lower secondary schools, but there are concerns about the efficiency of the distribution system. At primary school level, the language of instruction is the mother tongue and textbooks are translated into all nine Eritrean languages. This has the effect of facilitating the accessibility of the curriculum to children from all the language groups.

Accessibility of the curriculum to all learners, including to children with disabilities, is reiterated in the National Education Policy. The Comprehensive National Child Policy affirms that the “communication and linguistic rights of children with disabilities shall be officially recognized”.¹¹⁴ This would require textbook adaptations through the use of Braille and sign language in special needs schools and classrooms. Textbook adaptations should also be made available in inclusive schools to cater for the needs of different levels of ability in the classroom. When appropriate, similar curriculum and textbook adaptations can be made to suit the needs of children from nomadic and semi-nomadic communities.

3.4.6.5. Availability of Teachers

Almost all government policy documents (e.g. National Policy on Education, National Curriculum Framework, Teacher Education and Training Master Plan) underline the need to scale up teacher output in order to meet increasing demands for student enrolment. The justification for this need is simple: If there are not sufficient numbers of teachers, there will not be sufficient numbers of students in schools. In addition to the recruitment of teachers from the regular teacher training colleges, a strategy used to address the challenge of teacher shortages has been the recruitment and deployment of emergency/direct teachers.

The strategy of recruiting female teachers and from local communities has been applied, with varying rates of success, in some areas of the country. There is a need for such teachers at local levels mainly because of their potential to project positive role models in schools and surrounding communities. However, any strategy of increasing the number of female and local teachers in schools should necessarily include increasing their recruitment in teacher training institutions.

¹¹⁴ MoLHW (2013): National Comprehensive Child Policy, p. 48

3.5. Barriers Related to Quality.

3.5.1. Physical Learning Environment

A conducive physical learning environment is inextricably linked to quality education which in itself is as important as access to education. Essential ingredients of a conducive physical learning environment include the provision of secure and accessible classroom structures, safe water points and functional sanitation facilities in schools.

Most schools in Eritrea have been constructed on the basis of technical specifications required for a standard physical learning environment. According to the functional requirements for schools prepared by the Ministry of Education, a standard school is expected to meet the following requirements:¹¹⁵

- The school should, wherever possible, be situated away from major roads and busy commercial centers for health and safety reasons
- The entire area must be fenced for purpose of security protection of properties
- There must be one toilet for every 20 children. However, as per the school WASH Guidelines (September 2014), it has been amended to one cubic latrine for 50 boys and one cubicle latrine for 40 girls.
- The school must have a source of potable water
- The school must be large enough to provide outdoor playing area for children
- All facilities within the school should take into consideration children with special needs

The implementation of these school design specifications requires a lot of resources but investing in infrastructures intended to improve the physical learning environment for **all** children can facilitate the delivery of equitable access to quality education. The recognition that all facilities in the school should take into consideration the needs of children with disabilities is a necessary step in overcoming such disadvantages and enhancing equity.

However, it appears that this ‘recognition’ has often not been translated into action. According to the Comprehensive National Child Policy(2013): “ Many school buildings do not have the facilities to enable disabled children to have easy access to classrooms and other basic school facilities leading to the exclusion of disabled and impaired children from attending education, and to potential social exclusion of the ones already enrolled” .¹¹⁶

One concern which repeatedly emerges in the annual regional reports, particularly in respect to Anseba, Gash Barka, NRS and SRS regions, is the issue of make shift schools. It is also a concern raised at the FGDs in many parts of the country. It is true that make shift schools are a temporary measure and as such the initial capital costs are low. However, they expose children to risks of the sort mentioned in the previous section. The materials for the structure (typically

¹¹⁵ MoE (2004).Functional Requirements for Standard Schools (K-12) in Eritrea. P.5-6

¹¹⁶ MoLHW (2013). Comprehensive National Child Policy,p.54

grasses and plants) have to be replaced every year, and this process “consumes a lot of time, effort and money”.¹¹⁷

Another concern raised in the MoE annual reports and at the FDGs is the lack of attention given to the maintenance of old school buildings. In some areas, local communities do raise money to pay for basic maintenance costs but this is generally as far as they can go with limited resources at their disposal. Extensive school maintenance work requires investment but in the long term it is cost - effective since it increases the life span and quality of school buildings.

An attempt was made to assess the scale and quality of essential services (water, energy, toilets, etc.) available in schools. Part of this attempt included obtaining information on these services from a recent EMIS data base. A summary is given in the table below.

Table 3.3 Coverage of Essential Services in Schools (2013)

Service	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower Secondary
Playing field	56%	71%	82%
Tap water	29%	27%	38%
Toilet	52%	61%	74%
Energy(electricity, solar)	22%	31%	51%

Source: MoE (2013) Basic Education Statistics

According to the minimum standards set in the Guidelines on School Wash Facilities, “all schools should have sufficient and quality water for both drinking and washing purposes”.¹¹⁸ Although tap water is generally considered to be safe, only a limited proportion of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools have access to this provision. Almost all of the schools with toilet facilities have separate latrines for boys and girls but it is unlikely that they have special provision for the needs of children with disabilities. The School Guidelines on Wash Facilities are clear on this issue: “There should be disabled friendly cubicles in schools - at least one each for boys and girls”¹¹⁹

3.5.2. Availability of Appropriate Learning Facilities and Support Services

The availability and use of suitable learning facilities and resources can enrich learning experiences in schools. Reports from the annual regional education offices, however, indicate that the supply of appropriate learning facilities and support services in schools is limited.¹²⁰ Some primary and lower secondary schools, particularly the new ones in rural areas, do not have libraries. Even in schools where there is a library, the space is too small for the number of users. In addition, some of the books in the libraries are “not relevant” to the requirements of

¹¹⁷ MoE (2012/2013).Annual Regional Education Reports

¹¹⁸ MoE (2014).Guidelines on School Wash Facilities,p.11

¹¹⁹ MoE (2014). Guidelines on School Wash Facilities, p.12

¹²⁰ MoE (2012;2013).Annual Regional Education Reports

the new national curriculum.¹²¹This is particularly troubling since the provision of learning materials in support of the curriculum is a key function of school libraries.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has the potential to improve the quality of teaching and learning if there is adequate infrastructure and the human resources required to apply it. The National Curriculum Framework conceives ICT as an essential tool for teaching. Accordingly, ICT has been introduced as a subject in all secondary schools and ICT laboratories are being established in a limited number of lower secondary schools. Even within the context of this situation, the implementation of the program is being severely constrained by the lack of proper maintenance and lack of access to a stable supply of electricity /solar energy.¹²²

Pedagogic Resource Centers (PRCs) are part of the quality improvement support services available to Eritrean schools. They operate at sub-regional level and their potential to transform the quality of teaching-learning is acknowledged by the MoE regional offices.¹²³ Each PRC serves a cluster of four to five schools but in rural areas the cluster may be expanded to include six to seven schools. This raises concerns about their accessibility to teachers in remote rural schools. The PRCs are often used as venues for localized in-service training workshops and other capacity building activities. This is an interesting departure from previous practice since it devolves some responsibility for program planning and implementation to local education authorities.

3.5.3. Professionally Trained and Motivated Teachers

The Dakar Framework (2000) clearly stated that investing in teachers is essential in providing basic education of good quality. As implementers of educational policies and programs at the classroom level, teachers are central to the improvement of quality learning in the education system. Sustained quality improvement in the classroom requires teachers who are not only professionally trained but with the motivation necessary to stay in the profession. This need is recognized in the Eritrean Education Sector Development Plan: “Upgrading the professional status of teachers is necessary but not sufficient to retain them in schools. To be sufficiently motivated, teachers must be accorded recognition in the form of a comprehensive incentive scheme.”¹²⁴

Within the framework of teacher qualifications, the most recent published figures indicate that the rate of qualified teachers at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels is 50.4%, 79.8% and 86.4% respectively.¹²⁵ These figures refer to initial training which is only one component of teacher professional development. In terms of the other component of teacher

¹²¹MoE (2013). Annual regional Education Reports, p.36

¹²² MoE (2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹²³ MoE (2012;2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹²⁴ MoE (2013). Education Sector Development Plan, p.54

¹²⁵ MoE (2013). Essential Education Indicators

development, the Ministry of Education has been organizing in-service training programs with a view of upgrading the professional status of serving teachers.

However, a lot remains to be done to reach the desired level of teacher professional competence for all levels in the school system. A recurring concern in the regional education reports is the deployment of “inadequately trained and largely disinterested teachers”.¹²⁶ At the FGD with senior officials in the Debu Regional Administration, it was reported that “a substantial number of teachers in Areza Sub-Region are direct recruits with no professional training”.

Areza is essentially a rural sub-region and the pattern of teacher deployment could be typical of what happens in other rural areas. Normally, fresh and less experienced teacher recruits are assigned to teach in rural and remote areas and this practice has implications for access to quality education in these areas. This is compounded by the possibility that schools located in remote rural areas could have less instructional time partly due to teachers arriving late to take up their posts at the beginning of the academic year.¹²⁷ As it is widely recognized, teacher absenteeism reinforces disparities in learning.

These two factors (the deployment of unqualified teachers and less instructional time) could have the effect of compromising quality in learning and triggering a feeling of exclusion among students from school. This feeling, if not curtailed, may induce drop out cases. Against this background, more progress is needed in making sure that those teachers are properly trained qualified and deployed.

More progress is also needed to ensure that teachers are motivated. Recent studies on teacher motivation in Eritrea show that low fixed salary, lack of career progression, and low social status given to teachers in the society are among the key factors adversely affecting teacher morale and motivation.¹²⁸ This is substantiated by evidence from the qualitative part of the country study. In virtually all the FGDs across the regions, low teacher morale and motivation were cited as reasons for lack of teacher professionalism. In the words of an official in the Debu Regional Administration: “Teachers these days are not really serving as positive role models for the young. Some teachers pour out their anger and dissatisfaction with the profession in front of students in the classroom. This is likely to have negative influence on the learners”.

Improving the quality of learning is associated with the improvements in the status of teaching as a profession. Improving the status of teaching is in turn associated with better motivation and job satisfaction which increases teacher retention and performance in the classroom. High

¹²⁶ MoE (2012;2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹²⁷ MoE ((2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹²⁸ Rezene Habtemariam(2008). Motivation of Teachers: The Case of Eritrea: S Kumar(2008) Motivating De-motivating Factors...

levels of teacher performance can improve learner retention and progression rates. Conversely, low levels of teacher performance can lead to increases in student repetition rates and, eventually, to dropout probabilities.

3.5.4. School Management and Supervision

Each school in the Eritrean school system is managed by a head teacher or acting head teacher depending on the circumstances. School head teachers are selected by regional education offices primarily on the basis of their performances as teachers. Many head teachers assigned to rural schools tend to be less trained and experienced and consequently are not in a position to provide satisfactory professional leadership tasks.¹²⁹The situation at the national level is not that different. Figures provided by the Ministry of Education show that during the 2012-13 academic year, the percentage of untrained school head teachers for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school levels was 65%, 88% and 74% respectively.¹³⁰

The Ministry of Education recognizes that teacher performance and quality learning in schools can be improved by the presence of an adequate supervision system capable of enforcing educational standards and providing professional advice and support to teachers. Most of the supervisors(80%) working for the Ministry of Education are assigned to primary and lower secondary schools, but only 40% of them are professionally trained.¹³¹

Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) are an integral part of school management in Eritrea. One of the principal functions of PTSAs is to raise funds for school renovation and other recurrent costs such as water and electricity bills. They also have non-financial functions such as participating in the planning and implementation of community sensitization and mobilization activities to encourage student enrolment, and assisting in the maintenance of discipline in schools.¹³²

The level of effectiveness of PTSAs varies from school to school and from area to area. Many schools located in urban areas tend to have more educated parents as members of PTSAs, and better opportunities to raise funds for school projects. In many rural areas, parent members of PTAs tend to be less educated with limited ability to follow their children's progress in school and to raise money from local communities to support school project. This is another example of the interaction between demand side and supply side issues with implications for variations in access to equitable quality education.

3.5.5. Curriculum and Pedagogy

The new national curriculum is designed to offer broad, balanced and relevant learning in terms of the needs of the individual. The curriculum also addresses the wide spectrum of national

¹²⁹ MoE (2012). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹³⁰ MoE (2013). Annual Regional Education Reports,p.36

¹³¹ MoE (2013). Annual Regional Education Reports, p.40

¹³² MoE (2008).Teachers in Eritrea

needs by creating a broad base of relevant learning through the interaction of education and practical work.¹³³ A relevant learning provision based on the articulation of intended learning outcomes is an essential feature of the new curriculum. Within this context, the concept of content shifts from an over-emphasis on factual knowledge to balanced content covering knowledge, skills and values.

Learner Centered and Interactive Pedagogy (LCIP) is another essential feature of the national curriculum. This approach requires a high level of learner participation in the construction of knowledge. A fundamental process in this process is the need for teachers to encourage students to investigate and pose questions, to develop creative thinking and to sharpen their problem solving and communication skills.

Regional education authorities agree that the new national curriculum is transformational and has the potential to improve learning outcomes. They also agree that the effective implementation of the curriculum, particularly LCIP, is being constrained by a number of factors including class sizes, shortage of resources and limitations in teacher competence.¹³⁴ An impact study of the curriculum carried by the Ministry of Education indicated the prevalence of direct teaching and traditional pedagogical practices in classroom situations.¹³⁵ A wide ranging review on learner centered pedagogy in a number of countries identified “challenges related to a lack of supportive environment, teacher training and preparation, textbooks, teaching materials, class size and furniture”.¹³⁶

3.5.6. Learner Progression and Achievement

The analysis of data in Chapter 2 of this study shows that substantial proportions of primary and lower secondary school children are not progressing to the next grade. Repetition rates are particularly high in grades 1 and 2. This phenomenon is most probably linked to the lack of early childhood education and late enrolment in those grades. Repetition rates are also high in grades 6 and 8 at the lower secondary school level. This raises some questions about the internal efficiency of the education system, particularly as it relates to Anseba, Gash-Barka, NRS and SRS regions.

Grade repetition represents a major element of wastage in education. When a child repeats the same grade, it is assumed that he/she has wasted resources invested in his/her education during the past year in the same grade. This means that the unit cost of producing one class completer is significantly higher than what it should normally be. Repeaters also displace potential new students since they occupy classroom places that would otherwise become available to other students. Moreover, as it is well known, repeated incidences of repetition could lead to drop out from school.

¹³³ MoE (2009). National Curriculum Framework

¹³⁴ MoE (2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹³⁵ MoE (2012). Impact Study of the Curriculum in Eritrean Schools

¹³⁶ Cited in UNESCO (2015). EFA Global Monitoring, p. 208

Grade repetition has varied causes. However, some common patterns emerged from the annual regional education reports ¹³⁷ and from the analysis of responses obtained at the FDGs. These include poverty and other social problems, work load at home, prolonged absenteeism mainly due to illness, lack of parental interest and support, peer pressure, large class sizes, lack of supportive and competent teachers and shortage of reference books and other leaning resources.

Some of these factors are external to the school but they do interact in a cluster of two or three constraints to undermine student progression. For example, poverty among children from disadvantaged families could trigger malnutrition and illness, and could consequently cause absenteeism. Incidences of absenteeism or irregular attendance could in turn lead to low achievement, academic failure and eventually to repetition and drop out. Other factors are school related focusing on teacher characteristics, classroom environment and learning materials

Although as indicated elsewhere in this report, there have been improvements in student – teacher ratios and in the proportion of children reaching the end of primary school; these improvements have not been matched by improvements in learning outcomes. In the first two Monitoring of Learning Achievement surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education in a sample of 60 primary schools at grades 3 and 5 levels, the Minimum Mastery Level target (i.e.80% of learners scoring 50% or above) was not achieved in each of the subject areas tested. The report of the study also shows that only 27% of the students in both grades were able to meet the required MLA target. Furthermore, in virtually all the learning and skill areas tested, urban schools outperformed rural schools (39% urban and 31% rural).¹³⁸

3.5.7. Policies and Strategies on Barriers Related to Quality

3.5.7.1. Physical Learning Environment

Policy guidelines prepared by the Ministry of Education in relation to the standards required for a conducive and safe learning environment include Functional Requirements for the Construction of Standard Schools (2004), Child Friendly Schools in Eritrea (2007) and Guidelines on School Wash Facilities (2014). The inputs in these guidelines are intended to support the delivery of quality learning in schools.

However, there are challenges to the effective implementation of these guidelines. Increases in student enrolment rates within the context of financial constraints have not been matched by desired increases in the provision of standard schools. This explains the existence of sub-standard make shift (mainly straw huts) schools in some rural areas of the country. The make shift structure, although serving a purpose (i.e. access), symbolizes the unequal distribution of educational facilities among urban and rural schools

¹³⁷ MoE (2011; 2012; 2013). Annual Regional Education Reports

¹³⁸ MoE (2001; 2009). Monitoring Learning Achievement

3.5.7.2. Use of Appropriate Textbooks and Learning Resources

Textbooks and other learning materials have been reviewed in line with guidelines set in the National Curriculum Framework (2009). Among other things this would require a more balanced content coverage of relevant knowledge, skills and values. This would also require the content to be gender sensitive, and flexible to accommodate the needs of different ability levels in the classroom. Although conscious efforts have been made to eliminate gender bias from the textbooks and other learning materials, more efforts are needed to make them more interactive and user friendly to individual and group needs, including children with disabilities.

The use of school libraries, ICTs and PRCs is supported by relevant guidelines. However, the input of these resources to the improvement of teaching and learning has been severely constrained by lack of suitable materials (particularly in new rural schools), inadequate ICT infrastructures and unsatisfactory clustering of PRCs in remote localities. If the resources extended to the newly served areas are so inadequate or inappropriate, there is the risk that learning will become less meaningful in the context of inequitable access to quality education.

3.5.7.3. Curriculum and Pedagogy

Policy directions and strategies of implementing the new national curriculum have been clearly articulated in the new National Curriculum Framework and in the National Education Policy. At the primary school level, the curriculum is delivered in the mother tongue. However, more work is required to develop some of the Eritrean languages (particularly in terms of orthography) and to train teachers in these languages with view of improving the quality of instruction and learning at the classroom level.

Learner centered and interactive pedagogy is an essential feature of the new national curriculum. Although the move towards this approach is generally accepted as necessary and appropriate, old practices (e.g. teacher talk, note taking) have remained largely unchanged. Learner centered and interactive pedagogy is not simply about diversifying teaching methods, but also about creating an enabling environment for students to learn with understanding. This process requires systemic reform with a view of improving teacher competence, classroom organization, school management and the orientation of school based and school leaving examinations.

3.5.7.4. Professionally Trained and Motivated Teachers

A number of MoE policy documents and sector plans (National Education Policy, National Curriculum Framework, Teacher Education and Training Master Plan, Education Sector Development Program, Education Sector Development Plan, GPE-Eritrea Programme) have referred to the centrality of teachers in any quality improvement strategy in schools. The majority of teachers at the pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools are technically qualified for the job they are doing. But they need more grounding in pedagogy and in

classroom management to assist them deliver improved instructional practices and handle variations in ability/ disability levels within the framework of inclusive education.

There is paucity of policy documents on teacher conditions of service. Preparations are underway to revise the salary structure of teachers and other government civil servants. This initiative is likely to improve the status of teachers which in turn is likely to raise their motivation. High levels of teacher motivation can improve their effectiveness in the classroom. However, it is necessary not to overstretch the linkages between improved teachers' salaries and teacher effectiveness. Improving teacher performance requires multi-pronged initiatives including better salary, career progression, opportunities for continuous professional training and supportive school management and supervision systems.

3.5.7.5. School Management and Supervision

There are regulations and guidelines in place to support effective management and supervision practices in schools. But challenges remain in view of the fact that the majority of head teachers and supervisors in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools are not professionally trained. Equity issues also become of concern if less qualified and experienced head teachers are deployed to rural schools, and if inadequate supervision is carried out in schools located in remote and isolated areas due to transport problems.

School Management Committees, or PTAs as they are commonly known in Eritrea, play a significant role in shaping whole school policy by bringing decision making processes closer to local communities and by reinforcing the linkage between the school and the community. This role can be further enhanced by providing training to PTAs on issues like community sensitization and mobilization, and outreach work and advocacy. Such initiatives could be useful to sustain enrolment and improve the quality of learning in schools.

3.5.7.6. Learner Progression and Achievement

The introduction of normal progression policy at the lower level of the primary school cycle in 2014 is expected to virtually eliminate repetition in grades 1 to 3. The MoE could extend this policy to cover the rest of the primary school cycle. Normal progression is no blank cheque for automatic promotion since it assumes that children who pass from one grade to another will have satisfied particular learning competency standards. This may be a way forward to the universalization of primary education and to the attainment of the government's goal of providing basic education to all.

The results of the first two MLA surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education in grades 3 and 5 raised questions about the challenges involved in the equitable learning of basic skills, particularly in rural areas and in respect to the use of particular languages as the medium of instruction. Children who have difficulties mastering minimum competency levels in primary

schools are likely to face further learning difficulties in lower secondary schools. The National Education Policy makes provision for more learning assessments to be carried out in the future. This is crucial for improving learning in classrooms.

The high repetition rate in grade 6 is in all probability associated with the introduction of English as the language of instruction in the same grade. The National Curriculum Framework makes provision for the use of Integrated Content and Language Learning (ICOLL) as a mechanism to optimize opportunities for content and language learning. According to this approach, subject area teachers are expected to help their students learn the content and English at the same time (i.e. all teachers who teach in the medium of English must also be teachers of English). The extent to which this approach is being meaningfully applied in the classroom would be a useful topic for future investigation.

The increase in gross enrolment ratio at the end of the basic education cycle (i.e. grade 8)¹³⁹ is symptomatic of the children who repeat. Repetition in grade 8 itself is linked to low achievement levels recorded in school based examinations and in the National Examination administered at the end of the lower secondary school level. The performance of girls in the National Examination is particularly worrying.¹⁴⁰ In broad terms, measures have been taken to align the national examination to the requirements of the national curriculum.¹⁴¹ This process is ongoing and when fully operational it is expected to contribute towards improvements in student performances in the national examinations.

3.6. Analytical Summary

This chapter examined the barriers and bottlenecks which exclude children of pre-primary (D1), primary (D2) and lower secondary (D3) school age children from participating in school. Concurrently, the chapter also examined the factors which make those who are already in primary and lower secondary school (D4&D5) to be at risk of being out of school. Literature review and qualitative information from the FDGs were the main sources of data for the analysis. The barriers and bottlenecks were analyzed under four categories in line with the procedures set by the CMF: enabling environment, demand, supply and quality. When appropriate, this kind of analysis was extended to cover the linkages and interactions among the barriers in relation to specific profiles of excluded children

Enabling Environment

In general there is a strong political will to support the policy priority of making basic education available to all. Within the framework of this policy priority, primary education has been

¹³⁹ MoE (2013). Basic Education Indicators, p.48

¹⁴⁰ MoE (2014). Grade 8 National Examinations Report. An analysis of the results between 2010 and 2013 shows that the percentage of girls who passed the examination was consistently lower than that of boys.

¹⁴¹ MoE (2010). Alignment of the Curriculum and National Examinations.

identified as a cutting edge to achieve basic education for all. However, there is policy gap in respect in to the status of pre-primary education within the Eritrean education system.

Although, pre-primary education is “part and parcel” of basic education, it is not clear whether this provision is free and compulsory for all children aged four to five.

Demand Side Barriers

The evidence presented in the chapter indicates that the main barriers to school participation are household poverty, negative socio-cultural beliefs and practices (particularly in relation to girls), low levels of parental and community awareness on the value of education, underage marriage, nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle of some communities and scattered villages and settlements. Most of these barriers affect rural communities and they do interact to generate a multiplicity of barriers which rural children encounter in accessing to and staying in school.

Supply Side Barriers

Shortage of schools and classrooms is a major constraint to educational participation. This is more severe at pre-primary and lower secondary school levels. In spite of the efforts to expand access to schooling in rural areas, there are remote villages and scattered settlements which are still undeserved. In remote rural areas, the prospect of travelling long distance to school adversely affects the participation of children, particularly girls and children with disabilities, in education. Another supply side constraint is the recruitment and deployment of inadequate number of teachers. Inadequate supply of water and sanitation facilities also emerges as an obstacle to a healthy learning environment.

Quality Related Barriers

The analyses of data on barriers related to quality show that there are a number of unstable school structures in some in rural areas of the country. Shortage of professionally qualified teachers and limitations in the provision of adequately trained professional school management and supervision personnel constitute part of the quality related bottlenecks identified in the chapter. These constraints, along with insufficient supply of appropriate learning facilities and resources can have the effect of undermining student progression and achievement in school. Low achievement can lead to class repetition and being overage for the grade which are risks factors for dropping out.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations.

4.1. Introduction

Within the framework of Eritrea's policy objective of providing basic education to all, this study set out to investigate the profiles of out-of-school children as per the five dimensions of exclusion. The study also examined the barriers and bottlenecks (enabling environment, demand side, supply side, and quality) that lead to exclusion, and the policies and strategies aimed at addressing such impediments. The following conclusions and recommendation have emerged from the findings of the study.

4.2. Sources of Data and Data Collection System

Within the framework of quantitative research approach, data on the profiles of out of school children were obtained from the Eritrean Population and Health Survey (NSO, 2010) and the Education Management Information System (MoE, 2013). Although, the gap in the time of the publications of these two data sources is not that wide, applying the school age population structure estimate generated by EPHS to the school enrolment figures produced by EMIS has been a challenge.

Another challenge has been the paucity of information on particular social groups such as children with disabilities, children from nomadic communities and working children. To be sure, some data can be gleaned on these groups from particular studies but the data tend to be fragmented, patchy and tentative. **Therefore, there is a need to compile comprehensive and systematic data on such vulnerable groups in EPHS and EMIS surveys so that relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies can track their needs and target resources in more rationale and equitable ways.**

The Department of Adult and Media Education has been obtaining data on children attending CEECs. Similarly, the Department of General Education has also been collecting data on children attending nomadic education centers. While this practice is legitimate for research purposes, it may also result in duplication of work and unnecessary demands on the responding local education and school authorities. To streamline the data gathering process in the MoE, it will be necessary for EMIS to capture all data on these and related cases. A decision will have to be made on the database upgrading needs of EMIS, **but what is equally important is that the data collected should be relevant and comprehensive enough to monitor the plights of and pathways available to OOSC, and to satisfy the basic information requirements of the various departments and divisions within the MoE.**

4.3. Enabling Environment

The review of relevant literature shows that there is a strong political will, rooted in the government's principle of social justice, to support the policy priority of making basic education available to all. This is reflected in a number of policy statements issued by the government and in the country's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other international obligations such as the EFA, MD and SG goals.

The National Policy on Education recognizes pre-primary education as “part and parcel basic education”. However, there are variations in the implementation of pre-primary educational provision for children aged four to five (e.g. one year; two years). In some rural areas, children do not have the opportunity to enroll in pre-primary education institutions. **In view of the head start advantages it offers for school readiness and because of equity considerations, it is necessary to unambiguously and unequivocally place pre-primary education within the basic education cycle. In this context and taking into account the resourcing implications, it is also necessary to consider a commitment to provide free and compulsory pre-primary education to all children aged five. This commitment needs to be matched by sustainable increase in government funding in collaboration with parents, local communities and development partners.**

In principle, pre-primary education comes under the management responsibility of local administrations. However, there are concerns about the inability of local administrations, communities and stakeholders to coordinate and promote the cause of pre-primary education in mainly rural areas of the country. Indeed in some rural kindergarten and CCG centers, enrolments are influenced by the level of awareness and commitment of local administrators. **This calls for institutional capacity building at local administration levels in order to facilitate the planning, management and implementation of pre- primary education programs and to boost enrolment figures in pre-school education centers.**

4.4. Demand Side Issues

From the perspective of the demand side, the determinants of exclusion or being at risk of exclusion from school are household poverty, negative socio-cultural beliefs and practices (particularly in relation to girls), low levels of parental and community awareness on the value of education, underage marriage, nomadic, semi-nomadic lifestyle of some communities and scattered villages and settlements. Most of these barriers affect rural communities and they do interact in a cluster of two or three constraints to contribute to a multiplicity of barriers which rural children encounter in accessing to and staying in school. Within this context, the profiles most affected by such barriers tend to be girls and children with disabilities.

The existence of multiplicity of barriers underlines the importance of multi-sectoral and multi-pronged interventions in addressing the plight of out-of-school children. Poverty alleviation and eradication programs need to be complemented by sensitization and awareness raising campaigns. These activities in turn need to be reinforced by targeted adult education programs. Parallel to sensitization and parental education programs, there will be a need to enforce the implementation of basic education in schools through some form of legal framework.

Most of these are long term interventions. **In the short term, it will be necessary to continue with the provision of stationery, bicycles and cash incentives to targeted girl students and other deserving children. It will also be necessary to continue with the ‘donkey for school project’ mounted by the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare and UNICEF to ease the**

mobility problems faced by children with disabilities in poor and disadvantaged communities. Another social protection support service worth considering is the re-instatement of feeding programs (mid-day lunch/snack) in some parts of the country so that poorer families can send their children to school.

4.5. Supply Side Issues

The analysis of data in Chapter 2 of the study has shown that there are over 220,000 children aged 5-13 who are out of school. The scale of exclusion is more severe at the pre-primary school education level where 73% of pre-primary school age children are estimated to be out of school, and at the lower secondary school level where nearly 41% of lower secondary school age children are out of school. In general, there are more female children of primary and lower secondary school age who are out-of-school in comparison with male children. In addition, primary and lower secondary school age children from rural areas are more likely to be out of – school than urban children of the same age groups

All these children who are currently out-of- school need to be in school because education is a fundamental human right and a means for achieving equity (PGE, 1991). Within the framework of this long standing government principle, **there is a need to continue investing in school infrastructure through the construction of new schools and the rehabilitation of existing ones, particularly in rural and underserved areas of the country.**

There is an acute shortage of pre-primary school provision throughout the country, particularly in rural locations. One innovative approach to the supply of pre-primary education being considered in MoE circles is the possibility of primary schools offering a one year pre-primary school programme within their premises. **If this approach turns out to be viable and needs scaling up, due attention should be given to such contingencies in the design and construction of primary school sites.**

One of the biggest challenges confronting the Ministry of Education is the supply of learning provision for children with disabilities, particularly the ones with severe disabilities. Ministry of Education policy highlights the centrality of integrating children with disabilities in mainstream schools within the framework of inclusive education. **This policy should be complemented by a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special education needs required at every level in the school system. If this is not carefully applied, the risk of children with disabilities being excluded from school and within school shall remain high.**

In the context of this study, distance of school from home emerges as key barrier to educational participation. For poor households living in rural areas, this phenomenon adds to the opportunity cost of sending children to school, which could increase as the child’s distance to school increases. Distance of school from home adversely affects girls’ participation in education in particular. To mitigate the effects of distance of school from home, the MoE has been operating feeder primary schools to serve clusters of villages and lower secondary school

boarding facilities in selected disadvantaged communities. **There is a need to pursue this strategy by paying particular attention to the effective utilization of the existing boarding schools and the provision of para-boarding facilities in areas of need.**

There is a clear shortage of mother tongue teachers in some primary schools. There is a need for such teachers in order to facilitate the accessibility of the curriculum, and to project positive role models in local schools and communities. **Any strategy of increasing the number of mother tongue teachers should include increasing their recruitment in teacher training institutions.**

4.6. Quality Related Issues

Most schools in Eritrea have been constructed on the basis of technical specifications required for a standard physical environment. Findings from the study demonstrate that although the majority of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary schools have toilet facilities, very few have access to running water. This affects all children but particularly adolescent girls. Against this background, **allocation of adequate resources and continuous monitoring of water and toilet facilities will be necessary to ensure that the facilities are functional and properly maintained.**

As many instances in this study have shown, increases in student enrolment rates within the context of financial constraints have not been matched by desired increases in the provision of standard schools. This explains the utilization of sub-standard make shift schools in some rural areas of the country. The make shift school structure, although serving a purpose (i.e. Increasing access), epitomizes the unequal distribution of education facilities between urban and rural schools. **Since they expose children to risks arising from rain, wind, heat and other elements and because of equity considerations, there is a need to replace the make shift schools with stable and standard school structures.**

The provision of quality education in the classroom can be enhanced through the training and deployment of competent, committed and motivated teachers. Although the number of technically qualified teachers has recently been increasing, they need more training in pedagogy and in classroom management to enable them deliver improved instructional practices and to handle variations in ability/disability levels within the framework of inclusive education. **The development of this kind of teacher professionalism requires multi- pronged interventions such as improved salary structure, career progression, opportunities for continuous in-service training and supportive school management and supervision systems.**

4.7. National OOSC Strategy

The plight of out of school children is a collective responsibility anchored in the commitment to provide equitable access to quality education. This commitment becomes more meaningful in context of a sustainable synergy of efforts involving the central government, regional

administrations, non-governmental organizations, local communities and developmental partners. **To this end, a national strategy, along with details of concrete action plans and interventions, is required to address the issues linked to OOSC and bring back all children to school.**

Within the framework of the above conclusions and recommendations the following issues merit special attention.

- Make pre-primary education compulsory for all children aged 5.
- Consider the use of primary school premises to offer pre-primary learning provision for children aged 5.
- Diversify education provision with flexible calendar and modes of delivery to address the learning needs of children in nomadic and scattered settlements.
- Expand and enhance the existing CEE initiatives to promote equitable access to education to reach overage children in remote and underserved areas.
- Ensure the effective utilization of existing boarding schools and provide para boarding facilities in areas of need with particular attention to girls' education.
- Compile comprehensive data on children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups so that their needs can be addressed in more systematic and equitable ways.

4.8. Possible Research Areas Emerging from the Study

No country study on OOSC can comprehensively and exhaustively address all profiles of excluded children and all the attendant reasons for exclusion. This particular country study is no exception to this general rule. Accordingly, the following issues are suggested for future investigation:

- Evaluation on the effectiveness of policies and strategies (e.g. boarding schools; feeder schools) aimed at promoting access to education among disadvantaged groups in Eritrea.
- Community perceptions on the value of demand side interventions (e.g. cash incentives; feeding programs) to improve access and achievement in schools.
- The effects of distance to school on enrolment and attendance in selected rural areas.
- What can be done to enable Out-of-School Children to enroll in school? : the perspectives of parents and their children.
- In this report a statement was made to the effect that “for most nomadic communities, the imperatives of survival come before children’s education”. What strategies and programs are needed to bring these groups to school?

- An investigation into local community initiatives aimed at facilitating access to equitable quality education in Eritrean schools.
- National survey on the prevalence of children with disabilities and their educational needs.
- In-depth and context based study of OOSC at regional and sub -regional levels.

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Annexes

Annex 1

Source of Data on Out-of-School Children:

Data Inventory Template.

Country	Eritrea
Data Source	Education Management Information System (EMIS)
Agencies Responsible for Collection and Dissemination of Data.	Department of Research and Human Resource Development, Ministry of Education.
Data Collection Date (Not publication Date)	November, 2012.
Frequency of Data Collection (For Example, annual, every two years ...)	Annual School census.
Definition of an Out-of-School Child (For Example, is not currently enrolled, or did not attend school at any time in the last three months).	A child of official school age who is not registered/enrolled in school during the same academic year.
Definition of Other Education Terms	
School Entrance Age	The official entrance age to primary level is age 6.
Enrolment	All children available in the school attendance sheet.
Attendance	All children available in the school attendance sheet up until the end of the academic year.
Drop-out	A student who failed to attend school for over 2 official school weeks (10 official school days) without legitimate cause.
Educational Attainment	The highest grade a student completed.
Other relevant Terms	Repeater: a student who enrolled in the same grade in the previous and current academic year.
Sample Design and Coverage of the Data Collection (For Example, national, specific geographic region, specific sub-population group)	National, All or 100% of the Education Institutes have completed and submitted survey forms.
Smallest Administrative Area for which statistics in the Out-of-School Population are	Zoba Education office: The MoE branch office of an administrative region.

statistically accurate.

Types of Disaggregation Possible with Data (For Example, by Age, Gender, Area, Wealth Quintile, Socio-economic Group, Ethnicity, Religion, Type of school)

Age, Sex, Grade, Zone of Residence (Zoba).

Data Availability and Access (Include Information on Type of data Available and procedure to acquire the data)

EMIS Annual Publication by the Department of Research and Human Resource Development, MOE is Available.

Data Limitations (coverage, Accuracy)

Data on CEE (Complementary Elementary Education), the Non-formal /alternative education system, managed by the MOE is not included in EMIS.
EMIS is short of providing disaggregated data on students' household situation (wealth quintiles), location (rural/urban) and disability.
Data on age-specific enrolment should be interpreted with caution.

Other Information

Data Source

Eritrea- Population and Health Survey (EPHS 2010).

Agencies responsible for collection and dissemination of data.

Ministry of National Development, National Statistics Office (NSO).

Data Collection Date (Not publication Date)

January to July- 2010.

Frequency of data Collection (For Example, annual, every two years ...)

Follow-up to the 1995 and 2002 DHS surveys.

Definition of an out-of-school child (for example, is not enrolled, did not attend in the last three months)

A child of official school age who is not currently attending school (during the survey)

Definition of Other Education Terms

School Entrance Age

The official entrance age to primary level is age 6.

Enrolment

All children enrolled and currently attending school during the time of the survey.

Attendance

All children currently attending (during the time of the survey).

Drop-out Children of official school age who are not currently attending school.

Educational Attainment The highest grade a student completed (Elementary, middle and secondary levels)

Sample Design and Coverage of the Data Collection (For Example, national, specific geographic region, specific sub-population group)

A national representative probability sampling designed to allow estimates at the national level, by urban and rural areas and to provide estimates for each of the six Zoba (regions).

Smallest Administrative Area for which statistics in the Out-of-School Population are statistically accurate.

Zoba / Administrative Region

Types of Disaggregation Possible with Data (For Example, by Age, Gender, Area, Wealth Quintile, Socio-economic Group, Ethnicity, Religion, Type of school)

Age, Sex, Zoba, educational attainment, location (rural/urban), household characteristics (wealth quintiles), disability, children living arrangements and orphan hood, parental level of education.

Data Availability and Access (Include Information on Type of Data Available and procedure to acquire the data)

EPHS -2010 publication of the NSO is available and additional information about the EPHS may be obtained from the National Statistics Office P.O. Box 5838, Asmara, Eritrea (telephone: 291-1128034/7153234;
E-mail- ainom.berhane@nso.gov.er.

Data Limitations (coverage, Accuracy)

Prone to errors linked to Sample Based Survey

Annex 2

Data Quality Assessment Worksheet:

Eritrea

Data Source: Education Management Information System (EMIS).

Score **Data Source Assessment Criteria:**

1. **Age:** When were the data collected (not published)?

- (1) 6-10 years ago (2005-2009)
- (2) 3-5 years ago (2010-2012)
- (3) Within the last 2 years (2013-present)

2. **Frequency:** How often are the data collected? (Possibility of time series data)

- (1) The data are from a one-time collection
- (2) The data are from a repeated or periodic collection (For example: every 3-5 years)
- (3) The data are from an annual or semi-annual collection

3. **Accuracy of age data:** How are children's age data collected?

- (1) Age data not reported
- (2) Age data for children are collected from the teacher or household respondent
- (3) Age data for children are collected from official records (birth certificate, etc.)

4. **Ease of access:** What is the procedure to acquire access to the dataset in standard format for analysis (raw, unit level)?

- (1) Data access procedure is time consuming and likelihood of access is uncertain
- (2) Data access procedure is time consuming and likelihood of access is certain
- (3) Data access procedure is not time consuming and likelihood of access is certain

5. **Software expertise required for data analysis: Is there sufficient capacity in the software generally used to analyze this data?**

- (1) Insufficient capacity
- (2) Some capacity or possibility of training or support

- (3) Sufficient capacity

6. **Purpose:** To what extent was this data source designed to collect data on education?(Consider coverage of appropriate age groups, sample design (if survey))

- (1) Data collection not intended for generating education statistics (labor force, health, etc.)
- (2) Data collection includes a module primarily intended for generating education statistics (health and education)
- (3) Data collection primarily intended for generating education statistics

7. **Coverage of age data:** For which ages are data on current school attendance collected?

- (1) Primary and lower secondary age
- (2) Pre-primary to upper secondary age
- (3) Pre-primary to tertiary age

8. **Coverage of education levels:** For which levels of education are attendance data collected?

- (1) Primary education
- (2) Primary and secondary education
- (3) Pre-primary to tertiary education

9. **Coverage of educational institution types:** Are data collected on (or do they include) all types of educational institutions in the country (Example: public, private, NGO, religious, community or unregistered schools)?

- (1) Data collection excludes some important types of educational institutions
- (2) Data collection includes most types of educational institutions
- (3) Data collection includes all types of educational institutions

10. **Usefulness for disaggregated data analysis:** What is the smallest administrative area for which the data source is designed to provide reliable and representative statistics on out-of-school children?

- (1) National level only

(2) Macro administrative region (for example, state or province) and area of residence (urban/rural)

(3) Micro administrative region (for example, district or village)

11. Usefulness for identifying characteristics of out-of-school children: To what extent is disaggregation (sub-national analysis) possible with this data source (for example, by age, sex, area, wealth, disability, ethnicity, region, and child labor status)?

(1) Limited disaggregation possible (for example, only by sex)

(2) Some disaggregation possible, but some important groups are not available (for example, analysis by area of residence and wealth quintile is possible, but not ethnicity or disability)

(3) Significant disaggregation possible, including most high priority groups (for example, by disability, child labor status, etc.)

12. Consistency of education terms: How would you rate these terms on their consistency with standard international definitions? (UIS indicator and education term definitions can be found in Arabic, English and French in the UIS Glossary at www.uis.unesco.org/Pages/Glossary.aspx)

(1) Very few education terms are consistent with standard definitions

(2) Some education terms are consistent with standard definitions

(3) Most education terms are consistent with standard definitions

13. Comparability of education terms: How comparable are the definitions with other national data sources?

(1) Very few education terms are comparable with other national data sources

(2) Some education terms are comparable with other national data sources

(3) Most education terms are comparable with other national data sources

14. Data coverage of population of interest: To what extent has the data source considered coverage of disadvantaged groups in its data collection (sample design)?

(1) Sample design does not explicitly consider coverage of disadvantaged groups

(2) Sample design considers coverage of some disadvantaged groups

(3) Sample design considers coverage of many disadvantaged groups

15. Consistency of age and school participation data: To what extent is there a time lag between the recorded age of children and the start month of the academic year? (In sources with long data collection periods, select the answer covering the majority of cases (>50%)).

- (1) Age data are recorded more than 6 months after the start month of the school year (large gap)
- (2) Age data are recorded between 2 and 6 months after the start month of the school year (small gap)
- (3) Age data are recorded during the start month of the school year (no gap)

Total Score – 91%

Annex 3

Age Specific Attendance Rate by Level of Education and Gender:

Population by Age		Pre-primary	%	Primary	%	Lower Secondary	%	Upper secondary	%
Male									
5	45,314	12,029	26.55	164	0.36				
6	37,266	2,303	6.18	18,434	49.47				
7	35,480	1,306	3.68	32,045	90.32				
8	36,933	170	0.46	35,522	96.18				
9	34,600	9	0.03	32,821	94.86				
10	35,213			29,755	84.50	302	0.86		
11	36,008			19,883	55.22	4,688	13.02		
12	38,609			11,999	31.08	12,165	31.51	9	0.02
13	41,825			6,672	15.95	17,590	42.06	523	1.25
14	43,635			3,169	7.26	18,431	42.24	3,596	8.24
15	42,948			1,310	3.05	15,125	35.22	8,007	18.64
16	40,635			277	0.68	9,917	24.41	11,117	27.36
17	38,669			58	0.15	5,623	14.54	11,786	30.48
Population by Age		Pre-primary	%	Primary	%	Lower Secondary	%	Upper Secondary	%
Female									
5	42,535	11,403	26.81	130	0.31				
6	33,653	2,238	6.65	16,691	49.60				
7	32,250	1,225	3.80	28,386	88.02				
8	33,674	168	0.50	30,394	90.26				
9	31,260	6	0.02	28,192	90.19				
10	32,120			24,522	76.35	322	1.00		
11	32,900			15,438	46.92	4,861	14.78		
12	35,533			7,979	22.46	11,186	31.48	8	0.02
13	38,743			3,689	9.52	15,131	39.05	387	1.00
14	40,765			1,411	3.46	14,985	36.76	3,446	8.45
15	40,623			531	1.31	11,213	27.60	7,305	17.98
16	39,042			139	0.36	6,505	16.66	9,406	24.09
17	37,803			28	0.07	3,283	8.68	9,066	23.98
Population by Age		Pre-primary	%	Primary	%	Lower Secondary	%	Upper Secondary	%
Total									
5	87,849	23,432	26.67	294	0.33				
6	70,919	4,541	6.40	35,125	49.53				
7	67,731	2,531	3.74	60,431	89.22				
8	70,607	338	0.48	65,916	93.36				
9	65,860	15	0.02	61,013	92.64				
10	67,332			54,277	80.61	624	0.93		
11	68,908			35,321	51.26	9,549	13.86		
12	74,142			19,978	26.95	23,351	31.49	17	0.02
13	80,568			10,361	12.86	32,721	40.61	910	1.13
14	84,400			4,580	5.43	33,416	39.59	7,042	8.34
15	83,571			1,841	2.20	26,338	31.52	15,312	18.32
16	79,677			416	0.52	16,422	20.61	20,523	25.76
17	76,472			86	0.11	8,906	11.65	20,852	27.27

Annex 4

Calculation Spread Sheet for Dimensions 2 and 3.

[Eritrea] [2012/2013]		Global Initiative on Out-of-school Children -- Calculation spreadsheet for Dimensions 2 and 3															
		Primary secondary (ISCED 1) (ISCED 2)		Sheena Bell: 1) Enter start age and duration of primary and lower secondary education.							2) Enter population data by age in Table 2.						
Table 1	Education system	Source data															
	Entry age	6	11	School attendance (Table 2)							[EPHS population structure] [2010]						
	Duration of level (years)	5	3	Population by age (Table 3)							[EMS] [2012/2013]						
		Primary age							Lower secondary age								
Table 2	Population by age	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
	Total population	99,859	87,849	70,919	67,731	70,607	65,806	67,332	68,908	74,142	80,568	84,400	83,571	79,677	76,472		
Table 3	School attendance status	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
	Out of school (OOS)	84.5	73.0	50.5	10.8	6.6	7.4	18.5	34.9	41.5	45.4	46.6	48.0	53.1	60.9		
	Dropped out			6.7	5.4	4.5	3.7	3.6	4.0	4.6	5.2	5.2	6.4	7.9	10.3		
	Never been in school			43.8	5.4	2.1	3.7	14.9	30.9	36.9	40.2	41.4	41.6	45.2	50.6		
	New entrants to primary school			24.17	74.43	157.09	314.40	12.76	1.29	0.54	0.07	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.00		
Table 4	New entrants	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
	New entrants as % of OOSC never in school in previous year			35.6%	93.2%	98.7%	98.9%	46.2%	4.0%	1.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		
	OOSC never in school in current year as % of OOSC never in school in previous year				6.8%	1.3%	1.1%	53.8%	96.0%	98.6%	99.8%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		
		Primary age							Lower secondary age								
Table 5	Categories of OOSC (%)	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
	Dropped out			13%	50%	67%	51%	20%	11%	11%	11%						
	Expected to enter by age 17			87%	50%	32%	24%	5%	2%	0%	0%	0%					
	Expected to never enter			0%	0%	0%	25%	76%	87%	89%	88%	89%					
Categories of OOSC (population)																	
	Dropped out			4,776	3,650	3,145	2,465	2,450	2,723	3,425	4,172	4,389					
	Expected to enter by age 17			31,038	3,664	1,506	1,185	569	374	86	46	16					
	Expected to never enter			0	0	9	1,220	9,437	20,942	27,257	32,358	34,957					
	Number of OOSC			35,814	7,315	4,660	4,870	12,456	24,038	30,769	36,576	39,362					
		Primary age secondary age (Dimension 2) (Dimension 3)									Primary age secondary age						
Table 6	Categories of OOSC (%)	25.3	11.3								342,395	223,618					
	Dropped out (% of OOSC)										81.0	59.1					
	Expected to enter by age 17 (% of OOSC)										277,280	132,235					
	Expected to never enter (% of OOSC)	16.4	88.2														
	Total out-of-school children	19.0	40.9														
Categories of OOSC (population)																	
	Dropped out	16,486	10,319														
	Expected to enter by age 17	37,962	507														
	Expected to never enter	10,667	80,557														
	Total out-of-school children	65,115	91,383														

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Annex 5

Sample Based Qualitative Survey.

Common Areas Covered in the Interview/ FGD Guide with Students, Teachers, Head teachers, Parents, Local/ Regional Authorities and Other Stakeholders.

I. Basic Information

- Age/ Age range
- Gender
- Level of education/ grade in school
- Work experience(non-student respondents)

II. Background Information on Schools and Children in the Local Community

- The number of schools in the community (pre-primary, primary, lower secondary)
- Are these educational institutions sufficient for the locality?
- What is the estimated number of children in school (pre-primary, primary, lower secondary)?
- Are there children of school age (pre-primary, primary, lower secondary) who have never been to school?

III. Children Who Have Never Been to School

- What are the reasons for being out of school?
- Please rank the reasons according to priority.
- What has been done/ can be done to enroll those children who have never been to school (at community, sub-regional/ regional, MoE/ Government levels)?

IV. Children Who Dropped Out from School

- Are there children who dropped out from school (pre-primary, primary, lower secondary school)?
- What are the reasons for dropping out?
- Please rank them according to priority.
- What has been done/ can be done to bring these children back to school (at community, sub-regional/ regional, MoE/ Government levels)?

V. Children who are at Risk of Dropping Out from School

- Who do you think are those who are at risk of dropping out from school (pre-primary, primary, lower secondary)?
- What are the reasons for making them at risk?
- Please rank them according to priority.
- What has been done/ can be done to retain them at school (at community, sub-regional/regional, MoE/ Government levels)?

VI. Additional Information/ Comments

- Please feel free to offer any further information or comment relevant to OOSC
- Do you have any questions to ask?

Annex 6

Frequency Analysis of Barriers and Bottlenecks

	List of Barriers and Bottlenecks	Frequency	Percentage
1	House hold poverty/economic challenges	46	10.41
2	Socio- economic life styles (scattered communities, nomadic/ semi nomadic life styles, inconvenient topography)	44	9.95
3	Lack of awareness and low value on education generally	33	7.47
4	Lack of awareness and low value on the benefits of pre-primary education	26	5.88
5	Distance of school from home	25	5.66
6	Shortage of professionally trained, motivated teachers and school directors	23	5.20
7	Social construct on gender hampering girl child education and preference for male sibling	22	4.98
8	Inadequate coordination and support from local administration and other stakeholders	18	4.07
9	Insecurity and fear of violence for girls while travelling long distance	17	3.85
10	Child marriage	17	3.85
11	Inadequate number of lower secondary schools	17	3.85
12	Insufficient public budget allocation to pre-primary education	16	3.62
13	Inadequate number of KG/CCG	16	3.62
14	Lack of adequate data/information and awareness on Children with Disabilities(CWD)	16	3.62
15	Lack of vision/aspiration in terms of student career progression and employability	16	3.62
16	Poor school infrastructure and facilities	16	3.62
17	Separate latrines/inadequate WASH facilities	11	2.49

18	Absence of school feeding programs	10	2.26
19	Migration of parents/ adolescents within and outside the country	10	2.26
20	Lack of female teacher role models in rural areas	9	2.04
21	Inadequate number of primary schools	9	2.04
22	Environmental conditions (drought ,harsh weather condition)	9	2.04
23	Child work (street vending, domestic work, fishing, traditional mining)	9	2.04
24	Peer pressure to dropout	7	1.58
		442	100.00

Annex 7

OOSC Country Study Team

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