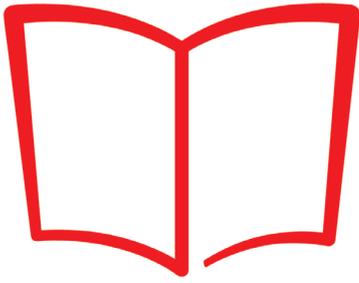




More Investment on Children's Education can Save a Generation

**Making a case for increased public investment in education in Puntland
Policy Brief**

Introduction



Access to quality education is a right of all children, which they must enjoy at all times. This right is often negatively impacted in times of emergencies such as drought, conflict and/or pandemics. The combined effect of protracted conflict, COVID-19 pandemic and climate change has had enormous negative impact on Somali's child access to quality education and continued learning. Progress to increase access to and quality of education was already severely slowed by longstanding barriers such as child and forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and limited public investment towards development of physical infrastructure

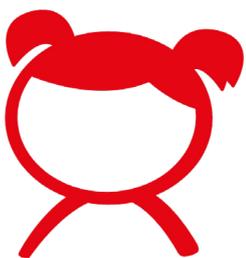
and safe learning environment, mobilisation of children to enrol in school, improving safety and protecting of children and their communities. In Puntland for instance, the government's education budget stands at just 8 percent of national budget estimated at 350 million USD—which falls short of 12 percent applied by most African Union member state and proposed 20% global standard. In fact, just only 1 percent¹ is actually secured and spent on education. Of critical importance is that these funds also cover administrative costs which often take a considerable percentage leaving critical areas of the soft component even further under-funded. Whilst government investment in education may fall short, substantial contributions comes from parents, communities and development partners. Parents play a considerable responsibility in school management, pay school fees, provide learning materials and uniforms for their children, while development partners support the financial and technical gaps of the Ministry and community. These combined investments in education has resulted in increased enrolment rate from just 199,294 in 2015/16 to 273,7729 in 2019/2020 academic year.²

This policy brief is developed jointly by Save the Children and the Ministry of Education of Puntland. It outlines barriers to education and suggests that increased education financing will contribute to increased opportunity for the most marginalized and hard to reach children to access quality and continued inclusive education services. Overall, it aims to:



- spotlight limited public investment in education as a critical barrier to children's access to quality inclusive education; and
- suggest recommendations for policy makers and education stakeholders for collaboration to address education financing challenges

Children out of school are children left behind



In Somalia, it is estimated that over 4.4³ million school-aged children are unaccounted for in the education sector. A large majority of these children come from Puntland. However, this number could even rise as warned in a recent survey by Save the Children on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education. Globally, 99% percentage of children have dropped out of school in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in closure of schools and with little to no distance learning happening.

Its estimated that only 273,729 children are in school in Puntland out of which 199,269 are in formal basic education.⁴ Enrolment rate for school-aged children in Puntland is extremely low and is mainly impacted by recurring natural disasters, poverty, internal conflict, displacement, pastoralist and nomadic lifestyles, and exclusion on gender and disability. The overall primary Net Enrolment Rate (NER) stands at 57.2% for Puntland, while 62.6% for boys and 51.9% for girls, and secondary Net Enrolment Rate is just 13% with 17.2% for boys and 9.7% for girls⁵. The vast majority of children missing out of schools come from pastoralist and IDPs communities who represent 39% and 5% of Puntland's population of 2,701,623⁶. According to Puntland's Education Sector Analysis (ESA), 2016, only 15% of school-aged pastoralist children have access to education. Weak implementation of sector policies by education institutions, insufficient financial resources, limited qualified education personnel, inadequate educational spaces, limited teaching and learning materials and low payments for qualified educational staff are the country's major challenges that hinders to fully achieve quality learning for all children.⁷

The Government of Puntland and its education partners have invested a total of US \$14.8 million since 2019. This has resulted enrolment to increase by 9.5%⁸ yearly, while it improved access to education, increased quality of education through improved school management, training of teachers through teacher professional development approaches, improved teaching and learning processes, monitoring and provision of scholastic materials and creating more learning spaces.

Whilst this is to be applauded, more needs to be done to safely bring the hundreds of thousands of children currently out of school back to learning. A total of \$51 Million would be needed in the next 5 years to provide quality education and ensure continued learning to 300,000 children in Puntland.⁹

Cost of Inaction

With COVID-19 pandemic, protracted conflict and worsening climate change, urgent action is needed to mobilise necessary funding to protect children's right to quality basic education. If not, there is the risk of a lost generation: Children that are out of school represent a generation lost as they are at increased risk of being recruited into armed groups, becoming street children, engaged in harmful labour and other negative coping mechanisms, forced into child marriage and/or FGM. As such are exposed to greater risks of abuse and exploitation. Ultimately, they are not accounted for in education outcomes of the country. This, too, has irreversible impact on long term development outcomes resulting in reduced skilled economic workforce and in achieving both national development goals and SDG targets for education.

Reversing negative trend: Recommendations

Governments

- To safely bring back 300,000¹⁰ children currently out of school, the government should incrementally increase its education budget from 8 to 15 percent until 2024. This means 2 percent annual increment should be allocated and prioritised on the following initiatives:
 - Construction of more classrooms;
 - Recruit, train and deploy 1,600 teachers (50% female) to complement the existing 8,000 teachers;
 - Provide text books and other teaching and learning materials
 - Disinfect schools and ensure teachers, learners and their families are safe from COVID-19; and
 - Ensure sustained awareness creation to mobilise public, parents and communities to send all children to school
- Education investment should target marginalised and excluded children, especially girls, children living in pastoral areas, children with disabilities, children on the streets and children living in IDP camps
- As the country rolls out the COVID-19 vaccines, priority should be given to the teaching force as first target groups to ensure that children and teachers are safe and that education does not suffer more setbacks. This should include strengthening public health guidelines including its dissemination and enforcement to prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19
- Mainstream distance learning – the blended online/ offline learning to complement the classroom learning and reach more out of school children unable to attend regular classes, urban working children, dropouts from different grades, girls dropped out because of early/ forced marriage etc. willing and able to continue their education.

Donor community and other stakeholders

- Increased investment in alternative education strategies such as distance learning (online/offline learning,) community schools, Alternative basic education programs and use of technologies where possible ensuring that hard to reach children are reached to through flexible programs responsive to their life style.
- Additionally, the government and partners should organise catch up classes for those children missed out lessons as a result of the school closures and lack of support for home learning, as well as limited access to online learning. Accordingly, there is a need to contextualise the curriculum to fit the virtual content format, train teachers on the online/offline delivery, and strengthen assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the distant learning.
- Donors should also ensure that the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) \$5 billion target for 2021-2025 replenishment and that of ECW is fully funded to contribute to country's recovery from COVID-19 and build back education better. This includes prioritising funding for integrated child sensitive social programming, especially exploring cash programming in education to support teachers, parents and communities for purposes of enhancing educational access. This stems from the background that, as the COVID ravaged the global economy, the livelihoods of teachers and even parents to support their families got compromised significantly, and they need support to lift them up.

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