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**Low-fee Private Schooling:  
aggravating equity or  
mitigating disadvantage?**

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SYMPOSIUM  
BOOKS

CHAPTER 5

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## **Low-fee Private Schooling: the case of Kenya**

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STEPHEN P. HEYNEMAN**

This investigation, part of a larger study commissioned by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with case studies on six countries (i.e. Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Pakistan and Tanzania), was undertaken in order to gain a more complete understanding of the low-fee private education sector in Kenya, as well as the impetuses for increased low-fee private schooling in relation to Education For All (EFA). We present data from the commissioned case study on Kenya, and provide a description of 23 low-fee private schools in four districts (i.e. Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret West and Kisumu), the challenges and issues they face, and the regulatory context within which they operate.

In this chapter we begin with a discussion of the education policy context in Kenya, briefly highlight the arguments surrounding non-government schooling, and contextualize the non-government and low-fee private sectors in Kenya. We then explain our method of inquiry before presenting our results, which include a description of the case study school contexts and characteristics, pedagogical quality issues, and the regulatory environment. We also examine the impact of external actor activities on low-fee private primary schools in Kenya before concluding with observations and recommendations for the sector. As a final note on terminology, the terms 'non-government', 'private' and 'independent' are used interchangeably throughout this chapter, owing to their common use in the Kenyan context.

### **Education For All, the Kenyan Policy Context, and Free Primary Education**

Although it is well documented that some countries are lagging behind in their progress toward universal basic education and gender parity, it is

important to understand why this is occurring. We posit four main reasons: (1) lack of government capacity and, on occasion, commitment; (2) decreases in donor support/funding; (3) the recent global economic crisis; and (4) the prevalence of failed states and post-conflict circumstances. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the unrealistic nature of EFA goals. By setting such high standards without taking into account the magnitude of the problem in some countries, it is not unreasonable to assume that certain among these countries may be unable to meet the goals despite a concerted effort. In fact, far-reaching goals may increase problems in the public sector, if the focus is placed on access without sufficient attention to quality. For example, while net primary enrolment rates in Kenya increased from 61% in 2002 to 82% in 2009, pupil-teacher ratios increased by nearly 40% during the same time (World Bank, 2010). This is likely due to capacity and funding issues.

While national spending on education increased in a majority of countries after the EFA declaration in Dakar, 40 of 105 countries with available data actually experienced a decrease in the share of national spending between 1999 and 2006 (UNESCO, 2008). Some of this was in failed states and post-conflict contexts. In Kenya, public spending on education decreased from 26% of total government expenditure in 2000 to 18% in 2005 (World Bank, 2010). Combined with the fact that aid commitments have been decreasing, this lack of government support (i.e. funding) for basic education has caused some researchers, donors and education experts to call into question the ability of poor nations to provide free high quality basic education to all children, youth and adults even with international assistance. It is in this context that the low-fee private education sector in a number of developing countries, such as Kenya, has been filling the gap.

Before examining the private sector, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the more recent history of the Kenyan education system and its focus on free primary education (FPE). There have been several attempts at providing FPE in Kenya. The first FPE initiative came in 1974 with the abolition of formal school fees. In 1979, a second initiative was passed, prohibiting building levies and non-fee charges on parents. These first two FPE initiatives saw significant increases in enrolments in primary education. However, the 1980s saw the implementation of a cost-sharing programme, along with increased private costs, which led to enrolment stagnation throughout the primary sector (Somerset, 2008).

In 1986, core subjects were added to the curriculum, though the public system suffered due to a lack of additional resources. Throughout the 1990s, decreases in economic growth and per capita incomes, rising poverty rates, deterioration of public infrastructure, and increases in corruption exacerbated the problem. With a growing budget deficit, many families were forced into the sprawling Kenyan slums; however, the provision of government education did not follow suit (Bauer et al, 2002).

In 2003, a third and final initiative was introduced by development experts and world leaders, that this final initiative did not pass, which is often attributed to it, and the public system is still far from universal (Dixon, 2006b; Musani, 2008; Tooley, 2008). Tooley (2008) sums up the consensus by noting the trouble providing education for (lack of materials and uniforms), high student-teacher ratios, insufficient schools, and other problems for public education. Tooley (2008) notes that out-of-pocket costs are increasing. In 2008, more than half the funding for primary education came from parental contributions.

With regard to enrolments in primary education, 6500 students in the slums were enrolled in primary education at the introduction of FPE in 2003. This was a decrease because they were enrolled in private schools. In 2005, 1000 students enrolled in Kibera's public primary school led to an estimated reduction of 1000 students (Tooley, 2005). However, these 1000 students were school managers, and therefore their enrolment. Tooley did not necessarily account for the fact that they may have transferred, and these 1000 students from one private school to another.

### Arguments Surrounding School Expansion and Learning

Private schooling across the globe has increased. *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (2009) primary school students were enrolled in private schools. In 2009, the figure rose to more than 100 million in many countries that much of the enrolment is in the private school sector. Although the reasons vary to each country, there is an undoubted trend that private education derives from the need of parents at all income levels.

While the relative size, supply and demand vary by country, there are two sectors in the private sector. The first is that inadequate government financing leads to demand for school. (Colclough, 1997). The second is that private education. In other words, no government financing in developing countries in order to

In 2003, a third and final FPE initiative was passed and was heralded by development experts and world leaders alike. However, it has been argued that this final initiative did not provide the expansion in primary enrolment that is often attributed to it, and that despite admirable government efforts, the public system is still far from 'free' (Tooley, 2005, 2009; Tooley & Dixon, 2006b; Musani, 2008; Tooley et al, 2008; Verspoor, 2008a). Musani (2008) sums up the consensus by noting that the Ministry of Education had trouble providing education for all, and that high costs (e.g. textbooks, materials and uniforms), high student-teacher ratios (up to 100 students per class), insufficient schools, and limited facilities and activities remain problems for public education in Kenya. Additionally, Verspoor (2008a) notes that out-of-pocket costs are on the rise in public schools and that, as of 2008, more than half the funding of public schools came from fees and parental contributions.

With regard to enrolments, Tooley (2005) found that approximately 6500 students in the slums of Kibera left private schools during the introduction of FPE in 2003. An additional 4500 students dropped out because they were enrolled in private schools that closed, but only 3300 students enrolled in Kibera's public schools during that same period. This led to an estimated reduction of 8000 students enrolled from one slum alone (Tooley, 2005). However, these numbers are based on estimations by private school managers, and therefore they may be exaggerated. Additionally, Tooley did not necessarily account for all possible schools to which students may have transferred, and these numbers do not take into account transfers from one private school to another.

#### **Arguments Surrounding Non-government School Expansion and Low-fee Private Schools**

Private schooling across the globe is on the rise. According to UNESCO's *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, approximately 16% of the world's primary school students were enrolled in private schools in 2000, and by 2009, the figure rose to more than 20% (UNESCO, 2010). It has been noted in many countries that much of this increase is due to the rise of the low-fee private school sector. Although the specific reasons for this growth are unique to each country, there is an underlying theme. Simply put, the demand for private education derives from the public sector's inability to meet the needs of parents at all income levels.

While the relative size, support and impact of low-fee private schools vary by country, there are two seemingly ubiquitous reasons for the rise of the sector. The first is that inadequate or uneven distribution of government financing leads to demand for schooling that non-government schools can fill (Colclough, 1997). The second is low quality and/or inefficient public education. In other words, non-government schools have proliferated in developing countries in order to meet excess demand resulting from an

insufficient supply of public school spaces, and/or to provide alternatives to a failing public education system. While, in many countries, private schools were traditionally used by wealthy families as alternatives to the public system, in the past few decades, this same trend has been seen for low-income families.

Phillipson (2008) provides additional reasons for the expansion of this sector. He suggests that low-fee private education has increased in developing countries in recent years due in part to an oversupply of teachers, hidden costs in government schools, high private tuition fees (in high-fee schools), a preferable language of instruction being used, poor public school performance (i.e. poor academic achievement), and religious preference. In addition, Tooley (2009) claims that low-fee private schools are likely to experience lower teacher absenteeism (because of increased accountability to parents and school owners), more engaged teachers (because of more local recruitment), smaller class sizes and more individualised attention. Although there is evidence in the literature and from our fieldwork in Kenya to support both Phillipson's and Tooley's claims, low-fee non-government schools are not without their problems and controversies.

#### *Debates and Controversies*

Lewin (2007) outlines four arguments against the use of non-government schools to achieve universal basic education. The first concerns the concept that basic education is a human right that only states can deliver. According to this argument, for-profit institutions have no essential interest in delivering education services to the poor, and non-profit charities cannot deliver services on a national scale without relying on a public subsidy, essentially making them a public responsibility even if the state outsources service delivery. This argument holds that states have the moral and legal responsibility to protect minorities, promote equity and diminish exclusion (Lewin, 2007, p. 42).

Second, if non-subsidised providers in low-income communities depend on community revenue, including tuition, they are essentially drawing down the community's wealth. The availability of income to support non-government schools is much more limited in low- rather than in high-income countries, among other things because of differences in age-dependency ratios. Relative to gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, teacher salaries in low-income countries may be six times those in high-income countries. Additionally, available domestic revenue is only 15% of GDP, compared with 40% in wealthy countries (Lewin, 2007). This suggests that the relative social cost of basic education is significantly higher in low-income countries; hence, arguments for non-government schools in high-income countries cannot easily be applied in low-income countries (Lewin, 2007, p. 43). Ultimately, as Watkins (2004) puts it, '[s]hould the world's poorest people really be expected to choose between the health and the

education of their children? And would such choices make sense for the rest of the world?

Third, the claims of greater educational quality and higher relevance in the non-government schools are often made under conditions of transparent accountability, adequate funding and a regulatory framework' (p. 44), and they rarely reach the poorest households in developing countries. In particular, the claim that, without sufficient information, parents will take advantage of poor parents (Phillipson, 2008) is especially troubling. Lewin (2007) alleges that there is no OECD-style framework for basic education. This is because of the externalities, which are naturally produced by non-government schools (Lewin, 2007, p. 44).

Two additional arguments against non-government schools are raised in the literature. One is that non-government schools can undermine the public education system by drawing government schools because of public subsidies. Another is that an appropriate short-term fix for the public education system through increased public investment in infrastructure will inevitably undermine public education. Much of the literature raises the point that non-government schools will be unable to accommodate the needs of the poor (Watkins, 2004; Rose & Adelabu, 2004). We kept these important arguments in mind throughout the study. We feel that, for the most part, they are not supported. We found evidence that both supports and refutes these arguments.

#### **Non-government Schools in Kenya**

Less than a decade ago, researchers were arguing that governments that private schooling is a better alternative in respective countries. In fact, we encountered a similar situation in Jamaica in the broader USAID-supported education sector. On the other hand, the Kenyan government has been aware of the low quality of public education since the early 1960s. Shortly after independence, private organisations in Kenya took it upon themselves to improve the education sector to places beyond the public system (Verspoor, 2008a).

These *Harambee* (translated from Swahili as 'Come Forward') schools were established without adequate funding and were therefore not only unreciprocated but also suffered from initial funding shortages and regular

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education of their children? And what is the market rationale to suggest that such choices make sense for the rest of society?' (p. 9).

Third, the claims of greater efficiency, lower cost, higher quality and higher relevance in the non-government sector can only be true under certain conditions. According to Lewin (2007), these include 'informed choice, transparent accountability, adequate regulation and an effective legal framework' (p. 44), and they rarely, if ever, pertain to the reality of the poorest households in developing countries. The lack of informed choice, in particular, is especially troubling. Opponents of non-government schooling claim that, without sufficient information, low-fee private schools will simply take advantage of poor parents (Probe Team, 1999; Watkins, 2004). Fourth, Lewin alleges that there is no OECD or rapidly developing country that has depended on non-government provision to achieve universal attendance in basic education. This is because basic education has a wide range of externalities, which are naturally provided through state involvement (Lewin, 2007, p. 44).

Two additional arguments against the use of non-government schools are raised in the literature. One is that relying on non-government schools can undermine the public education system. While enrolling children in non-government schools because of public system shortcomings may prove to be an appropriate short-term fix for some, 'failure to address the challenge through increased public investment and improvements in service delivery will inevitably undermine public education' (Watkins, 2004, p. 10). Second, much of the literature raises the point that private schools charging low fees will be unable to accommodate the poorest households (Probe Team, 1999; Watkins, 2004; Rose & Adelabu, 2007; Srivastava & Walford, 2007). We kept these important arguments in mind throughout our work in Kenya, and feel that, for the most part, they are compelling. However, our fieldwork found evidence that both supports and belies these concerns.

### Non-government Schools in Kenya: history and context

Less than a decade ago, researchers had a difficult time convincing certain governments that private schooling catering to poorer groups existed in their respective countries. In fact, we encountered this issue in our recent research in Jamaica in the broader USAID study. The Kenyan government, on the other hand, has been aware of the low-fee or community private school sector since the early 1960s. Shortly after independence in 1963, grassroots organisations in Kenya took it upon themselves to expand the secondary education sector to places beyond the reach of the government system (Verspoor, 2008a).

These *Harambee* (translated from Kiswahili as 'Let's all pull together') schools were established without approval from the Ministry of Education and were therefore not only unrecognised, but technically illegal. Despite initial funding shortages and regular conflicts with the government, by 1973

government provisions and recognition were offered to *Harambee* schools, which ultimately afforded some of the best students the opportunity to transfer to government schools (Kitaev, 1999). Although course offerings and resources were limited and there was a high proportion of unqualified teachers, the provision of schooling opportunities for low-income students who could not afford to travel to government schools significantly increased secondary school enrolments throughout rural Kenya as a result of increases in numbers of schools (from 19 government-assisted and 244 unassisted schools in 1969 to 1142 assisted and 741 unassisted schools in 1987). Bray (1997) notes that the expansion was not due to increases in quality but was because these schools were the only ones available to certain populations. In the early 1990s, *Harambee* schools were subsumed by the government system, and are no longer distinguished from public, government schools (Verspoor, 2008a).

In the current context, a new brand of private school has emerged. In one of the earliest pieces on private education in Kenya, Karmokolias and van Lutsenburg Maas (1997) offer a useful starting point for understanding the main impetuses for private education expansion, which may also help to explain its growth over the last 15 years or so. The authors assert that the reasons for increased demand in private education in Kenya are as follows: (1) population growth; (2) fiscal constraints in the public sector; (3) better image of private schools; (4) increased expenses for parents (i.e. government cutbacks); (5) opportunity costs (i.e. lack of public school efficiency leads to wasted time, and thus less time for children to contribute to labour); (6) long waiting lists at private schools; and (7) significant increases in private enrolments (leading to even further demand).

While it may appear on the surface that some of these reasons are somewhat outdated, especially in light of post-2003 FPE, the majority of the more recent literature still draws upon a very similar set of causes for the expansion of the sector. More specifically, the low quality of public schools, inadequate supply of public school spaces (and schools in remote areas) and high school fees (i.e. hidden costs of schooling) have become the most prevalent responses to the question of why the private sector has expanded so rapidly in Kenya in recent years (Lewin & Caillods, 2001; Lewin & Sayed, 2005; Tooley, 2005; Tooley & Dixon, 2005, 2006a; Musani, 2008; Somerset, 2008; Tooley et al, 2008; Verspoor, 2008a; World Bank, 2008).

The prevalence of low-fee private primary schools is greatest in slum areas but is not limited to them. Similar to Tooley's work, our team found that low-fee primary schools can be found throughout the country in urban slums, small cities and rural areas. However, due to the high population density in urban slums and the low supply of government schools serving them, low-fee schools are often viewed as more necessary and prevalent there. Low-fee private primary schools in Kenya are almost universally run by local community members or local organisations, such as churches and/or small non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In both slums and rural

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A previous analysis by Toc achievement of students in Nairobi sl low-fee schools scored about the sam all subjects, with slightly better scoi slightly worse in English. It is import researchers controlled for family/back it is not entirely clear that they suffic controlling for unobserved characte cause students to enrol in private o achievement.

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areas, they are generally housed in small rented buildings or semi-permanent structures, electricity being an uncommon luxury, and facilities are typically not up to the standards of public primary schools.

A previous analysis by Tooley and Dixon (2005) of relative achievement of students in Nairobi slums found that, on average, students in low-fee schools scored about the same as their public school counterparts in all subjects, with slightly better scores in mathematics and Kiswahili, but slightly worse in English. It is important to note, however, that although the researchers controlled for family/background characteristics in that analyses, it is not entirely clear that they sufficiently accounted for selection bias (i.e. controlling for unobserved characteristics, such as motivation) that may cause students to enrol in private over public schools, and influence their achievement.

In a new analysis presented in this volume of those data using multilevel modelling techniques (see Chapter 4, by Dixon et al), the researchers found a significant positive relationship between private school attendance and test scores in mathematics and Kiswahili, but not in English. Although both analyses were only on students in Nairobi slums, the results provide some evidence about relative achievement in low-fee schools. Differences in achievement between government and non-government schools are not consistent across subjects, suggesting that the demand for non-government schools cannot simply be reduced to higher test scores/achievement.

Due to insufficient official data, and because so many private schools (and therefore students) are unregistered with the government, it was difficult to obtain accurate or consistent private school enrolment figures in the literature. Thus, while the literature and our field research point to a relatively large low-fee private sector, the exact figures on how non-government schools accommodate low-income children are non-existent. Nonetheless, there are some relevant statistics that may be useful in developing a deeper understanding of non-government and low-fee private schools in Kenya.

As of 2001, Bauer et al (2002) noted that there were an estimated 700 primary and 300 secondary private schools registered in Kenya. Tooley (2009) offers that only a year later, there were 76 private primary schools serving 12,132 students in Kibera slum alone, a third of which were managed by women. By 2008, Musani (2008) claimed that more than 5000 independent schools were found to serve over 500,000 students throughout the country. Additionally, Musani (2008) noted that many of these schools served HIV/AIDS orphans and provided subsidies to those who could not afford tuition and fees.

Perhaps most illustrative are the table and figure, reproduced here as Table I and Figure 1, from recent work by Oketch et al (2010), showing that more than 40% of the poorest students in slums in their study attended private schools, and that this number steadily increased since the introduction of FPE in 2003 (see Table I). While these numbers are high,



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with so few public schools and so many unregistered low-fee private schools in many of Kenya's slums, they are not necessarily surprising. Table I also shows that while poorer populations in slums are more likely to enrol in private schools than their wealthier counterparts, the reverse is true for those living in non-slum areas. The most intriguing trend in Figure 1 is that since the introduction of FPE, the percentage of private school students in slums has remained above the percentage of public school students.

Variable	Private	Total	% Private
<i>Site</i>			
Korogocho	1712	3921	43.66
Viwandani	793	2235	31.45
Jericho	97	779	12.45
Harambee	112	348	32.18
Total	2624	7283	36.03
<i>Wealth Index: All</i>			
Poorest 20%	705	1559	45.22
2	542	1361	39.82
3	558	1450	38.48
4	514	1457	35.28
Least poor 20%	305	1456	20.95
<i>Wealth Index: Slum</i>			
Poorest 20%	529	1232	42.94
2	490	1231	39.81
3	504	1231	40.94
4	485	1233	39.33
Least poor 20%	407	1229	33.12
<i>Wealth Index: Non-slum</i>			
Poorest 20%	12	227	5.29
2	25	224	11.16
3	39	227	17.18
4	55	228	24.12
Least poor 20%	78	221	35.29
<i>HHG</i>			
Female	720	2196	32.79
Male	1904	5087	37.43

Table I. Private school enrolment by wealth and study site.  
Source: Oketch et al, 2010.

From our field experience, it is clear that the number of registered schools grossly underestimates the actual number of operating private schools. Additionally, there is a distinct concentration of schools in Nairobi's slum

areas and, as evident in World Bank Kenya have been on the rise, increasing. However, our work leads us to believe that the number of private schools may be underestimated. This is due to the assumption that low-fee private schools are concentrated in urban slums. While we found a concentration of private schools around Nairobi, we were surprised to find private primary schools throughout the rural areas. The great majority of these schools were not recognised by any government. The method of inquiry used for the broad-based survey before discussing results.

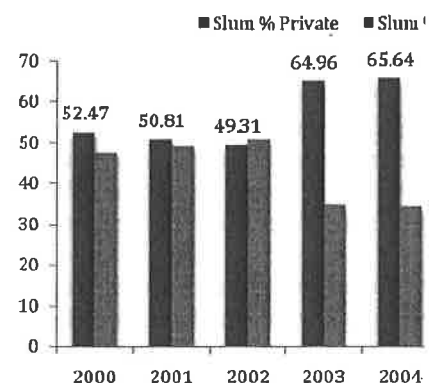


Figure 1. Public and private enrolments  
Source: Oketch et al, 2010.

### Method of Inquiry

As noted in the introduction, this study was commissioned by USAID-Washington to investigate low-fee private schools. The full study included case studies from six countries (Kenya, Pakistan and Tanzania), 100 interviews as well as school site visits. The principal investigators (Stephen H. Smith) prior to visiting the first country to understand the education context of each site. The study was conducted from January 2010 until May 2011. The data analysis was conducted by Heyneman and Stern.

We began our investigation of the private school sector in Kenya with a review of

ay unregistered low-fee private schools not necessarily surprising. Table I also in slums are more likely to enrol in counterparts, the reverse is true for those intriguing trend in Figure 1 is that since ge of private school students in slums public school students.

Total	% Private
21	43.66
35	31.45
79	12.45
48	32.18
83	36.03
59	45.22
61	39.82
50	38.48
57	35.28
56	20.95
32	42.94
31	39.81
31	40.94
33	39.33
29	33.12
27	5.29
24	11.16
27	17.18
28	24.12
21	35.29
96	32.79
87	37.43

1 and study site.

that the number of registered schools number of operating private schools. ntration of schools in Nairobi's slum

areas and, as evident in World Bank (2010) statistics, private enrolments in Kenya have been on the rise, increasing from 4% in 2005 to 11% in 2008. However, our work leads us to believe that even Musani's (2008) numbers may be underestimated. This is due to the fact that those estimations are based on the assumption that low-fee private schools are primarily found in urban slums. While we found a concentration of low-fee schools in the slums around Nairobi, we were surprised to find large numbers of small low-fee primary schools throughout the rural areas of western Kenya as well. The great majority of these schools were off the beaten path, and very few of them were recognised by any government organisation. We now turn to the method of inquiry used for the broader study and for the Kenyan case study before discussing results.

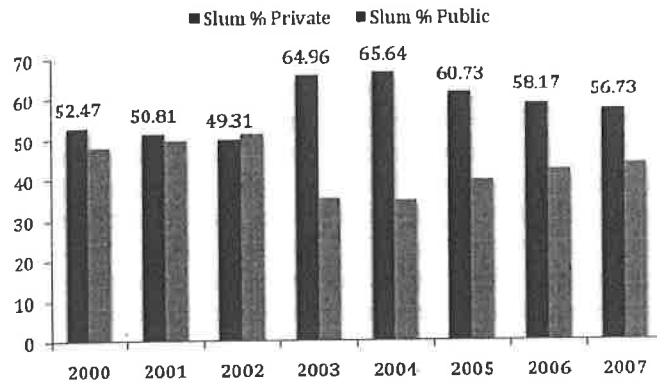


Figure 1. Public and private enrolments by year (in slum areas). Source: Oketch et al, 2010.

### Method of Inquiry

As noted in the introduction, this chapter stems from a larger study commissioned by USAID-Washington to assess the growth and impact of low-fee private schools. The full study included a global literature review, as well as case studies from six countries (i.e. Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Pakistan and Tanzania). All case studies included in-country interviews as well as school site visits. Interview protocols were created by the principal investigators (Stephen Heyneman, Jonathan Stern and Thomas Smith) prior to visiting the first country, and were adapted as necessary to suit the education context of each subsequent country. The overall study ran from January 2010 until May 2011. All interviews and site visits in Kenya were conducted by Heyneman and Stern during May-June 2010.

We began our investigation of the low-fee private primary education sector in Kenya with a review of the available literature and background

information. We then obtained a list of contacts from the Director of the Education Development Office at USAID-Kenya. The list included representatives from donor organisations, NGOs and government officials relevant to the sector. All representatives were contacted prior to our arrival in Kenya in order to schedule in-country interviews.

Interviews with representatives from donor organisations (i.e. Department for International Development [DFID], International Development Association [IDA], International Finance Corporation [IFC] and USAID) were conducted in order to obtain information about current policies on low-fee private schools, opinions on the promise/obstacles of the sector, ideas for appropriate public policy, and intentions regarding future assistance. NGOs and service providers (e.g. Bridge International Academies, Dignitas and the Kenya Independent Schools Association [KISA]) were interviewed on sources of funding, regulatory environments, motivations (e.g. for-profit or non-profit), scholarships/subsidies, growth prospects and major challenges. Finally, Kenyan government officials (i.e. from the Ministry of Education [Basic Education, Adult and Continuing Education] and the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, as well as District Education Officers) were interviewed regarding government data collection, school registration, government support/funding, accreditation, regulatory frameworks, monitoring/oversight and perceived benefits/concerns about low-fee private schooling.

While ministry interviews were intended to obtain lists of private schools for site visits, we quickly learned that complicated and inefficient registration procedures precluded any such list from being created. The reality was that no government agency, local or national, knew how many non-government schools existed, where they were located or who (teachers or students) was involved. Unlike Tooley's previous work, we did not have the resources to do a catchment sample.[1] As an alternative, we chose several rural and urban districts, using convenience sampling techniques to locate schools. Since we knew we would not be able to generate a representative sample, our objective was different – namely, to find schools that illustrated each of the six official categories of non-government schools that exist in Kenya (discussed further below). Ultimately, we adopted a school selection method similar to snowball sampling. After learning about a particular school from one of our initial interviews, we would use those contacts in order to pinpoint other schools.

Although monetary restrictions and incomplete data prevented us from using an expansive random sampling procedure, we worked with Ministry of Education officials and local USAID offices to create a sampling frame that would allow for the most appropriate sample of schools possible (taking into account geography, religion and tuition), given time and monetary restraints. Our final sample included one public government and 23 non-government schools across four districts (Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret West and Kisumu). These included non-government schools registered with the Ministry of

Education Department of Basic Education, Directorate for Adult and Continuing Education, Sports, Culture and Social Services, as well as with any government organisation.

We conducted interviews with school owners and teachers. Whenever possible, school visits were conducted on occasions when we would simply 'confer' with school owners. We were willing to provide us with an interview/visit was to obtain information on school enrolment, tuition and fees, scholarship operation, religious affiliation, source of funding, parental involvement, teacher salaries, materials, student background (including performance on the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education). Although several school owners and teachers did not participate entirely, we were able to provide information on tuition, teacher salaries and materials.

As a consequence of segmenting the sector into different organisations, including departments of the Ministry of Education, the scope of the sector. This stems from the language surrounding non-government schools are referred to as 'self-help groups' in the Ministry of Education Department of Basic Education, whereas, in the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, they are referred to as 'informal and Non-Formal Education, they are referred to as 'informal'. They are additionally referred to as 'informal'.

Additionally, since there is no uniform definition of private schools in the literature (which is the focus of our study), a definition was created for the commissioned study. Low-fee private schools were defined as schools with tuition rates that were less than 50% of the minimum monthly wage rate. For Kenya, however, the minimum monthly wage rate was much less, at KSh 968. The minimum monthly wage rate in 2010 for a general labourer was 15.6% in all other municipalities, and 15.6% in all other municipalities, and the minimum wage for a general labourer (Ministry of Labour and Social Security) in Nairobi slums had a tuition fee maximum of 9% of the minimum monthly wage rate.

#### **Characteristics of Low-fee Private Schools**

Table II presents the range and mean characteristics of the 23 private schools in our study. Although we did not visit all of our case-study schools, it is important to note that

t of contacts from the Director of the USAID-Kenya. The list included NGOs and government officials. These were contacted prior to our arrival for interviews.

es from donor organisations (i.e. Development [DFID], International Finance Corporation [IFC]) were contacted to obtain information about current opinions on the promise/obstacles of the policy, and intentions regarding future schools (e.g. Bridge International Academies, Kenya Schools Association [KISA]) were contacted to obtain information about regulatory environments, motivations (e.g. subsidies, growth prospects and major government officials (i.e. from the Ministry of Education and Continuing Education) and the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, as well as District Offices regarding government data collection, reporting/funding, accreditation, regulatory requirements and perceived benefits/concerns about

we intended to obtain lists of private schools. We learned that a complicated and inefficient process of such a list from being created. The Ministry, local or national, did not know how many schools they were located or who (teachers or owners). In our previous work, we did not have the resources to do this. [1] As an alternative, we chose several sampling techniques to locate schools. We intended to be able to generate a representative sample of schools, namely, to find schools that illustrated the diversity of non-government schools that exist in Kenya. Initially, we adopted a school selection procedure. After learning about a particular school, we would use those contacts in order to

and incomplete data prevented us from following the procedure, we worked with the Ministry of Education to create a sampling frame that included a sample of schools possible (taking into account time and monetary restraints). We contacted 23 government and 23 non-government schools in Nakuru, Eldoret West and Kisumu). We also contacted schools registered with the Ministry of

Education Department of Basic Education, the Ministry of Education Directorate for Adult and Continuing Education and the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, and schools operating but not registered with any government organisation.

We conducted interviews with principals or directors and teachers. Whenever possible, school visits were announced. There were, however, occasions when we would simply 'come upon' a school and ask if they would be willing to provide us with an interview. The purpose of school interviews/visits was to obtain information about the number of students enrolled, tuition and fees, scholarships, class size, hours and days of operation, religious affiliation, sources of funding, management structure, parental involvement, teacher salaries and qualifications, facilities and materials, student background (including ability to pay full tuition) and performance on the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam. Although several school owners and/or principals were initially hesitant to provide information on tuition, teacher salaries and funding, none refused to participate entirely.

As a consequence of segmentation across the six categories, all organisations, including departments within ministries, had differing views on the scope of the sector. This stems in no small part from inconsistencies about the language surrounding non-government schools in Kenya. In the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, non-government schools are referred to as 'self-help groups' or 'community projects'. In the Ministry of Education Department of Basic Education, they are referred to as 'private schools', whereas, in the Ministry of Education Directorate for Adult and Non-Formal Education, they are referred to as 'non-formal schools'. They are additionally referred to as 'independent schools'.

Additionally, since there is no universally accepted definition of low-fee private schools in the literature (which has an impact on the generalisability of studies), a definition was created for the purpose of the larger commissioned study. Low-fee private schools were defined as those with tuition rates that were less than 50% of the minimum wage, which we took as a conservative figure. For Kenya, however, the mean school fee at case study schools was much less, at KSh 968, representing 14.4% of the minimum monthly wage rate in 2010 for a general labourer in Nairobi and Kisumu, 15.6% in all other municipalities, and 17.5% of the overall mean monthly wage for a general labourer (Ministry of Labour, 2010). [2] All study schools in Nairobi slums had a tuition fee at or below KSh 600, representing a maximum of 9% of the minimum monthly wage rate.

### Characteristics of Low-fee Private Schools

Table II presents the range and mean for a variety of characteristics for the 23 private schools in our study. Although the table provides a good overview of our case-study schools, it is important to examine these numbers with

some context and scrutiny. For example, while the lowest performing school had a pass rate of 71% on the eighth grade exit exam, it is important to contextualise what this means relative to nearby primary schools. As it happens, this mark ranked the school first in its zone and fourteenth in the district on KCPE exam rates in 2009, among all public and private schools. In general, case study schools regularly placed at or above the level of nearby public schools in terms of district-wide Grade 8 exam rankings. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that the top-scoring public school in the district ranked twenty-second overall, out of 81 schools. In other words, the top 21 schools in the district were all private schools, many of which were low-fee schools like the ones in our study.

	Range	Average
Years in operation	1-23	9
Monthly tuition (KSh)	200-2100	968
Monthly teacher salary (KSh)	1500-12000	6186
Number of students	35-856	220
Scholarship or subsidized tuition (%)	5-100	61
KCPE pass rate (%)	71-100	89

Table II. Description of the 23 private primary sample schools in Kenya.  
Source: Researcher fieldwork.

Several other characteristics require further explanation. Opponents of low-fee private schools have raised concerns about the 'fly by night' nature of the sector, but we found that, on average, case study schools had been in operation for nine years. Half were run by women. While interviewees informed us that some low-fee schools had shut down in recent years, this was purported to be the result of decreased enrolments and families' inability to pay after the post-election violence in 2007-2008. For example, two schools in our sample finished the 2007 school year with more than 300 students, but re-opened after the post-election violence with less than a tenth of their previous year's cohort. Conversely, one public primary school in Nakuru increased its enrolment by nearly 40% between 2007 and 2010. This led to serious concerns about capacity in the public sector, especially since the school had a student-teacher ratio of approximately 90 to 1 as a result.

As for funding and resources, Table II tells an interesting but incomplete story. Although the average monthly tuition across these schools was KSh 968 (under \$13), 40% of sample schools had tuition fees below KSh 675, including all the schools we visited in Nairobi slums (which had a mean tuition fee of KSh 450). With regard to teacher salaries, the average is skewed upward due to the disproportionate increases for head teachers. The majority of teachers averaged closer to KSh 4300 per month, while head teachers averaged approximately KSh 8100. Finally, it is important to note that while the percentage of students receiving scholarships or subsidised

tuition ranged from 5% to 100%, concessions to under a quarter of their s

More generally, in addition to overflow in demand for schooling, low-fee schools have been found to fill a particular niche: non-government schools are associated with community churches. In our interviewees, schools adhered to a moral philosophy that emphasized the proper educational experience of their students, and a curriculum. In terms of religious affiliation, schools were found to be non-selective. Church-enrolled Muslim students.

Furthermore, while all sample schools charged relatively low fees, many catered to poor children who could not afford to attend. 'free' public education in Kenya is not admitted, a child needs to have shoes, and donate a desk and chair, all of which are expensive. Verspoor (2008a) claims that the cost of education fees ranging from KSh 10,000 to KSh 20,000.

Of the schools in our sample, 40% charged less than the 10,000/year mark, and none charged more than the school range noted by Verspoor (2008a). Many schools offer some sort of scholarship or subsidy to poor students. fees. Ultimately, while Kenya has made significant progress, it seems that the majority of independent schools cater to poorer students and provide access to education outside the public system due to a severe underfunding of the relatively high fees.

Finally, the financial stability of schools depends entirely on the business acumen of the school owners. To attract a sufficient number of students, schools must appear to be promising. Nearly all schools are run by community members who wanted to improve the community, but who had no business experience under the regulatory framework. Many schools require school owners to register their school, and undergo a registration and/or monitoring process would require school officials. Complicated tax structures, especially in slum areas, are likely to undermine the long-term financial sustainability of schools. To grow in the aggregate, without financial aid organisations, individual schools need to ensure long-term sustainability to their students.

tuition ranged from 5% to 100%, only four schools provided such concessions to under a quarter of their students.

More generally, in addition to accounting for the public system overflow in demand for schooling, low-fee private schools in Kenya have been found to fill a particular niche regarding religious preference. Many non-government schools are associated with local religious groups and local community churches. In our interviews, school owners claimed that they adhered to a moral philosophy that parents believed is necessary for the proper educational experience of their children in addition to the national curriculum. In terms of religious affiliation, the schools in our study were found to be non-selective. Church-run schools, for instance, regularly enrolled Muslim students.

Furthermore, while all sample schools enrolled poor students and charged relatively low fees, many catered specifically to orphans and street children who could not afford to attend public schools. As mentioned above, 'free' public education in Kenya is not necessarily free of private cost. To be admitted, a child needs to have shoes, uniform shirt, socks, tunic and shorts, and donate a desk and chair, all of which costs an estimated KSh 4500. Verspoor (2008a) claims that the cost is actually higher, with public school fees ranging from KSh 10,000 to KSh 26,000 per year.

Of the schools in our sample, the majority fell below the KSh 10,000/year mark, and none charged more than the upper end of the public school range noted by Verspoor (2008a). The majority of schools provided some sort of scholarship or subsidy to students who could not afford tuition fees. Ultimately, while Kenya has many high-fee private primary schools, it seems that the majority of independent and/or unregistered schools target poorer students and provide access to education that is unavailable in the public system due to a severe under-supply of public school spaces and relatively high fees.

Finally, the financial stability of the low-fee private sector relies almost entirely on the business acumen of school proprietors and their ability to attract a sufficient number of students to pay their teachers, and this did not appear to be promising. Nearly all school owners we interviewed were local community members who wanted to provide a much-needed service to the community, but who had no business experience and little understanding of the regulatory framework. Many school owners were unaware of how or with whom to register their school, and some even feared that the registration and/or monitoring process would only result in having to pay bribes to officials. Complicated tax structures and issues regarding property rights, especially in slum areas, are likely to play a further role in frustrating the long-term financial sustainability of the sector. While the sector is continuing to grow in the aggregate, without financial assistance from the government or aid organisations, individual schools are unlikely to provide assurance of long-term sustainability to their students.

Range	Average
1-23	9
200-2100	968
1500-12000	6186
35-856	220
5-100	61
71-100	89

many sample schools in Kenya.

Further explanation. Opponents of low-fee schools about the 'fly by night' nature of the schools, case study schools had been in the past run by women. While interviewees said that schools had shut down in recent years, this was due to decreased enrolments and families' inability to pay fees in 2007-2008. For example, two schools in 2007 school year with more than 300 students experienced election violence with less than a tenth of the students remaining. Conversely, one public primary school in the same area saw an early 40% increase between 2007 and 2010. This was due to a change in the public sector, especially since the 2007 election of approximately 90 to 1 as a result.

Table II tells an interesting but complex story. The average monthly tuition across these schools in our sample schools had tuition fees below KSh 1000. Schools visited in Nairobi slums (which had a high level of poverty) had a regard to teacher salaries, the average is KSh 1000. Monthly salaries increase for head teachers. The average monthly salary is KSh 4300 per month, while head teachers receive KSh 8100. Finally, it is important to note that many schools receive scholarships or subsidised

### Pedagogical Considerations

We found that the pupil-teacher ratio reached 80:1 in a government school, but was about 15:1 in a non-government school in Nairobi slums, Kisumu, Eldoret West and Nakuru.[3] In earlier analyses, Tooley and Dixon (2005) found the student-teacher ratio in government schools to be 60:1, as opposed to 21:1 in low-fee private schools in Kibera. Musani (2008) also claimed that independent schools had lower student-teacher ratios and better facilities than public schools. Regarding teacher pay, we found that, in general, public schools can pay teachers as much as twice the salary of top earners in non-government schools and offer pensions and health insurance. Despite the fact that we found teacher salaries to be as low as KSh 1500 per month in private schools (and as high as KSh 35,000 in public schools), teacher absenteeism in private schools was reported to be lower or non-existent.

We also found that class periods in public schools are meant to be 35 minutes regardless of subject, whereas, class length in non-government schools may be altered according to the demands of the curriculum. Furthermore, while public schools are obligated to maintain national schedules (7.30 am to 12.30 pm for grades 1-4, and 7 am to 4 pm for older students), non-government schools can open as demanded by the parents. Some schools in our study opened as early as 6 am, catering to parents in peri-urban areas with long commutes, and closed at 6 pm. Public schools are normally open five days per week, with three months of holiday (one month after each of three terms), while many non-government schools remain open on Saturdays and year-round.

As a result of our interviews and site visits, we also found many differences with regard to teacher hiring/firing practices, as well as differences in financial support and funding streams. For example, public schools use teachers of standard quality but find it difficult to transfer or sanction a teacher for absenteeism or non-performance. Non-government schools, conversely, have flexibility in hiring and dismissal procedures. Public schools may appoint teachers without regard to their education philosophy; non-government schools often appoint teachers as a result of their education philosophy.

Public schools may appoint teachers from widely dispersed areas; non-government schools often appoint teachers from the same village community, and frequently those who have graduated from the same school in which they teach. Although knowledge of the local community is seen as a benefit, this can have adverse effects, since local recruitment may result in a limited supply of teachers (especially those with strong educational backgrounds). Public schools depend on the government for financial support; non-government schools depend less on the government for financial support. Often the school management committees, church committees and parent groups in non-government schools may take a more active role because they may feel they 'own' the school to a greater extent.

In several instances, we opportunistically visited the schools we visited. In these cases, particular non-government school for the interviewees mentioned the school's 'concerns' about the ability of parents to speak up about concerns. Finally, due to concerns about female students often noted that they could provide greater 'protection' than t

### Regulatory Environment

The complex structure of the Kenyan education presents a barrier towards monitoring (Verspoor, 2008b). The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (comprised of 10 divisions) and the Kenya Institute of Education and Human Resource Development are the main regulatory bodies (World Bank, 2008). Furthermore, the responsibility of the Boards of Governors and District Education Offices. However, BOG members are not necessarily qualified for their role towards their constituents (World Bank, 2008). Parent-teacher associations rely on Board of Governors and District Education Offices, but there is limited communication. Finally, transitions from public to private schools are poorly aligned in the system. There has been a loss of trust, which is not helped by the fact that many schools (World Bank, 2008). The following issues were most apparent during our analysis

### Registration Procedures

In addition to the complex administrative structure, schools are faced with a complex set of procedures (see Box 1). Glassman and Sullivan (2008) note that, with this overly complex procedure has led to delays. Whether it is a result of delayed committee meetings, or cumbersome procedures, a significant amount of time, potentially lost, is spent by private school owners with whom we spoke prior to being registered, knowing that they will face immediate consequences. This issue is even more acute when attempting to register with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the fact that many schools do not meet the requirements for which their school resides (Musani, 2008).

In several instances, we opportunistically spoke with family members at the schools we visited. In these cases we asked why they accessed that particular non-government school for their children. Most of these informal interviewees mentioned the school's 'control' or discipline, and often talked about the ability of parents to speak to teachers/principal if there were concerns. Finally, due to concerns about sexual harassment, parents of female students often noted that they felt that the non-government school could provide greater 'protection' than the overcrowded public system.

### Regulatory Environment

The complex structure of the Kenyan administration system with regard to education presents a barrier towards effective policy implementation and monitoring (Verspoor, 2008b). The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (comprised of 10 divisions), Kenya Teachers Service Commission, Kenya Institute of Education, and Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development are all involved in education provision (World Bank, 2008). Furthermore, the management of public schools is the responsibility of the Boards of Governors (BOGs) who report to District Education Offices. However, BOG members are political appointees who are not necessarily qualified for their roles, and may not accurately represent their constituents (World Bank, 2008). Additionally, school-level parent-teacher associations rely on BOGs to pass their messages on to District Education Offices, but there are often breakdowns in the lines of communication. Finally, transitions from primary to secondary schools are poorly aligned in the system. There have been reports of student files being lost, which is not helped by the fact that there is little local accountability in schools (World Bank, 2008). The following highlights some of the issues that were most apparent during our analysis.

### Registration Procedures

In addition to the complex administrative system, private school owners are faced with a complex set of procedures for opening and registering a school (see Box 1). Glassman and Sullivan (2006) contend that the main problems with this overly complex procedure have to do with inadequate manpower. Whether it is a result of delayed inspections, lost forms, postponed committee meetings, or cumbersome paperwork, this process can take a significant amount of time, potentially delaying school openings. Thus, many private school owners with whom we spoke pre-emptively opened their doors prior to being registered, knowing that there was insufficient monitoring to face immediate consequences. This issue of private schools opening without even attempting to register with the Ministry of Education is exacerbated by the fact that many schools do not meet the criterion of owning the land on which their school resides (Musani, 2008).



Application for registration of a school is made in a prescribed form and is submitted to the Registrar through the district, municipal, or city education officer.

Application form is accompanied by the following documents:

- Inspection report from the public health officer indicating whether the institution complies with the set of health standards
- Inspection report from the inspector of schools
- Minutes of the district education board in which the application was discussed
- Certification of registration of business name from the registrar general
- An application for the approval of the district manager
- Names of school managers and copies of their education certificates
- School size in terms of land (rules differ depending on locality)
- Proof of ownership of the land on which the proposed school is now or is to be built

Once the registrar receives the application, it is presented to the Ministerial Committee on Registration of Schools for evaluation in accordance with the relevant provisions.

If the application is approved, it is forwarded to the Ministry of Education for authorization.

The Minister issue [*sic*] two letters to the manager of the school approving and authorizing the operation of the school.

The Registrar of the school will then issue a certificate to the institution after the final inspection.

Box 1. Official procedure for opening a private school in Kenya.

Source: Glassman & Sullivan, 2006.

However, it is possible for schools to be registered even if they are not under the Ministry of Education. Schools that do not own land can register as self-help groups or community organisations through the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, but they are then registered as businesses for taxation purposes. It does not seem appropriate that basic education institutions (particularly those that are non-profit) following the national curriculum, and established because of excess demand due to insufficient public school supply, should be taxed differently from other formal (government) schools. While we do not claim that all schools registered with the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services are non-profit, the majority of schools we visited claimed to reinvest their income into materials and facilities. Many school owners and directors claimed to pay themselves a lower salary than their teachers.

#### *Land Ownership: related issues*

As indicated above, the condition for low-fee private school owners, Because many low-fee private school owners reside and are unable to register with the Ministry of Education, data on their numbers and enrolment in the registration process with the Ministry of Education Services makes data collection at the district level complicated, as the two ministries do not have databases in their statistical analyses.

More pointedly, however, while the Ministry of Education has tried to encourage school owners from registering with the Ministry, this has also contributed to limiting the number of schools in slum areas. Due to the fact that schools in slum areas are generally built on land that is not provided for public schooling, as noted in the fieldwork, Musani (2008) estimated that there are 10,000 students in a five-kilometre radius living in the middle of Mathare Valley who do not attend school through the expansive slum schools. This is one of the main reasons for the high number of schools in Nairobi.

#### *Donor and Other Actor Activities*

Although there are a number of international donors in Kenya, the programmes/activities of these donors are limited. The major bilateral aid donor is the Canadian International Development Cooperation Agency [CIDA], a burgeoning sector, but have yet to fund the operation of private schools. The World Bank has been involved in education work in Kenya. However, the Sector Support Programme II (KES-SSP II) was intended to provide some assistance in the form of grants, although the exact nature of support is not clear.

On the other hand, the IFC has been involved in the sector. Capital, a private operating foundation, was established in order to gain an understanding of the sector. In the mapping initiative was expected to be completed, no information was available on the work of the IFC and Gray Matters Consulting, two organisations entering the sector, particularly the number of low-fee private schools is funded by the government.

*Land Ownership: related issues*

As indicated above, the condition of land ownership poses significant issues for low-fee private school owners, but also for the wider education sector. Because many low-fee private schools do not own the land on which they reside and are unable to register with the Ministry of Education, available data on their numbers and enrolments are limited. Additionally, the dual registration process with the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services makes data collection at the national level significantly more complicated, as the two ministries do not appear to cross-reference school databases in their statistical analyses.

More pointedly, however, while the land requirement precludes private school owners from registering with the Ministry of Education, land issues have also contributed to limiting the number of public schools established in slum areas. Due to the fact that slums are technically illegal settlements, public schools are generally built outside them. This has led to the under-provision of public schooling, as noted in the literature above and in our own fieldwork. Musani (2008) estimated that there was one public school for each 10,000 students in a five-kilometre radius in some urban slums. Thus, people living in the middle of Mathare Valley, for example, would have to send their children through the expansive slum in order to reach the nearest public school. This is one of the main reasons for the expansion of low-fee private schools in Nairobi.

*Donor and Other Actor Activities in Private Education in Kenya*

Although there are a number of international aid organisations and NGOs in Kenya, the programmes/activities of these organisations in private education are limited. The major bilateral aid organisations in the country (i.e. the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA], DFID, the Japan International Cooperation Agency [JICA] and USAID) are aware of the burgeoning sector, but have yet to develop projects focusing on low-fee private schools. The World Bank has also been limited in its private education work in Kenya. However, the recently designed Kenya Education Sector Support Programme II (KESSP), although public sector focused, is intended to provide some assistance to private schools by way of textbooks, although the exact nature of support is unclear.

On the other hand, the IFC has recently commissioned Gray Matters Capital, a private operating foundation, to map the country's private schools in order to gain an understanding of the size and needs of the sector. While the mapping initiative was expected to have been completed by the time of writing, no information was available about the results. Nonetheless, the work of the IFC and Gray Matters Capital indicates the likelihood of other organisations entering the sector, particularly if that study shows that the number of low-fee private schools is far greater than currently estimated by the government.



process can take as little as five months from procuring land to the school opening.

Finally, given the complications of registration, many private schools belong to the Kenya Independent Schools Association (KISA), in order to increase their legitimacy. According to its director, KISA aims to support these schools from its own budgetary resources coming from membership subscriptions and donor support. Support was mentioned in the form of advocacy to lower government restrictions, networking, capacity building, micro-finance and scholarships for needy students. While KISA's plans for achieving its goals and the extent of the work accomplished were unclear, it seemed that simply becoming a member provided a sense of legitimacy for member schools. Ultimately, while international aid agencies have taken a relatively minor role in assisting private primary education up to this point, providing technical and other assistance to organisations representing private schools may be an effective means of assisting the low-fee private school sector as a whole.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

By presenting data from our commissioned case study on Kenya, this chapter provided a description of 23 low-fee schools in four districts (i.e. Nairobi, Nakuru, Eldoret West and Kisumu), the challenges and issues they face, and the regulatory context within which they operate. Due in large part to land rights issues, we found public schooling options to be woefully inadequate for the number of school-aged children in the country's largest slums. With a strong desire for education, many individual proprietors and small community organisations have established low-fee schools that are accessible to children whose parents are unwilling to allow them to travel the distances necessary to reach the nearest public school. Even those old enough to make the trip are often greeted by educational institutions that are severely overcrowded. Therefore, we contend that low-fee private schools are meeting a demand for accessible schooling in some of the country's poorest neighbourhoods. Based on our case study, we make the following recommendations for the public and private education sectors in Kenya.

All schools, whether operated by the government or any other organisation, should be listed under one ministry. This centralised listing procedure would allow all schools to be recognised under one registry, providing significant benefits for assessing the size of the public and private education sectors. It would also help determine the overall proportion of out-of-school youth in the country. The central listing should contain schools in the following categories.

- Category A: operated by the Ministry of Education or Municipal Councils
- Category B: operated by churches or mosques
- Category C: operated by private proprietors



implications for the type and amount of aid for education in Kenya in the future, affecting the public and private sectors.

Finally, while the demand for low-fee private schools in Kenya is unlikely to diminish soon, there are two significant barriers to the growth and sustainability of the sector. Arguably, as highlighted above, the largest obstacle is the issue of (official) land rights. This stems largely from the fact that slums are technically illegal settlements, and therefore land cannot be purchased or owned. While land outside of slums can be owned and registered by official government agencies or owned and managed by tribal authorities, only schools on land in the former category are considered primary schools under the authority of the Ministry of Education. Since land ownership is a registration requirement, this matter will continue to hinder many low-fee private schools' attempts at becoming recognised as legitimate education institutions. Unfortunately, the land issue has deep historical roots, and is far beyond the purview of the Ministry of Education.

Ultimately, insufficient supply (in quantity and quality) of public schools seems to be the overriding reason for the rise in low-fee private schooling in Kenya. While this issue is most prevalent in urban slums, there is additional evidence of this phenomenon in rural areas where infrastructure, roads and public services are limited. These independently owned low-fee schools therefore address a very important need in the lives of many poorer Kenyans. While this sector faces some significant obstacles, it seems inevitable that low-fee private schools will play an important role in assisting Kenya to reach its goal of universal access to basic education.

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#### Notes

- [1] A catchment sample is analogous to how a biologist might survey for a particular species. A boundary is drawn around a particular area and all species within it are counted. Since no government agency had adequate data on non-government schools, this technique would have been the only way to answer the question of how many non-government schools there were in a particular area where all schools had been identified and counted.
- [2] Exchange rate at time of fieldwork was 75.78 Kenyan shillings to the US dollar on 1 June 2010.
- [3] The public school figure is an estimated average, although the pupil-teacher ratio was as high as 90:1 in lower-primary public schools.

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*Low-fee Private Schooling*

## CHAPTER 6

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# Scaling Up: cha low-fee private slums of Lagos,

JOANNA HÄRMÄ & FO

### Introduction

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CHAPTER 6

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## **Scaling Up: challenges facing low-fee private schools in the slums of Lagos, Nigeria<sup>[1]</sup>**

**JOANNA HÄRMÄ & FOLASADE ADEFISAYO**

### **Introduction**

Lagos is the thriving economic heart of Nigeria that exists (to some extent) outside of the oil industry, and it is characterised by great wealth, entrepreneurialism and innovation on the one hand, while in certain areas there is still great inertia and apathy, with many living in poverty. Some public services have gone from non-existence to strength in recent years, a highly visible example being the clean-up of Lagos's streets, with the ubiquitous piles of rubbish having been banished. For many, though, the quest for essential services of acceptable quality and in sufficient quantity has led them to the private sector, education being a prime example. Alongside a modest public education system there is a rapidly expanding private education sector, with 12,098 private schools in Lagos State in the 2010-2011 school year compared with the government's 1606 schools (Lagos State Government, 2011a).

The education landscape in Lagos is dominated to such an extent by private schools that they account for 70% of pre-primary- and primary-level pupils (Härmä, 2011b). The most common is the low-fee private school, operating on tight margins, and catering to poorer communities and the less well-off in middle-class neighbourhoods. These schools can be found across the city and in outlying peri-urban areas, sometimes in great concentration. They are often hard to find, and want to remain so, as many do not meet government norms and run the risk of being closed down. They may be housed in apartment buildings, behind unassuming metal gates, and in shoddy makeshift structures. Often the only clue to their existence is the sound of children's voices in the air, or the sight of uniformed pupils emerging unexpectedly from anonymous gates and doorways.