

Out of School Children in Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia

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Abstract - The purpose of the study was to assess major factors that keep children out of school and create pressure on students to drop from the second cycle primary education in Oromia Regional State. Based on the purpose of the research, three basic questions were drawn to guide the entire research. The research method employed was a concurrent mixed model using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. A blend of survey design with deep analysis of cases at the woreda and school levels was used. Multiple instruments (questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions) were used in collecting data. Educational officials working at the various levels of the system, school principals, teachers, parents of the OOSCs and PTAs, KETBs and dropouts were used as sources of data. Various documents (policies, strategies, programs/ESDPs, annual statistical abstracts and related documents) were also used as secondary sources of data. The reflection of those who were truly part of the problem was reported from the point of insider's view. Different sampling techniques such as simple random sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling and availability sampling were used. The sample zones, woredas and schools were selected randomly. Overall, 34 woredas and 68 primary schools were used for the quantitative data while 10 woredas and 10 schools were used for qualitative data. The quantitative data were systematically organized, categorized and tabulated using SPSS and excel packages. Statistical tools (graph, tables, frequencies, percentages, weighted means values) were used. The qualitative data gathered through interviews and FGDs were coded and organized into a variety of meaningful themes through case-by-case and cross case analysis. The findings of the study revealed that the Out of school children (OOSC) including dropouts were mainly from the poor parents engaged in hand-to-mouth economic activities, farming, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist activities, weaving and other small business (vender). The unfriendly nature of the schools and the direct costs and contributions expected of parents and students were reported as concerns. The findings of the study revealed that socio-cultural and economic factors like early marriage and teenage pregnancy, inclination towards religious education, less value given to education by parents and their low involvement in education of their children and the need for child labor were reported among the barriers that kept children out of schools. Conversely, it was revealed that child related factors (lack of interest for education, illness or disability among children and over-agedness) and school related factors were not among the major causes that kept children out of school. On the other hand, the findings revealed the existence of policy and public supports as well as the commitment of authorities (provision of free textbook, expansion of schools to rural areas as well as the abolishment of school fee) to encourage and attract OOSC to schools. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended creation of the required level of awareness among the local communities and parents, and promoting the education of parents themselves through various modalities, creation of attractive school environment, designing support mechanisms that enable parents to generate better income and thereby send their children to school that may mitigate the root causes of out of school children.

Keywords - Out of School Children, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education has been recognized as a vibrant engine for economic growth and development. Worldwide, it is recognized as having a potential to augment productivity,

empower people, improve individuals' earnings, create healthy population, promote democracy and the entire economy of a nation (Mundy, and Verger (2015); Hanushek, and Wößmann, 2007). It helps to build a stock of quality human capital for development. It is a foundation for the

advancement of science and technology, knowledge production and application. Overall, investments made on education are by and large projected to bring wide-ranging private and social benefits which in turn resulted in the well-being of a society. According to human capital theory, investment made in human capital is essential because of the expected returns later in life (Machlu, 1982, Appleton and Teas (1998). In general, education is considered as remarkably imperative to individual development and the society as whole.

Since the setting of Education for All (EFA) targets, countries around the world ushered commitments to expand access to primary education. The international human rights conventions have also recognized the right to education. This right has been acknowledged by a string of UN Conventions, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which acquired the status of international law in 1990.

According to Article 28 of the Convention, governments have the responsibility of making primary education free, compulsory and accessible to all. Manifestly, UN Member States have adopted the Universal Primary Education (Goal 2 of both EFA - Jomtien, 1990; reaffirmed in Dakar, 2000) and the MDGs in 2000 (UNESCO, 2010). Evidently, these initiatives have led to enhanced educational participation and completion primary education than ever before in several countries.

Despite all these efforts, as reported by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) issues like getting out-of-school children into classrooms has been reflected as an urgent challenge ever since the international community adopted the six EFA goals in Dakar in 2000. It was also clearly stated that about 63 million primary school-age children were out of school in 2016. According to the same document, of the above-indicated figure, Sub-Saharan Africa Countries account for more than one-half of all out-of-school children worldwide; indeed, with increasing number of out of school children. This exhibit growing apprehension as the pace of progress towards universal primary education has been slowing over the past several years. It was also indicated that, the declarations emerging from the EFA High-Level Group meetings in Addis Ababa in February 2010 and in Jomtien in March 2011 call on governments to scale up efforts to address the problem of out-of-school children. Despite all these efforts, the achievements being made have been remained fragile. It is with this background that countries have moved towards

sustainable development goals (SDGs) having 17 goals with goal 4 which mainly focuses on inclusive education. Though children are expected to go to school, millions of children have remained out of school owing to the push and pulls factors. Several studies indicated that factors such as economic, political, socio-cultural and school related factors have prevented children from schooling (Habtamu, 2002; Huisman, and Smits, 2014)).

The government has continuously prioritized investments in this sector, which has contributed to a rapid expansion of access to all education levels along with a sharp increase in the number of teachers and schools. For instance, the second cycle primary education has expanded from 15.8 million students in 2009/10 to 20.8 million students in 2016/17 (MoE, 2014; MoE, 2017). This resulted in an increase of net enrolment rate from 65.5% in 2009/10 to 74.4% in 2016/17 academic year. On the other hand, reports from the Ministry (MoE, 2014; MoE, 2017) depict that the system is not that efficient in moving first cycle completers to the second lever of primary education. For instance, national reports on dropout rate indicate that the dropout rate has shown an increasing trend since 2012/13 regardless of the expansion of the system. For instance, the dropout rate which was 7.8 in 2012/13 has increased to 11.65 in 2015/16, putting the efficiency of the system under questions.

With this in mind, the researchers assessed factors for students' dropout of primary education in Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia. In so doing, it seems important to see students' dropout from different angles- social, economic, political and school related factors.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Oromia Regional National Regional State is one of the nine regional states of Ethiopia that has shown remarkable progress in primary education. The regional has continuously prioritized primary education which has contributed to a rapid expansion of access along with a sharp increase in the number of students. For example, the gross enrolment of primary education has expanded from 3.5 million in 2011/12 to 8.0 million in 2017/18 (OEB, 2011; OEB, 2018). As reported by MoE (2017), the Region has become one of the regional states that managed to increase its primary education net enrolment at an unusual rate between 2007 and 2017. For instance, the regional primary education NER of 82% in 2007/08 has grown to 99.4% in 2017/18. Similarly, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for primary education has grown from 0.6 in 2002/03 to 0.87 in 2017/18 (MoE, 2003; MoE, 2008 and OEB/Oromia

Education Bureau, 2018). Moreover, the Regional State has committed over 20% of its budget to education sector of which the lion share goes to general education (OEB, 2015).

Despite the significant achievements made in increasing access to education and narrowing gender disparity, yet significant number of children have remained out of school. This is particularly true for the second cycle primary education. As reported by OEB (2018) about 45.7% of children of official age (over 1.7million children) were out of the second cycle primary education in Oromia regional state in 2017/18. This problem of OOSC (out of school children) at this level has been also aggravated by high rate of dropout and repetition. According to OEB (2018), dropout rates were 14.1% and 11.8% at grade five and grade seven of the second cycle primary education in 2017/18 respectively. Over 6% of students also was also repeaters in these two grades in the same academic year. This shows that the magnitude of the problem is still challenging the education system.

Essentially, the reasons for out of school children extend over supply to demand side factors of schooling. While the internal (system and sub system) and external environments of the school are directly and indirectly related to out of school children, the internal (system and sub system) and external (supera system) of the school environment have direct and sometimes immediate effect on keeping children out of school. Nevertheless, to the knowledge of the researchers, what determinants keep children out of school has never been fully researched in the context of Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia. Only few studies (Habtamu, 2002; MoE, and UNICEF, 2012) were conducted on identifying the usual /customary/ factors for out of school children at the national. They were not comprehensive and did not manage to single out the key determinants and newly emerging concerns that keep children out of school. Overall, this study was triggered to examine the major determinants and newly emerging concerns that keep children out of school the second cycle of primary education in Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia.

2.1 Research Questions

The following basic questions were set to guide the entire research work.

1. What are the major determinants that keep school age children¹ out of school in Oromia National Regional State?

¹ School age children or children of official age are those children who are between the age of 7-10 for grades 1-4 (first cycle primary

2. What new concerns keep children out of school in Oromia National Regional State?
3. What possible and workable strategies could be suggested in the context Oromia National Regional to bring all school age children to schools?

2.2 Objectives the Study

The objective of this study was to assess the determinants and new concerns that keep children out of second cycle primary education and to suggest workable strategies that enable attract out of school children to the education system. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- a) Identify school related determinants that keep school age children out of school
- b) Examine the socio- cultural determinants that keep school age children out of school
- c) Assess the economic factors that keep school age children out of school
- d) Scrutinize the newly emerging concerns that keep school age children out of school
- e) To suggest workable strategies to alleviate the challenges encountered to attract out of school children to the education system

2.3 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Oromia National Regional State. Representative sample zones, woredas² (districts), and schools were included among others. In terms of content, this study emphasized on school related, economic and socio-cultural factors and newly emerging concerns related to out of school children.

2.4 Operational Definition of Terms

Excluded children: children of school age (11-14 age for primary), who for various reasons, are unable to enroll in either second cycle primary schools, or whose schooling progress is repressed by various factors.

Out of school children/OOSC: according to UNESCO (2013), encompasses a wide range of realities and refer to children *who didn't get access to a school* in their community, children who were *enrolled but didn't attend school* and those who *dropped out of the education system* for various reasons. In the study OOSC is used to refer to those excluded from the second cycle primary education.

education) and those between the age of 11- 14 for grades 5-8 (second cycle primary education).

² Woreda: (may be district in English) is small administrative division having many villages and managed by local government

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Out of school children are those who have never been in school for various reasons. Essentially, the major factors for out of school children vary from region to region and other specific contexts. To identify the major determinants and newly emerging concerns, the following framework was used to guide the entire study.

The above framework was used as a guiding implement for the major factors that keep children out of school. It indicates the major determinants and emerging concerns that could be prevailed in the system. The framework has also assisted the link and interconnectedness of the major factors along with the newly emerging concerns aggravating the challenges than ever before.

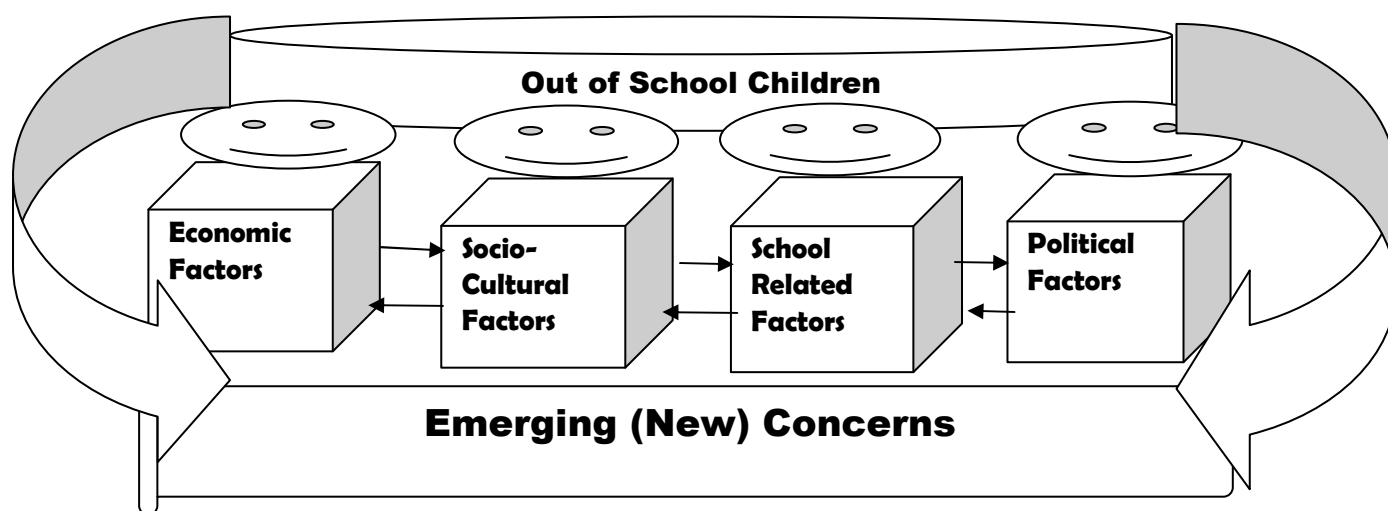


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Method

The research method used in this study was a concurrent mixed model that involves both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The study was started by conducting document review (document analysis) and then followed by the actual field visits that included – the various echelons of the education system of Ethiopia. Woredas and schools were the major focus of the study in collecting various data on the major determinants and newly emerging concerns in relation out of school children. The data for this research was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include out of school children, community members, teachers, primary school principals, supervisors and education officials. Review of policy documents (ETP, 1994), strategies, programs (ESDPs), annual statistical abstracts, Mid Term Reports and GEQIP related documents, national policy directions and plans (PRSP, PASDEP and GTP) as well as international commitments (EFA, UPE, MDG) along with preceding national and international research findings and information on the current practices and problem in Ethiopia were also used as a secondary sources of data. Overall, regional, woreda and school level actors were used as sources of data.

4.2 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed a multi-site approach to reach the research participants /respondents/. The geographic scope of the study was region wide covering all the twenty zones Oromia Regional State. The sites include; Regional Education Bureau (REB), Woreda Education Offices (WEOs), and Schools and Kebeles/villages. The sample was representative of all zones, woredas and primary schools to address diversity, thus enabling the generalization of the results. The procedure followed was, first 10 sample zones were randomly selected to ensure enough representation of all zones and then 2-4 sample woredas were selected from each zone based on the seriousness of the dropout problems in the region. Following this, two complete primary schools were selected from each woreda for quantitative data gathering. However, from among the selected woredas and schools, one woreda and one school for qualitative case studies were picked purposively based on the context of the woredas or schools related to the problem under investigation.

4.2.1 Sampling structure

The sampling structure and procedures of selection among all schools in the country were as follows:

Table 1: Sampling Techniques

No	Sampling Unit	Sampling technique
1	Zones (primary sampling unit)	Random sampling
2	Woredas (secondary sampling unit)	Random sampling, purposively sampling for conducting case studies
3	Primary schools (tertiary sampling unit)	Random sampling for both rural & urban and also purposive sampling for conducting case studies
4	Principals	Purposive sampling
5	Teachers and students	Systematic random sampling, certain grades from second cycle primary schools with purposive sampling, snowball sampling as needed
6	PTA* and KETB* members (tertiary sampling unit)	Availability sampling
8	Regional & Woreda level Education Officials and experts (tertiary sampling unit)	Purposive sampling
9	OOSC (tertiary sampling unit)	Snowball sampling
	Parents/guardians of out of school young children (tertiary sampling unit),	Snowball sampling

* PTA=Parent teacher association; KETB=kebele (village) education & training board

4.2.2 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame at each sampling stage was prepared. For the primary and secondary sampling units, list of zones and woredas in the selected zones were produced using fresh data obtained from Regional Education Bureau. For the tertiary sampling units, list schools were obtained from the selected woredas. This was followed by the selection of teachers, out of school children and their parents, list of PTA and KETB members and the principals from the selected schools.

4.2.3 Sample Selection

The sample was selected in three stages. It involved the selection of woredas from the selected zones. This was done using Probability Proportion to Size (PPS) procedure, where size was the total number of woredas in each zone. The first stage of sampling of woredas within each zone was done by

the researchers. The second stage was selection of schools using Probability Proportion to Size (PPS) procedure, where size was the total number of primary schools in the selected woredas. In each sampled Woreda, a fresh list of schools was used to select two primary schools having second cycle grades (5-8). This second stage of sampling of schools was also done prior to the fieldwork.

In the third stage of sampling, from each selected school, a fresh list of teachers, PTA members and principals were prepared, though it is time consuming. Using this list, a systematic random sampling technique was used to select teachers while the school principals, PTA and KETB members were selected using purposive sampling technique. Regional Education Bureaus and Woreda officials & experts were also contacted purposely.

The table below summarizes, the sample woredas and schools that were included in study.

Table 2: Sample Woredas and Schools

Zone	Sample Woredas/schools for Quantitative Data		Sample Woredas/schools for Qualitative Data	
	Woredas/kebele	Primary Schools	Woredas	Primary schools
Arsi	2	4	1	1
Bale	4	8	1	1
Borena	4	8	1	1
North Shewa	3	6	1	1

East Hararge	3	6	1	1
East Shoa	4	8	1	1
Guji	4	8	1	1
West Arsi	3	6	1	1
South West Shewa	3	6	1	1
West Hararge	4	8	1	1
Total	34	68	10	10

After determining the number of woredas (34) to be covered by quantitative data, 2 primary schools that have second cycle grades (grade 5-8) were taken randomly from each woredas as a sample. Concerning qualitative data, one woreda was selected for quantitative data collection.

Following this, from each woreda, one primary school was included as a sample for qualitative data. In all cases, the data was collected from target population that was selected using the following techniques.

Table 3: Participants at Different Levels

No	Level	Participants	No. of participants	Sampling Techniques	Data gathering instrument/s
1	REB	REB officials	2	purposive sampling	Interview
2	WEO	Officials and experts	2	purposive sampling	Interview
3	Primary schools	Principals	1 each	purposive sampling	Questionnaire
		Teachers	20 %	Systematic random	Questionnaire
		OOSC	4-8 each	Stratified random or snowball	Interview
		Parents (PTA members), KETB members	3 each	Purposive sampling	FGD

4.3 Instruments of Data Collection

Multiple instruments: questionnaire, structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and checklists were used. The following were the tools used after reaching at consensus with the client during the inception report.

Questionnaire: Questionnaire was employed to gather information from large number of people: school principals and teachers. The questionnaire was prepared based on the research theme (identifying the root causes that kept children out of school and forced them to dropout) and its policy implications and the basic (guiding) questions developed for the study.

Structured interviews: Interviews were held with selected educational officials and experts working at the regional and woreda levels. Primarily interviews were conducted with children who are out of school. Parents/guardians (parents whose young children were out of school), school principals of their respective school and teachers were also consulted through interviews.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD): Discussions were made with relatively small groups of people (4-8) having similar background and experiences about their school that consists of community members (PTA, KETB), students' representatives of selected primary. Issues for discussions were designed in advance. The purpose of the FGDs were to elicit ideas, insights, and experiences of key actors in a social context, which helps people, stimulate each other and consider their own scrutiny along with the views of others.

Document Reviews: all the relevant documents (ETP of the nation, strategies, programs (ESDP I-V), Education Statistics Annual Abstracts of MoE and OEB, GEQIP and all SIP related documents (the Blue Book, the School Improvement Framework, the technical paper on GEQIP, the school grant guidelines, etc.) along with previous research findings on out of school children reviewed.

4.4 Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained through questionnaire were systematically organized, categorized and tabulated for all zones and woredas. The researchers did make use of the

inputs (quantitative data) which were systematically computerized using SPSS, excel and other appropriate packages. Following this, the collected data were systematically organized, presented, analyzed and interpreted. In the process of data analysis and interpretations, appropriate statistical tools (graph, tables, frequencies, percentages, weighted mean values and other relevant statically tools (both descriptive and regression analysis) were used. The qualitative data gathered through interviews and FGDs were coded and organized into a variety of meaningful themes and categories for narration. This was followed by, case-by-case and cross case analysis. Interview data were transcribed and then used as direct quotation to show direct views and words as they were told by the informants. Due attention was given to the reflections of respondents in analyzing and reporting (from the insiders' view of the research participants). Indeed, the entire data (quantitative and qualitative) of the study were critically analyzed, interpreted and reported in an integrated manner.

4.5 Ethical Consideration

Serious attention was given to the rights of participants in the study. After selection of sample respondents, each participant was briefed on the purpose of the study and confidentiality of the information each participant provides. Prior to data gathering from each participant, the consent and willingness of respondents were secured. The researchers also greatly valued and respected the participants' voices and contribution in the study.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 The Status of Out of School Children

Educational system's coverage of the school age population is measured using gross and net enrolment rates³. Since the inception of ESDP I in 1997, there has been a dramatic increase in primary school enrolment in Ethiopia in general and in Oromia in particular. For instance, the second cycle primary education gross enrolment which was about 1.9 million in 2012 was raised to about 2.6 million in 2017/18 academic year in Oromia Regional State. The increasing trend of enrolment of children of official age has also continued over the last two decades. As reported by OEB (2018), the Region has managed to enroll about 2.1 million children of official age (10-14) to its second cycle primary education. The table below, however, shows that

the achievement of second cycle primary education in Oromia Regional State is still a daunting challenge.

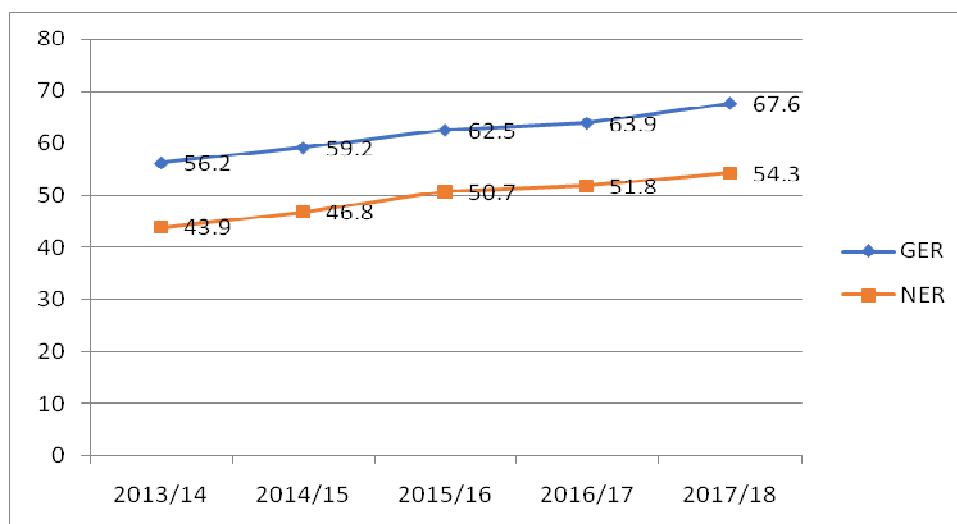
The bellow graph shows that GER and NER which were 56.2% and 43.9% in 2013/14 were raised to 67.6% and 54.3% in 2017/18 respectively. Relatively, there was better percentage increase for NER than GER between 2013/14 and 2017/18 (20.3 percentage increment for GER and 23.6 percentage increase for NER). The graph also shows the rate of increase for NER was higher (8.3%) between 2014/15 and 2015/16 than the last two academic years though there were some irregularities between years both in terms of GER and NER.

Further scrutiny of the above data shows not only slow progress of GER and NER over the last five years but also indicate the presence of huge number of children of official age out of the second cycle primary education in Oromia Regional State. For instance, about 1.7 million (about 45.7%) children of official age (age 11-14) were not in the second cycle primary education in Oromia Regional State in 2017/18 academic year(OEB, 2018). This clearly shows the existence of large number of OOSC children at second cycle primary education which implies the seriousness of the problem of exclusion despite the commitments to provide primary education for all citizens. This problem of OOSC might also be further aggravated by the presence of relatively high rate of dropouts in the second cycle primary education as indicated below.

The review of official documents and the reflections of various actors clearly revealed that dropout rate of the second cycle primary education is still high (11.5% in 2016/17 academic year). In fact, the magnitude of the problem (dropouts from grades 5-8) varies somewhat from grade to grade in the Region. For instance, the dropout rate ranges from 9.5% in grade 8 to 14.1% in grade 5. Worse than this, gender wise comparison shows that female dropout rate is higher in all grades under consideration in 2016/17 academic year.

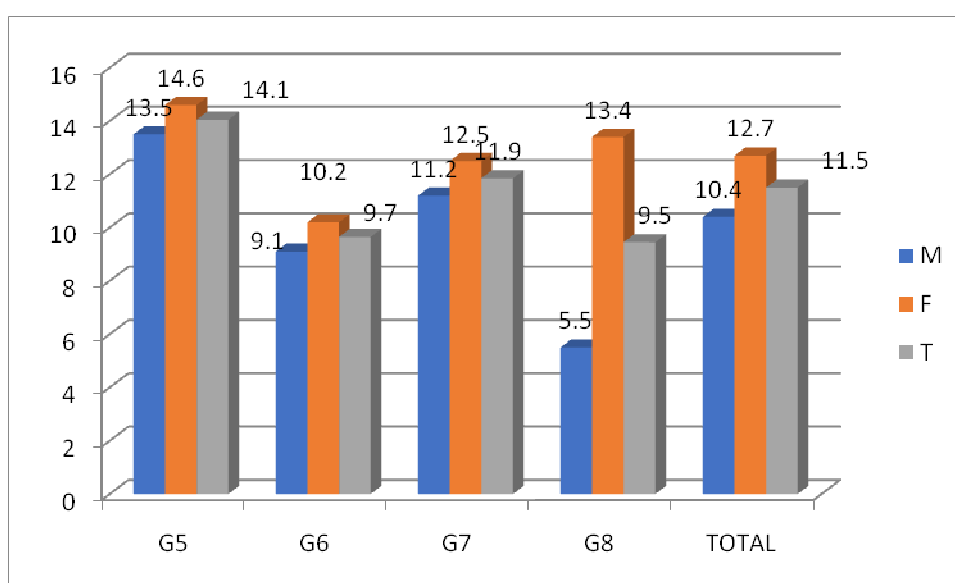
Overall, regardless of the achievements discussed earlier, comparison of the enrolment sat first and second cycle primary education shows that high students enrolment in the lower grades (grade 1-4) couldn't continue up the ladder(OEB, 2018).

³Gross enrolment rate is the number of pupils in a given educational cycle expressed as a percentage of 'the population of related school age' while net enrolment rate is the percentage of students of official age (7-14), out of the population of related school age.



Source: OEB (2018) Education Statistics Annual Abstract, Addis Ababa

Figure 2. Enrolment Trends of in second cycle primary education, 2013/14-2017/18



Source: OEB (2018) Education Statistics Annual Abstract, Addis Ababa

Figure 3. Second cycle primary education dropout rate (2016/17)

5.2 Factors that Kept Children Out of School

The root causes that keep children out of education can be seen from different angles and are multifaceted by their very nature. As seen from the frame of analysis the influence comes from different angle including school

related factors, socio-cultural factors, economic factors, political & institutional factors and child related issues. Table4and other subsequent tables summarize data collected on these possible barriers and bottlenecks for children to be out of school.

Table 4: Responses on Child Related Factors that Kept Children out of School

No	Child Related Reasons	Rating scale (N= 637)					F
		Very high & High (%)	Medium (%)	Very low & Low (%)	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Children's lack of interest	26.4	27.3	44.1	2.71	1.36	2.36
2	Illness/disability among children	13.1	15.8	67.0	2.07	1.17	1.04
3	Over agedness	19.9	23.1	52.2	2.45	1.26	0.92
	Average				2.41	1.26	

The above depicts data in relation to three child related factors namely children's interest, illness/disability of children, and over-agedness for primary education. Accordingly, children's lack of interest was rated 'Very high or high' by only 26.4 percent of the respondents with mean score of 2.71. On the other hand, significant number of respondents (44.1 percent) rated children's lack of interest as 'very low or low'. This implies that children are interested in education. However, there are some Woreda level experts, PTAs, and KETBs members who have partly opposite views regarding children's interest for education. When they were consulted to share their views most of them echoed that interest of some children for education is deteriorating from time to time. One of the experts from WEOs in West Hararge, for instance, has the following mixed views to tell:

In our Kebele children's interest for education, by and large, could be said satisfactory. Majority are attracted by their age-mates admitted to schools. Very few children are out of school because of lack of interest. These students are usually overwhelmed by their interest to make money by selling cash crops like Khat.

A PTA member from primary school of Gasera district of Bale Zone region said "I did not come across any child who refused to be admitted schooling. Most of the children in our kebele are eager to join schools". This implies that children's interest for education seems not serious problem for being out of school. Illness or disability among children as a factor keeping children out of school was rated 'very low or low' by 67.0 percent of the respondents. This means, illness or disability among children was not as such a substantial root cause for out of school children as revealed by the majority of the respondents. In relation to this, interviews/FGDs were conducted with PTA and KEB members, parents/guardians, and out of school children

themselves. Accordingly, PTAs and KETBs in Goro Woreda (Bale), Dobba Woreda (West Hararge) and Utalla Kebele in Yabello Woreda of Borena Zone, verified that illness or disability among children is not the root cause for keeping children out of school in their respective kebeles. However, reports from some PTAs and KETBs, parents/guardians and out of school children indicated the presence of few cases where some children remain at home because of illness/disabilities. For instance, in Gasera District of Bale zone in Oromia National Regional State, a father of a child with disability said "My daughter cannot walk and have difficulty of using her two arms properly. Since I cannot afford buying wheelchair, she remained at home though she is a teenager." In the same way, a child who is out of school in the same kebele told the interviewer her problem that kept her out of school as follows:

I have sight problem. I cannot see things very clearly. I usually see blurred objects. My poor parents could not take me to a hospital. When my age-mates start school, my father refused sending me to school saying that it is dangerous to let you go to school alone. He usually says, 'there could be accidents on the way to school.

On the whole, irrespective of few cases reported in some kebeles, the above qualitative data and mean value of 2.07 clearly show that illness or disability among children is not a significant factor that kept children out of school.

An attempt was also made to see whether or not over-agedness was the root cause for some children to be out of school. Accordingly, over agedness was rated 'Very low or low' by 52.2 percent of the respondents with mean score of 2.45. Those who rated the item 'very high or high' and 'medium' accounted only for 19.9 percent and 23.1 percent of the respondents respectively. In interviews and FGDs conducted on this issue with WEOs key experts as well as PTA and KETBs members confirmed that children of all

ages are encouraged to join school though emphasis tend towards school age children. This is apparent when a key expert in Adola district said “we occasionally find some children who are over-aged for grade one. Yet we encourage such children to join school though they are older for this grade level”. Similarly, an expert in Yabello WEO in Oromia regional state noted the following:

Owing to the nature economic activities and somewhat harsh climate, it is common to find over-aged uneducated children in rural kebeles [villages] of our Woreda. Using the existing Kebele structures, particularly PTAs and KETBs, we persuade everybody to start education

though we focus on the school age children. Over-agedness has never been a cause for keeping children out of school in our Woreda.

Similar views were reflected by experts of Oda Bultum and Mieso Woreda in West Hararge, Kofele and Adaba Woreda in West Arsi. They all indicated that over-agedness is not a factor that kept children out of school in their locality. Overall, the aggregate mean score of 2.41 (which is in category of ‘low’) shows that child related factors (lack of interest for education, illness or disability among children and over-agedness) were not as such root causes that kept children out of school.

Table 5: Respondents Rating on School Related Factors that kept Children out of School

SN	School Related Reasons	Rating scale (N= 637)					F
		Very low & Low (%)	Medium (%)	Very high & High (%)	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Absence of school/ABE center in the area	56.3	17.7	22.9	2.36	1.38	3.03
2	Absence of shift system	59.0	13.4	21.5	2.25	1.42	2.65
3	Absence of flexibility in academic calendar	53.8	17.3	20.0	2.33	1.35	0.12
4	Long distance between school/ABE center & home	45.0	22.7	29.7	2.75	1.35	3.37
5	Unfriendly nature of schools	43.1	20.3	32.2	2.77	1.38	3.35
Average					2.50	1.37	

The first three items (absence of school/ABE center in the area, absence of shift system, and absence of flexibility in academic calendar) were rated ‘low’ with mean values ranging from 2.25 – 2.36 while long distance between school/ABE center & home and unfriendly nature of schools were rated ‘medium’ with mean value of 2.75 and 2.77 respectively. In terms of percentage, the first item (absence of school/ABE center in the area) was rated ‘very low or low’ by the majority (56.3 percent) of the respondents. Those who rated this item ‘medium’ and ‘very high or high’ accounted for 17.7 percent and 22.9 percent of the respondents respectively. Absence of shift system was rated ‘very low or low’ by the majority (59.0 percent) of the respondents while 21.5 percent rated the same item ‘very high or high’.

Unfriendly nature of schools was rated ‘very high or high’, ‘medium’ and ‘very low or low’ by 32.2 percent 20.3 percent and 43.1 percent respectively. In relation to school

related factors, educational officials at region and woreda level and PTA and KETBs as well as out of children were consulted through interviews and FGDs. Most of the participants from at region level reflected that school related factors, which were once serious challenges, were mitigated by bringing schools closer to children’s village. For instance, a core process owner in Oromia National Regional State expressed the reality in his region as follows:

In our region, children of first cycle primary school travel relatively shorter distance. Since we have at least one first cycle primary school in every kebele, children need not go farther to get first cycle primary education. To further improve the situation, our region is also upgrading existing first cycle primary schools to complete primary schools and

the construction of these schools has been the focus of the region.

Improved school situation in general and presence of shift system and reduced distance between primary schools and children's home in particular were also reported by key experts of Oromia Education Bureau. However, some experts at the woreda level reported few cases where children are forced to travel long distances. This is particularly true for those families who look for better quality second cycle primary education for their in urban areas. According to one PTA member of Goro Woreda of Bale zone, some students with strong family background commute for second cycle primary education as relatively urban schools with relatively better quality are at distance of over one hours walk from their respective kebeles. The other expert in Gasera Woreda Office from the same zone said,

Some children in our woreda travel long distance or forced to commute to get relatively better quality education in the woreda town. Given, the absence of immediate parents follow ups, it is common for these children to join peer groups who mislead and distract them from their education. As a result, they

drop out from schools sometimes without the knowledge of their parent.

Taken as a whole, from the individual mean values of each item and the qualitative data, one can safely say that 'absence of school in area, absence of shift system, 'unfriendly nature of schools' and 'absence of flexibility in academic calendar' were not notable reasons for children to be out of school while 'long distance between school& home' were fairly seen as cause for some second cycle students to drop from schools. The aggregate mean score (2.50) of the five items in the above table also doesn't show adequate magnitude to consider school related factors as root causes that kept children out of school. In this connection, attempt was made to analyze if there are variations among zones on these factors as root cause to keep children out of schools.

Respondents were also asked to rate on some possible socio-cultural factors that could keep children out of school. Eight items related to value given to education, attitude towards girls' education, early marriage and fear of teenage pregnancy, gender based violence, female genital mutilation practice, parents interest in education, children with disabilities, focus on religious education were presented to respondents for rating. The results are summarized as in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Respondents Rating on Socio-cultural Factors that kept Children out of School

No	Socio-cultural factors	Rating scale (N= 637)					F
		Very low & Low (%)	Medium (%)	Very high & High (%)	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Low value given to education	33.3	20.5	41.6	3.14	1.42	2.24
2	Wrong attitude towards the education of girls	37.8	24.5	34.6	2.95	1.33	2.71
3	Early marriage and teenage pregnancy	45.9	21.3	29.9	2.72	1.62	2.67
4	Gender based violence	56.9	19.6	19.6	2.34	1.29	4.49
5	Female genital mutilation practice	55.7	16.3	22.4	2.37	1.41	1.96
6	Parents not involved & interested in education	29.2	24.3	43.2	3.23	1.33	1.42
7	Tradition of keeping children with disabilities behind bars	50.4	17.2	28.8	2.63	1.41	4.09
8	Parents focus on religious education than modern education	42.9	20.6	31.6	2.81	1.43	3.86
Average					2.77	1.40	

Accordingly, absence of Parents' involvement & interest in education (43.2 percent), low value given to education (41.6 percent), wrong attitudes towards the

education of girls (34.6 percent), early marriage and teenage pregnancy (29.9 percent) are all rated as relatively very high or high factors keeping children out of school in

order of their importance (with mean values ranging from 2.72 – 3.23).

Parents' focus on religious education than modern education particular in some rural areas has been rated by 31.6 percent of the respondents as a very high or high factor that kept children out of modern schooling system. Tradition of keeping children with disabilities behind bars was also rated by good number of respondents (28.8 percent) as a 'very high' or 'high' factor that kept young children out of

school. On the other hand, gender-based violence and female genital mutilation practice were rated by 56.9 percent and 55.7 percent of the respondents respectively as very low or low factors that kept children out of school.

Respondents were also asked to rate on possible economic/cost factors that kept children out of school. Table 7 presents reflections of respondents. In view of this, seven items that are related to economic or cost related factors were administered to the respondents for rating.

Table 7: Respondents Rating on Economic Factors that kept Children out of School

No	Economic/cost related factors	Rating scale (N= 637)					F
		Very low & Low (%)	Medium (%)	Very high & High (%)	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Household poverty	25.6	23.2	48.4	3.38	1.34	0.30
2	Orphan-hood	41.4	27.1	28.0	2.84	1.23	2.36
3	Seasonal factor and migration	46.9	20.0	29.3	2.67	1.38	3.45
4	Indirect and opportunity costs of education	46.9	24.1	24.3	2.62	1.27	2.61
5	Child labor is needed at home/farm	24.0	21.2	51.3	3.44	1.31	0.55
6	Prospect of low-income return	26.9	22.8	46.8	3.33	1.33	1.91
7	Family investment behavior	37.5	21.6	28.5	2.81	1.34	1.24
	Average				3.01	1.31	

Accordingly, the need for child labor at home/farm is rated as a very high or high factor the affects children education and kept children away from schools by majority of respondents (51.3 percent) with mean score of 3.44. Furthermore, household poverty and prospect of low income return were also rated by significant number of respondents, 48.4 percent and 46.8 percent respectively, as very high or high factors that kept children out of school.

Examining the mean values of each item, one can easily identify that the effect of these factors in keeping children

out of school vary. If these items are ranked in terms of their effect the 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranks are occupied by the demand for child labor at home /farm, household poverty, and prospect of low income return respectively. The remaining four items - orphan-hood, family investment behavior, seasonal factors and migration, indirect and opportunity cost of education- ranked from 4th to 7th.

Research participants of this study were also asked to rate on some assumed political and institutional factors that kept children out of school and their responses are summarized as in table 8 below.

Table 8: Respondents Rating on Political & Institutional Factors that kept Children out of School

No	Political & institutional factors	Rating scale (N= 637)					F
		Very low & Low (%)	Medium (%)	Very high & High (%)	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Labor market conditions & employment prospective	33.9	22.2	41.0	3.15	1.63	2.98
2	Inadequate public support	34.2	25.7	36.7	3.04	1.30	4.06
3	Weak policy support	40.4	22.5	33.1	2.88	1.37	3.46
4	Poor political commitment	38.6	23.5	33.8	2.92	1.52	2.25
	Average				2.92	1.45	

Labor market conditions and employment prospective has been rated by good number of respondents (41.0 percent) as very high or high factor keeping children out of school with a mean value of 3.15. The aggregate effect of all of the items listed under this category (political and institutional factors) is rated as medium with mean value of 2.92. More specifically, the effect of inadequate public support and poor political commitment were rated as very high or high factors that kept children out of school by

significant number of the respondents (36.7 percent and 33.8 percent respectively).

5.3 Policies and Strategies Implemented to Address the Problem of OOSC

Table 9 resents the reflection of the respondents on the effect of polices and strategies in place to address issues that are related to OOSC. In view of this, 14 major items that are related policies and strategies were administered to the respondents for rating.

Table 9: Respondents Rating on Policies and Strategies in place to Address OOSC

No	Policies and Strategies in place	Rating scale (N= 637)					F
		Very low & Low (%)	Medium (%)	Very high & High (%)	$\bar{X}$	SD	
1	Implementation of Universal Primary Education	24.0	30.1	41.9	3.23	1.18	0.85
2	Abolishment of education fee for grades 1-10	26.7	17.1	52.7	3.47	1.59	0.82
3	Free textbook provision	20.7	14.5	60.0	3.68	1.39	1.50
4	School distance norms and expansion of schools to rural areas	22.1	21.3	53.7	3.51	1.30	0.22
5	Introduction of specific gender-related policies and programs	24.3	26.8	45.8	3.32	1.23	1.54
6	Policies adopted to address issue of parental lack of interest in education	31.5	27.9	38.0	3.07	1.23	2.77
7	Alternative basic education and functional adult literacy programs	22.6	27.5	37.4	3.06	1.25	3.49
8	Policy measures related to reduction of the incidence of child labor	37.5	26.2	33.6	2.89	1.28	0.36
9	Policy of protection of children from all forms of violence	22.4	24.9	39.9	3.09	1.29	1.97
10	Policy and strategy to promote inclusive education	29.6	29.2	37.5	3.10	1.25	2.15
11	Social welfare programs	37.6	28.1	29.8	2.85	1.22	0.55
12	Specific policy and programs aimed at improving the education of orphans and vulnerable children	39.7	28.9	28.8	2.82	1.24	2.47
13	Policy to coordinate development partners, community, NGOs, and sectors	36.7	26.9	33.7	2.93	1.25	5.04
14	Policy and guideline on student promotion	29.6	26.6	41.1	3.15	1.27	0.44
	Average				3.15	1.28	

As a result, except for two items (free textbook provision; and school distance norms and expansion of schools to rural areas) which were rated “very high or high” with mean values of 3.68 and 3.51 respectively, all the other items were rated “medium” with mean values ranging from 2.82-3.47. Seen from the proportion of respondents’ items

such as free textbook provision, school distance norms and expansion of schools to rural areas, abolishment of education fee for grades 1-10 were rated “very high or high” showing the gravity of the problem. Overall, though their effect varies from one item to the other item, the grand mean

of the respondents rating shows that the effect of these items has been medium (3.12.) in general terms.

The data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions also supports the respondents' opinion as participants witnessed that the provision textbooks, the attempts that have been made to minimize the school home distance particularly in rural areas were among the positive endeavors that did help to attract the OOSC to the school though still a long distance is there to attract all the OOSC to the school. Above all, both the educational officials and school level actors did appreciate the abolishment of education fee (grades 1-10) and the introduction of specific

gender-related policies and programs as well as the very existence of UPE and its implementation efforts as a promising grounds for the declining pattern of the OOSC and in realizing all the subsequent efforts to be made to enroll children that are deprived of the chance of going to school. Nevertheless, some of the school level actors have raised their concerns. Among these concerns, the direct costs (stationery, uniform, food) and contributions expected from parents and students are becoming burden to some parents. One of the parents involved in the FGD in Kuyu woreda of North Shewa zone said, *"The government claims that education is free of fee, we are still paying a lot to send children to the school under the pretext of contribution"*.

Table 10: Respondents Rating on Extent of Coordination to Address Issues of OOSC

No	Extent of coordination and coordinated activities	Rating scale (N= 637)			$\bar{X}$	SD	F
		Very low & Low (%)	Medium (%)	Very high & High (%)			
1	Coordination between development partners, NGOs and government/sector offices	31.7	33.6	9.1	2.45	1.02	2.00
2	Coordinated activities				2.84	1.22	
	a) Allocate resources to offer sufficient school places	30.5	26.0	25.7	2.91	1.25	1.04
	b) Provide teachers with quality training;	37.7	24.4	26.6	2.78	1.32	1.50
	c) Provide educational materials for school or/and children;	35.3	28.3	24.6	2.84	1.20	3.06
	d) Improve school facilities and school environment	33.7	31.9	24.2	2.89	1.17	0.40
	e) Support development projects that contributes to children's education (address poverty, child labor)	35.0	23.8	20.7	2.76	1.23	1.04
	f) Strengthen community networking & collaboration	35.7	28.9	24.1	2.83	1.17	2.49
	g) Strengthen the capacity of education officers & leaders	33.2	28.3	27.2	2.88	1.23	2.49
Average					2.64	1.12	

The above table summarizes the extent of coordination and extent of coordinated activities in relation to OOSC. Accordingly, the first item which reads "Coordination between development partners, NGOs and government/sector offices" was rated 'low' with mean value of 2.45. In interview conducted the woreda expert in Seru woreda of Arsi Zone said;

"The task of making house to house visit and bringing OOSC to schools is usually

left to school level actors. Most importantly, the coordination between woreda level experts, PTA, KETB and local NGOs on issues of OOSC is of sporadic nature and lacks consistency."

In the second item, respondents were requested to rate the extent of coordination in resources allocation to offer sufficient school places, in provision of quality training to teachers and educational materials for school or/and

children; in improving school facilities and school environment, in supporting development projects that contribute to children's education (address poverty, child labor), in strengthening community networks & collaboration and in strengthening the capacity of education officers & leaders. Accordingly, 'co-ordinations in undertaking all these activities' were rated 'medium' with mean values that range from 2.76 and 2.91. On the issue of coordination of activities that address OOSC, interview was held with woreda education officials. In their response, most of the interviewees noted the presence of some collaboration of limited nature. For instance, one woreda level expert in Liben woreda of Guji zone said the following.

At the beginning of the academic year or during the summer vacation, it is becoming a common practice that PTA members along with teachers make a kind of campaign to register all children of age 7 in the kebele and hold discussions to raise community's awareness about education.

Another expert from Oromia Education Bureau also noted that collaboration between woreda level sector offices and other stakeholders on educational matters is limited and usually common whenever there are campaigns on mobilizing communities for some contribution. Overall, the data from the above table implies that there is a need to further strengthen collaboration on educational activities that address issues of OOSC.

VI. MAJOR FINDINGS

- The findings of the study show that communities demand for boys' education was found "low" (mean value=2.3) while the demand for girls' education was reported 'medium' (mean value= 2.84) showing improvements as opposed to the past trends and expectations. Seen overall, the level of communities' demand for their children's education appeared inadequate (not high or very high) for both sexes. However, when disaggregated in terms urban and rural settings, there are still preferences for boys' education than girls' education as reflected by the school level actors.
- The findings of the study show that, among others, the parents of dropped out students were mainly from those who engaged in manual labor, farming and trade in a descending order.
- The findings of the study also depicted that most of dropouts were from the poor parents engaged in hand-to-mouth economic activities, farming (in some areas no adequate plot of land as families get extended), pastoralist and agro-pastoralist activities, weaving and other small business (vender). It was found that the connection between the level of parents' education and children's' exclusion from schooling was inverse.
- The findings of the study depicted that child related factors (lack of interest for education, illness or disability among children and over-agedness) were not among the major causes that kept children out of school (mean value=2.41). Relatively, however, children's lack of interest was reported (mean value=2.71) implying some serious concerns as reflected the participants.
- It was found that school related factors were not relatively strong in keeping children out of school (mean value=2.5). Nevertheless, the existences of long distances between schools and home as well as the unfriendly nature of the schools were reported as concerns with mean value of 2.75-2.77. In the interviews and focus group discussions conducted with the school level actors, particularly parents, these items were boldly voiced as a serious problem in most of the rural and remote woredas.
- The findings of the study revealed that socio cultural factors were among the challenges that has been backing the pressure that kept children out of school quite moderately (mean value=2.77). Nevertheless, some of the socio-cultural factors were relatively very strong in keeping children out of school. Among others, the value given to education by parents, parents' involvement and interest in education, the attitude towards girls' education, early marriage and teenage pregnancy and the inclination towards religious education were reported among the barrier in kept children out of schools. This was implied by the ratings of the respondents and also unveiled by many of the consulted actors predominantly at the grass root level.
- In term of economic factors that kept children out of school, on average the items were rated 'medium' with mean value of 3.1. Seen specifically, however, some of the factors were found stronger in keeping children out of school. Among others, the need for child labor at home, the prospect of low return from education and household poverty were reported as serious concerns that kept children out of school.
- The findings of the study depicted that, regardless of the differences observed, the existence of policy and public supports as well as the commitment of authorities were promising and encouraging to attract

OOSC to schools. Conversely, what is happening in terms of the labour market and employment prospective were reported as grave factors and this was boldly affirmed by the participants consulted through interviews and focus group discussions. Worse than this, the school level actors disclosed the practices of forcing parents (using various modalities of punishment) to send their children to the school.

- Concerning the policies and strategies in place to address issues that are related OOSC, the respondents rating shows the moderate (mean value=3.12) existence of policy environment. Some of the efforts made in this regard such as the policy of providing free textbook, the policy directions set to minimize school – home distance, the expansion of schools to rural areas as well as the abolishment of school fee for (grades 1-10, general education) were described as the most vital and encouraging policies and strategies to attract children to the school.
- The data gathered through interviews and focus group discussions also supports the respondents' opinion as participants witnessed that the provision textbooks, the attempts that have been made to minimize the school home distance particularly in rural areas were among the positive endeavors that did help to attract the OOSC to the school though still a long distance is there to attract all the OOSC to the school. Above all, both the educational officials and school level actors did appreciate the abolishment of education fee (grades 1-10) and the introduction of specific gender-related policies and programs as well as the very existence of UPE and its implementation efforts as a promising grounds for the declining pattern of the OOSC and in realizing all the subsequent efforts to be made to enroll children that are deprived of the chance of going to school. Nevertheless, some of the school level actors have raised many concerns. Among these concerns, the direct costs (stationery, uniform. food) and contributions expected from parents and students are becoming huge burden to parents.

VII. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, some conclusions and implications were drawn. Though there are some progresses in provision of second cycle primary education in Oromia Regional State, unless parents send all school age children to schools and unless the quality and nature of the local communities participation is improved, the challenges ahead in minimizing out of school children seems far-flung - given the proportion of OOSC in comparison with the lingering

time. Moreover, the economic, (occupation, life style, mobility, earnings/low income, being poor), socio-cultural and educational background) has been eroding the exertions made in attracting and retaining children in the school. Among all others, home related factors (such as the demand for children's labor at home), socio cultural factors (the value given to education, parents' involvement and interest in education, the attitude towards education, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, the prone to religious education), economic factors (the need for child labor at home, the prospect of low income return, household poverty), have been eroding the endeavors made in attracting OOSC and retaining children in the schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The awareness of local communities with regard to children's education was found low. In practice, the success of an educational system counts on high level of awareness, consensus building and real commitment among the local communities. Hence, creating awareness the leads to the level of strong consensus and commitment appears very imperative for success. This can be realized by organizing workshops, long terms and short-term trainings, advocacy and lobby, use of media, templates and the speeches made by figure head officials. To this end, the REB and WEOs should focus on creating the required level of awareness, consensus and commitment using the above indicated and other possible strategies for bona fide success.
- It was also found that, though some improvements have been observed, communities' demand for their children's education appeared inadequate for both sexes. Hence, the school and woreda level actors in collaboration with REB should plan, advocate and create awareness on among the local communities and parents with regard to the importance of education.
- The findings of the study revealed that economic background and occupation of parents were among the major factors that kept children out of school and compel some to drop. Specifically, most of the parents of OOSC were mainly engaged in manual labor, farming, pastoralists and small businesses that generate subsistence earnings only. Hence, creating an all-inclusive move by creating joint effort in collaboration with different sectors to strengthen the economic and occupational background of parents seems very essential. Hence, the woreda and regional level authorities in collaboration with the central government should design support mechanisms that enable them to

generate better income and thereby send their children to the school. This might require identifying the actual needs of these segments of population and thereby address their problems by creating opportunities devoid of creating dependency.

- It was found that school related factors create quite modest pressure in keeping children out of school. Nevertheless, among others, the long distance that exists between home and school was found serious concern (particularly in rural and remote woredas) in attracting children to the school and reduces the dropping of students. Hence, the WEOs in collaboration with the REB should build more schools in the nearest distance. In some woredas the problem was created when students complete a given cycle, they have to go to other place to find the next level. This entails the demand for conducting micro planning and school mapping activities. Hence, the REB in collaboration with the WEOs should conduct micro planning and school mapping projects that will enable them to identify the geographic location of the schools and create balance in terms of distribution.
- Like the school related factors, the pressure created by home related factors were found moderate. Nevertheless, the home related factors were relatively stronger than the school related factors. Among the home related factors, the demand for children's labor at home was found strapping in keeping children out of school. This implies the need for convincing parents to send their children to the school though they are required by parents. Hence, the woreda and school level actors should discuss with parents, convince them and provide them support whenever possible (depending on the spastic contexts). For instance, the school community and students could support the harvesting activities of parents during peak harvest times.
- The unfriendly nature of schools was also reported in general and in most of the rural and remote schools in particular. Among other things, complete absence or shortage of adequate facilities (drinking water, library and laboratory) were found the major reasons that keep back children from schools. This entails the need for improving school facilities and creating attractive school environment. Hence, WEOs and the school level actors (in collaboration with the REB) should create attractive school environment. This can be done by allocating adequate budget and providing basic school facilities.
- The findings of this study depicted that the pressure created by economic and socio –cultural factors were

found among daunting challenges in keeping children out of school. Among the socio-cultural factors, the value given to education, parents' involvement and interest in education, the attitude towards girls' education, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, inclination towards religious education and the tradition of keeping children with disabilities were found quite stronger. This shows the need for discussions and clear deliberations with regard to the socio-cultural factors stated above. Hence, the WEOs and the school level actors should launch continuous campaigns that could create better awareness and clear understandings on the value of education.

- Overall political factors (the existence of policy, public supports and the commitment of authorities) were found relatively enabling. Nevertheless, what has been happening in terms of the labor market and employment prospective were reported found negative. This has creating negative feelings towards education among some children and parents. Therefore, policy makers, in collaboration with the regional and woreda level actors, should make serious endeavors to create link between the labor market and educational provisions. In connection to this, involving national and regional universities would have a great deal of help for success.
- Some serious concerns were also raised in implementing polices. For instance, the practices of forcing parents (using various modalities of punishment) to force them send their children to school and forced contributions (school fees) were observed here and there. Hence, the regional, woreda and school level actors should avoid such practices and search for alternative strategies such as using discussion forums with elders, religious leaders and influential personalities.
- The REB/WEOs and schools that work in a different contexts (pastoralist and mobile communities) should plan and rearrange the time and location of schooling which fits to the specific contexts of their respective zone, woredas and schools in order attract children to the school, minimize the dropping of students.
- The regional and woreda actors should pay due attention and support to children of the poor, single family, street children, orphans, the disadvantaged and girls. This can be done by creating positive bias in allocating government budget, by mobilizing donors and development partners, national and international NGOs, charity organizations, private sectors.

- The regional, woreda and school level actors should work against delusion created (sending children abroad, to big cities like Addis Ababa for daily laborer in activities like coffee harvesting and farming) on the values of education and its long-term benefits.
- It is evident that priming and implementing policies and strategies are essential to address issues of drop outs. In this regard, the findings of this study revealed positive effects of the efforts made so far. However, the Woreda and the local authorities should bring into play other alternative strategies and support that persuade parents to send their children to school. On top of this, mobilization of manpower and other resources should not be trendy incident; rather it should be well planned, comprehensive and steadfast promotion throughout the year.
- There should be an all-out campaign that would uphold the values of education among the local communities, change the attitude of parents and the local communities towards education (particularly girls education), advocate and lobby success stories (use model children), provide support (school feeding in some localities), encourage localities having rich resources but fail to use for educating their children and to end with gear education /schooling/ towards actual problem solving tool putting quality at the hub of all endeavors.

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