



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



THE NATIONAL GENDER AND EQUALITY COMMISSION

EVIDENCE ON SCHOOL-LEVEL FACTORS AFFECTING GIRLS' ACCESS TO
QUALITY EDUCATION IN MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN KENYA





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KENYA VISION 2030

TOWARDS A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE
AND PROSPEROUS NATION



VISION

An inclusive society free from gender inequality and all forms of discrimination



MISSION

To promote and protect gender equality and freedom from all forms of discrimination in Kenya, especially for Special Interest Groups through ensuring compliance with policies, laws and practice



CORE
VALUES

- Dignity
- Equality
- Teamwork
- Integrity
- Inclusivity

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Evidence on School-Level Factors Affecting Girls' Access to Quality Education in Marginalised Communities in Kenya.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	Viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	Ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN KENYA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM.....	3
METHODOLOGY	6
SAMPLING.....	6
RESPONDENTS.....	6
DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND ANALYSIS.....	7
KEY FACTS ON GENDER DIMENSIONS AND THE STATE OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN KENYA.....	7
KEY FINDINGS.....	8
1. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE.....	9
1.1 Headteacher Characteristics.....	10
1.2 Governance Structures.....	12
2. SCHOOL CATEGORIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE.....	14
2.1 Category of Schools.....	15
2.2 Class Size.....	16
3. STAFFING IN SCHOOLS.....	18
3.1 Teacher Staffing and Professional Capacity.....	19
3.2 Teacher Capacity Development.....	20
3.3 ECDE Teacher Distribution by Gender.....	22
3.4 Junior School Teacher Deployment and Training.....	23
3.5 Junior School Teacher Specialisation.....	25
3.6 Teacher Attendance by Gender and County on Day of Survey.....	27
4. ENROLMENT, ATTENDANCE AND TRANSITION.....	29
4.1 Enrolment by grade.....	30
4.2 Enrolment by Sex.....	31
4.3 Absenteeism Rate on the day of Survey.....	33
4.4 Distance from school.....	34
4.5 Transition to Junior School.....	35
5. SCHOOL HEALTH AND SUPPORT SERVICES.....	37
5.1 School Support Services by County.....	38
5.2 Main Sources of Drinking Water by County.....	39
5.3 Learner Sanitation Facilities by County.....	40
5.4 Inclusive Sanitation Facilities for Learners and Staff by County..	42
5.5 Sanitation Functionality and Maintenance Challenges.....	43
5.6 Cross-Tabulation Analysis: Menstrual Hygiene and Sanitation Adequacy	45



6. DISABILITY AND INCLUSION.....	46
6.1 Challenges in Delivering Education to Learners with Special Needs	47
6.2 Inclusivity and Accommodation of Learners with Disabilities.....	48
7. SOCIAL ISSUES: TEENAGE PREGNANCY, RE-ENTRY AND CHILD MARRIAGE.....	50
7.1 Teenage Pregnancy, Re-entry and Child Marriage.....	51
7.2 Measures to Support Pregnant Girls and Young Mothers.....	53
7.3 Measures Taken on Teenage Pregnancy.....	55
7.4 Curriculum Coverage on Sexual and Reproductive Health	56
7.5 CBE and Its Challenges for Sexual Reproductive Health.....	57
8. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND OTHER HARMFUL PRACTICE.....	58
8.1 Reported Gender-Based Violence Cases.....	59
8.2 Other harmful Practices.....	60
9. IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCY-BASED	62
9.1 KPSEA and Transition 75.....	63
9.2 Competency-Based Education (CBE) Implementation Challenges	65
10. QUALITATIVE SYNTHESIS.....	67
10.1 School Leadership and Governance	68
10.2 Enrolment, Transition, and Retention.....	68
10.3 WASH, Health, and School Safety.....	68
10.4 Social and Cultural Issues.....	69
10.5 Harmful Practices and Child Protection.....	69
10.6 Emerging Positive Drivers.....	69
10.7 Summary Insight.....	69
CONCLUSION.....	71
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS.....	72

FOREWORD



This report by the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) presents a comprehensive and timely analysis of school-level factors that influence girls' access to quality education in these underserved areas. It draws on data from 19 counties and offers rich insights into governance, infrastructure, staffing, sanitation, disability inclusion, and social norms—all of which shape the educational experiences of girls.

Education is not only a fundamental human right, but it is the foundation upon which inclusive development, gender equality, and national transformation are built. In Kenya, the journey toward equitable access to quality education has seen commendable progress. However, for girls in marginalised communities, particularly those in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), informal urban settlements, and geographically isolated regions—this journey remains fraught with persistent structural, socio-cultural, and economic barriers.

The findings are both sobering and instructive. They reveal significant disparities in leadership representation, teacher deployment, menstrual hygiene management, and protection from harmful practices such as child marriage and gender-based violence. Yet, the report also highlights counties that are making notable strides, such as Nairobi City, Tharaka-Nithi, and Makueni—where inclusive policies, community engagement, and gender-responsive leadership have begun to yield positive outcomes.

As Kenya continues to align its development agenda with Vision 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and Agenda 2063, this report serves as a vital resource for policymakers, educators, civil society, and development partners. It is a call to action to deepen our commitment to gender equality in education and to ensure that every girl, regardless of her location or background, has the opportunity to learn, thrive, and lead.

On behalf of the Commission, I extend my appreciation to all those who contributed to this important work and reaffirm NGEC's dedication to promoting inclusive, evidence-based policy and programming that leaves no child behind.

HON. REHEMA JALDESA

CHAIRPERSON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) wishes to express its heartfelt gratitude to all individuals and institutions whose contributions made this Gender Education Status Report 2025 possible. We are deeply thankful to Echidna Giving for their generous support and partnership throughout the study. Their commitment to advancing girls' education globally has been instrumental in enabling this evidence-based analysis.

We acknowledge the invaluable collaboration of the Office of the President, the Minority and Marginalised Affairs Unit, Ministry of Education, County Education Officials, County Commissioners, and representatives from the Ministry of Interior and National Coordination, whose facilitation and insights enriched the data collection process across 19 counties.

Special appreciation goes to the school leadership teams headteachers, deputy headteachers, and senior teachers who provided critical information and perspectives on the realities facing girls in their schools. Their openness and dedication to improving education outcomes are commendable.

We also thank the data collection teams, analysts, and technical experts who ensured the integrity, accuracy, and depth of the findings. Their professionalism and commitment to quality were vital to the success of this report.

This report is a product of collective effort, and we remain committed to using its findings to inform transformative action for gender equality in education.



PURITY NGINA , PHD, MBS

COMMISSION SECRETARY/CEO





INTRODUCTION

Access to education remains a fundamental human right and a cornerstone for achieving gender equality and fostering socio-economic development in Kenya. While the country has made significant strides in enhancing overall enrolment rates for girls and boys at the primary education level, persistent disparities continue to affect girls, particularly those in marginalised communities such as arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), informal urban settlements, and geographically isolated regions. These disparities are not merely numerical but are deeply embedded in structural, socio-cultural, and economic barriers that impede girls' full participation and academic success.

The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS, 2022) underscore these disparities by revealing that girls from marginalised communities experience lower enrolment, retention, and transition rates compared to their counterparts in more affluent regions. Key barriers impacting girls' education include pervasive poverty, inadequate school infrastructure, insufficient menstrual hygiene management facilities, and poor sanitation. Gender-based violence (GBV), harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), long distances to educational facilities, and entrenched social norms that deprioritise girls' education exacerbate the situation (Global Partnership for Education [GPE], 2022)¹. These challenges significantly limit girls' ability to access, remain in, and benefit fully from educational opportunities.

The National Gender and Equality Commission's strategic plan² emphasizes the generation of disaggregated, robust evidence as a key pillar to inform policy advocacy, program design, and monitoring efforts. This evidence is essential for aligning Kenya's educational priorities with the country's key development frameworks, notably Vision 2030, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Vision 2030, Kenya's long-term development blueprint, recognises education as a vital enabler for the nation's socio-economic transformation. Its aims include the provision of equitable and quality education for all, with particular attention to historically marginalised populations, including girls in remote and disadvantaged areas. Within this framework, enhancing girls' educational access and outcomes is pivotal for achieving the broader goals of poverty reduction, improved health standards, and gender equality.

Likewise, the SDGs serve as a global call to action, where Goal 4 specifically targets inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all³. Central to this is the commitment to eliminate gender disparities in education by ensuring that all girls complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary schooling. Achieving these targets by 2030 calls for focused efforts to address the unique challenges confronting girls in marginalised Kenyan communities.

¹ Global Partnership for Education (GPE). (2022). GPE Annual Report.

² Kenya National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC). Strategic Plan 2025–2029.

³United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Furthermore,⁴Agenda 2063, Africa’s strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development, also prioritises education as a catalyst for women’s empowerment and gender equality across the continent⁵. It underscores the need for member states, including Kenya, to generate evidence-based policies that dismantle barriers and promote girls’ full participation in education.

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) reports complement these frameworks by providing data-driven insights into specific areas requiring urgent attention, such as improving school infrastructure, teacher training with a gender perspective, and community engagement to shift harmful social norms. GPE’s 2022 report highlights that targeted investments in marginalised regions yield significant returns by improving attendance, reducing dropouts, and fostering an inclusive school environment where girls thrive.

Given this landscape, this report aims to generate detailed, school-level evidence on factors affecting girls’ access to quality education in public primary schools in Kenya’s marginalised communities. By illuminating these determinants, the report intends to provide actionable knowledge to policymakers, education stakeholders, and community leaders to tailor interventions that address the root causes of gender disparities. Through integrating findings with the NGECC’s strategic focus, this research will contribute to tracking progress on national commitments like Vision 2030 and international obligations such as the SDGs, thereby supporting Kenya’s broader ambition of achieving gender equality and inclusive development by 2030 and beyond.

Addressing the multifaceted barriers faced by girls in marginalised communities requires a coordinated, evidence-based approach aligned with Kenya’s development vision and international frameworks. This report shares the evidence that will be crucial for informed decision-making, ensuring that no girl is left behind in realising the transformative power of education.

⁴African Union. (2015). Agenda 2063: The Africa we want (Framework Document). African Union Commission. <https://au.int/en/agenda2063>

GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN KENYA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

The right to education for all children, irrespective of gender, socio-economic status, tribe, or location, is firmly guaranteed by Kenya's Constitution (Republic of Kenya, 2010)⁶ and operationalised through the Basic Education Act (Republic of Kenya, 2013)⁷. This legal foundation is reinforced by regional and international instruments, including the Sustainable Development Goals—particularly SDG 4 on inclusive, quality education and SDG 5 on gender equality—the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Despite these robust frameworks, evidence consistently shows that structural, socio-cultural, and economic barriers within and around schools disproportionately block girls' full educational participation, especially in marginalised communities (GPE, 2022).

Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) comprise approximately 89% of the country and is home to nearly 38% of Kenya's population (KDHS, 2022)⁸. This region faces multiple challenges, such as prolonged drought, extremism, and hunger. Counties including Turkana, Marsabit, Wajir, Garissa, Mandera, Samburu, Isiolo, Tana River, Baringo, Kitui, and Kajiado experience these issues due to their geography, livelihoods, and cultural contexts. Long distances to schools—caused by sparse settlement patterns, poor road infrastructure, and insecurity from cattle rustling, inter-clan conflicts, or wildlife attacks—adversely affect school attendance. Pastoralist lifestyles, involving frequent movement in search of water and pasture, further disrupt consistent school attendance, often leading to prolonged absenteeism and early dropouts, particularly among girls (Population Council, 2019)⁹.

Government and partner initiatives, such as boarding schools, mobile schools, and Alternative Basic Education (ABE) models, attempt to mitigate these challenges. However, these alternatives often suffer from inadequate resources, teacher shortages, and community resistance, particularly where cultural preferences keep girls at home to support domestic or livelihood activities (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2018). Furthermore, climate shocks such as droughts and floods exacerbate these difficulties by displacing families, straining livelihoods, and forcing many girls to drop out of school to help their households survive (UNICEF, 2019)¹⁰.

Within schools, leadership and governance are critical to fostering an inclusive, safe, and supportive environment for girls. Effective school leaders enforce child protection policies, ensure safe learning spaces, motivate teachers, and collaborate with communities to challenge harmful norms that marginalise girls' education (Bush, 2011; UNESCO, 2019).

Infrastructure deficits remain a significant barrier. Overcrowded and dilapidated classrooms/learning spaces, insufficient desks, lack of science laboratories and libraries and inadequate sanitation facilities disproportionately impact girls.

⁶ Republic of Kenya. (2010). The Constitution of Kenya. Government Printer.

⁷ Republic of Kenya. (2013). Basic Education Act. Government Printer.

⁸ Kenya Demographic and Health Survey [KDHS]. (2022). Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2022. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.

⁹ Population Council. (2019). Child marriage in Kenya: A Population Council report. Population Council.

¹⁰ UNICEF. (2019). The state of the world's children 2019: Children, food and nutrition. UNICEF.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) insufficiencies exacerbate absenteeism during menstruation, as girls lack access to sanitary pads and safe private spaces for changing, undermining their attendance, performance, and dignity (Sommer et al., 2015; UNICEF, 2018)¹¹. Studies indicate that menstruation-related absenteeism can accumulate into substantial lost school time, contributing to poor academic outcomes and higher dropout rates (Muralidharan et al., 2016; WSSCC & UNICEF, 2018)¹².

Teacher availability, gender balance, and competency also influence girls' education outcomes. Many marginalised schools suffer chronic teacher shortages, high absenteeism, and limited professional development opportunities, which diminish instructional quality and student motivation (World Bank, 2021)¹³. Female teachers are particularly vital as role models and facilitators of gender-sensitive pedagogy, helping parents feel more confident about sending daughters to school. However, female teacher deployment to remote and marginalised areas remains low due to harsh living conditions and security risks (Teachers Service Commission [TSC], 2022)¹⁴. Limited access to school-based health services, including counselling and health screenings, leaves issues such as school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) unaddressed, increasing girls' vulnerability to dropout, early marriage, and mental health problems (Plan International, 2019¹⁵, UNGEI, 2021)¹⁶.

Beyond schools, entrenched social and cultural barriers persist. Harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM, compounded by teenage pregnancies and gender norms favouring boys' education, severely limit girls' schooling (KDHS, 2022). Evidence highlights that integrating comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education (SRHE) in curricula, alongside community engagement, is effective in reducing adolescent pregnancies and early marriages, thereby enhancing girls' retention in school (Population Council, 2019).

As Kenya implements the Competency-Based Education (CBE), digital literacy and access to technology have become critical competencies. Unfortunately, marginalised and rural schools often lack the necessary infrastructure, connectivity, and trained teachers to implement digital learning effectively. This digital divide creates new inequalities and risks leaving girls further behind in acquiring ICT skills essential for modern labour markets (MoE, 2019; GEM Report, 2020).

In sum, achieving gender-equitable, quality education for girls in marginalised communities demands a comprehensive approach that addresses interlinked barriers inside and outside schools. Strengthening leadership and governance, improving infrastructure and menstrual hygiene management, investing in teacher capacity and gender balance, combating harmful social norms, and ensuring inclusive access to educational reforms like CBE and digital learning are all indispensable components of this effort.

¹¹ UNICEF. (2018). Guidance on menstrual hygiene management. UNICEF.

¹² WSSCC & UNICEF. (2018). Menstrual hygiene management in schools: Evidence review. Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council & UNICEF.

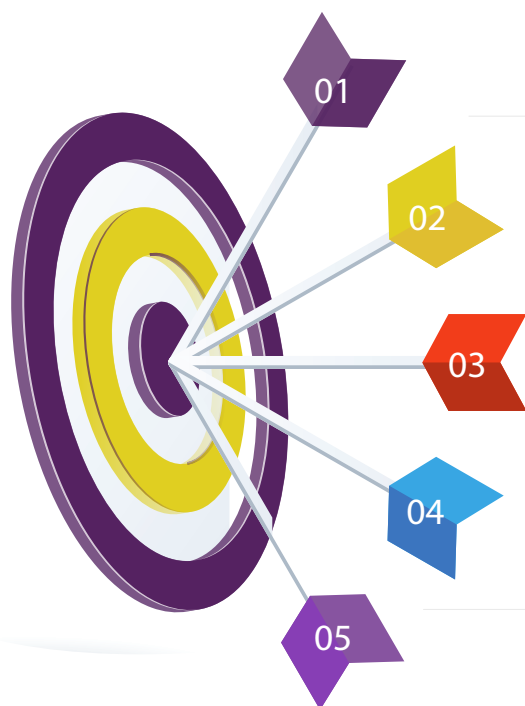
¹³ World Bank. (2021). World development report 2021: Data for better lives. World Bank.

¹⁴ Teacher Service Commission [TSC]. (2022). Annual report. Teacher Service Commission.

¹⁵ Plan International. (2019). School-related gender-based violence: Global review. Plan International.

¹⁶ UNGEI. (2021). School-related gender-based violence: Guidance and resources. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative.

OBJECTIVES



Assess the school-level factors influencing girls' access, participation, and retention in primary education within the marginalized regions of Kenya.



Analyze the gender disparities in teacher deployment, leadership, and capacity development in public primary schools.



Assess the adequacy of school infrastructure in supporting girls' education.



Identify socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers hindering girls' transition and completion rates across education levels.



Provide evidence-based recommendations to inform policies and programmes on promoting gender equality and inclusive education as part of both national and international commitments.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional descriptive design to generate an inclusive snapshot of school-level factors influencing girls' access to quality education in marginalised regions of Kenya. The design was chosen for its suitability in capturing data at a single point in time across a broad and diverse set of public primary schools within arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), informal settlements, and other hard-to-reach areas. Such an approach enabled the identification of prevailing conditions and associations among critical factors without requiring longitudinal follow-up, thereby offering timely and actionable insights relevant to policymaking and program planning. This design supported the National Gender and Equality Commission's mandate to monitor the status of special interest groups in all spheres of life, and these include children in education.

SAMPLING

A stratified sampling strategy was adopted to ensure representativeness across the diverse contexts encompassed in Kenya's marginalised regions. The sampling frame included public primary schools located in ASAL counties, informal settlements primarily within urban centres, and other hard-to-access geographical locations. Strata were defined by region and type of marginalisation—either ASAL or Urban Informal Settlement—to allow for comparison and generalisation of findings. Priority was to be given to counties documented to have the highest gender disparities in educational access and outcomes, such as Turkana, Marsabit, Wajir, Garissa, and informal settlements in Nairobi. Within each stratum, schools were randomly selected using probability proportional to size (PPS) techniques based on official Ministry of Education registries to achieve a statistically valid sample size adequate for detecting differences in key indicators related to girls' education. This sampling plan ensured a comprehensive yet manageable study scope that captured contextual variation while enabling rigorous data analysis.

RESPONDENTS

The primary respondents were public primary school leadership personnel, best positioned to provide accurate and comprehensive information about school-level factors. Specifically, headteachers, deputy headteachers, or senior teachers with administrative responsibilities were engaged as key informants. These individuals were expected to have detailed knowledge of staffing, infrastructure, school governance, student enrolment and retention, implementation status of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBE), and existing child protection measures. Their insights helped contextualise observed data patterns and offered qualitative perspectives on challenges and best practices influencing girls' access to education. Their roles also ensured ethical information sharing with an understanding of confidentiality and data usage. Focus group discussions were also conducted with the County Commissioners and County Security team, County Executive Committee members in charge of gender and education, Curriculum support officers and Directors from the Ministry of Education and TSC at the County levels.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND ANALYSIS

In the first week of September 2025, visits were made to 19 counties drawn from the Arid and Semi-Arid regions and Nairobi. Data were collected from sampled primary schools using a structured tool designed to capture quantitative and qualitative data on school characteristics, resources, and policies relevant to girls' education. To enhance efficiency, accuracy, and real-time validation, the form was administered electronically via mobile data collection applications compatible with tablets and smartphones. This digital approach minimised data entry errors, expedited processing, and allowed for geolocation tagging to verify school visits. Supplementing this, key informant interviews using a semi-structured guide were conducted with selected respondents to deepen understanding of sensitive areas such as gender-based violence (GBV), child protection implementation, and community engagement dynamics. The respondents included County Education Officials, County Commissioners or their representative, Directors and County representatives of the Ministry of Education, Directors and local representatives of the Ministry of Interior and National Coordination. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods facilitated a holistic analysis of the school environment.

Data analysis utilised both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques appropriate for categorical and continuous data. Descriptive statistics summarised characteristics of schools, leadership, staffing, infrastructure, and student enrolment metrics. Inferential analyses, including chi-square tests, t-tests, and regression models, explored associations and predictors of girls' enrolment, retention, and progression outcomes. All results were disaggregated by gender and school type (e.g., urban informal settlement, ASAL rural, hard-to-reach) to highlight disparities and contextual influences on educational access. Qualitative data from key informant interviews were thematically analysed to complement quantitative findings, enrich interpretation, and identify nuanced barriers and facilitators specific to marginalised contexts.

KEY FACTS ON GENDER DIMENSIONS AND THE STATE OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES IN KENYA

1. School leadership in marginalised communities shows a significant gender imbalance, with 76% of headteachers being male and only 24% female, while female leadership is relatively higher in Nairobi's informal settlements.
2. Enrolment data reveal persistent gender disparities favouring boys (52%), especially in marginalised ASAL counties, with girls (48%) underrepresented both in overall enrolment and among learners with disabilities.
3. Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities are inadequate in many schools, particularly in ASAL regions, impacting girls' attendance and wellbeing; fewer than 30% of schools have disability-accessible toilets, highlighting inclusion gaps.
4. Social challenges such as menstruation-related absenteeism (averaging 10.9%), teenage pregnancy (reported in 30% of schools), and child marriage continue to hinder girls' consistent school attendance and progression.
5. Implementation of the Competency-Based Education (CBE) faces major challenges, including teacher shortages (reported by 62% of schools), inadequate learning resources, and infrastructure deficits, particularly in marginalised areas, limiting quality and inclusive education.

KEY FINDINGS

This chapter presents the key findings from the school survey and complementary qualitative interviews. The analysis focuses on school-level factors, structural, staffing, resource-related, and socio-cultural, that shape access to quality education, particularly for girls in marginalised contexts.

Data were drawn from sampled public primary schools in selected arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) counties and informal settlements in Nairobi, reflecting learning environments where gender disparities are most pronounced. The findings are therefore not nationally representative, but they offer critical insights into patterns influencing girls' enrolment, participation, and learning outcomes in these settings.

The chapter is organised thematically around the main domains covered in the school tool:

- » Governance and community engagement
- » Teacher availability and capacity
- » Enrolment, attendance, and transition
- » Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)
- » School health, safety, and protection mechanisms
- » Social and cultural barriers
- » **Competency-Based Education (CBE) implementation and learning readiness**


Quantitative data are presented as percentages of schools reporting a given condition or indicator, while ratios such as pupil–teacher, class–pupil, and pupil–toilet are derived from enrolment and infrastructure data. Qualitative insights from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) complement these statistics by providing contextual explanations for observed trends.

All qualitative responses are aggregated and anonymized to protect respondent confidentiality. A detailed synthesis of KII themes, showing frequency of mentions and illustrative perspectives, is provided in the annex. Where relevant, unique observations emerging from the data are highlighted to show context-specific variations or new patterns of gendered experience.

The findings contribute to NGECC's mandate to monitor and promote gender equality and inclusion in education, consistent with Kenya's Constitution (2010), the Basic Education Act (2013), and national commitments to Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education and Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality. By generating disaggregated, school-level evidence, this analysis strengthens policy dialogue and programming aimed at closing gender gaps in education within marginalised settings.

CHAPTER ONE

HEADTEACHERS
OFFICE



CHAPTER ONE

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

School leadership and governance are key in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of learning and in guiding and managing schools through shared decision-making, strategic direction, and accountability. Effective leadership fosters a positive school culture, supports teaching and learning, and engages stakeholders such as headteachers, teachers, parents, and the community. Governance ensures policies are implemented, and schools are accountable, while collaborative leadership models promote collective responsibility and continuous improvement to enhance school performance.

1.1 Headteacher Characteristics

This sub-section analyses the demographic and professional characteristics of headteachers in the surveyed schools, including their teaching experience, tenure as headteachers, gender representation, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and participation in management and gender-in-leadership training.

Table 1.1: Headteacher Characteristics by County

County	% Male HT	% Female HT	% HT with Disability	% Degree or Higher	% Trained in Mgmt	% Trained in Gender and Inclusive Leadership
Kwale	76.9	23.1	0.0	53.9	76.9	7.7
Kilifi	78.6	21.4	0.0	57.1	57.1	64.3
Tana River	90.9	9.1	9.1	27.3	72.7	45.5
Garissa	83.3	16.7	0.0	41.7	91.7	33.3
Wajir	100.0	0.0	9.1	18.2	45.5	54.6
Mandera	100.0	0.0	7.7	69.2	92.3	23.1
Isiolo	80.0	20.0	0.0	30.0	70.0	50.0
Meru	73.3	26.7	6.7	66.7	80.0	66.7
Tharaka-Nithi	63.6	36.4	0.0	63.6	72.7	27.3
Kitui	68.8	31.3	6.3	37.5	81.3	68.8
Makueni	66.7	33.3	0.0	73.3	93.3	46.7
Turkana	92.9	7.1	7.1	50.0	85.7	28.6

County	% Male HT	% Female HT	% HT with Disability	% Degree or Higher	% Trained in Mgmt	% Trained in Gender and Inclusive Leadership
West Pokot	78.6	21.4	0.0	42.9	71.4	42.9
Samburu	81.8	18.2	9.1	9.1	72.7	72.7
Baringo	81.8	18.2	9.1	36.4	72.7	81.8
Laikipia	81.8	18.2	0.0	63.6	54.6	63.6
Narok	71.4	28.6	0.0	57.1	92.9	50.0
Kajiado	69.2	30.8	15.4	46.2	92.3	30.8
Nairobi City ¹⁷	11.1	88.9	11.1	55.6	100.0	33.3
Average	76.0	24.0	5.5	52.4	79.1	46.8

Headteachers in the surveyed schools had an average of 21.5 years of teaching experience and 7.6 years in headship, indicating an experienced leadership group across the sampled counties.

- » 76% of headteachers were male and 24% female, showing a clear gender imbalance in school leadership.
- » Only 5.5% of headteachers reported a disability, reflecting limited inclusion in leadership positions.
- » Slightly more than half (52%) held a degree or higher qualification, suggesting modest academic advancement among school leaders.
- » Nearly 79% had undertaken management training, showing strong participation in general leadership development.
- » Less than half (47%) had received Gender-in-Leadership (GIL) training, pointing to uneven exposure to gender-responsive leadership approaches.
- » Schools in Nairobi's informal settlements recorded the highest share of female headteachers (89%) and full participation in management training (100%), contrasting sharply with ASAL counties such as Wajir and Mandera, where headship remains entirely male.

Key informants reported that most headteachers rose through internal promotion after long service. Women's progression into headship remains constrained by relocation challenges, domestic responsibilities, and limited mentorship opportunities. Gender-sensitivity training exists but remains sporadic and largely dependent on externally supported initiatives.



Unique Observations

- ✓ Nairobi's informal settlements are a positive outlier, with 89% of schools headed by women, demonstrating the potential of inclusive recruitment in urban low-income settings.
- ✓ Counties with relatively high GIL training coverage, such as Baringo (82%) and Samburu (73%), still show low female headship, suggesting that training alone does not guarantee gender parity in leadership appointments.

¹⁷ All Nairobi schools surveyed were in informal settlements

✓ A few headteachers with disabilities also held management qualifications, showing that inclusion and professional growth can progress together when targeted support mechanisms are in place.

1.2 Governance Structures

School governance is largely functional across the surveyed schools, demonstrating widespread community involvement and compliance with national policy guidelines.

Table 1.2: Governance Structures by County (%)

County	Schools with PTA	Female PTA Chairs	Schools with BOM	Female BOM Chairs	Female JS BOM Chairs
Kwale	92.3	16.7	100.0	0.0	44.4
Kilifi	92.9	30.8	100.0	0.0	0.0
Tana River	90.9	30.0	100.0	27.3	12.5
Garissa	91.7	18.2	100.0	0.0	16.7
Wajir	90.9	0.0	72.7	0.0	16.7
Mandera	92.3	8.3	100.0	0.0	10.0
Isiolo	60.0	16.7	100.0	0.0	14.3
Meru	100.0	13.3	100.0	26.7	36.4
Tharaka-Nithi	100.0	54.6	100.0	18.2	20.0
Kitui	100.0	50.0	100.0	25.0	50.0
Makueni	93.3	50.0	93.3	14.3	9.1
Turkana	92.9	30.8	100.0	0.0	0.0
West Pokot	100.0	7.1	100.0	0.0	0.0
Samburu	100.0	36.4	100.0	0.0	60.0
Baringo	72.7	37.5	100.0	0.0	0.0
Laikipia	100.0	36.4	100.0	27.3	25.0
Narok	92.9	15.4	100.0	0.0	9.1
Kajiado	84.6	9.1	92.3	16.7	0.0
Nairobi City *	100.0	22.2	100.0	33.3	42.9
Average	94.0	25.0	98.0	20.0	18.0

- » 94 % of schools had active Parents–Teachers Associations (PTAs) and 98 % had Boards of Management (BOMs).
- » Female participation remains limited: women chaired about **25 %** of PTAs and **20 %** of BOMs, indicating that leadership within governance bodies is still male-dominated.
- » Female representation in Junior School BOMs was even lower, with women chairing only **about 18 %** of these newer boards.
- » **Tharaka-Nithi (55 %)** and **Kitui (50 %)** recorded the highest shares of female PTA chairs, while **Laikipia (27 %)**, **Meru (27 %)**, and **Kitui (25 %)** showed modest inclusion within BOM leadership.
- » Female leadership in most ASAL counties, including **Wajir, Mandera, and Garissa**, was minimal or absent, where PTA and BOM chair positions were held almost exclusively by men.
- » Schools in **Nairobi’s informal settlements** displayed relatively greater inclusivity, with **22 %** of PTAs and **33 %** of BOMs chaired by women.

Counties such as Tharaka-Nithi, Kitui, and Laikipia demonstrated promising gender balance in PTA leadership, offering practical examples of inclusive community engagement, a practice to replicate in the neighbouring counties located towards ASAL. Nairobi City schools in informal settlements showed gradual improvement in women’s leadership, suggesting that proximity and day-to-day parental interaction support inclusivity, despite over presence of urban advantages.

Although governance structures are nearly universal, gender parity in leadership remains low, indicating a need for deliberate gender-sensitive election guidelines and mentorship for prospective female leaders. Key informants noted that women’s involvement in school committees is often limited to membership rather than leadership. Participation improves when meetings are scheduled at convenient times and when local education officers encourage gender balance during elections.

CHAPTER TWO



CHAPTER TWO

SCHOOL CATEGORIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

In complementing school governance and leadership, the school category, the infrastructure, and learning resources critically influence the quality of learning. Schools with sufficient and manageable class sizes and adequate facilities create an environment conducive to student engagement and achievement. These characteristics not only affect academic performance but also shape students' norms, motivation, values, attendance, and retention, thereby playing a pivotal role in delivering quality education. Addressing gaps in school resources and management is essential for enhancing learning outcomes, particularly in marginalised and in resource-constrained settings.

2.1 Category of Schools

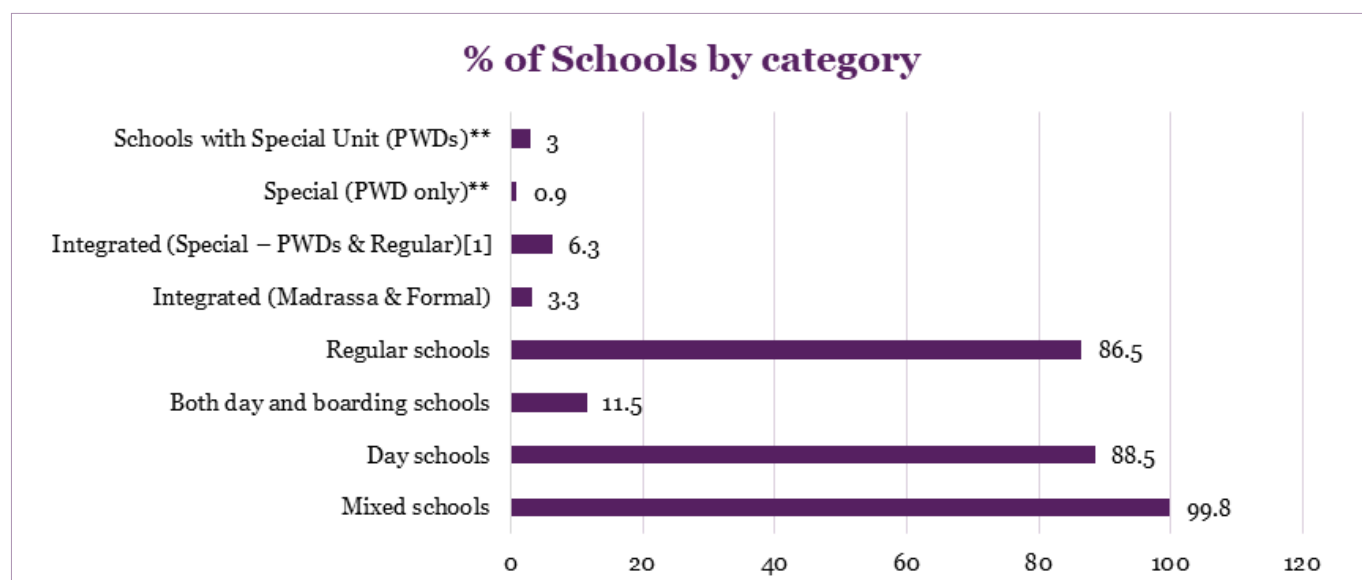


Figure 2.1: School Categories

* Only one girls' school was recorded – located in Garissa County.

** Categories relating to disability integration.

- » Mixed schools dominate the primary-education landscape (**99.8 %**), confirming that learners generally attend co-educational institutions.
- » Only one girls-only school was recorded, located in Garissa County; no boys-only schools appeared in the sample.
- » Most schools are day schools (**88.5 %**), while **11.5 %** combine day and boarding facilities.
- » Regular schools account for **86.5 %**, with very limited provision for mobile or nomadic schooling despite pastoral contexts.
- » A small proportion of institutions integrate learners with disabilities—**6.3 %** within regular classrooms, **0.9 %** as stand-alone special schools, and **3 %** with special units on-site.
- » Faith-based integration (Madrassa and formal learning) was observed in **3.3 %** of schools.

Key informants reported that boarding options remain limited due to cost and infrastructure gaps, forcing most pupils, especially girls, to travel long distances. Respondents also noted that mobile schools have either closed or are no longer formally recognised within current administrative data.



Unique Observations

- ✓ The existence of **only one girls-only school** across all surveyed counties highlights a major structural limitation in promoting girls' education choices.
- ✓ **No mobile or nomadic schools** were identified, pointing to a policy-practice gap in supporting education continuity for pastoralist learners.
- ✓ The small but growing share of **integrated and special-unit schools (~ 9 %)** shows emerging efforts toward inclusive education, though coverage remains minimal relative to need.

2.2 Class Size

Table 2.2: Average Number of Streams and Class Sizes by County

County	Avg. No. of Streams	Average Class Size
Kwale	1.0	34.5
Kilifi	1.1	34.9
Tana River	1.1	40.5
Garissa	1.0	45.0
Wajir	0.9	32.5
Mandera	1.1	63.4
Isiolo	0.9	34.2
Meru	1.3	33.8
Tharaka-Nithi	0.9	20.3
Kitui	1.2	19.8
Makueni	1.2	25.5
Turkana	1.3	38.1
West Pokot	1.0	34.4
Samburu	0.7	34.0
Baringo	0.9	29.3
Laikipia	1.2	26.5
Narok	1.2	35.8
Kajiado	1.0	32.6
Nairobi City	1.9	50.6

Schools across most counties maintain an average of one stream per grade, consistent with modest enrolment levels.

- » The **average class size** is **34.6 learners per class**, though notable disparities exist between counties.
- » **Mandera (63.4)**, **Garissa (45.0)**, and **Nairobi (50.6)** recorded the highest-class sizes, indicating overcrowding and limited classroom space.
- » **Kitui (19.8)** and **Tharaka-Nithi (20.3)** reported the smallest class sizes, reflecting more balanced pupil distribution and manageable learning environments.
- » **Nairobi's informal settlement schools** averaged **1.9 streams**, the highest within the sample, showing pressure from dense enrolments within limited school infrastructure.
- » **ASAL counties** such as **Mandera and Turkana** had large class sizes but fewer streams, pointing to restricted school coverage and concentrated enrolment in existing facilities.

Overall, overcrowding is most severe in Nairobi's informal settlements and northern ASAL counties, highlighting the need for classroom expansion and equitable teacher deployment. Single-stream schools in Kitui, Makueni, and Tharaka-Nithi show efficient enrolment management and relatively better pupil–teacher ratios. The uneven distribution of streams and class sizes reflects infrastructure inequities across the regions, with congestion concentrated in urban and northern ASAL counties.

CHAPTER THREE



CHAPTER THREE

STAFFING IN SCHOOLS

3.1 Teacher Staffing and Professional Capacity

Teacher staffing and professional capacity are central to education quality and learner achievement. The findings highlight disparities in gender representation, employment type, teacher distribution, and access to continuous professional development across the surveyed ASAL counties and Nairobi's informal settlements

Table 3.1: Teacher Numbers, Employment Type and Registration Gender and County (%)

County	Male Teachers	Female Teachers	TSC Teachers	Intern Teachers	PTR
Kwale	63.2	36.8	91.2	4	39.8
Kilifi	45.6	54.4	91.3	5	39.3
Tana River	48.3	51.7	91.7	0.7	35.6
Garissa	84.9	15.1	56.2	8.2	36.1
Wajir	85.3	14.8	67.2	4.9	46.6
Mandera	85.5	14.6	69.1	1.8	66.8
Isiolo	57.9	42.1	88.6	6.1	25.7
Meru	46.5	53.5	83.5	2.4	25.8
Tharaka-Nithi	36.4	63.6	95.5	2.3	19.5
Kitui	43.9	56.1	95.5	5.3	23.5
Makueni	38.6	61.5	89.8	2.4	30.9
Turkana	71.7	28.3	86.8	11.3	51.7
West Pokot	53.6	46.4	82.4	5.6	35.4
Samburu	64.3	35.7	100	2.4	44.5
Baringo	61.6	38.4	81.4	9.3	31.2
Laikipia	45.5	54.6	87.4	2.8	25.7
Narok	54.3	45.7	76.3	5.2	40.3
Kajiado	61	39	75.7	4.4	30.8
Nairobi City*	32.6	67.4	97.8	8.1	42.4
Average	51.9	48.1	85.2	4.2	33.4

- » Overall, 52% of teachers were male and 48% female, showing near gender balance but with stark disparities across counties.
- » The majority (85%) were employed by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), while 4% served as intern teachers.
- » The average Pupil–Teacher Ratio (PTR) was 33:4, below the national standard of 40:1, but with significant variation from 19.5 in Tharaka-Nithi to 66.8 in Mandera.
- » Male teachers predominated in Mandera, Wajir, and Garissa (over 84 %), whereas female teachers were more represented in Nairobi (67 %), Tharaka-Nithi (64 %), and Makueni (62 %) counties.
- » Turkana (11%) recorded the highest share of intern teachers, while Tana River and Samburu had none reported.

Key informants indicated that teacher shortages in ASAL regions are compounded by distance, high attrition, and limited incentives for female teachers to work in remote areas. Respondents also noted delays in replacing transferred teachers and difficulties in maintaining consistent staffing, resulting in overcrowded classrooms and inconsistent learning support.



Unique Observations

- ✓ Mandera’s PTR (66.8) highlights acute understaffing, especially for lower grades.
- ✓ Tharaka-Nithi and Kitui show optimal teacher–learner balance, suggesting efficient staffing and retention.
- ✓ Female dominance in Nairobi contrasts sharply with male dominance in ASAL counties, illustrating gendered employment patterns and location-based constraints.
- ✓ The small share of intern teachers (4%) points to limited short-term staffing reinforcement in areas facing persistent teacher deficits.

3.2 Teacher Capacity Development

Teacher professional development underpins curriculum quality and inclusion. Continuous in-service training, digital literacy, and Competency-Based Education (CBE) retooling are vital for strengthening teacher preparedness and responsiveness to learner needs.

Table 3.2: Teacher Capacity Development by Gender and County (%)

County	Male In-service	Female In-service	Teachers Trained in SNE	Teachers Trained in Digital Literacy	Teachers Retooled/ Trained in CBC
Kwale	63.4	44.7	12.4	42.6	54.3
Kilifi	57.3	43.8	7.3	36.6	68.3
Tana River	59.2	39.7	14.3	30.5	76.6
Garissa	52.3	51.9	7.1	27.4	41.6
Wajir	25.0	50.0	0.0	10.8	23.0
Mandera	42.1	18.8	5.7	26.8	34.2
Isiolo	40.7	56.6	5.0	25.2	31.7

County	Male In-service	Female In-service	Teachers Trained in SNE	Teachers Trained in Digital Literacy	Teachers Retooled/ Trained in CBC
Meru	26.5	30.5	6.9	17.2	39.3
Tharaka-Nithi	67.4	54.2	10.3	31.0	83.3
Kitui	59.7	37.9	5.2	31.8	72.1
Makueni	35.8	35.0	9.4	33.5	75.9
Turkana	48.6	51.3	8.3	46.8	58.7
West Pokot	40.5	36.2	2.0	15.5	43.9
Samburu	70.2	62.1	7.9	38.2	81.6
Baringo	36.4	35.0	10.4	34.0	56.6
Laikipia	31.0	22.2	12.4	91.3	44.1
Narok	48.5	30.6	11.4	44.0	70.7
Kajiado	52.9	32.8	6.8	31.3	42.9
Nairobi City	75.7	62.9	8.5	53.5	81.2
Average	46.4	37.3	7.7	33.1	58.0

On average, 46 % of male and 37 % of female teachers had participated in in-service training.

- » 7.7 % of teachers were trained in **Special Needs Education (SNE)**, reflecting limited inclusion-focused capacity.
- » **33 %** had been trained in **digital literacy**, showing gradual uptake of ICT skills.
- » **58 %** had been **retooled or trained in CBC**, indicating variable curriculum transition coverage across counties.
- » **Tharaka-Nithi (83 %)**, **Samburu (82 %)**, and **Nairobi City (81 %)** recorded the highest CBC retooling rates, while **Wajir (23 %)**, **Mandera (34 %)**, and **Isiolo (32 %)** had the lowest.
- » **Laikipia (91 %)** registered the highest share of teachers trained in digital literacy, followed by **Turkana (47 %)** and **Nairobi City (54 %)**.
- » Participation in SNE training was lowest in **Wajir (0 %)**, **West Pokot (2 %)**, **Mandera (5.7 %)**, **Isiolo (5 %)**, **Kitui (5.2 %)**, **Meru (6.9 %)**, **Kajiado (6.8 %)**, and **Garissa (7.1 %)**, all below the 7.7 % average.

Key Informants noted that access to professional development is uneven. Training sessions are often held at sub-county or county headquarters, limiting participation from remote schools. Respondents from ASAL counties cited workload and travel costs as barriers to attending CBC and digital literacy courses. Many also reported minimal exposure to SNE, stating that teachers rely on referrals to special schools for learners with disabilities.



Unique Observations

- ✓ CBC retooling coverage exceeded 80 % in **Tharaka-Nithi, Samburu, and Nairobi City**, while several ASAL counties remained below 40 %.
- ✓ SNE training coverage was below 7 % in eight counties, underscoring limited inclusion capacity.
- ✓ **Laikipia's 91 %** digital-literacy coverage demonstrates strong integration of technology in teacher training.
- ✓ Gender differences persist in access to in-service training, with male teachers more likely to attend than females, particularly in remote regions.

3.3 ECDE Teacher Distribution by Gender

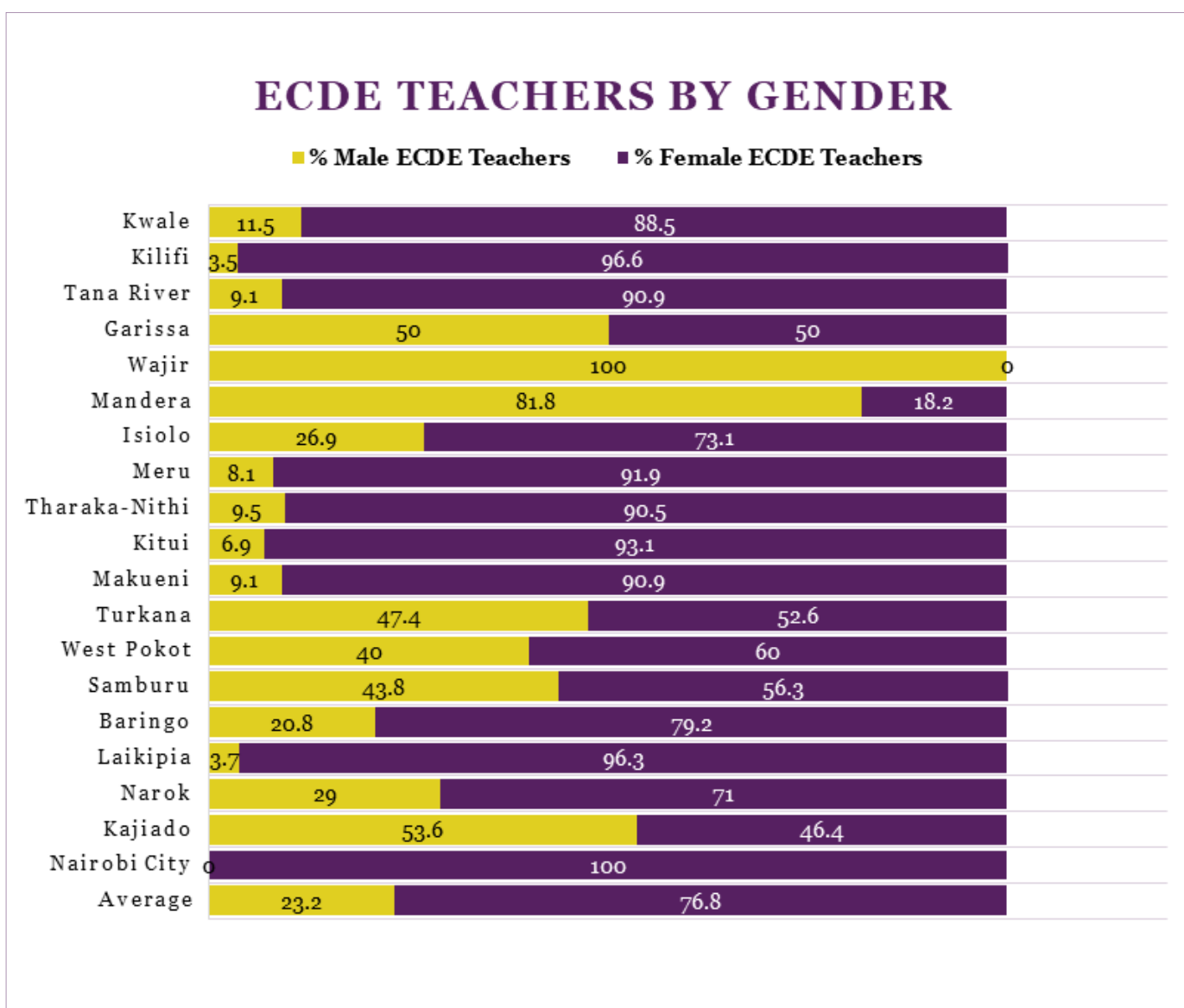


Figure 3.3: ECDE Teachers by County

On average, 23 % of ECDE teachers were male and 77 % female, showing strong feminization of early-childhood teaching.

- » Female dominance exceeded 90 % in Kilifi (97 %), Laikipia (96 %), Meru (92 %), Tharaka-Nithi (91 %), Tana River (91 %), and Makueni (91 %).
- » Gender inversion was observed in Wajir (100 % male) and Mandera (82 % male), where female participation remains minimal.
- » Balanced staffing appeared only in Garissa (50 % male, 50 % female) and Turkana (47 % male, 53 % female), both slightly above the national average for male engagement in ECDE.
- » Nairobi City reported all-female ECDE staff, reflecting the dominance of women in early learning within urban informal settlements.



Key Informant Insights

- » County officials attributed the low number of female ECDE teachers in northern ASAL counties to cultural norms restricting women's employment and relocation to remote areas.
- » In contrast, respondents from coastal and central counties linked female predominance to social acceptance of women in early-childhood care roles and the proximity of schools to residential areas.
- » Some counties noted delays in ECDE teacher remuneration and contract renewal, discouraging retention, particularly of male teachers who often seek more stable teaching positions.
- » Informal settlement schools in Nairobi reported higher recruitment of local women volunteers or caregivers, many without formal ECDE training but valued for their community trust and familiarity with children.



Unique Observations

Gender imbalance is most extreme in Wajir and Mandera, where female teachers are nearly absent, limiting girls' exposure to female role models at the entry level.

- ✓ Counties with more balanced staffing, such as Garissa and Turkana, show early signs of shifting norms in teacher recruitment.
- ✓ The high concentration of female ECDE teachers across most counties reflects both entrenched gender roles and labour-market dynamics, where ECDE remains a low-paying, locally staffed subsector.
- ✓ Sustained gender-responsive teacher-deployment strategies could improve representation and strengthen foundational learning environments in marginalised regions.

3.4 Junior School Teacher Deployment and Training

Deployment patterns at Junior School (JS) level reveal gendered and contractual disparities that continue to shape curriculum delivery in marginalised regions.

Table 3.4: Junior School Teacher Deployment and Training by County (%)

County	Male JS Teachers	Female JS Teachers	JS TSC Teachers – Male	JS TSC Teachers – Female	JS Teachers – Interns	JS Teachers Also Teaching Primary
Kwale	68.1	31.9	58.3	41.7	10.6	19.2
Kilifi	51.8	48.2	29.4	70.6	14.3	30.4
Tana River	62.2	37.8	90.0	10.0	2.7	32.4
Garissa	65.4	34.6	60.0	40.0	23.1	26.9
Wajir	76.5	23.5	50.0	50.0	17.7	64.7
Mandera	94.6	5.4	87.5	12.5	5.4	48.7
Isiolo	51.5	48.5	55.6	44.4	21.2	48.5
Meru	39.4	60.6	41.4	58.6	8.5	46.5
Tharaka-Nithi	55.2	44.8	45.5	54.5	6.9	65.5
Kitui	51.1	48.9	53.3	46.7	15.6	28.9
Makueni	50.0	50.0	18.8	81.3	8.0	70.0
Turkana	44.4	55.6	33.3	66.7	22.2	44.4
West Pokot	54.2	45.8	90.0	10.0	14.6	37.5
Samburu	90.0	10.0	66.7	33.3	5.0	30.0
Baringo	62.1	37.9	44.4	55.6	27.6	24.1
Laikipia	43.2	56.8	63.6	36.4	10.8	59.5
Narok	56.0	44.0	36.4	63.6	20.0	40.0
Kajiado	71.4	28.6	78.6	21.4	17.1	48.6
Nairobi City*	28.2	71.8	25.9	74.1	15.5	48.5
Average	55.1	44.9	49.3	50.7	13.2	42.2

On average, 55% of JS teachers were male and 45% were female, indicating a modest gender gap across sampled schools.

- » Female representation was notably low in Mandera (5%), Wajir (24%), and Samburu (10%), but higher in Meru (61%), Makueni (50%), and Nairobi City (72%).
- » TSC-employed teachers accounted for roughly half of JS staff, though coverage ranged widely from under 20% in Makueni to 90% in Tana River and West Pokot.
- » Interns constituted about 13% of JS staff, with higher reliance in Garissa (23%), Isiolo (21%), and Baringo (28%).
- » Nearly four in ten JS teachers also taught in primary grades, with cross-level teaching most common in Makueni (70%), Tharaka-Nithi (66%), and Wajir (65%).



Key Informant Insights

- » County officials and headteachers reported that female teacher deployment to ASAL schools remains limited due to distance, security, and family constraints.
- » Cross-teaching between primary and JS was cited as a stopgap measure in schools with delayed or insufficient teacher postings.
- » In several counties, intern teachers sustain JS operations, though turnover and limited training affect consistency.
- » Respondents from Meru, Makueni, and Nairobi City attributed higher female participation to proximity to towns and improved living conditions.



Unique Observations

- » Gender imbalance remains most pronounced in northern frontier counties, where female teachers make up less than 10% of JS staff.
- » Counties with higher female presence; notably Meru and Nairobi City, also reported stronger teacher stability and CBC coverage.
- » Intern reliance continues in at least five counties, reflecting transitional staffing in newly introduced JS levels.
- » Cross-teaching between JS and primary persists as an adaptive but unsustainable measure to address shortages.

3.5 Junior School Teacher Specialisation

Teacher specialisation patterns highlight gendered disparities in subject allocation, especially within STEM-related disciplines.

Table 3.5 Junior School Teacher Specialisation by County (%)

County	Teachers in STEM (Male)	JS Teachers in STEM (Female)	JS Teachers in Social Sciences	JS Teachers in Arts/ Sports
Kwale	43.75	20.00	25.53	17.02
Kilifi	34.48	11.11	30.36	8.93
Tana River	39.13	21.43	27.03	5.41
Garissa	23.53	44.44	38.46	23.08
Wajir	61.54	25.00	23.53	0.00
Mandera	45.71	0.00	21.62	8.11
Isiolo	35.29	18.75	27.27	6.06
Meru	32.14	16.28	40.85	2.82
Tharaka-Nithi	31.25	30.77	37.93	0.00
Kitui	21.74	13.64	33.33	2.22
Makueni	40.00	28.00	32.00	0.00
Turkana	50.00	20.00	33.33	0.00
West Pokot	26.92	18.18	20.83	6.25

County	Teachers in STEM (Male)	JS Teachers in STEM (Female)	JS Teachers in Social Sciences	JS Teachers in Arts/Sports
Samburu	44.44	0.00	30.00	0.00
Baringo	33.33	36.36	31.03	3.45
Laikipia	31.25	47.62	29.73	5.41
Narok	28.57	18.18	22.00	6.00
Kajiado	28.00	20.00	40.00	2.86
Nairobi City*	34.48	16.22	26.21	8.74
Average	33.68	20.16	30.73	5.02

On average, 34% of JS male teachers and 20% of female teachers specialised in STEM subjects, while 31% taught Social Sciences and 5% focused on Arts and Sports.

- » Male dominance in STEM was evident in Wajir (62%), Mandera (46%), and Turkana (50%), whereas female concentration in STEM was highest in Garissa (44%) and Laikipia (48%).
- » Social Sciences attracted more balanced participation, exceeding 35% in Meru, Tharaka-Nithi, and Kajiado, compared to less than 25% in Mandera and Narok.
- » Arts and Sports specialisation remained low across all counties, averaging 5%, and was entirely absent in several ASAL counties such as Wajir, Makueni, Samburu, and Turkana.



Key Informant Insights

- » County education officers noted that STEM teaching in ASAL schools is constrained by the limited pool of trained female teachers and scarce laboratory resources.
- » Cultural expectations and limited mobility restrict women's access to in-service STEM retooling opportunities, reinforcing the gender gap.
- » Respondents from urban and semi-urban settings, particularly Garissa and Laikipia, cited recent deployment of younger female STEM teachers under CBC reforms as a positive shift.
- » Social Science subjects were viewed as more inclusive, often assigned to teachers without formal STEM qualifications.



Unique Observations

- ✓ The under-representation of women in STEM persists across most counties, with female dominance appearing only in Garissa (44%) and Laikipia (48%)—an exception among the surveyed ASAL regions.
- ✓ STEM-qualified teachers remain concentrated among male staff in northern frontier counties such as Wajir and Mandera, where deployment is influenced more by availability than subject planning.
- ✓ The absence of Arts and Sports teachers in several counties, including Wajir, Makueni, Samburu, and Turkana, points to curricular gaps in co-curricular development.
- ✓ Promoting targeted recruitment, mentorship, and gender-responsive professional development in STEM could support more balanced representation and enhance CBC

implementation.

3.6 Teacher Attendance by Gender and County on Day of Survey

This section presents teacher presence as recorded on the survey day and summarises reported causes of absenteeism across sampled schools in ASAL counties and informal settlements.

Table 3.6: Teacher Attendance by Gender and County on Day of Survey

County	% Male Teachers Present	% Female Teachers Present	% ECDE Teachers Present (Survey Day)
Kwale	85	94	96
Kilifi	92	94	90
Tana River	87	94	86
Garissa	88	85	100
Wajir	89	90	93
Mandera	90	69	86
Isiolo	79	92	92
Meru	66	92	81
Tharaka-Nithi	93	88	90
Kitui	94	91	93
Makueni	81	99	91
Turkana	77	90	89
West Pokot	82	91	88
Samburu	96	93	88
Baringo	67	83	83
Laikipia	87	99	93
Narok	77	93	71
Kajiado	82	84	100
Nairobi City	94	95	96
Average	83	92	89

On the day of the survey, 83% of male and 92% of female teachers were present.

- » ECDE teachers recorded an average attendance of 89%, the highest among all levels.
- » Full ECDE presence (100%) was observed in Garissa and Kajiado, while the lowest was in Narok (71%).
- » Male attendance exceeded 90% in Kitui, Mandera, Tharaka-Nithi, Samburu, and Nairobi City; female attendance was above 95% in Makueni, Laikipia, and Nairobi City.

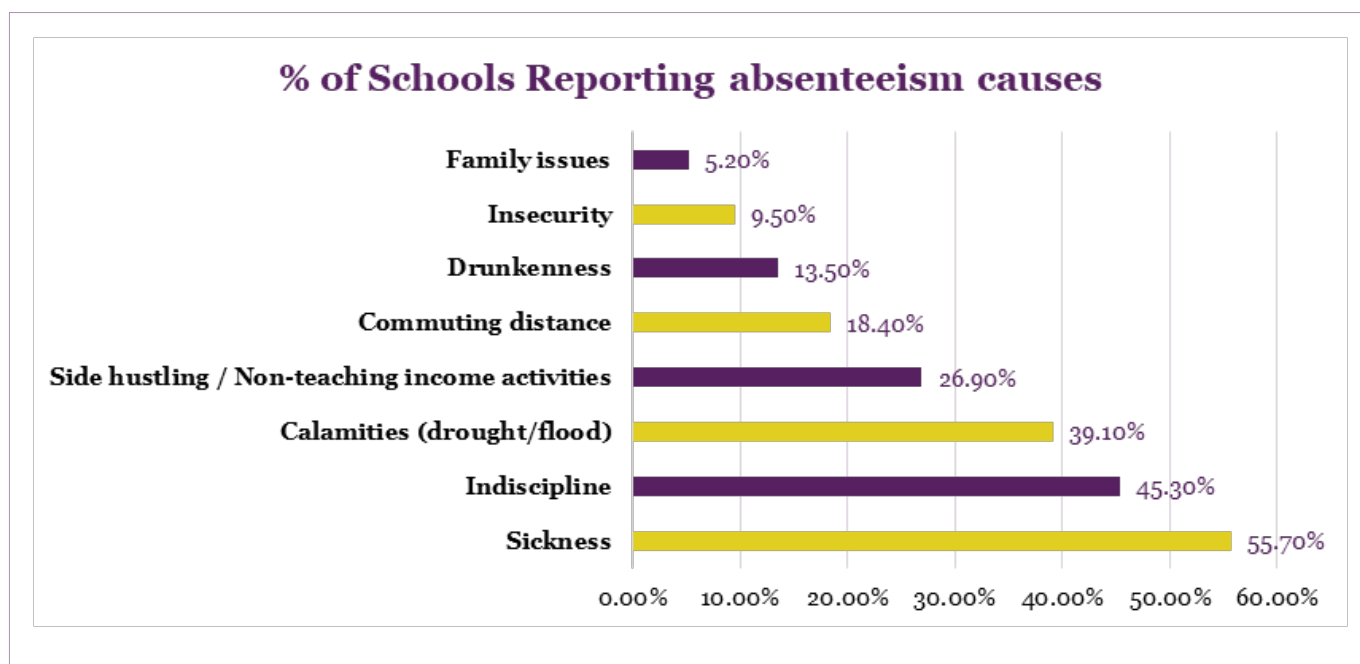


Figure 3.7 Main Reported Causes of Teacher Absenteeism

The main reported causes of absenteeism were sickness (56%), indiscipline (45%), and calamities such as drought or floods (39%).

- » Side hustling or non-teaching work accounted for 27% of cases, while commuting distance (18%), insecurity (10%), and drunkenness (14%) were less frequent.



Key Informant Insights

- » County education officials noted that absenteeism peaks during environmental disruptions such as drought or flooding when access to schools is affected.
- » Respondents from ASAL counties mentioned that long travel distances and inadequate staff housing occasionally affect daily teacher presence.
- » In informal-settlement schools, informants reported that some teachers engage in secondary income activities, contributing to irregular attendance.
- » Health-related absences were commonly mentioned in remote areas where access to medical services is limited.
- » School leaders also reported that monitoring systems for attendance remain weak, particularly in schools with understaffed administrative teams.

Female teachers recorded higher presence rates on the day of the survey than their male counterparts across most counties. Health, environmental, and behavioural factors were the leading causes of reported absenteeism, affecting over half of schools surveyed. ECDE teachers exhibited the most consistent attendance, reflecting stronger community anchorage at early-childhood level. Overall, teacher attendance on the survey day was high, but absence reports indicate that both contextual and personal factors continue to influence staff reliability in marginalised and informal settings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Class Enrollment

Class Attendance

CHAPTER FOUR

ENROLMENT, ATTENDANCE AND TRANSITION

Achieving 100% enrolment, attendance, retention, and transition remains a key goal in Kenya's education system, though significant challenges persist. While primary school enrollment has grown rapidly, coverage still falls short of full universal access, with disparities especially pronounced in marginalised regions.

4.1 Enrolment by grade

Table 4.1: Enrolment by Grade

Grade	% Boys Enrolled	% Girls Enrolled	Gender Parity Index (F/M)	% Boys with Disabilities Enrolled	% Girls with Disabilities Enrolled	Disability Enrolment GPI (F/M)
ECDE (PP1+PP2)	51.79	48.21	93.10	0.70	0.42	60.03
Lower Primary (Grade 1-3)	52.88	47.12	89.10	0.44	0.23	52.85
Upper Primary (Grade 4-6)	52.13	47.87	91.82	0.81	0.53	65.19
Junior School (Grade 7-9)	52.26	47.74	91.36	0.71	0.59	81.91
Average	52.26	47.74	91.35	0.67	0.44	64.99

Across all grades, boys constituted 52% and girls 48% of enrolled learners in the sampled schools.

- » The overall Gender Parity Index (GPI) was 0.91, reflecting a modest enrolment gap in favour of boys.
- » The **highest GPI (0.93)** was at **ECDE level**, followed by **Upper Primary (0.92)**, while **Lower Primary (0.89)** recorded the widest gender gap.
- » **Learners with disabilities** accounted for less than 1% of total enrolment across all levels, averaging **0.67% boys and 0.44% girls**.
- » **Disability enrolment parity** improved slightly with grade progression, rising from **0.60 at ECDE to 0.82 at Junior School**.



Key Informant Insights

- » County education officials confirmed that **enrolment remains higher for boys than girls** in most sampled ASAL counties.
- » Respondents in several counties reported **low enrolment of learners with disabilities**, attributing this to the absence of specialised facilities and trained staff.
- » In Nairobi's informal settlements, **ECDE enrolment was described as near equal by gender**, supported by locally managed centres that enroll both boys and girls from surrounding communities.



Unique Observations

- » Enrolment favours boys at all levels, but parity is **closest at ECDE** where community-based enrolment is more inclusive.
- » **Gender gaps widen in Lower Primary**, coinciding with the onset of transition and increased household responsibilities for girls in ASAL areas.
- » The **progressive rise in disability GPI** suggests gradual inclusion at higher grades, though overall participation of learners with disabilities remains low.
- » Across both ASAL and informal-settlement schools, **gender parity remains below 1.0**, indicating persistent enrolment imbalance.

4.2 Enrolment by Sex

Table 4.2: Enrolment by sex and County

County	% Boys Enrolled (All Grades)	% Girls Enrolled (All Grades)	GPI (Overall Enrolment)	% Boys with Disabilities Enrolled	% Girls with Disabilities Enrolled
Kwale	50.2	49.8	99.2	1.7	0.0
Kilifi	50.6	49.4	97.6	0.0	0.0
Tana River	50.6	49.4	97.6	0.9	0.0
Garissa	47.4	52.6	100.0	0.0	0.0
Wajir	54.4	45.6	84.0	0.2	0.0
Mandera	61.5	38.5	62.7	1.6	0.0
Isiolo	51.1	48.9	95.6	1.4	0.6
Meru	52.1	47.9	91.8	0.8	0.1
Tharaka-Nithi	51.7	48.3	93.4	0.5	0.0
Kitui	50.7	49.3	97.3	0.3	0.1
Makueni	51.2	48.8	95.3	1.0	0.2
Turkana	49.0	51.0	100.0	0.6	0.2
West Pokot	52.5	47.5	90.6	0.3	0.0

County	% Boys Enrolled (All Grades)	% Girls Enrolled (All Grades)	GPI (Overall Enrolment)	% Boys with Disabilities Enrolled	% Girls with Disabilities Enrolled
Samburu	54.5	45.5	83.4	0.3	0.1
Baringo	54.4	45.6	83.7	0.1	0.0
Laikipia	51.0	49.0	96.2	0.6	0.3
Narok	51.2	48.9	95.5	0.8	0.0
Kajiado	51.8	48.2	93.0	0.1	0.0
Nairobi City	50.0	50.0	100.1	0.6	0.1
Overall*	51.9	48.1	93.3	0.6	0.1

- » Overall enrolment was 52 % boys and 48 % girls, with an average Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.93.
- » Parity or higher female enrolment (GPI \geq 1.0) was recorded in Garissa (1.11), Turkana (1.04), and Nairobi City (1.00).
- » The lowest GPIs were in Mandera (0.63), Samburu (0.83), and Baringo (0.84), showing notable gender gaps.
- » Learners with disabilities constituted less than 1 % of total enrolment across counties – averaging 0.62 % boys and 0.09 % girls.
- » Kwale (1.74 %), Mandera (1.60 %), and Isiolo (1.44 %) recorded the highest shares of boys with disabilities, while girls with disabilities were below 1 % in all counties.



Key Informant Insights

- » County education officials confirmed that male enrolment remains higher across most ASAL counties, matching the observed county averages.
- » Officials in Garissa and Turkana noted that girls slightly outnumbered boys, consistent with their GPI values above 1.0.
- » Respondents in several counties reported limited identification and reporting of learners with disabilities, citing lack of screening tools or specialist teachers.
- » In Nairobi City, informants described gender-balanced enrolment in informal settlement schools due to community-based registration practices.



Unique Observations

- » Mandera and Wajir had the widest gender disparities, with girls forming less than 46 % of total enrolment.
- » Garissa and Turkana were the only counties where girls' enrolment slightly exceeded that of boys.
- » Enrolment of learners with disabilities remains very low across all counties, with boys consistently more represented than girls.
- » Nairobi City achieved full gender parity, marking the only county with balanced participation across grades.

4.3 Absenteeism Rate on the day of Survey

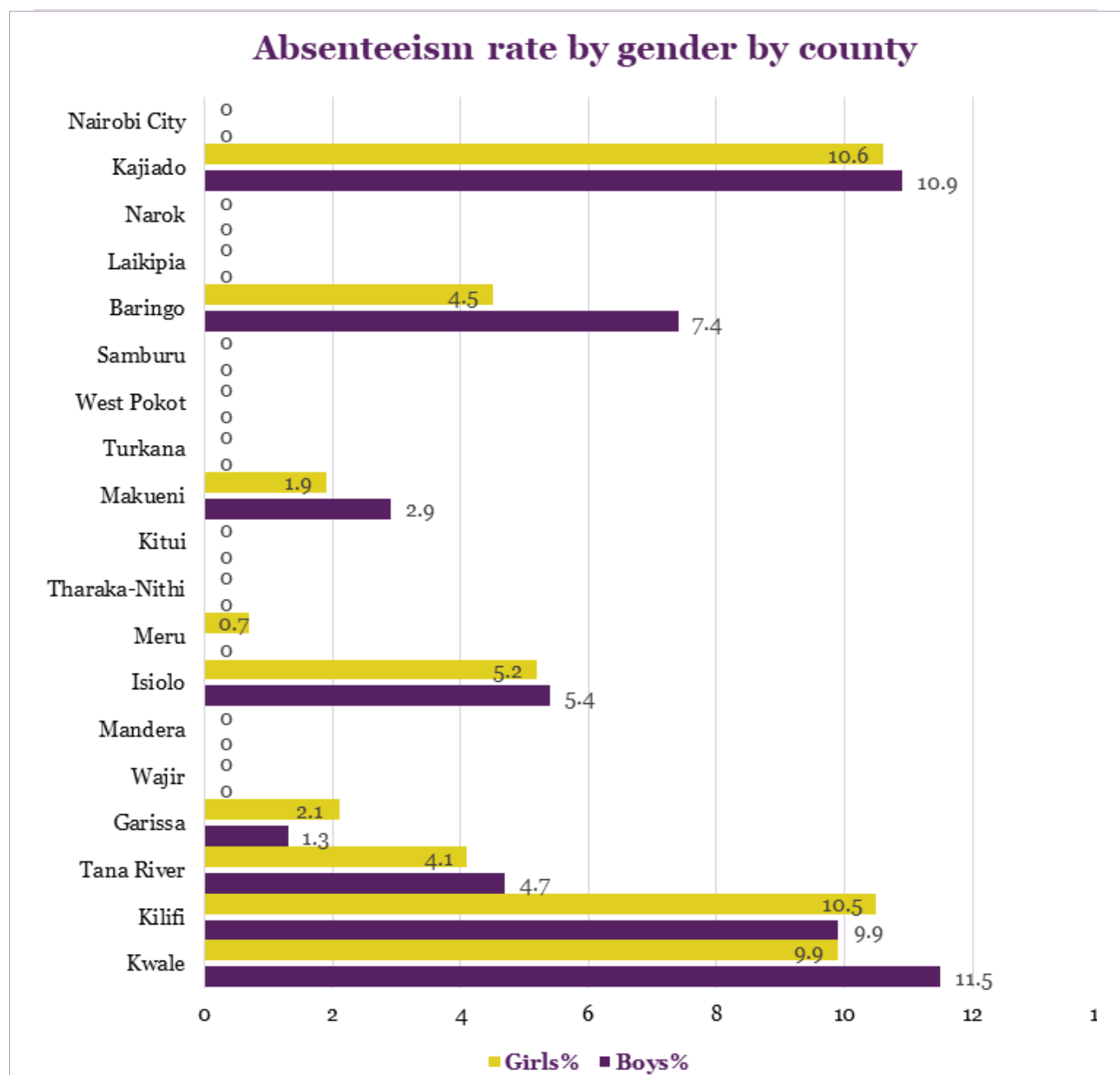


Figure 4.3: Absenteeism Rate on Survey Day by Gender and County

- » On the day of the survey, absenteeism among boys was reported in 10 of the 19 counties, led by Kwale (11.5%), Kajiado (10.9%), and Kilifi (9.9%).
- » Girls’ absenteeism was recorded in nine counties, highest in Kilifi (10.5%), Kajiado (10.6%), and Kwale (9.9%).
- » No absenteeism was reported among boys and girls in Mandera, Kitui, Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, and Laikipia.
- » Among learners with disabilities, absenteeism was reported in a few counties, highest among boys in Baringo (100%), Kilifi (60%), Isiolo (52%), and Nairobi City (42%).
- » No girls with disabilities were reported absent on the survey day in any county.



Unique Observations

- ✓ Attendance on the day of data collection was generally high across all counties.
- ✓ Instances of absenteeism were few and localised, with boys slightly more affected than girls.
- ✓ Absenteeism among learners with disabilities was limited to a small number of counties but remained exclusive to boys in the data collected.

4.4 Distance from school

Table 4.4: Distance and School Attendance

County	Average time to school (Min)	Schools offering organised transport for girls (%)
Kwale	55.0	0.0
Kilifi	53.9	0.0
Tana River	38.6	0.0
Garissa	13.2	0.0
Wajir	11.4	0.0
Mandera	16.4	0.1
Isiolo	29.8	0.0
Meru	39.0	0.1
Tharaka-Nithi	37.7	0.0
Kitui	42.7	0.0
Makueni	42.3	0.0
Turkana	39.6	0.0
West Pokot	80.7	0.1
Samburu	40.0	0.0
Baringo	60.5	0.1
Laikipia	45.0	0.0
Narok	42.1	0.2
Kajiado	46.9	0.0
Nairobi City	28.9	0.0
Average	43.8	0.0

- » The average time to school across all counties was 44 minutes.
- » The longest travel times were reported in West Pokot (81 minutes), Kwale (55 minutes), and Kilifi (54 minutes), while the shortest were in Wajir (11 minutes) and Garissa (13 minutes).

Table 4.5: School Arrangements to Help Learners Who Live Away from Schools

Considerations / Arrangement	% of Schools
After-school programmes	0.1
Organised lunch / School Feeding Programme (SFP)	0.2
School-managed boarding facilities	0.6
Organised transport	0.0

County officials (KI) noted that long distances to school continue to affect learner attendance, especially in sparsely populated ASAL areas. Boarding facilities were cited as the best strategy to accommodate learners who travel long distances. School feeding programmes were reported to operate inconsistently, often dependent on county or partner funding. In informal settlements, some schools conduct after-school sessions led by community volunteers, rather than as structured institutional programmes. Travel distances remain long in most ASAL counties, with minimal provision of organised transport.

4.5 Transition to Junior School

This section presents the proportion of boys and girls transitioning from upper primary (Grade 6) to junior school (Grade 7) across the counties.

Table 4.5: Transition to Junior School (Grade 7) by Gender

County	% Boys Transitioning to Grade 7	% Girls Transitioning to Grade 7	Transition GPI (Girls/Boys)
Kwale	50.4	49.6	1.0
Kilifi	54.8	45.2	0.8
Tana River	48.4	51.6	1.1
Garissa	61.7	38.3	0.6
Wajir	51.9	48.2	0.9
Mandera	62.2	37.8	0.6
Isiolo	57.0	43.0	0.8
Meru	53.3	46.7	0.9
Tharaka-Nithi	51.4	48.6	0.9
Kitui	54.6	45.4	0.8

County	% Boys Transitioning to Grade 7	% Girls Transitioning to Grade 7	Transition GPI (Girls/Boys)
Makueni	50.7	49.3	1.0
Turkana	61.8	38.2	0.6
West Pokot	54.1	45.9	0.8
Samburu	52.1	47.9	0.9
Baringo	54.7	45.3	0.8
Laikipia	55.1	44.9	0.8
Narok	50.1	49.9	1.0
Kajiado	50.1	49.9	1.0
Nairobi City	48.3	51.7	1.1
Average	53.4	46.6	0.9

- » On average, 53.4% of boys and 46.6% of girls transitioned to junior school, giving an overall Transition GPI of 0.9.
- » This indicates that for every 10 boys progressing to Grade 7, only about 9 girls make the same transition.
- » Counties with near gender parity in transition included Narok (1.00), Kajiado (1.0), and Kwale (0.98).
- » Girls' transition exceeded that of boys in Tana River (GPI 1.1) and Nairobi City (1.8).
- » The lowest transition GPIs were recorded in Mandera (0.6), Turkana (0.6), and Garissa (0.6), indicating significant gender gaps.
- » Transition rates for girls were below 45% in Mandera, Garissa, Turkana, and Isiolo, while exceeding 50% only in Tana River and Nairobi City.



Key Informant Insights

- » County education officers attributed lower transition rates for girls in ASAL regions to mobility, early marriage, and family responsibilities, which increase after upper primary.
- » Respondents in urban informal settlements noted that the transition to junior school is almost uniform by gender, supported by proximity to schools and parental engagement.
- » It was observed that distance and school availability still limit seamless progression in remote rural areas.

Overall, gender gaps in transition remain wider in ASAL counties compared to urban areas. Tana River and Nairobi City were the only counties where girls' transition slightly exceeded that of boys. Despite curriculum reforms, girls continue to experience lower transition rates in counties where social and environmental barriers are more pronounced.

CHAPTER FIVE



CHAPTER FIVE

SCHOOL HEALTH AND SUPPORT SERVICES

This section presents findings on the availability of key health and psychosocial support services offered in sampled schools. These services promote learner well-being and safety within school environments.

5.1 School Support Services by County

Table 5.1: School Support Services by County

School Support Service	% of Schools
Offer guidance and counselling services	90
Staff trained in first aid	52
Conduct regular health promotion (medical camps, awareness campaigns)	41
Conduct assessments of learners who abuse alcohol, tobacco, and other illicit drugs	49

Guidance and counselling services were available in 90% of schools, indicating wider coverage.

- » Staff trained in first aid were present in 52% of schools, suggesting moderate emergency preparedness.
- » Health promotion activities, such as medical camps and awareness campaigns, were conducted in 41% of schools.
- » Assessments of learners exposed to alcohol, tobacco, or other substances were undertaken in 49% of schools.
- » County officials highlighted that guidance and counselling are now standard in most schools but vary in quality due to limited trained personnel.
- » First aid training was noted to be more common in boarding schools and urban centres.
- » Respondents indicated that health promotion and substance-use assessments often depend on partnerships with health officers or NGOs, especially in ASAL areas where school health programmes are limited.

While most schools offer counselling services, specialized psychosocial support remains limited. Health-related services such as first aid and awareness campaigns are less uniformly implemented, especially in remote schools. Collaboration between schools and local health units remains crucial in sustaining learner well-being initiatives.

5.2 Main Sources of Drinking Water by County

Table 5.2: Main Sources of Drinking Water by County (%)

County	Borehole /Well	Rain water	Pipe	Water Vendors	River	Bought Bottled Water
Kwale	30.0	40.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Kilifi	10.0	40.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tana River	40.0	10.0	20.0	30.0	0.0	0.0
Garissa	40.0	0.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Wajir	60.0	10.0	10.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
Mandera	0.0	60.0	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
Isiolo	50.0	0.0	30.0	0.0	20.0	0.0
Meru	10.0	10.0	70.0	10.0	10.0	0.0
Tharaka-Nithi	10.0	0.0	60.0	0.0	20.0	0.0
Kitui	0.0	70.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	10.0
Makueni	60.0	0.0	20.0	10.0	10.0	0.0
West Pokot	10.0	10.0	40.0	0.0	40.0	0.0
Samburu	60.0	30.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Baringo	40.0	50.0	10.0	0.0	10.0	0.0
Laikipia	20.0	50.0	40.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Narok	40.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0
Kajiado	30.0	30.0	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nairobi City*	40.0	0.0	40.0	10.0	0.0	0.0
Average	31.6	26.3	26.3	5.8	7.4	0.5

- » Overall, boreholes and wells (32%), rainwater (26%), and piped water (26%) were the most common sources of drinking water in the schools surveyed.
- » Water vendors (6%) and rivers (7%) were reported less frequently, while a few schools indicated bottled water (0.5%) or other sources (4%).
- » Boreholes and wells were most common in Wajir (60%), Samburu (60%), and Makueni (60%), indicating reliance on groundwater in ASAL areas.
- » Rainwater harvesting was highest in Kitui (70%), Mandera (60%), and Laikipia (50%), showing its importance where piped water is limited.
- » Piped water systems were more common in Meru (70%), Tharaka-Nithi (60%), and Kilifi (50%).
- » Use of water vendors was reported mainly in Tana River (30%) and Garissa (20%).



Key Informant Insights

- » County officers noted that water reliability remains a challenge, especially in arid counties where schools rely on boreholes and rainwater collection.
- » In urban informal settlements, access to piped water was reported as inconsistent due to shared connections and supply interruptions.
- » Several respondents highlighted maintenance gaps in water infrastructure, leading some schools to depend on vendors during dry seasons.



Unique Observations

- ✓ Groundwater and rainwater harvesting remain the dominant sources of drinking water in ASAL counties.
- ✓ Piped systems are more prevalent in urban and high-rainfall areas, reflecting better infrastructure coverage.
- ✓ Reliance on vendors and rivers points to continued vulnerability to water scarcity, particularly in remote and drought-prone regions.

5.3 Learner Sanitation Facilities by County

This subsection presents findings on learner sanitation facilities, including pupil-to-toilet ratios, handwashing facilities, and overall cleanliness across sampled schools.

Table 5.3: Learner Sanitation Facilities by County

County	Pupil Toilet Ratio (Boys)	Pupil Toilet Ratio (Girls)	Pupil Toilet Ratio (ECDE Learners)	% Schools with Functional Handwashing Points	% Schools Rated Clean/Very Clean
Kwale	57.0	42.7	26.6	53.9	92.3
Kilifi	44.5	33.8	97.8	64.3	100.0
Tana River	62.6	55.8	19.2	72.7	90.9
Garissa	54.1	46.1	25.2	66.7	91.7
Wajir	85.6	52.4	27.0	54.6	100.0
Mandera	97.1	44.7	30.5	69.2	84.6
Isiolo	37.8	32.2	29.2	70.0	80.0
Meru	30.0	22.7	16.0	100.0	86.7
Tharaka-Nithi	11.6	10.2	30.6	90.9	90.9
Kitui	23.7	17.4	25.2	93.8	100.0
Makueni	24.3	17.6	19.3	100.0	100.0
Turkana	68.7	64.4	64.1	64.3	85.7
West Pokot	63.0	52.7	40.1	64.3	100.0

County	Pupil Toilet Ratio (Boys)	Pupil Toilet Ratio (Girls)	Pupil Toilet Ratio (ECDE Learners)	% Schools with Functional Hand-washing Points	% Schools Rated Clean/Very Clean
Samburu	62.4	49.0	19.5	54.6	90.9
Baringo	29.6	10.8	16.7	90.9	81.8
Laikipia	33.6	22.7	28.4	90.9	100.0
Narok	41.8	43.0	51.3	92.9	92.9
Kajiado	50.8	41.5	22.0	76.9	84.6
Nairobi City	48.2	42.4	45.6	88.9	88.9
Overall	42.7	31.5	29.7	77.3	92.0

The average pupil-to-toilet ratio was 43:1 for boys, 32:1 for girls, and 30:1 for ECDE learners, all above the national standards of 25:1 for boys, 20:1 for girls, and 10–15:1 for ECDE.

- » The highest ratios were recorded in Mandera (97:1 boys), Wajir (86:1), and Turkana (69:1), indicating severe sanitation pressure.
- » ECDE facilities remain inadequate in several counties, particularly Kilifi and Narok, highlighting the need for age-appropriate, child-friendly infrastructure.
- » The most favourable ratios were reported in Tharaka-Nithi (10:1) and Baringo (11:1) for girls, showing strong compliance with sanitation guidelines.
- » 77 % of schools had functional hand-washing points, while 92 % were rated clean or very clean.

Lowest hand-washing access reported in Kwale (54 %), Samburu (55 %), and Wajir (55 %).

- » Full cleanliness ratings were achieved in Kilifi, Wajir, Kitui, Makeni, Laikipia, and West Pokot.
- » Urban context: Nairobi City recorded ratios of 1:48 for boys and 1:42 for girls with 89 % cleanliness, reflecting resilience despite congestion in informal settlements.

The key informant noted that sanitation access remains limited in several ASAL counties due to constrained funding and water scarcity. Hand-washing facilities were often improvised or dependent on rainwater collection, limiting consistent use. In urban informal settlements, respondents cited space limitations and high enrolment as key sanitation challenges¹⁹.



Unique Observations

- ✓ ASAL counties continue to lag behind national standards, underlining persistent infrastructure and water access disparities.
- ✓ High overall cleanliness ratings indicate progress in hygiene maintenance, but sustainability depends on steady resource allocation and water availability.
- ✓ Wide variation in functional hand-washing access (54–100 %) demonstrates unequal implementation of health and sanitation standards.

¹⁹**Note:** According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) and Kenya Ministry of Education guidelines, the recommended maximum pupil-to-toilet ratios are 25:1 for boys, 20:1 for girls, and 10–15:1 for ECDE learners. Ratios above these thresholds are considered inadequate for safe, hygienic, and gender-responsive learning environments.

5.4 Inclusive Sanitation Facilities for Learners and Staff by County

This section presents findings on the accessibility of school sanitation facilities for learners and staff with disabilities. Inclusive sanitation is essential for ensuring dignity, safety, and participation in learning for all.

Table 5.4: Inclusive Sanitation Facilities for Learners and Staff by County

County	% Toilets Accessible to Boys with Disabilities	% Toilets Accessible to Girls with Disabilities	% Toilets for Staff	% Toilets Accessible to Staff with Disabilities
Kwale	7.7	7.7	92.3	23.1
Kilifi	7.1	7.1	85.7	0.0
Tana River	36.4	45.5	90.9	9.1
Garissa	36.4	33.3	50.0	25.0
Wajir	9.1	18.2	54.6	9.1
Mandera	38.5	30.8	92.3	7.7
Isiolo	10.0	10.0	90.0	0.0
Meru	33.3	26.7	100.0	13.3
Tharaka-Nithi	27.3	27.3	100.0	18.2
Kitui	12.5	12.5	93.8	6.3
Makueni	33.3	40.0	100.0	20.0
Turkana	28.6	35.7	85.7	21.4
West Pokot	0.0	0.0	85.7	0.0
Samburu	45.5	36.4	63.6	0.0
Baringo	27.3	27.3	100.0	18.2
Laikipia	18.2	18.2	100.0	9.1
Narok	42.9	42.9	92.9	28.6
Kajiado	30.8	15.4	100.0	7.7
Nairobi City	77.8	66.7	88.9	33.3
Average	26.6	25.6	88.2	13.0

- » On average, 27% of schools had toilets accessible to boys with disabilities, and 26% to girls with disabilities, showing minimal inclusion.
- » Only 13% of schools had toilets accessible to staff with disabilities, indicating that workplace inclusion remains largely overlooked.
- » Toilets designated for staff use were reported in 88% of schools, suggesting fair coverage for general staff but limited adaptation for special needs.
- » Highest accessibility: Nairobi City (78% boys, 67% girls) recorded the most inclusive facilities.
- » West Pokot (0%), Kwale (8%), and Kilifi (7%) had the least disability-friendly facilities.
- » **Staff sanitation:** Meru, Tharaka-Nithi, Makueni, Baringo, Laikipia, and Kajiado had 100% staff toilets, though less than 20% were accessible to staff with disabilities.
- » County education officials reported that inclusive sanitation is rarely prioritized, with most budgets focused on classroom construction and water access.
- » Design gaps were common—many toilets lack ramps or handrails, rendering them inaccessible to learners using mobility aids.
- » Urban schools, especially in Nairobi and Laikipia, were more likely to have retrofitted toilets through NGO or donor support, while rural and ASAL schools still rely on basic pit latrines.
- » Teachers with disabilities often share general-use toilets, highlighting the absence of tailored facilities for staff.
- » Respondents in Kajiado and Garissa noted that girls with disabilities face greater stigma and mobility challenges, requiring targeted interventions.



Unique Observations

- ✓ Disability inclusion remains weak, with fewer than one-third of schools offering accessible toilets for learners with disabilities.
- ✓ Urban–rural inequalities persist, with schools in Nairobi City’s informal settlements demonstrating the most progress.
- ✓ Despite fair staff sanitation coverage, facilities remain largely non-inclusive for teachers with disabilities.

5.5 Sanitation Functionality and Maintenance Challenges

This indicator examines the extent to which school sanitation facilities were functional on the day of visit and the reasons reported for non-functionality.

Table 5.5: Sanitation Functionality and Maintenance Challenges

County	% Schools Reporting Lack of Funds	% Schools with Facilities Closed for Maintenance	% Schools Citing Other Reasons
Kwale	0.0	15.4	0.0
Kilifi	0.0	21.4	21.4
Tana River	0.0	27.3	45.5
Garissa	0.0	33.3	8.3
Wajir	0.0	18.2	18.2
Mandera	0.0	30.8	0.0
Isiolo	0.0	50.0	0.0

County	% Schools Reporting Lack of Funds	% Schools with Facilities Closed for Maintenance	% Schools Citing Other Reasons
Meru	0.0	33.3	0.0
Tharaka-Nithi	0.0	18.2	0.0
Kitui	0.0	25.0	37.5
Makueni	0.0	6.7	26.7
Turkana	0.0	21.4	14.3
West Pokot	0.0	50.0	14.3
Samburu	0.0	9.1	9.1
Baringo	9.1	36.4	27.3
Laikipia	9.1	45.5	9.1
Narok	0.0	35.7	7.1
Kajiado	0.0	46.2	0.0
Nairobi City	0.0	33.3	22.2
Average	0.8	29.0	13.9

- » On average, 29 % of schools had sanitation facilities closed for maintenance, while 14 % cited other reasons such as structural damage or lack of water.
- » Only 0.8 % of schools explicitly reported lack of funds as the cause of non-functionality.
- » The highest proportions of schools with facilities closed for maintenance were observed in Isiolo (50 %), West Pokot (50 %), Kajiado (46 %), and Laikipia (45 %).
- » County officers and head teachers noted that maintenance is largely reactive, with repairs initiated only when toilets become unusable.
- » Limited budget allocations for WASH mean that most schools depend on parental contributions or community support for minor repairs.
- » Respondents highlighted that water scarcity and borehole breakdowns often delay sanitation repairs, especially in ASAL counties.
- » External partners such as NGOs or CDF projects occasionally assist in rehabilitation, though support remains inconsistent.



Unique Observations

- ✓ The overall maintenance closure rate (29%) points to moderate but uneven upkeep of sanitation facilities across counties.
- ✓ ASAL counties such as West Pokot, Isiolo, and Mandera experience higher facility closure rates, reflecting harsh climatic and logistical challenges.
- ✓ Urban schools in Nairobi reported facility closure mainly due to overcrowding and high usage, rather than lack of funds.
- ✓ While only a few schools explicitly cited financial constraints, key informants clarified that limited funding remains an underlying cause, as sanitation maintenance is rarely budgeted for directly.
- ✓ Sustaining WASH services requires dedicated maintenance funding and systematic monitoring within school management routines.

5.6 Cross-Tabulation Analysis: Menstrual Hygiene and Sanitation Adequacy

This subsection links menstrual-related absenteeism with sanitation adequacy, hand-washing access, and school cleanliness to illustrate how WASH conditions influence girls' attendance, particularly in ASAL and low-resource settings.

Table 5.6: Cross-tabulation of Menstrual Hygiene and Sanitation Adequacy

Category	Avg. % of Girls Missing School Due to Menstruation	Avg. Pupil Toilet Ratio (Girls)	% Schools with Functional Handwashing Points	% Schools Rated Clean / Very Clean
Counties with Adequate Sanitation (≤ 40 girls per toilet)	7.3	33 : 1	90	95
Counties with Inadequate Sanitation (> 40 girls per toilet)	15.8	56 : 1	65	84

Menstrual-related absenteeism is twice as high in counties with inadequate sanitation (15.8 %) compared to those meeting the 40 : 1 standard (7.3 %).

- » Counties with functional hand-washing facilities and clean toilets consistently show lower absenteeism, underscoring the link between hygiene infrastructure and girls' participation.
- » This pattern highlights the gendered impact of poor WASH conditions, particularly in ASAL and low-resource counties where facility maintenance is inconsistent.

Groundwater access is central for water security in arid and semi-arid area schools, but maintenance and quality assurance remain major challenges. Rainwater harvesting offers important seasonal relief but lacks sustainability without proper storage and treatment. Urban schools, especially in informal settlements, rely on a mix of piped and purchased water due to rationing and infrastructure gaps. With only 26% of schools having piped water, significant inequities in safe, reliable drinking water access persist. Strengthening school-based water safety systems through filtration, rainwater storage, and borehole monitoring can improve health outcomes and learning consistency.

CHAPTER SIX



CHAPTER SIX

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

Learners with disabilities in Kenya, and specifically in marginalised communities, face significant barriers to quality education due to inaccessible infrastructure, a shortage of specially trained teachers, and societal stigma, leading to low enrollment, isolation, and high dropout rates. Despite strong legal frameworks like the Constitution and the Persons with Disabilities Act, implementation gaps remain wide, with many schools lacking ramps, accessible toilets, and assistive technologies. Inclusive education requires integrated efforts from government, communities, and advocacy to create accessible environments, improve specialist training, and combat stigma for meaningful participation of learners with disabilities.

6.1 Challenges in Delivering Education to Learners with Special Needs

The survey explored constraints affecting inclusion of learners with disabilities in ASAL and informal settlement schools.

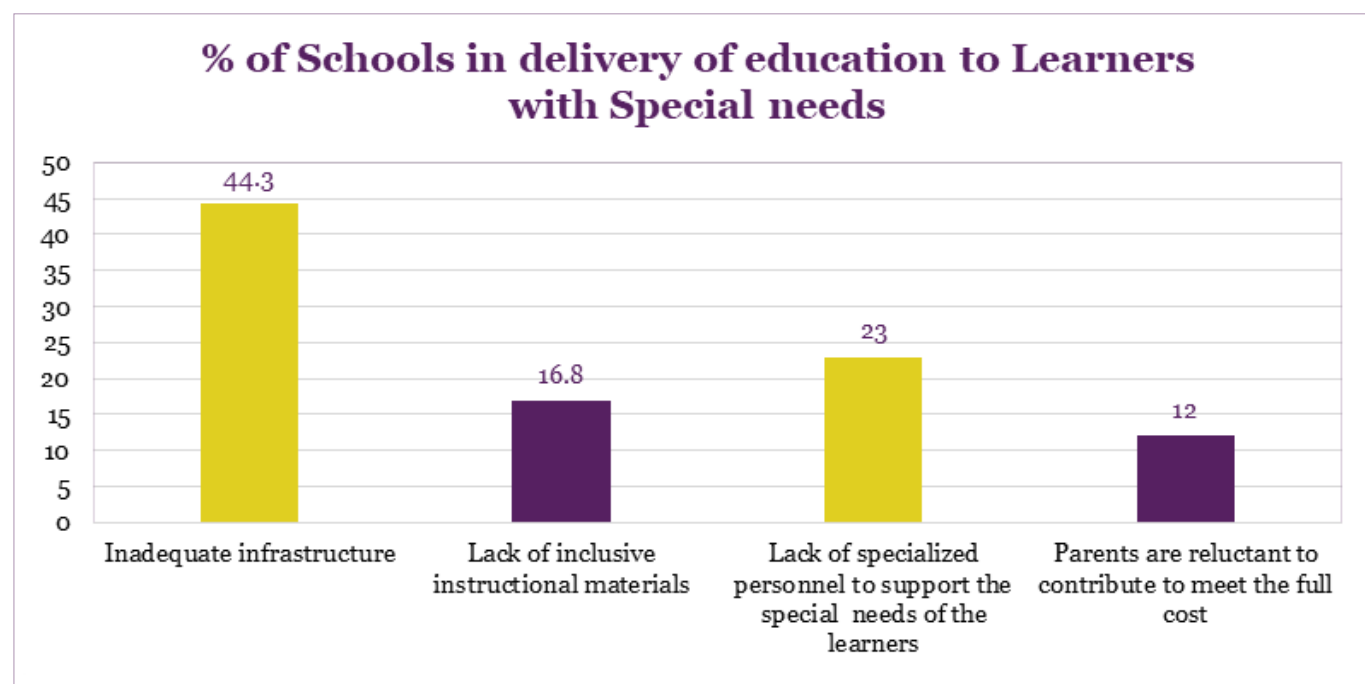


Figure 6.1: Challenges in Delivering Education to Learners with Special Needs

Inadequate infrastructure (44%) was the most cited challenge, reflecting limited accessibility features such as ramps, adapted toilets, and assistive devices.

- » **Lack of specialised personnel (23%)** and **limited inclusive instructional materials (17%)** further restrict effective support for learners with special needs.
- » **Parental reluctance to meet related costs (12%)** also emerged as a barrier, especially in low-income settings.

Key informant interviews underscored that most schools rely on mainstream teachers without specialised training, and that infrastructural modification remains minimal despite inclusive education policies.

6.2 Inclusivity and Accommodation of Learners with Disabilities

This subsection examines how schools integrate and support learners with disabilities through curriculum inclusion, physical accommodation (boarding and facilities), and attention to gender differences.

Table 6.2: Inclusivity and Accommodation of Learners with Disabilities

County	% Schools Reporting Curriculum Inclusive of Learners with Disabilities	% Schools Accommodating Learners with Disabilities	% Schools Reporting Gender-Specific Disability Challenges
Kwale	11.68	11.71%	0.00%
Kilifi	12.10	13.25%	0.00%
Tana River	11.65	11.65%	0.00%
Garissa	13.64	14.46%	0.00%
Wajir	13.46	15.04%	0.00%
Mandera	11.71	10.03%	0.00%
Isiolo	14.52	15.52%	0.00%
Meru	12.68	12.91%	0.00%
Tharaka-Nithi	14.53	14.53%	0.00%
Kitui	12.43	12.43%	0.00%
Makueni	12.20	12.68%	0.42%
Turkana	11.68	13.25%	0.00%
West Pokot	13.25	13.25%	0.00%
Samburu	11.65	13.46%	0.00%
Baringo	15.04	14.53%	0.00%
Laikipia	14.53	15.04%	0.00%
Narok	10.99	12.10%	0.00%
Kajiado	11.71	11.71%	0.00%
Nairobi City	15.75	10.50%	0.00%
Average	12.90	13.06%	0.02%

- » 13% of the schools surveyed, reported curricula that are inclusive of learners with disabilities.
- » A comparable share (13%) had boarding or physical accommodation facilities to support such learners.
- » Only 0.02% of schools reported gender-based differences in challenges, showing that disability inclusion is generally not assessed through a gender lens.
- » Isiolo, Baringo, Laikipia, and Tharaka-Nithi recorded the highest inclusivity levels (above 14%), while Narok and Mandera fell below 11%.
- » Most schools accommodate learners with disabilities within regular facilities, often without adapted infrastructure or learning aids.
- » Boarding and dormitory spaces are seldom designed for accessibility, and learners with mobility impairments rely on peer assistance.
- » Curricular inclusion remains limited; teachers often use mainstream materials due to lack of training or special needs resources.
- » County officers acknowledged that gender considerations in disability inclusion are rarely monitored or reported.

Overall, inclusion of learners with disabilities remains largely symbolic, with limited structural or pedagogical adaptation. Physical accommodation (boarding) is rare and concentrated in better-resourced counties. Gendered barriers; such as menstrual management for girls with disabilities, are seldom addressed, pointing to a gap in holistic inclusion programming.

CHAPTER SEVEN



CHAPTER SEVEN

SOCIAL ISSUES: TEENAGE PREGNANCY, RE-ENTRY AND CHILD MARRIAGE

This section explores social and cultural factors that influence learners' participation, retention, and transition across schools in ASAL counties and informal settlements in Nairobi. It focuses on challenges such as early marriage, teenage pregnancy, female genital mutilation (FGM), child labour, and community attitudes that limit equal educational opportunities. These barriers extend beyond the school environment but directly affect attendance, progression, and re-entry, particularly for girls and learners from marginalised or pastoralist backgrounds.

7.1 Teenage Pregnancy, Re-entry and Child Marriage

Teenage pregnancy and child marriage remain among the most significant social and cultural barriers to girls' education in ASAL counties and informal settlements. The study examined the extent of these cases, school-level responses, and awareness of the national School Re-entry Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 1994; 1999; 2020 – COVID-19 Integrated Version).

Table 7.1: Teenage Pregnancy, Re-entry and Child Marriage by County

County	% Schools Reporting Teenage Pregnancies	% Girls Re-admitted (Re-entry)	% Schools Reporting Child Marriage Cases	% Schools Aware of Re-entry Guidelines
Kwale	53.9	15.4	0.0	76.9
Kilifi	71.4	28.6	21.4	50.0
Tana River	27.3	27.3	0.0	72.7
Garissa	0.0	0.0	0.0	83.3
Wajir	0.0	0.0	0.0	81.8
Mandera	15.4	7.7	7.7	76.9
Isiolo	50.0	40.0	40.0	90.0
Meru	33.3	6.7	33.3	73.3
Tharaka-Nithi	18.2	9.1	9.1	54.6
Kitui	31.3	12.5	12.5	93.8
Makueni	20.0	0.0	0.0	66.7
Turkana	21.4	21.4	7.1	78.6
West Pokot	42.9	35.7	14.3	85.7

County	% Schools Reporting Teenage Pregnancies	% Girls Re-admitted (Re-entry)	% Schools Reporting Child Marriage Cases	% Schools Aware of Re-entry Guidelines
Samburu	36.4	27.3	0.0	72.7
Baringo	45.5	36.4	18.2	81.8
Laikipia	45.5	27.3	9.1	54.6
Narok	64.3	35.7	35.7	71.4
Kajiado	61.5	61.5	15.4	69.2
Nairobi City	66.7	22.2	22.2	77.8
Average	37.0	21.4	13.0	74.4

- » On average, 3 in 10 schools reported at least one case of teenage pregnancy across the surveyed counties.
- » The average re-admission (re-entry) rate for girls after pregnancy was 21%, reflecting partial implementation of the re-entry policy.
- » 1 in 10 schools reported cases of child marriage.
- » 74% of schools were aware of the national School Re-entry Guidelines, though understanding and enforcement varied widely.
- » Highest proportions of teenage pregnancies were reported in Kilifi (71%), Narok (64%), Kajiado (62%), and Nairobi City (67%). No cases were reported in Garissa and Wajir.
- » Kajiado (62%) and Isiolo (40%) recorded the highest re-entry levels of young mothers.
- » Child Marriage Cases were reported in Isiolo (40%), Narok (36%), and Meru (33%). No cases were reported in Kwale, Tana River, Garissa, Wajir, Samburu, and Makueni.
- » Awareness of Re-entry Guidelines were highest in Kitui (94%) and Isiolo (90%), and lowest in Kilifi (50%) and Laikipia (55%).



Key Informant Perspectives

- » Teenage pregnancy and child marriage were consistently linked to poverty, cultural norms, and peer influence, particularly in pastoralist and informal settlement communities.
- » School administrators and teachers noted that although awareness of re-entry guidelines was widespread, actual enforcement remained inconsistent, largely due to limited training and community sensitisation.
- » In ASAL counties, marriages are often culturally sanctioned and rarely reported as violations, contributing to underreporting.
- » Respondents cited stigma, lack of childcare support, and fear of discrimination as major barriers to re-entry for young mothers.
- » Community and religious leaders continue to shape norms around early marriage and re-admission acceptance, with notable variation across ethnic and religious contexts.
- » Urban informal schools reported relatively higher re-admissions but highlighted economic hardship and household duties as persistent challenges to retention.



Key Observation

Counties with high rates of **child marriage**, notably **Isiolo (40%)**, **Narok (36%)**, and **Meru (33%)**, also recorded elevated **teenage pregnancy** rates, reflecting **interlinked socio-cultural challenges** that constrain girls' sustained participation in education despite policy awareness²⁰.

7.2 Measures to Support Pregnant Girls and Young Mothers

The evidence shows the proportion of schools implementing measures that support girls' re-entry after pregnancy and promote inclusive learning environments.

Table 7.2: School Support Measures and Challenges by County

County	% Schools Admitting Girls Back	% Schools Offering Counselling	% Schools Providing Remedial Classes	% Schools Allowing Time for Baby Care	% Schools Aware of Re-entry Guidelines
Kwale	28.57	71.43	57.14	0.00	76.92
Kilifi	40.00	70.00	80.00	10.00	50.00
Tana River	100.00	100.00	33.33	33.33	72.73
Garissa	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	83.33
Wajir	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	81.82
Mandera	50.00	100.00	100.00	50.00	76.92
Isiolo	80.00	80.00	80.00	40.00	90.00
Meru	20.00	80.00	40.00	0.00	73.33
Tharaka-Nithi	50.00	50.00	100.00	0.00	54.55
Kitui	40.00	40.00	80.00	0.00	93.75
Makueni	0.00	33.33	66.67	0.00	66.67
Turkana	100.00	33.33	100.00	33.33	78.57
West Pokot	83.33	83.33	66.67	66.67	85.71
Samburu	75.00	100.00	50.00	25.00	72.73
Baringo	80.00	100.00	40.00	0.00	81.82
Laikipia	60.00	60.00	80.00	40.00	54.55
Narok	55.56	66.67	66.67	22.22	71.43
Kajiado	100.00	62.50	75.00	25.00	69.23
Nairobi City	33.33	83.33	100.00	66.67	77.78
Average	52.41	63.89	63.97	21.70	74.31

²⁰ Kenya's School Re-entry Policy Framework was first introduced through the Ministry of Education Circular (1994), reaffirmed in 1999, and later expanded through the 2020 Comprehensive Re-entry Guidelines (COVID-19 Integrated Version), jointly issued by the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, and UNFPA. The 2020 version remains the current reference framework for re-admission and retention of learners who become mothers.

The evidence shows the proportion of schools implementing measures that support girls' re-entry after pregnancy and promote inclusive learning environments.

- » Overall, 52.4% of schools reported re-admitting girls after pregnancy, reflecting modest progress in the implementation of the re-entry policy.
- » About 63.9% of schools indicated that they offer counselling services to affected learners, showing a strong commitment to emotional and psychosocial support.
- » Approximately 64.0% of schools provide remedial lessons to help returning girls catch up academically after re-entry.
- » Only 21.7% of schools reported having arrangements that allow time for baby care, suggesting that structural support for young mothers remains limited.
- » Around 74.3% of schools were aware of the Ministry of Education (2020) School Re-entry Guidelines, indicating high policy awareness but inconsistent implementation across counties.

County-Level Highlights

- » Tana River, Turkana, and Kajiado (100%) recorded the highest proportions of schools admitting girls after pregnancy, demonstrating strong policy uptake.
- » Samburu, Baringo, and Mandera (100%) reported that all schools in these counties offer counselling services for re-admitted girls.
- » Nairobi City, Mandera, and Turkana (100%) achieved full coverage in providing remedial classes, showing strong academic support for re-entry.
- » West Pokot (67%) and Mandera (50%) had the highest proportions of schools allowing time for baby care, demonstrating efforts to accommodate young mothers.
- » Awareness of re-entry guidelines was highest in Kitui (94%) and Isiolo (90%), reflecting strong institutional knowledge of national policies.
- » Tharaka-Nithi, Meru, and Kitui reported no schools with arrangements for baby care, while Laikipia (55%) and Kilifi (50%) recorded the lowest awareness of the re-entry guidelines.

Qualitative Insights

- » Key informants revealed that although awareness of the re-entry policy is widespread, actual implementation remains inconsistent due to stigma, unclear procedures, and limited institutional capacity.
- » Respondents in ASAL counties such as Garissa, Wajir, and Mandera cited early marriage, cultural barriers, and lack of community support as major obstacles to re-admitting young mothers.
- » School heads explained that decisions on re-entry are often made on a case-by-case basis since there is no dedicated funding or structured support for post-pregnancy learners.
- » Community attitudes play a critical role; while urban and peri-urban schools show increasing acceptance, rural and pastoralist areas still exhibit strong resistance.
- » Teachers and counsellors also reported that returning learners often face stigma, bullying, and isolation, which undermines their confidence and likelihood of retention.



Key Observations

✓ Counties that implement multiple complementary interventions—such as re-admission, counselling, and remedial classes—tend to record higher levels of policy awareness and improved re-entry outcomes. Sustained re-entry outcomes require targeted funding, capacity building for school leadership, and community engagement to reduce stigma and promote a supportive environment for young mothers to continue their education.

7.3 Measures Taken on Teenage Pregnancy

This subsection presents the proportion of schools implementing various preventive measures to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy among learners.

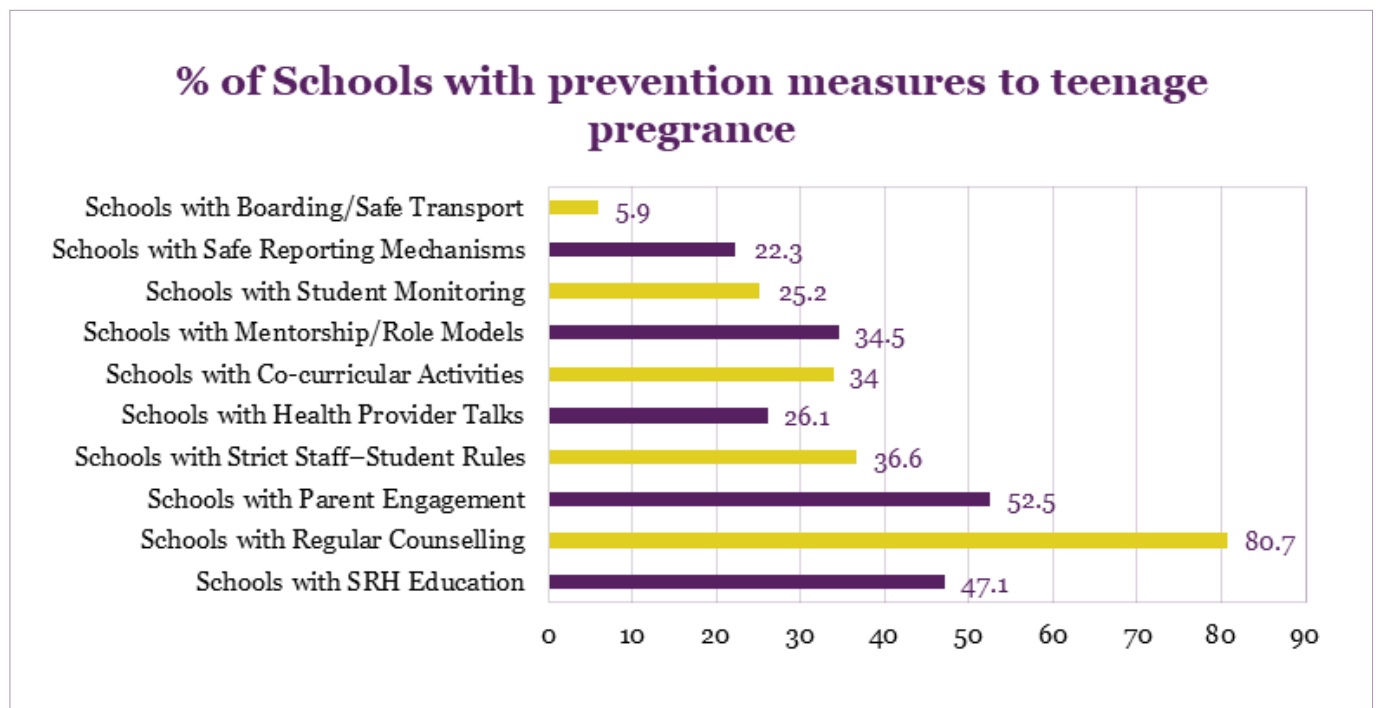


Figure 7.3: Prevention Measures for Teenage Pregnancy

The table presents the proportion of schools implementing different preventive measures to address teenage pregnancy.

- » Regular counselling sessions were the most common preventive measure, reported by 80.7% of schools.
- » Parent engagement activities were implemented in 52.5% of schools, while SRH (Sexual and Reproductive Health) education was offered in 47.1%.
- » Strict staff-student interaction rules were enforced in 36.6% of schools, and co-curricular activities as engagement tools were reported in 34.0%.
- » Mentorship or role model programs were available in 34.5% of schools.
- » Health provider talks were held in 26.1%, while student monitoring mechanisms were in place in 25.2% of schools.
- » Safe reporting mechanisms were available in 22.3% of schools, while boarding or safe transport provisions were the least common, reported by only 5.9% of schools.

Key informants noted that while counselling and parental forums are now routine in most schools, SRH education and structured reporting systems remain limited due to cultural resistance and lack of coordination between schools and local health providers. Teachers also expressed concern that students often fear reporting sexual advances or exploitation, as few schools offer confidential and well-enforced protection procedures. The findings highlight a prevention model heavily reliant on psychosocial and moral support, with limited structural or institutional safeguards. Strengthening partnerships with the health sector, improving confidential reporting systems, and contextualising SRH education would help bridge the gap between awareness and effective protection. While most schools have adopted counselling and parental engagement as primary prevention strategies, fewer schools provide structured reporting mechanisms, safe transport, or direct health interventions—areas that remain critical for reducing vulnerability to teenage pregnancy.

7.4 Curriculum Coverage on Sexual and Reproductive Health

The table presents findings on how schools integrate Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) topics into their curriculum.

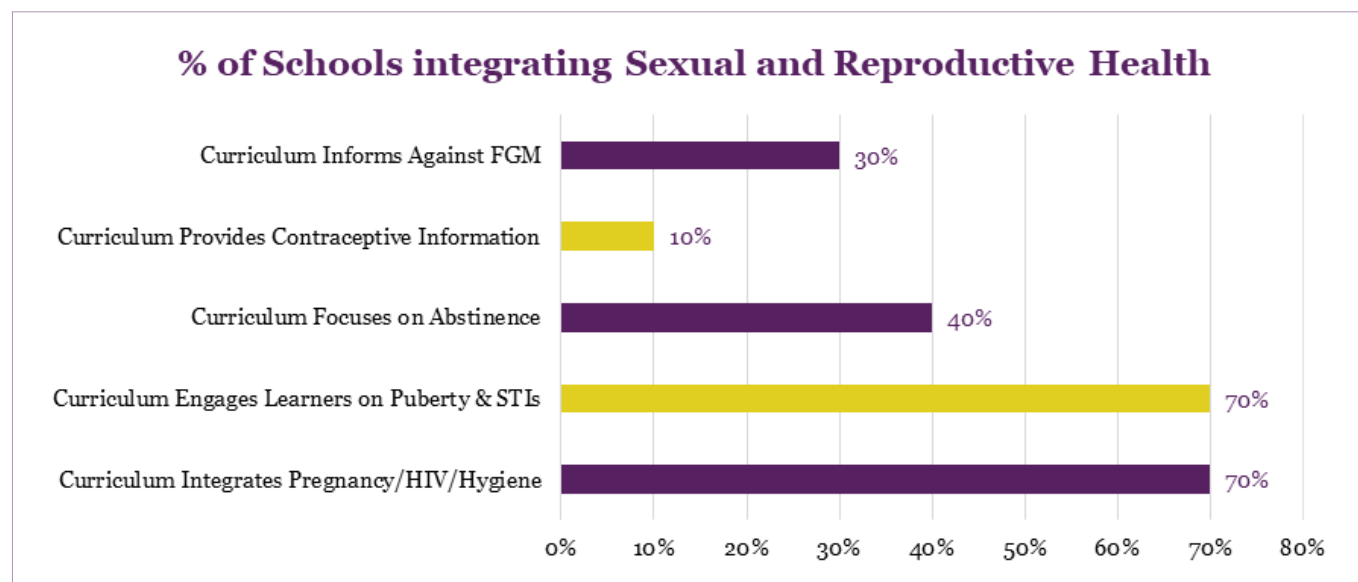


Figure 7.4: Curriculum Coverage on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

- » Pregnancy, HIV, and hygiene education were covered in 70% of schools.
- » Puberty and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were also included in 70% of schools.
- » Abstinence-focused content was reported in 40% of schools.
- » Only 10% of schools provided contraceptive information.
- » 30% of schools incorporated education against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) into their curriculum.



Key Informant Insights

- » Teachers and education officers reported that SRH topics are mainly delivered through Life Skills, Science, and Religious Studies, rather than as a distinct programme.
- » Many teachers expressed hesitation in discussing FGM, citing fear of community backlash or conflict with religious and cultural values.
- » In ASAL counties, respondents observed that FGM and early marriage persist despite classroom sensitisation, showing that school messaging alone is insufficient without community-level engagement.



- » Health officials emphasized that collaboration between schools and local health departments could strengthen accuracy, consistency, and practical impact of SRH education.



Observation

- ✓ SRH education across schools tends to prioritise awareness over empowerment, focusing on abstinence and hygiene while omitting in-depth coverage of gender-based protection.
- ✓ While most schools include general topics such as pregnancy, HIV, and hygiene, fewer directly address contraceptive use or FGM prevention, indicating that the curriculum remains largely conservative and only partially aligned with comprehensive sexuality education principles.

7.5 CBE and Its Challenges for Sexual Reproductive Health

The table presents the proportion of schools identifying key strengths and challenges in the curriculum as it relates to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and life skills education.

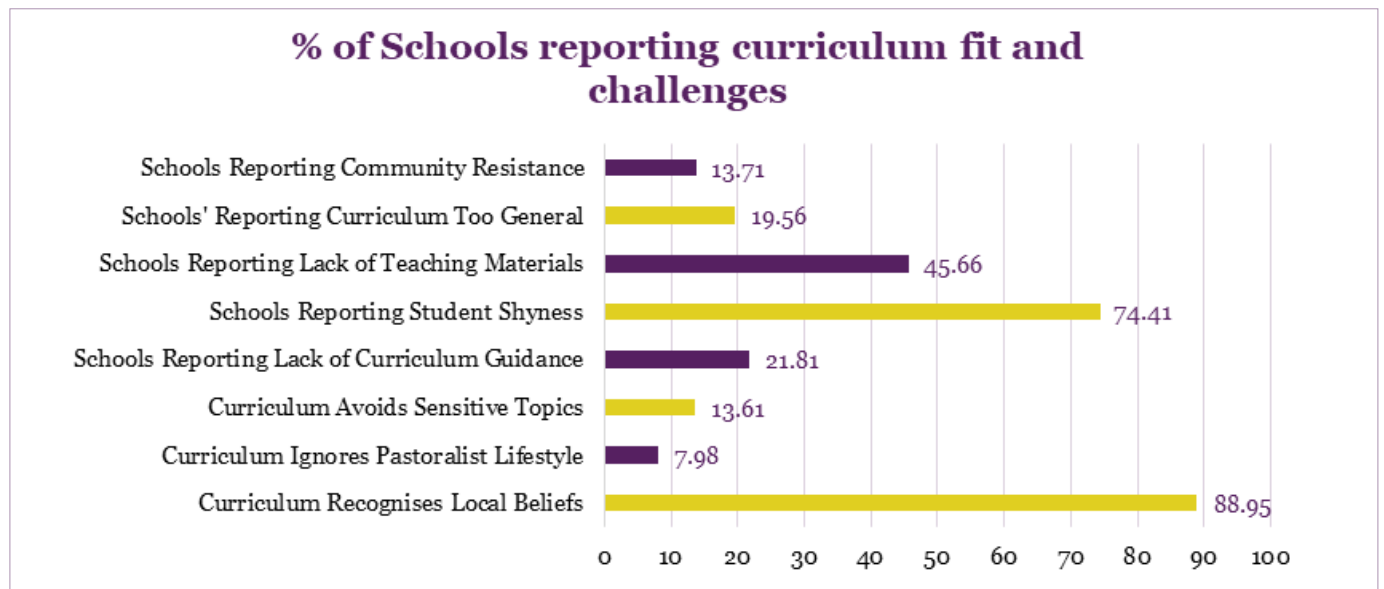


Figure 7.5: Curriculum Fit and Challenges

- » Recognition of local beliefs was cited by 88.9% of schools, suggesting efforts to align curriculum delivery with community values.
- » Student shyness emerged as a significant challenge, reported by 74.4% of schools, followed by lack of teaching materials (45.7%).
- » Limited curriculum guidance was reported by 21.8% of schools, while 19.6% noted that the curriculum content was too general.
- » Community resistance to certain SRH topics was reported by 13.7% of schools.
- » A smaller proportion (8.0%) indicated that the curriculum ignored pastoralist lifestyles, and 13.6% said it avoided sensitive topics.

While most schools affirm that the curriculum recognises local beliefs, practical challenges—including student shyness, limited materials, and lack of detailed guidance- continue to limit effective delivery of SRH content. These factors, coupled with occasional community resistance, suggest a need for localised and context-sensitive curriculum approaches.

CHAPTER EIGHT



CHAPTER EIGHT

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND OTHER HARMFUL PRACTICES

Gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices remain pervasive in Kenya's marginalised communities, severely undermining girls' and women's ability to access quality learning. Addressing GBV and harmful practices is critical for creating safe, inclusive learning spaces that support gender equality and empowerment.

8.1 Reported Gender-Based Violence Cases

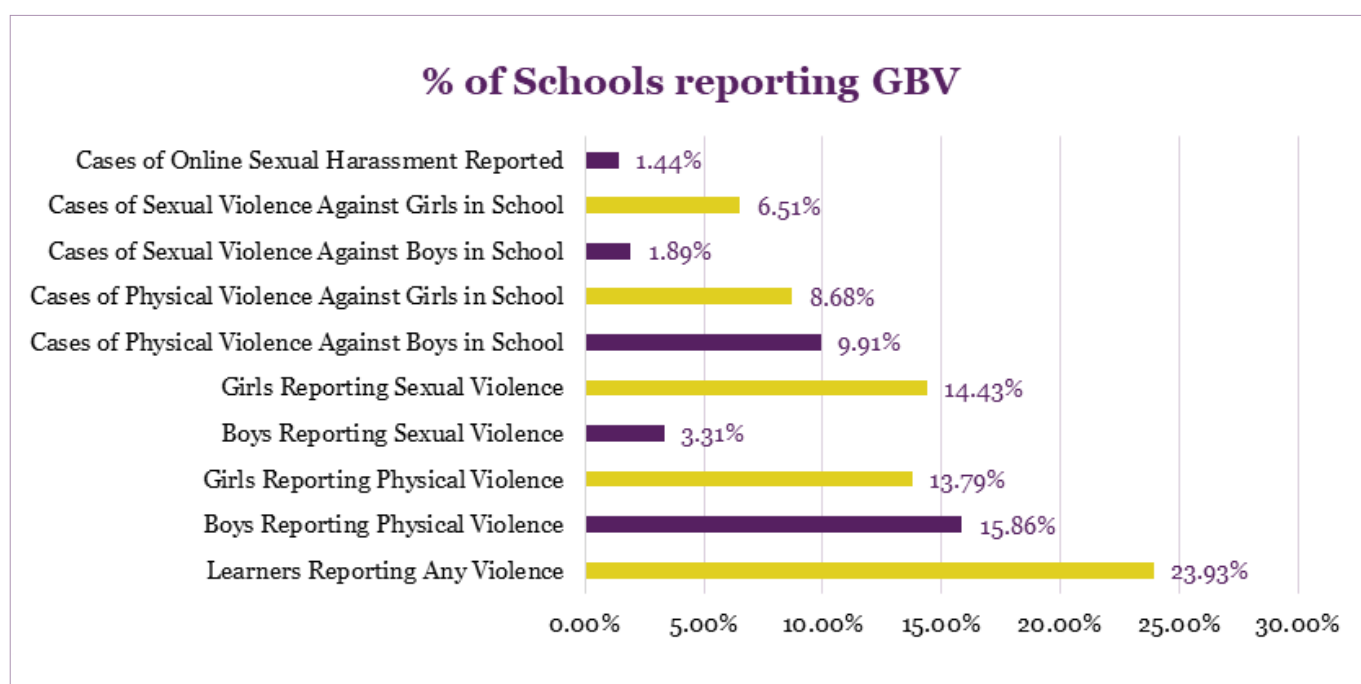


Figure 8.1: Learners Affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

The data present the proportion of schools reporting cases of gender-based violence (GBV) among learners across surveyed counties.

- » On average, 23.9% of schools reported that learners experienced some form of violence.
- » Reports of physical violence were slightly higher among boys (15.9%) than girls (13.8%).
- » Reports of sexual violence were more prevalent among girls (14.4%) compared to boys (3.3%).
- » Physical violence in school settings was reported in 9.9% of cases involving boys and 8.7% involving girls.
- » Sexual violence within schools was reported in 1.9% of cases affecting boys and 6.5% of cases affecting girls.
- » Online sexual harassment was the least reported, recorded by 1.4% of schools.

County-Level Highlights

- » Highest overall reports of violence: Nairobi City (66.7%) and Kitui (36.4%) recorded the highest proportions of schools reporting any learner violence.
- » Boys' physical violence: Most common in Nairobi City (55.6%) and Marsabit (26.7%).
- » Girls' physical violence: Highest in Nairobi City (55.6%) and Turkana (30%).
- » Girls' sexual violence: Most reported in Nairobi City (44.4%), Kilifi (21.4%), and Marsabit (20%).
- » Online harassment: Reported in Nairobi City (11.1%) and Baringo (9.1%), while all other counties recorded 0%.

Across most counties, girls experienced higher rates of sexual violence, while boys reported slightly higher rates of physical violence. The presence of online harassment, although minimal, signals emerging digital safety concerns among learners.

8.2 Other harmful Practices

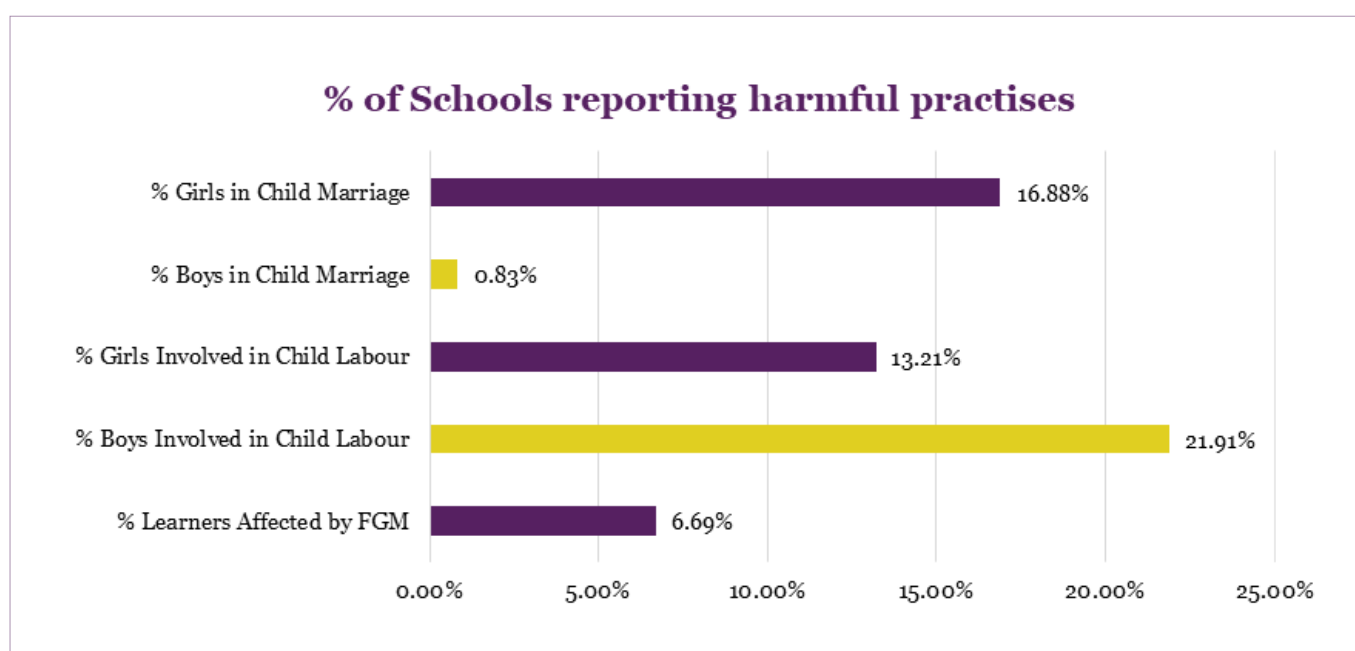


Figure 8.2: Harmful Practices by County

The data show that harmful cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child labour, and child marriage continue to undermine children's access to education, with girls disproportionately affected.

- » On average, 6.7% of schools reported cases of FGM among learners.
- » Child labour was more prevalent among boys (21.9%) than girls (13.2%).
- » Child marriage affected 16.9% of girls, compared to less than 1% of boys.

County Highlights

- » FGM cases were most pronounced in Baringo (27.3%), Garissa (27.3%), and Narok (21.4%), reflecting persistent cultural practices in parts of ASAL and pastoralist regions. No cases were reported in Kitui, Makeni, Kwale, Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, Kilifi, or Nairobi, suggesting positive progress in community sensitisation in those areas.
- » Cases of boys involved in child labour were most reported in Isiolo (50%), Baringo (36%), and Laikipia (36%), reflecting economic pressures and reliance on herding and casual work.

- » Girls faced higher involvement in domestic chores and market work in Isiolo (40%), Meru (20%), and Baringo (18%).
- » Highest incidences of girls affected by child marriages were reported in Isiolo (40%), Meru (40%), Baringo (27%), Narok (29%), and Kilifi (29%).



Key Informant Insights

- » Interviews with teachers and community leaders indicated that child marriage and FGM are often perpetuated by cultural expectations of womanhood and family honour, particularly in pastoralist and semi-arid areas.
- » Respondents from Isiolo, Narok, and Garissa noted that economic hardship and traditional rites continue to drive early marriages, especially where school retention for girls is already low.
- » Several county officials emphasised that while awareness campaigns have increased, law enforcement and follow-up mechanisms remain weak, allowing harmful practices to persist informally.
- » Headteachers in some ASAL regions observed that child labour is often normalised, with boys herding livestock and girls assisting in household work—behaviours viewed by communities as essential life skills rather than violations of child rights.

Harmful cultural practices remain a significant threat to girls' education and well-being. The persistence of FGM and child marriage in certain counties reveals gaps between awareness and enforcement, while child labour among boys reflects deeper economic and social vulnerabilities. Continued cross-sectoral collaboration—linking education, social services, and local leadership—is essential to address the intertwined cultural and economic drivers sustaining these practices.

CHAPTER NINE



CHAPTER NINE

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION (CBE)

The implementation of the Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Kenya's marginalised communities faces significant challenges that impact the quality of learning. This report shares evidence on key barriers discussed, including inadequate teacher training, shortages of instructional resources, and limited infrastructure

9.1 KPSEA and Transition

The subsection presents the proportion of boys and girls who sat for the 2024 Kenya Primary School Education Assessment (KPSEA) and their transition to Junior Secondary School (JSS).

Table 9.1: KPSEA Participation and Transition by Gender and County

County	% Boys Who Sat KPSEA 2024	% Girls Who Sat KPSEA 2024	% Boys Transitioned to Junior School	% Girls Transitioned to Junior School	% Boys Joined JS in Another School	% Girls Joined JS in Another School	Gender Parity Index (F/M Transition)
Kwale	52.56%	47.44%	77.92%	84.89%	22.08%	15.11%	1.09
Kilifi	56.25%	43.75%	85.86%	91.17%	14.14%	8.83%	1.06
Tana River	48.45%	51.55%	90.24%	90.51%	9.76%	9.49%	1.00
Garissa	61.23%	38.77%	56.83%	55.68%	43.17%	44.32%	0.98
Wajir	51.85%	48.15%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.00
Mandera	62.06%	37.94%	100.00%	99.38%	0.00%	0.62%	0.99
Isiolo	57.19%	42.81%	95.21%	96.00%	4.79%	4.00%	1.01
Meru	57.33%	42.67%	82.38%	97.00%	17.62%	3.00%	1.18
Tharaka-Nithi	51.87%	48.13%	81.98%	83.50%	18.02%	16.50%	1.02
Kitui	53.70%	46.30%	98.52%	94.86%	1.48%	5.14%	0.96
Makueni	50.97%	49.03%	83.12%	84.11%	16.88%	15.89%	1.01
Turkana	56.51%	43.49%	39.94%	32.07%	60.06%	67.93%	0.80
West Pokot	53.74%	46.26%	96.62%	95.10%	3.38%	4.90%	0.98
Samburu	51.79%	48.21%	99.01%	97.87%	0.99%	2.13%	0.99

County	% Boys Who Sat KPSEA 2024	% Girls Who Sat KPSEA 2024	% Boys Transitioned to Junior School	% Girls Transitioned to Junior School	% Boys Joined JS in Another School	% Girls Joined JS in Another School	Gender Parity Index (F/M Transition)
Baringo	55.48%	44.52%	89.82%	92.54%	10.18%	7.46%	1.03
Laikipia	55.42%	44.58%	93.18%	94.35%	6.82%	5.65%	1.01
Narok	52.08%	47.92%	78.80%	85.37%	21.20%	14.63%	1.08
Kajiado	53.90%	46.10%	83.53%	97.18%	16.47%	2.82%	1.16
Nairobi City	48.77%	51.23%	95.13%	96.79%	4.87%	3.21%	1.02
Overall	54.38%	45.62%	80.98%	84.17%	19.02%	15.83%	1.04

- » On average, 54.4% of candidates were boys, while 45.6% were girls, indicating a moderate gender gap in participation.
- » The transition rate to JSS was 80.9% for boys and 84.2% for girls, reflecting a slight female advantage nationally.
- » About 19% of boys and 16% of girls transitioned to different JSS institutions from their KPSEA schools.
- » The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for transition was 1.04, demonstrating near gender parity, with girls slightly ahead.

County-Level Highlights

Participation in KPSEA 2024

- » Boys outnumbered girls in most counties, except in Tana River (51.6%) and Nairobi City (51.2%), where more girls sat the KPSEA.
- » The widest gender gaps in participation were observed in Garissa (61.2% boys vs 38.8% girls) and Mandera (62.1% vs 37.9%), both in the North Eastern region.

Transition to Junior Secondary School

- » Highest transition rates: Wajir, Mandera, and Isiolo (above 95%) reported almost full transition for both boys and girls.
- » Lowest transition rates: Turkana (40% boys, 32% girls) and Garissa (57% boys, 56% girls) fell significantly below the national average.
- » Counties showing parity (GPI \approx 1.0): Tana River, Wajir, and West Pokot achieved nearly equal transition rates for boys and girls.

Gender Disparities

- » Female advantage: Meru (GPI 1.18), Kajiado (1.16), and Narok (1.08) recorded significantly higher female transition rates.
- » Male advantage: Turkana (0.80), Garissa (0.98), and Kitui (0.96) reflected lower female transition rates, suggesting potential structural or cultural barriers.

Cross-School Transitions

- » The highest proportion of learners joining different JSS schools was observed in Turkana (60% boys, 68% girls) and Garissa (43% boys, 44% girls).
- » Minimal learner movement was reported in Wajir, Mandera, and Samburu, where most learners continued in the same institutions.

Analytical Insights

Regional patterns:

- » Arid and semi-arid counties (ASALs) such as Turkana, Garissa, and Mandera show distinct participation and transition gaps – shaped by factors such as mobility, insecurity, and limited school infrastructure.

Urban advantage:

- » Urban counties like Nairobi City demonstrate strong gender balance (GPI 1.02) and high transition rates (96–97%), reflecting better school availability and family awareness.

Gender parity progression:

- » The near-parity GPI (1.04) nationally signals progress in gender equity at the transition level, but persistent regional imbalances highlight the need for targeted interventions.

Mobility and retention:

- » Counties with high inter-school transitions, notably Turkana and Garissa, may benefit from expanded JSS infrastructure and learner tracking systems to support continuity.

Overall, girls continue to slightly outperform boys in transitioning from KPSEA to Junior Secondary School, marking continued progress toward gender equality in education. However, regional inequalities remain pronounced, especially in ASAL regions, where cultural practices, displacement, and long school distances continue to impede equitable participation and transition.

9.2 Competency-Based Education (CBE) Implementation Challenges

This subsection highlights the key challenges experienced by schools in implementing the Competency-Based Education (CBE) across counties.

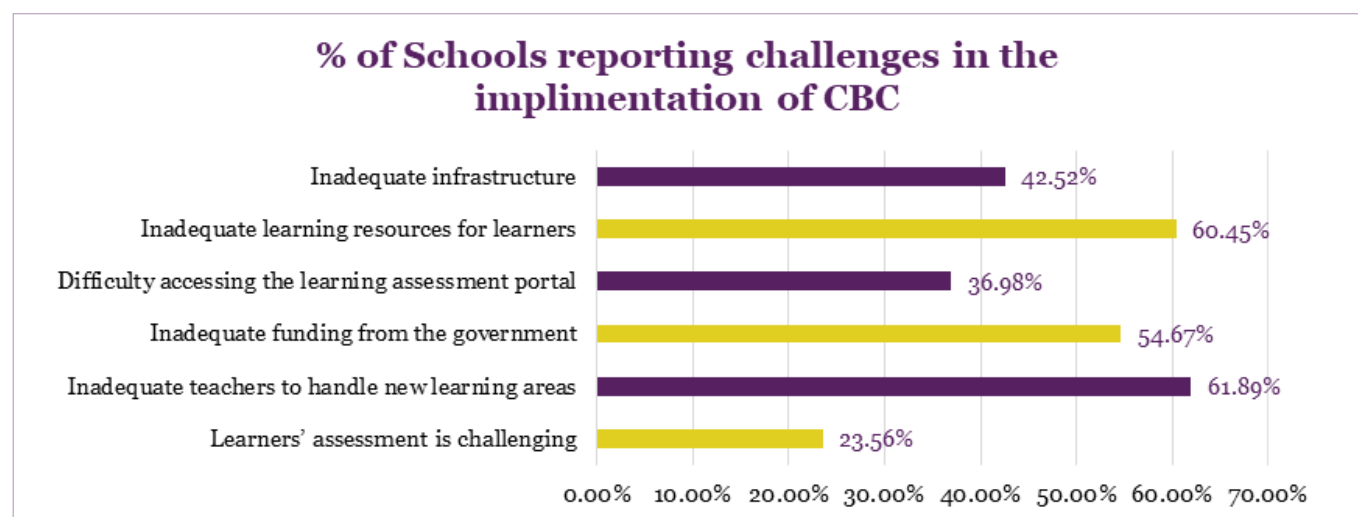


Figure 9.2: Challenges in Implementation of CBC by County

- » Inadequate teachers were reported by 61.9% of schools as the leading challenge in implementing new learning areas.
- » Inadequate learning resources followed closely, affecting 60.5% of schools.
- » Inadequate government funding was cited by 54.7% of schools, indicating systemic resource limitations.
- » Infrastructure gaps (42.5%) and difficulty accessing the learning assessment portal (37.0%) also hindered effective implementation.
- » Only 23.6% of schools found learner assessment processes themselves to be challenging, suggesting schools face more structural than pedagogical barriers.

County-Level Highlights

- » Highest teacher shortages: Mandera (84.6%), Wajir (81.8%), and Garissa (75.0%) reported the most acute teacher shortages for new learning areas.
- » Resource and funding gaps: Makueni (80%), Baringo (82%), and Kwale (85%) recorded the highest reports of inadequate funding.
- » Learning resource shortages: Tharaka-Nithi (90.9%), Makueni (81.3%), and Baringo (81.8%) showed severe deficits in learning materials.
- » Portal access difficulties: Meru (60%), Kitui (56%), and Narok (58%) reported the greatest challenges in accessing the national learning assessment portal.
- » Infrastructure limitations: Most pronounced in Garissa (66.7%), followed by Kitui (62.5%) and Makueni (62.5%).

Analytical Insights

Teacher preparedness remains a national concern:

The shift to CBC has increased instructional demands that many counties—especially in arid and semi-arid regions—are yet to meet due to staffing shortages and limited retraining opportunities.

Resource and funding inequality:

Counties such as Mandera, Garissa, and Baringo illustrate how geographical remoteness and limited fiscal allocation compound CBC implementation challenges.

Technology-linked barriers:

Difficulty in accessing the digital learning assessment portal reflects the uneven distribution of ICT infrastructure, particularly in rural and semi-arid counties.

Infrastructure bottlenecks:

Persistent issues with classrooms, laboratories, and sanitation facilities continue to constrain the CBC rollout, particularly in counties transitioning from double-shift systems or temporary structures.

Overall, human resource and material constraints—rather than conceptual or pedagogical issues—pose the greatest obstacles to effective CBC implementation. Addressing teacher shortages, equitable funding, and digital access will be central to ensuring the Competency-Based Curriculum achieves its goal of inclusive, skill-centred education.

CHAPTER TEN

Participant Information Survey

Full Name: _____
Contact Email: _____
Course Number: _____
Phone Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Gender: _____

How did you hear about us?

Social Media
 Social Media

Non-binary
 Other

Activist/Challenge
 Online Search

Please share any additional comments or questions:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CHAPTER TEN

QUALITATIVE SYNTHESIS

The qualitative evidence from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) complements the quantitative data presented in preceding chapters. It provides context for the variations observed across counties and themes—capturing how leadership, social norms, infrastructure, and resource constraints influence gender equality and inclusion in education within ASAL counties and Nairobi’s informal settlements.

10.1 School Leadership and Governance

Qualitative insights support quantitative findings showing that governance quality strongly influences gender inclusion and school accountability.

- » Active Boards of Management (BOMs) and Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs) were associated with better awareness of gender and re-entry policies.
- » Respondents highlighted low female representation in leadership, especially in remote counties, limiting role-modelling for girls.
- » School heads cited lack of training on gender-responsive leadership and irregular community participation as barriers to effective oversight.
- » Collaboration with chiefs and local administrators was viewed as critical for addressing early marriage and absenteeism at the community level.

10.2 Enrolment, Transition, and Retention

KIIs reinforced quantitative patterns indicating that while enrolment parity has improved, retention beyond primary remains fragile.

- » Teachers reported that poverty, household duties, and migration during drought seasons continue to disrupt attendance, especially for girls.
- » Many schools were aware of the **School Re-entry Guidelines**, yet few had resources for psychosocial or financial support to re-admitted mothers.
- » Stigma and lack of community acceptance were cited as key deterrents to re-entry despite formal policy provisions.
- » Schools with feeding programmes, mentorship clubs, or NGO partnerships noted better attendance and fewer dropouts.

10.3 WASH, Health, and School Safety

Qualitative accounts mirror data showing sanitation access and hygiene management as central to girls’ participation and dignity.

- » Teachers linked absenteeism among adolescent girls to limited menstrual hygiene facilities and lack of privacy.
- » Several head teachers reported sanitation facilities temporarily closed due to delayed maintenance and inadequate budgets.
- » Learners with disabilities faced limited toilet accessibility and insufficient adaptive

infrastructure.

- » Schools offering counselling, first-aid training, or periodic medical visits recorded improved learner confidence and attendance.

10.4 Social and Cultural Issues

KIIs confirmed quantitative findings that teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and FGM remain persistent social barriers.

- » Teachers reported that pregnancy cases often arise during holiday breaks, linked to peer influence and economic vulnerability.
- » Cultural and religious sensitivities constrained teachers from delivering comprehensive sexuality education beyond abstinence messages.
- » Chiefs, faith leaders, and women's groups were key allies in sensitising communities and supporting re-entry for young mothers.
- » Health officers recommended stronger collaboration between schools and county health departments for consistent reproductive-health messaging.

10.5 Harmful Practices and Child Protection

Qualitative narratives align with evidence (Section 8.0) on the persistence of FGM, child labour, and child marriage in specific counties.

- » Respondents in Baringo, Garissa, Narok, Isiolo, and Meru confirmed ongoing harmful practices despite legal prohibitions.
- » Boys were more often engaged in livestock herding and manual labour, while girls faced early marriage pressures.
- » Teachers and administrators cited weak enforcement of child-protection laws and limited referral pathways.
- » Community-led rescue centres, mentorship groups, and school-based committees were cited as effective but unevenly implemented interventions.

10.6 Emerging Positive Drivers

Across themes, KIIs highlighted areas of resilience and progress contributing to improved gender equality outcomes.

- » School feeding and mentorship initiatives were repeatedly identified as pivotal for attendance and confidence.
- » Partnerships with NGOs, faith-based organisations, and county departments enhanced psychosocial support and bursary access.
- » Growing parental support and female teacher role models were noted as influential in changing attitudes toward girls' education.

10.7 Summary Insight

The qualitative evidence underscores that progress toward gender equality in education is uneven and context-specific. While awareness of policies and provision of school-based support have expanded, social norms, economic precarity, and capacity gaps continue to constrain sustained impact. Meaningful change depends on multi-sectoral coordination—linking education, health, and social-protection efforts—and active community engagement to dismantle persistent socio-cultural barriers beyond the school environment.

Table 10.1: Summary of Qualitative Insights by Theme

Thematic Area	Unique Qualitative Insights
Leadership & Governance	Weak enforcement of gender policies, low female representation in BOMs, and community leaders play a critical role in reducing absenteeism and early marriage.
Access, Transition & Retention	Re-entry awareness is high, but stigma persists; poverty and long distances hinder transition; feeding and mentorship support retention.
WASH, Health & Safety	Funding delays affect sanitation maintenance; inclusion for learners with disabilities is limited; menstrual hygiene is key to attendance.
Social & Cultural Issues	Early marriage, FGM, and pregnancy persist; SRH teaching remains conservative; community sensitisation vital for change.
Harmful Practices & Child Protection	FGM and child labour concentrated in specific counties; weak law enforcement; isolated but promising community-led responses.
Positive Drivers	School feeding, mentorship, and NGO collaboration are linked to improved attendance and gender parity.

CONCLUSION

The report's findings show that three counties that urgently need focused action are Mandera, Wajir, and Garissa. These counties show significant gender disparities in enrollment and leadership, inadequate staffing and teacher training, and critical gaps in infrastructure and WASH facilities. Mandera especially faces overcrowded classrooms and poor female representation in both teaching and school leadership. Wajir exhibits issues around data reliability and lacks essential menstrual hygiene and transport provisions. Garissa continues to grapple with a high number of out-of-school children and weak inclusion of girls and learners with disabilities. In contrast, Nairobi City (particularly its informal settlements), Tharaka-Nithi, and Makueni stand out as best practice examples. Nairobi's urban informal settlements demonstrate strong female leadership, high teacher training rates, and better implementation of inclusive education policies. Tharaka-Nithi and Makueni exhibit positive gender representation in leadership and relatively favourable pupil-teacher ratios, supporting improved learning environments and governance.

To improve gender equality and quality learning in Kenya's marginalised communities, the counties must align with the policy frameworks and global best practices. Kenya has made significant strides aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 on Quality Education and SDG 5 on Gender Equality, guided by the Education and Training Sector Gender Policy (2015) and constitutional mandates that emphasise non-discrimination and inclusion. Globally, best practices stress the importance of gender mainstreaming throughout education policy and programming, requiring that the different needs and challenges faced by boys and girls are explicitly addressed. This includes integrating gender-responsive pedagogy in teacher training, ensuring safe and inclusive school environments, and promoting leadership opportunities for women educators.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section synthesizes the quantitative and qualitative findings through a policy lens. It highlights how existing evidence connects with Kenya’s current education and gender frameworks, identifying opportunities for stronger alignment, coordination, and accountability.

The recommendations draw on the Basic Education Act (2013), Education Sector Gender Policy (2021), School Re-entry Guidelines (2020), Children Act (2022), National School Health Policy (2018), Menstrual Hygiene Management Policy (2019), and the Kenya Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy (2022–2032), while supporting the aspirations of Vision 2030 (MTP IV 2023–2027) and the NGECE Strategic Plan (2023–2027).

I. Leadership and Governance in Education

Policy Reflection:

The *Education Sector Gender Policy (2021)* and *Basic Education Act (2013)* require gender-responsive governance structures and equitable participation in school management. However, findings reveal that female leadership within Boards of Management (BOMs) and Parent–Teacher Associations (PTAs) remains below parity, particularly in ASAL counties. Weak enforcement of gender quotas and limited gender-leadership capacity building constrain progress.



Recommendations

- a) Institutionalize gender-responsive leadership training for BOM and PTA members through county education boards.
- b) Enforce gender-representation quotas in school governance, guided by NGECE and MoE monitoring templates.
- c) Integrate gender budgeting and equality indicators into school improvement plans, consistent with the NGECE Strategic Plan (2023–2027).
- d) Strengthen data systems to track women’s participation in decision-making roles at school and county levels.

II. Access, Transition, and Retention

Policy Reflection:

Despite progress under the *School Re-entry Guidelines (2020)* and *Vision 2030 MTP IV (2023–2027)*, barriers such as poverty, long distances, and social stigma continue to limit girls’ sustained participation. While awareness of the re-entry policy averages 74 percent, actual re-admission and retention rates remain inconsistent.



Recommendations

- a) Operationalise the Re-entry Guidelines through county-level enforcement and routine NGECE compliance audits.



- b) Expand school-feeding, bursary, and transport programmes in vulnerable counties to mitigate economic and distance barriers.
- c) Establish flexible learning pathways and community-based education centres for pregnant and parenting learners.
- d) Institutionalise psychosocial and parental-engagement programmes to improve retention among girls in transition grades.

III. Health, WASH, and School Safety

Policy Reflection:

The *National School Health Policy (2018)* and *MHM Policy (2019)* call for safe, inclusive, and sanitary learning environments. The study shows that only 77 percent of schools have functional hand-washing points, 26 percent have accessible toilets for learners with disabilities, and menstruation-related absenteeism averages 11 percent.



Recommendations

- a) Prioritise gender-inclusive WASH infrastructure in school grants, ensuring disability-friendly sanitation in line with the Persons with Disabilities Act (2003).
- b) Provide sustainable menstrual-health supplies and education through MoE–MoH coordination.
- c) Integrate SRH, hygiene, and life-skills modules within CBC, guided by the ASRH Policy (2022–2032).
- d) Introduce periodic school-health audits to monitor compliance with the National School Health Policy and report through NGEC.

IV. Social and Cultural Barriers to Education

Policy Reflection:

Socio-cultural norms, early marriage, and gender-based violence remain persistent, despite protections under the *Children Act (2022)* and *National Gender and Development Policy (2019)*. SRH education coverage is limited—only 10 percent of schools offer contraceptive information—reflecting conservative implementation of the *ASRH Policy (2022–2032)*.



Recommendations

- a) Scale up comprehensive SRH education using trained Life-Skills teachers and local health officers.
- b) Engage cultural and religious leaders in community dialogues that challenge discriminatory norms.
- c) Strengthen reporting and response mechanisms for school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) under MoE–MoH–NGEC collaboration.

- d) Integrate community mentorship and role-model programmes for adolescent girls in ASAL and informal settlement schools.

V. Harmful Practices and Child Protection

Policy Reflection:

The *Children Act (2022)*, *Prohibition of FGM Act (2011)*, and *National Policy on the Elimination of Child Labour (2023)* prohibit child marriage, FGM, and exploitative labour. Yet 17 per cent of girls are still reported in child marriage, 7 per cent in FGM, and 13 per cent in child labour, concentrated in Baringo, Garissa, and Isiolo.



Recommendations

- a) Strengthen local child-protection committees to implement provisions of the Children Act (2022).
- b) Integrate anti-FGM and anti-child-marriage education within school-community outreach programmes.
- c) Enhance coordination between education, social protection, and justice sectors to enforce sanctions for harmful practices.
- d) Support school-based counselling and rescue-centre linkages for affected learners, particularly in high-risk counties.

VI. Cross-Cutting and Emerging Priorities

Policy Reflection:

The *NGEC Strategic Plan (2023–2027)* and *Vision 2030 MTP IV* emphasize data-driven monitoring, digital inclusion, and climate-responsive education. Yet school-level data disaggregation remains weak, and digital and climate shocks continue to exacerbate gender disparities.



Recommendations

- a) Institutionalise gender- and disability-disaggregated data within EMIS for annual NGEC tracking.
- b) Expand digital-learning infrastructure and teacher capacity in marginalised schools, aligning with CBC and SDG 4 targets.
- c) Integrate climate-adaptation and resilience education into school curricula to address the ASAL vulnerability nexus.
- d) Promote partnerships between NGEC, MoE, and development partners for sustained financing of gender-transformative education.

Collectively, the findings underscore the urgency of strengthening implementation—not just policy formulation. Kenya possesses a robust gender-responsive education framework; the challenge now lies in coordination, financing, and accountability. By grounding future interventions in the frameworks outlined above, NGEC and its partners can accelerate progress toward an inclusive, equitable, and safe learning environment for every Kenyan child.

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