

## **Factors influencing Girls' Participation in Free Primary Education: A Survey of Schools in Kapenguria Division-West Pokot District-KENYA**

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### **Abstract**

*The Kenyan government has tried to address the gender imbalance in education by improving girl enrolment and thereby enjoy educational benefits. World Food Programme promotes universal education of people who are socially and economically disadvantaged in ASALs through advocacy, provision of food and basic education. In addition, the government has produced policy guidelines addressing gender differences in enrolment and achievement for example the readmission of adolescent mothers back to school and removal of stereotyping in all educational materials. The findings of the study will be useful to policy makers and other stakeholders to review strategies in order to widen girls' participation in education for Capacity Building, Transformation of Society and Sustainable Development.*

**Key words:** *Girls' Participation, Free Primary Education.*

### **1. Introduction**

The Kenya government has tried to redress the gender imbalance in education by focusing its efforts on improving girl participation in education thereby increasing their enrolment and educational benefits Bayon et al, (2005) and Kakonye et al. (2001) report that World Food Programme promotes universal education of the socially and economically disadvantaged in ASALs through advocacy, provision of food and basic education. In addition, the government has produced various policy guidelines addressing gender differences in enrolment and achievement for example the 7<sup>th</sup> Development Plan of 1994-1996 records guidelines on readmission of adolescent mothers back to school and removal of stereotyping in all educational materials while the 8<sup>th</sup> Development Plan (1997-2001) seeks to eliminate gender imbalances at all levels of education; particularly the low enrolment in ASALs through explicit government programmes (Kakonye et. al., 2001).

RoK (2007) reports that attainment of gender parity in education is a core development issue and is aimed at attaining six EFA goals. Towards the accomplishment of this goal, the Ministry of Education has developed Gender Policy in Education which provides a comprehensive framework of the principles and strategies to be pursued in order to achieve gender equity and equality in Education. However, UNICEF (2006) reports that currently there are more than 100 million children around the world of primary school age who are not in school. The majority of these children are in regions of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and within these countries, girls are the greatest disadvantaged in receiving access to education at primary school. Since MDGs were launched, Doughlas (2003) points out that there have been many

successes. For instance, China, Chile and Singapore are examples of developing countries that have successfully completed a campaign towards universal education.

In order to realize the above goals, the Government of Kenya introduced FPE in 2003. With its introduction, primary school enrolment rose but there were manifestations of disparities. Inequalities persist with females being under enrolled. The GER for 2004 stood at 104.8%; 108.5% for boys and 101.6% for girls thus witnessing a gender gap in favor of boys. There are wide regional disparities in primary completion where, for instance, in 2004, Nairobi had a rate of 3.3% in favour of girls while North Eastern province had 24.2% and Coast province 21.9% in favor of boys (Elimu News, 2007). At primary school level, there is gender disparity with serious regional disparity particularly in ASALs (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2003). Although the education system aims at removing social injustice and disparities between sexes, regions, social and economic groups, there are gender disparities in the formal education; girls' participation and completion rates are lower than those of boys (Elimu News, 2007; GCN, 2004). Reports by EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2003; 2005) indicate that implementation of FPE initiative increased number of pupils in primary schools from 5.9 million in 2002 to 7.2 million in 2004. The reports further indicate that at the national level, Kenya has virtually attained gender parity in enrolment at primary and secondary education levels. However, close scrutiny reveals that serious gender disparities in participation exist between regions in favor of boys. Although participation in education by the marginalized groups is low, girls are more marginalized, whereby education is not a priority. The disparity implies girl education need to be given more attention in the context of FPE. Koech Report (1999) emphasizes that ASAL districts have specific problems which affect access to education more seriously than those experienced by more economically productive districts.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

From the District Statistics Office, Kapenguria, 2005 and West Pokot District Education Office, 2007, the projected population of the boys was 173,054 while their enrolment was 132,915 giving a difference of 40,142. For the girls, the projected population was 169,951 and enrolment was 121,269 giving a difference of 48,682. This shows a higher gap between population projected and enrolment for the girls than for the boys and that is why this study sought to investigate factors influencing girls' participation in FPE. Comparing the projected population of girls and their enrolment in primary schools in West Pokot District indicates about 48680 girls are left out of school. This scenario indicates that there are factors interacting with each other to constrain girls' participation in FPE. The plight of the girl child has been improved but there are still disparities to be addressed. Failure to address these disparities would result in widening the gap which already exists between boys' and girls' education and eventual loss of benefits accrued from female education. The concern of this study therefore was the existence of gender disparity to the disadvantage of girls in participating in FPE yet the government is committed to providing education to all children and therefore it sought to establish factors that influence girls' participation in the context of FPE.

The study sought to determine enrolment and dropout trends of boys and girls between the years 2003 to 2007, to find out influence of economic background of parents on girls' participation in FPE and finally to find out influence of social-cultural factors on girls' participation in FPE.

### 3. Theoretical Model

The study was based on production function model, which according to Psacharaopoulos and Woodhall (1985) gives relationship between inputs and outputs. It compares the practice of the existing entities converting inputs X into output Y to determine the most efficient production function of existing entities. The production function is typically used in the context theory of the firm which is profit making. Educational production function is an application of economics' concept of a production function to the field of education where the inputs are the students and resources going into a given school while output is the resulting achievement upon graduation.

The general Educational production function was expressed as:

$$Q = f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) \quad (i)$$

Q, which is the output, is determined by inputs  $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$ . Q therefore denotes educational achievement while  $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$  can be adequate textbooks, qualified teachers and sufficient funds.

Various factors act in combination to determine whether girls participate in FPE in the case of this study. Taking participation as dependent variable and factors as independent variables, an equation was developed as follows:

$$v = f(m_1, m_2, m_3, m_4, e) \quad (ii)$$

Where  $v$  = participation

$m_1$  = economic background of parents

$M2$  = social-cultural factors

$e$  = error term.

### 4. Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. On the note of this, the study population comprised the 40 public primary schools in Kapenguria Division. Out of this population, a sample of 18 schools was drawn and selected through the process of stratified random sampling technique. All head teachers and class teachers in the sampled schools were purposively selected while simple random sampling was used to select pupils from class seven and eight. Purposive sampling was used to select 18 head teachers, each from the sampled schools. This technique enabled selection of typical and useful cases only. The same technique was also used to select all class teachers from the sampled schools. From each school, 8 class teachers (for classes 1-8) were sampled and therefore a total of 144 class teachers participated in the study. In classes where multi-streams existed, simple random sampling of the teachers was employed to obtain one representative. Purposive sampling was used to select classes seven and eight for the study because of their ability and competence to answer questions. Stratified sampling was then used to categorise pupils as boys and girls. This was because the study intended to obtain varying views from both boys and girls on factors influencing girls' participation in FPE. From these strata, disproportionate random sampling was used to sample 8 girls and 4 boys from each school. More girls than boys were sampled because the researcher felt the girls would be better placed to state the factors that influenced their participation in FPE, which was the focus of the study. Therefore from a total

population of 1400 pupils, 16% (216) were sampled to participate in the study from which 144 and 72 were girls and boys respectively. This is justified by Kerlinger (1973) who recommends that a sample should be between 10% and 30% of the study population.

The instruments used to collect data for the study were questionnaire and document analysis which requested for information on the enrolment and dropout trends of pupils between the years 2003-2007, influence of economic background of parents on girls' participation in FPE and influence of social-cultural factors on girls' participation in FPE. The content validity of the instrument was determined by experts in the Department of Educational Management and policy studies- Moi University to ascertain whether the instrument actually measured what it was supposed to measure. The reliability of the instrument was determined through the test-retest reliability technique. The questionnaire was tested for reliability whereby a pilot study was conducted in two schools in neighboring Sigor Division. The questionnaire was administered twice to 20 pupils and 10 teachers within an interval of two weeks. The pilot study was conducted in this Division to avoid contaminating the actual study sample in Kapenguria Division. Parson's Product moment correlation coefficient for test-retest reliability procedures was then computed. A co-relation coefficient of 0.71 was obtained and was high enough to judge the instrument as reliable for use in the study. The data collected were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics and presented. Frequencies, percentages, standard deviation and means were used to summaries data. Descriptive Statistics were used because they provide a summary of certain aspects of data (Berman, 2002).

## 5. Findings

Enrolment trends by gender

Enrolment of pupils by gender between the years 2003 and 2007 is contained in Table 1 below.

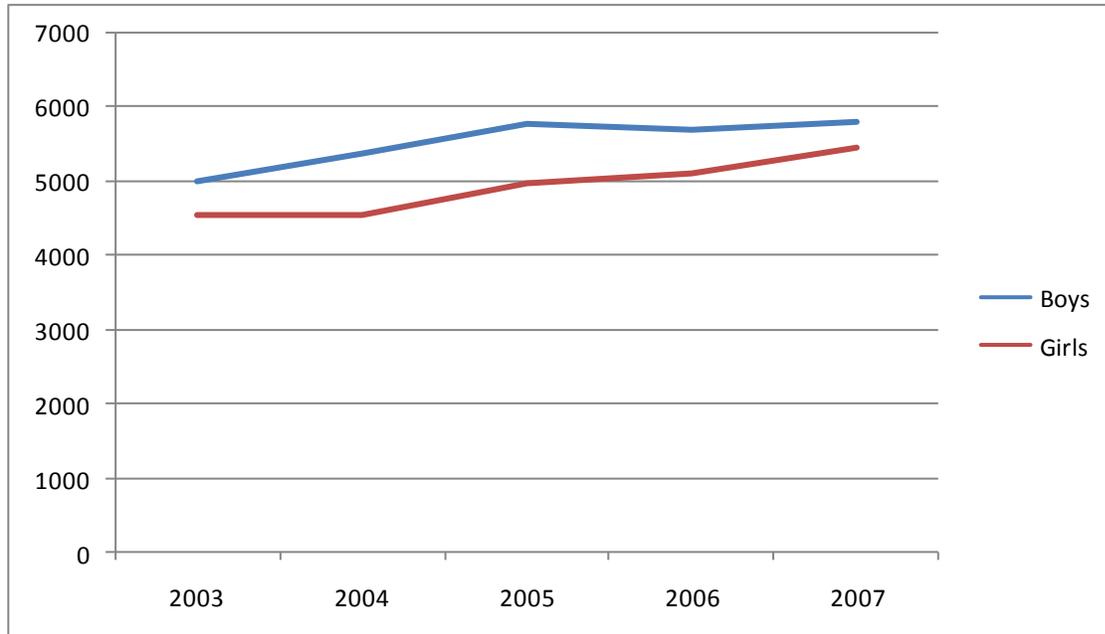
Table 1: Enrolment of pupils by gender

YEAR		BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
2003	enrolment	5004	4546	9550
	percentage	52.4	47.6	100
2004	enrolment	5365	4539	9904
	percentage	54.2	45.8	100
2005	enrolment	5755	4972	10727
	percentage	53.6	46.4	100
2006	enrolment	5695	5109	10804
	percentage	52.7	47.3	100
2007	enrolment	5792	5450	11242
	percentage	51.5	48.5	100

Generally, there was an increasing trend in enrolment of pupils between 2003 and 2007. In 2003, boys' enrolment consisted of 52.4% while the remaining 47.6% of total enrolment were girls. For the years that

followed, boys' enrolment were 54.2%, 53.6%, 52.7% and 51.5% while girls' were 45.8%, 46.4%, 47.3% and 48.5% of the total enrolment consecutively. Further, line graphs were drawn to present these trends as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Enrolment trends by gender**



Years

From the figure, it is shown that there was a steady increase in enrolment by boys between 2003 and 2005. However there was a slight decline between 2005 and 2006 and a further increase in 2007. The graph further shows enrolment of girls being almost stable increasing between 2003 and 2004 and a steady increase thereafter from 2004-2007.

### Dropout Trends by Gender

Information on dropout of boys and girls between the year 2003 and 2007 was sought. Table 2 gives this information.

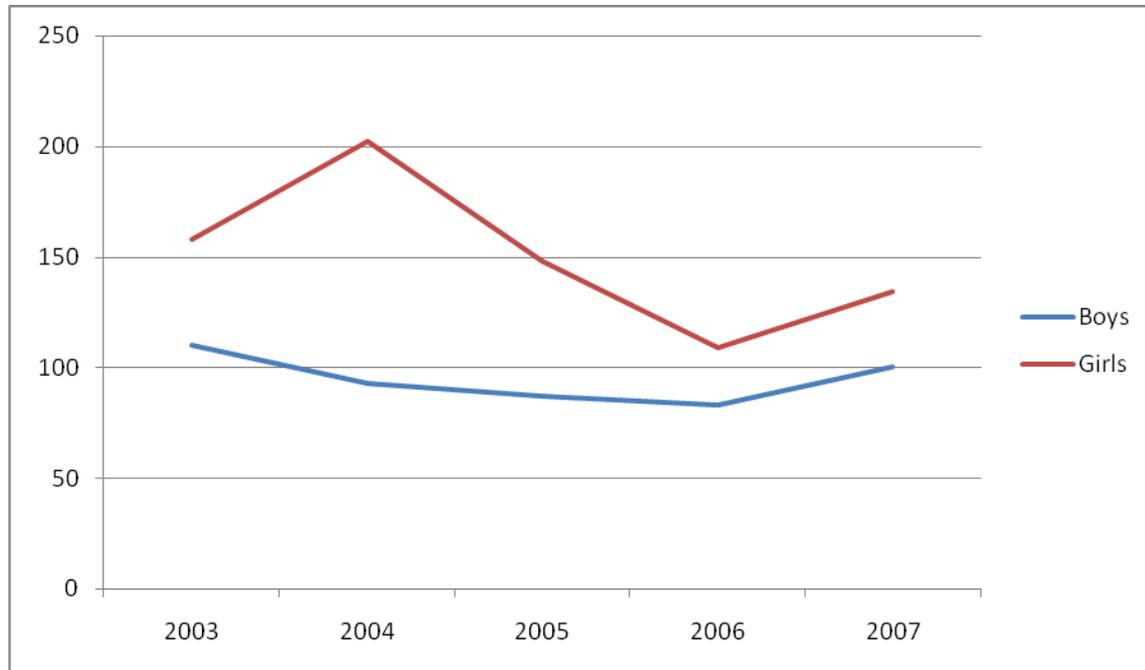
Table 2: Dropout of pupils by gender

YEAR	PUPILS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
2003	dropout	110	158	268
	percentage	41.0	59.0	100
2004	dropout	93	202	295
	percentage	31.5	68.5	100
2005	dropout	87	148	235
	percentage	37.0	63.0	100
2006	dropout	83	109	192
	percentage	43.2	56.8	100
2007	dropout	100	134	234
	percentage	42.7	57.3	100

Generally, the table above reveals a fluctuating dropout trend of pupils and a higher dropout rate of girls than of boys. In 2003, boys who dropped out constituted 41.0% while girls were 59.0% of the total dropouts. The trend is similar for the years 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 whereby the dropout of boys was 31.5%, 37.0%, 43.2% and 42.7% respectively while that of girls was 68.5%, 63.0%, 56.8% and 57.3% of the total dropouts respectively. It can be observed that the year with the highest dropout in absolute terms was 2004 (295) followed by 2003 (268). The year 2006 had the least dropouts (192)

When line graphs were drawn to represent this information, the trends were as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Dropout Trends by Gender**



Years

It can be observed from the figure that dropout of boys was declining between 2003 and 2004. Dropouts seem to be stabilising between 2004-2006 after which it rose between 2006 and 2007. On the other hand, girls' dropout was fluctuating. There was a sharp rise in dropout between 2003 and 2004 and a steady decrease between 2004 and 2006 from where it rose again in 2007.

### **Economic background of parents and their Highest Level of Education**

The economic background of parents was measured by use of education level, occupation and economic activity involved in.

Regarding the highest level reached by their father and mother, girls were asked to indicate them and the results of their responses are as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Highest level of education reached by parents**

Parent		No.edu	Pri.edu	Sec.edu	College	University	Total
Father	Frequency	53	50	20	14	3	140
	Percentage	37.9	35.7	14.3	10.0	2.1	100
Mother	Frequency	64	51	19	5	1	140
	Percentage	45.7	36.7	13.6	3.6	0.7	100

Low income levels of parents are further echoed by their education levels. Table 22 shows that 37.9% of the girls indicated that their fathers had no education, 35.7% indicated they had primary education and 14.3% of them had their fathers having attained secondary education. A small percentage of girls (10%) indicated that their fathers had college education and only a few (2.1%) indicated they had university education. Concerning highest level of education reached by their mothers, the table shows that 45.7% of girls had their mothers having not to have gone to school, 36.4%, 13.6%, 3.6% and a paltry 0.7% indicated their mothers have primary, secondary, college and university education respectively.

**Occupation of parent/guardian**

Occupation of parents/guardians of the girls was sought from them. Their responses are contained in Table 4.

**Table 4: Occupation of parent/guardian**

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
small scale farming	67	47.9
large scale farming	7	5.0
pastoralism	16	11.4
business	33	23.6
teaching	9	6.4
civil service	8	5.7
Total	140	100.0

Table 4 shows majority of the girls (47.9%) gave the occupation of parent/guardian as small scale farming. Other occupations given by 11.4%, 23.6%, 6.4% and 5.7% of girls are pastoralism, business, teaching, civil service and large scale farming respectively.

**Dominant Economic Activity**

The teachers were asked to state the dominant economic activity in the region. A summary of their responses is given in Table 5.

Table 5: Dominant economic activity in the region

Economic activity	Frequency	Percentage
Small scale farming	118	86.1
Pastoralism	10	7.3
Quarrying	3	2.2
Charcoal business	6	4.4
Total	137	100.00

It can be seen that majority of the parents relied on small scale farming as indicated by 86.1% of the teachers. Small percentages of them (7.3%, 4.4% and 2.2%) indicated that the dominant economic activity is pastoralism, charcoal business and quarrying respectively.

### Income Levels from Economic Activity

Closely associated with source of income, the teachers were asked to rate the sources of income of parents in terms of generation of returns. Their responses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Income levels from dominant economic activity

Income levels	Frequency	Percentage
High returns	5	3.6
Average returns	36	26.3
Low returns	87	63.5
No returns	9	6.6
Total	137	100.0

Table 6 shows majority of the teachers (63.5%) felt that the dominant source of income give low returns while 26.3% were of the opinion that it gives average returns. It is further shown that the economic activity give high returns and no returns by 3.6% and 6.6% of the teachers respectively.

### Teachers' Responses on Girls' Participation in FPE

The teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed on factors concerning the economic background of parents that influence girls' participation in FPE. Their responses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Teachers' responses on economic background of parents

Factor		SA	A	U	D	SA	Total
Opportunity cost of girls	Frequency	64	49	13	7	3	137
	Percentage	46.8	35.8	9.6	5.2	2.3	100
Most parents cannot meet girls' needs	Frequency	48	57	3	25	4	137
	Percentage	35.0	41.6	2.2	18.2	2.9	100
Illiterate parents	Frequency	73	48	6	5	5	137
	Percentage	53.3	35.0	4.4	3.6	3.6	100

Key: (SA) Strongly Agree, (A) Agree, (U) Undecided (D) Disagree and (SD) Strongly Disagree.

It can be observed that 46.8%, 35.8%, 9.6%, 5.2% and 2.3% of the teachers strongly agreed, agreed, were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that opportunity cost of girls influence their participation in FPE. It is also given that 53.3%, 35.0%, 4%, 3.6% and another 3.6% of teachers strongly agreed, agreed, were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that illiterate parents have an effect on girls' education. Most parents not being capable of meeting girls' needs had teachers who strongly agreed, agreed, were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed being 35%, 41.6%, 2.2%, 18.2% and 2.9% respectively.

**Social Cultural Factors on Girls' Participation in FPE.**

In order to determine the effect of social-cultural factors on participation in FPE of girls, pupils were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed on some social-cultural factors that could influence girls' participation in FPE. Their responses are contained in Table 8.

Table 8: Pupils' responses on social cultural factors

Factor	Pupils		Agree	Disagree	Total
Household chores	Boys	Frequency	34	31	65
		Percentage	52.3	47.7	100
	Girls	Frequency	78	62	140
		Percentage	55.4	44.6	100
Pregnancy	Boys	Frequency	62	3	65
		Percentage	95.4	4.6	100
	Girls	Frequency	119	21	140
		Percentage	85.0	15.0	100
Circumcision	Boys	Frequency	38	27	65
		Percentage	58.5	41.5	100
	Girls	Frequency	101	39	140
		Percentage	72.2	27.9	100
Parents preference	Boys	Frequency	39	26	65
		Percentage	60.0	40.0	100
	Girls	Frequency	85	5	140
		Percentage	60.7	39.3	100
Early Marriage	Boys	Frequency	50	15	65
		Percentage	76.9	23.1	100
	Girls	Frequency	97	43	140
		Percentage	69.3	30.7	100
Community Views	Boys	Frequency	41	24	65
		Percentage	63.1	36.9	100
	Girls	Frequency	97	43	140
		Percentage	69.3	30.7	100

It can be observed from the table that more than half of the pupils were of the opinion that household chores is a factor that influence girls' participation in FPE as shown by 52.3% of boys and 55.4% of the girls. Circumcision was considered by both boys and girls as a factor to determine participation in FPE as indicated by 72.2% of girls and 58.5% of boys. Pregnancy is depicted also as a major factor influencing primary education of girls as indicated by 95.4% of boys and 85.0% of girls. Early marriage was also viewed as a determinant in girls' participation in FPE. Those who supported this item were 76.9% of boys and 69.3% of girls. Such cultural practices mean girls have to leave school in order to participate in these practices leading to drop out. Other factors which were considered influential were parents' preferences as viewed by 60% of boys and 60.7% of girls while views of the community were indicated by 63.1% of boys and 69.3% of girls.

**Teachers' Responses on Girls' Participation in FPE.**

Concerning the effect of social-cultural factors on girls' participation in FPE, the teachers were asked to state the extent of their agreement or disagreement on factors that are social cultural. Their responses are contained in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Teachers' responses on social-cultural factors

Factor		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
Circumcision	Frequency	48	52	3	25	9	137
	Percentage	35.0	38.0	2.2	18.2	6.6	100
Early marriage	Frequency	55	60	3	13	6	137
	Percentage	40.1	43.8	2.2	9.5	4.4	100
Pregnancy	Frequency	44	79	2	10	2	137
	Percentage	32.1	57.7	1.5	7.3	1.5	100
Community view	Frequency	33	52	12	31	9	137
	Percentage	24.1	38.0	8.8	22.6	6.6	100
Parents preference	Frequency	24	68	9	25	11	137
	Percentage	17.5	49.6	6.6	18.2	8.0	100
Household chores	Frequency	65	51	10	7	4	137
	Percentage	47.4	37.3	7.3	5.1	2.9	100

Key: (SA) Strongly Agree, (A) Agree, (U) Undecided, (D) Disagree and (SD) Strongly Disagree.

It can be observed from the table above that early marriage is one of the major social-cultural factors that influence girls' participation in FPE. This is shown by 40.1%, 43.8%, 2.2%, 9.5% and 4.4% of teachers who strongly agreed, agreed, were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. Pregnancy was also indicated by 32.1%, 57.7%, 1.5%, 7.3% and 1.5 % of teachers who strongly agreed, agreed, were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that it influences girls' participation in FPE.

Circumcision is also given as a factor that play a role in girl education as shown by 35%, 38%, 2.2%, 18.2% and 6.6% of teachers who strongly agreed, agreed, were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively while community views on schooling of girls was strongly agreed, agreed, were

undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed by 24.1%, 38%, 8.8%, 22.6% and 6.6% of teachers respectively. Concerning parents' favourism towards boys' education, 17.5%, 49.6%, 6.6%, 18.2% and 8.8% of teachers strongly agreed, agreed, were undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively while girls undertaking household chores was strongly agreed, agreed, undecided, disagreed and strongly disagreed by 47.4%, 37.3%, 7.3%, 5.1% and 2.9% of teachers respectively that it influences girls' participation in FPE.

## 6. Discussion

The table demonstrates in absolute terms the gender gap in favour of boys. Gender gap was the widest (826) in 2004 and narrower (342) in 2007. This is probably due to sustained FPE programme by the government. This concurs with UNESCO (2009) which reports that sixty million girls worldwide are denied education and millions more receive an inferior education as compared to boys and that problem of participation in school results in inadequate enrolment; particularly by girls. The findings show that boys' total enrolment had been persistently above that of girls in the five years, in spite of the seeming increase in enrolment of girls. This concurs with UNICEF (2006) which reports that majority of those out of school are girls, rural children and children of the poor and many more complete fewer than six years of schooling. UNICEF (2008), in its Education for All Monitoring Report points out that notable progress has been made in the category of enrolment but much progress is still needed in addressing parity. It notes that girls continue to be under enrolled as compared to boys. This implies there is a gender disparity in favour of boys in participation in FPE in Kapenguria Division. This might be due to lack of reinforcement for education in the local environment, household and farm chores that compete for time in the child's schedule, increased likelihood of pregnancy and/ or preparation for marriage among older girls and these practices go unchanged under the guise of protecting communities traditional heritage as explained by Ateka (2009).

Generally, the figure depicts dropping out by girls being higher than by boys. It seems provision of FPE have had little impact on girls' participation as indicated by their dropout which is above 55% of all dropouts in the five years. The probable reasons for dropping out by girls could be because of factors that have an influence on girl child only and may include cultural factors and gender stereotyping. The rise in dropout after an initial increase in enrolment with introduction of FPE as reported by UNESCO (2005) could be because public schools were beginning to experience a decline in enrolment due to dropout caused by overstretched facilities. Moreover, a study by GNC (2004) in five provinces on effects of FPE indicated 60% of teachers reporting that FPE had increased dropouts in their schools. UNICEF (2005) reports that in Rwanda, free basic education swelled classrooms but dropout rate jumped from 14% to 18% and that in spite of increased enrolment in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, all of which abolished fees, the number of children especially girls remains treacherously low. The report pointed out factors such as unfriendly environments, inadequate toilets to accommodate large numbers as behind the dropping out. The present study revealed the same factors when girls indicated toilets and classrooms were not enough for them. Considering the fact that enrolment figures are relatively low for girls in the five years, the participation rate for girls in Kapenguria Division is poor.

Level of education of parents is an indicator of income levels and therefore it depicts the ability of parents to enrol girls in school. This finding is important as it relates to the ability, aspirations, role modelling and mentoring of girls in their quest for formal education. Therefore low economic status of parents in

Kapenguria Division lowers participation of girls in primary education because they are not able to enrol in school and mentor them. This shows majority of the parents do farming as their major occupation which fetches low returns. This implies girls may not access FPE because it is still the responsibility of parents to buy uniforms and to meet other needs of girls as the government provides funds for instructional materials. It can be concluded that majority of the parents in Kapenguria Division engage in small scale farming due to aridity of the land (Republic of Kenya, 2002-2008) and therefore earn low incomes which most likely leads to low participation of children especially girls in. High opportunity cost of girls in Kapenguria Division implies absenteeism or dropout in order to lessen the economic burden of their parents who are not able to meet their needs while in school. The need for girls' labour is further reinforced by illiteracy levels of parents which is high. This is the situation in Kapenguria Division yet Mushtaq (2009) points out that free schooling is taken to be merely waiver of tuition fee and provision of text books and classroom materials but there are many other essentials to be met by parents and that it is reported to have worked wonders in terms of statistical indicators but it is still beyond the reach of most Kenyan families. Further, Commonwealth Education Fund and Elimu Yetu Coalition (2003) jointly confirm that governments have neglected adult literacy and worldwide, one in five adults lacks basic literacy skills yet women's literacy has a strong influence on child's education. UNESCO (2007) relates poverty and education by stating that people who are most likely to suffer from poverty are those most likely to be excluded from education and that people who cannot access quality education are also likely to continue to suffer from poverty. It states that globally women are more vulnerable than men within this cycle; the one who misses out on education is poor, rural girls who have a mother with no education. In sub-Saharan Africa, when parents are forced to choose between the education of their daughters and that of their sons, they often choose to educate their sons in the belief that they will support them with the higher incomes derived from their education (Kavuma, 2003). This applies to parents in Kapenguria Division. This finding concurs with that of Hertz and Sperling (2004) who report that despite waiver on tuition fees in Bangladesh and Nepal, opportunity cost of girls among the poor remains an obstacle. They add that girls' labour paid or unpaid is important part of household survival and sending girls to school may mean less food on the table at the end of every day. Bruns (2003) adds that costs of education such as uniforms, transportation can represent significant barriers and that these costs are high for girls because of their lost household labour and costs associated with safety en route to and at school. Therefore high opportunity cost of girls implies absenteeism from school and may eventually lead to dropout and therefore lowers their participation in FPE. Similar findings have been found jointly by RoK and UNESCO (2006) on 'Progress Report for Kenya' that poverty remains an impediment to fulfilment of basic needs of Kenyans especially women and children; low access and high wastage rates in schools are all exacerbated by rising poverty.

Pregnancy and early marriages emerged as the major social-cultural factors influencing girls' participation in FPE in the present study. This suggests that more girls than boys dropout prematurely from primary schools in Kapenguria Division. This concurs with Okech (2005) who asserts that girls are kept out of school by issues that have a cultural bearing and are not given equal opportunity to education with the boys. As UNDP's report (2005) states that some regions still have low enrolment and high dropout rates for girls due to burden of household responsibilities, this was true for Kapenguria Division. UNESCO (2007) gives one of the reasons why girls leave school in Africa as marriage or pregnancy and that if they are allowed to rejoin the formal system after they give birth; they are required to return to a different school. This mostly discourages the girls and they abandon school completely. Kakonge et.al.

(2001) emphasise that girls are likely to get married off as early as nine years or be given away as 'gifts' so as to ensure family honour is maintained and that the girl should not be given an opportunity to reach adolescence in case she gets pregnant and bring dishonour to her family while at the same time parents' ambitions are to enrich themselves by marrying off their daughters at a tender age. The present study found out that community has a negative view towards education of girls. This is implied from the fact that boys who were married continued with their studies and the girls would not be given a chance to proceed with their studies. UNICEF (2006) reports that children from indigenous communities who still insist on their culture linked to a particular territory and history, maintaining own culture and social organization, have low school enrolment. It states that after removal of initial barriers which are school fees, secondary barriers which are social-cultural ought to be removed.

## **7. Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn based on the study findings

Generally the trend of total enrolment of pupils under investigation was found to be increasing with inception of FPE. This is an indication of high demand of primary education. This could mean schools ought to expand educational resources to cater for the increasing number of pupils. It can therefore be concluded that if the current enrolment trend continues, the available facilities will be overstretched necessitating the government in partnership with other donors, parents and the community to increase their financial support to primary education. The findings showed enrolment of boys being higher than that of girls and if this scenario continues, girls will be underrepresented in the school system. This will mean gender disparity in favour of boys in enrolment will continue to be witnessed.

Dropout of pupils existed within FPE programme. Generally there were fluctuating dropout trends of pupils in the five years. Analysis of dropouts showed that of girls being higher than that of boys over the five year period. This will further widen gender disparity between boys and girls in primary schools. It can therefore be concluded that this trend undermines government efforts of providing free primary education to all children and that of attaining gender parity in all regions in the country.

Further dropping out of pupils from school prevents attainment of the goal of universal primary education and ensuring by the year 2015, all children particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education. Lower enrolments and higher dropout of girls than of boys can be explained by inadequate and poor condition of physical facilities in school, low income levels of parents, gender stereotyping in school which discriminate against the girls and negative social-cultural factors which act as barriers to education of girls.

Parents in Kapenguria Division were of low economic background. This was manifested by small scale farming which fetches low returns and high illiteracy levels of the parents. There was high opportunity cost of girls in the Division; girls were engaged in domestic chores and agricultural activities at times for pay to supplement their meagre incomes. When girls remain at home to take care of their siblings and farm work, they miss school and would eventually dropout. Therefore more girls than boys did not participate in FPE in Kapenguria Division. It can be concluded that low economic background of parents had a negative impact on girls' participation in FPE. Thus child labour is one of the factors explaining declining enrolment rate in primary schools in Kapenguria Division.

Therefore with the poor economic condition of parents and increasing inflation rate and as long as there are essential needs of girls to be met by parents, lower participation of girls than by boys will continue to be witnessed.

Social-cultural factors that were significant in lowering participation of girls in FPE included early marriage at tender age to maintain family honour and to source wealth. This was reinforced by pregnancy among girls to lead to dropout. Negative attitude towards girl education acted as a discentive to school participation; it makes them remain at home, be married and fees given to the boys in whom the parents had preference in their education. Girls were being taken through circumcision rites and once they had gone through the rite, they were considered adults and do not go back to school.

## **8. Recommendations**

This study has come up with the following recommendations:

There is need for increased funding to FPE programme by the government and other private stakeholders (like banks, business sector) to provide education to all for sustainable development.

The government should build more low cost boarding schools in ASALS by injecting more funds than those granted to high production areas. County governments should prioritise this construction too.

Parents and guardians should be made aware of the need for education of girls through campaigns in order to transform the minds of parents from giving preference to boy education. Role models can be invited to schools to encourage girls ( for example, Tecla Lorupe Peace races).

Girls are kept out of school by issues that have a cultural bearing. The government needs to set up rescue centres in such counties to ensure education is provided to girls for capacity building.

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