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# The Funding of Free Primary Education and Its Prospects for Sustainability in Kakamega and Kajiado Counties, Kenya

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**Abstract**
The introduction of Free Primary Education in Kenya left the government with a greater role and burden in financing primary education. The new role encompassed mobilization of resources, paying tuition fees, training, recruitment and paying teachers, and the provision of infrastructure and instructional materials. Parents on the other hand were required to provide basic needs for their children such as school uniforms, food and transport to school where necessary. This paper sought to establish the funding mechanisms for FPE and examine the sustainability of the FPE initiative. The study was conducted in Kakamega and Kajiado districts (now Counties). From the 59 schools sampled, 59 headteachers and 177 teachers were included in the study. Fourteen Area Education Officers (AEOs), 118 parents, 118 School Management Committee (SMC) members, 2 District Education Officers and 7 senior officers from the Ministry of Education headquarters were also interviewed. The study used questionnaires, interview schedules and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for data collection. Head teachers and teachers indicated that no preparation for FPE had been given to them prior to implementation and the training given after introduction of FPE was inadequate and rushed. Head teachers and teachers revealed that most parents were not actively involved in school management affairs and had misinterpreted the FPE policy. Members of SMC were seen as lacking the necessary capacity to contribute effectively in financial management, budgeting and curriculum support in schools. Still, SMCs were more supportive than PTAs. Five concerns emerged as fundamental to the sustainability of FPE in Kenya: budgetary provisions and constraints, Kenya’s economic performance, donor support, political commitment and community support. The sustainability of FPE is threatened by high cost of funding, the shortage of teachers, reliance on donor support, uncertainty over continued political goodwill, slowed growth of the Kenyan economy and the apathy from parents. There are policy gaps relating to early childhood education, admission of pupils into primary schools and allocation of FPE grants.
**Keywords:** Funding, Free Primary Education, Prospective Sustainability, Kakamega, Kajiado Districts, Kenya

## 1. Introduction

The immediate and inevitable financial implication for the Kenya government after introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003 was a phenomenal increase of 3.2 billion Kenya shillings (Kshs) in expenditure on primary education. Considering the huge enrolments that were experienced, the financing needs became more substantial, such that in the absence of adequate resources, there was a real risk of pupils learning little in the public primary schools.

In the years preceding the introduction of FPE, the government’s financial resources to support primary schooling had been on a decline, thus shifting the burden to parents and communities. It is worth noting however that, immediately after independence in 1963, the government of Kenya, faced with the challenge and desire to Africanize the country’s economy, assumed greater responsibility in the establishment and running of primary schools. The government channelled its financing of primary schools through the District Education Boards (DEB) (Eshiwani, 1993). The central government had the direct responsibility in the administration and supervision of primary education to have control over quality. To enhance this, the Kenya Schools Equipment Scheme (KSES) was established to supply schools with equipment for learning (Sifuna, 1989). The whole government subsidy package in primary education catered for the provision of teaching and learning materials, shouldered the burden of operational costs and paid teachers’ salaries. Parents and communities when required provided land and labour. Parents also had to buy school uniform for their children and pay some nominal fee. This fee was however gradually phased out when the government embarked on the course to abolish fees at primary school level beginning 1971.

Tuition fees were therefore abolished in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) districts in 1971, and in 1973, another presidential decree abolished fees for all children in standards one to four. The vision then was to ultimately achieve free 7-year primary schooling by January 1980. The abolition of fees engendered massive enrolments; in 1973, there was a 51% increase in number of enrolled pupils (Government of Kenya, 1977). Parents, with time, had to contribute towards expansion and buying of equipment. But beside the issue of cost, there was a negative impact on quality. Not all communities could afford to provide adequate learning facilities. Thus, pupils in many areas had to contend with overcrowded classrooms and inadequate learning materials (Nkinyangi, 1982). There was also the issue of teachers; in 1973, about 78% of the primary school teaching cadre was professionally trained. This figure dropped to 67% in 1974, to 64% in 1975 and by 1976, it stood at 63% (Government of Kenya, 1977). The government was forced to increasingly rely on untrained teachers to counter the upsurge in enrolment.

Indeed, as earlier envisioned, in 1979, the government issued another directive abolishing all forms of school levies in public primary schools. Still, parents and communities had to contribute some amount of money towards development expenditure. The abolition of fees in the 1979 directive came along with advice to schools to establish Parent Teacher Association (PTA) that were supposed to coordinate the collection of funds through voluntary contributions (Lillis & Ayot, 1988; Olembo, 1982). This, arguably, is what provided the loophole for the proliferation of levies imposed upon parents. Therefore, whereas there early were government efforts to provide free primary schooling, this failed. Instead, education at this level became expensive and quality was compromised by parents' inability to guarantee provision of adequate facilities. It could also be argued that government policy did not direct as much attention on quality of infrastructure as it did on increasing the enrolment of children in schools.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Kakamega and Kajiado districts. From the 59 schools sampled, 59 headteachers and 177 teachers were included in the study. Fourteen Area Education Officers (AEOs), 118 parents, 118 School Management Committee (SMC) members, 2 District Education Officers and 7 senior officers from the Ministry of Education headquarters were also interviewed. The study used questionnaires, interviews schedule and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for data collection.

## 3. Results and Discussion

This study sought to examine the sources of funding for FPE, and the issues and concerns related to funding. From the data obtained, an analysis was made of the sustainability of FPE. Pertinent data that answered this research question was mainly gathered from interviews with senior Ministry of Education officials at the headquarters. Secondary sources of data from the Ministry of Education were also inevitably used for statistical data. Information gathered from teachers and headteachers supplemented the major sources of information.

### *3.1 Funding of FPE*

The Ministry of Education officials interviewed revealed that the hype that accompanied the introduction of FPE and the fact that the incoming government had used FPE as a campaign promise, made the necessity to invest heavily for the success of FPE a high-stakes matter. Urgent financial arrangements had to be made to enable the Kenya Government to deliver on its commitment to FPE. Unfortunately, all this was happening against a backdrop of poor economic performance by the country. Table 1 presents the picture of the budgetary trends for education in general for the period immediately preceding and following the introduction of FPE.

**Table 1: Overall Education Budget in Kenya (Kshs. Billions).**

| FY | Recurrent expenditure | % of Total | Development expenditure | % of Total | Total Kshs. (Billions) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1999/2000 | 47.60 | 98.63 | 0.66 | 1.37 | **48.26** |
| 2000/01 | 48.71 | 97.81 | 1.09 | 2.19 | **49.80** |
| 2001/02 | 53.74 | 95.39 | 2.60 | 4.61 | **56.34** |
| 2002/03 | 61.60 | 92.76 | 4.81 | 7.24 | **66.41** |
| 2003/04 | 71.80 | 89.49 | 8.43 | 10.51 | **80.23** |

**Source :** ***MOEST (www.education.go.ke)***

In the 2003/04 financial year, as the implementation of FPE began, there was a sharp increase of Kshs. 13.82 billion (20.8%) in the government's overall education budget, bringing government allocation for education to Kshs. 80.23 billion. During the interview with Ministry of Education officials, it was clarified that other than expenditure on salaries, much of this money (over Kshs. 7.6 billion) was specifically allocated to the FPE programme. The donor community responded by supporting the FPE initiative. In June, 2003, for example, the World Bank gave a grant of Kshs. 3.7 billion, while the Britain, through the Department for International Development offered Kshs. 1.6 billion.

There were other significant donors such as the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) which provided Kshs. 1.2 billion, the Swedish government which gave Kshs. 430 million and UNICEF which gave Kshs. 250 million (Commonwealth Education Fund & Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2003). It thus could be immediately noted that donor funds played a significant role in funding FPE. Then also, the funds awarded to Kenya in donor support, though welcome and impressive, pointed to the fact that the country was not fully prepared for the FPE that it had so boldly introduced. Much of the increase in educational expenditure is attributable to the implementation of FPE. Table 2 illustrates budgetary allocation towards primary education during the period immediately preceding and following the introduction of FPE.

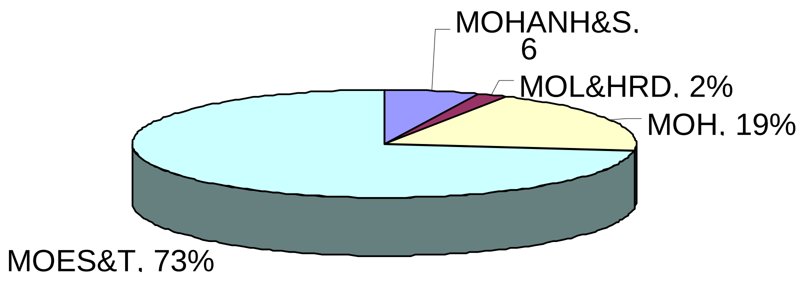
**Table 2: Primary Schools Education Budget (Kshs. Billions)**

| FY | Recurrent | % of Total | Development | % of Total | Total | As % of Total Education Budget |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1999/2000 | 0.483 | 62.97% | 0.284 | 37.03% | 0.767 | **1.59%** |
| 2000/01 | 0.816 | 77.57% | 0.236 | 22.43% | 1.052 | **2.11%** |
| 2001/02 | 0.742 | 83.18% | 0.150 | 16.82% | 0.892 | **1.58%** |
| 2002/03 | 3.32 | 80.66% | 0.796 | 19.34% | 4.116 | **6.20** |
| 2003/04 | 5.97 | 50.67% | **5.813** | 49.33% | 11.78 | **14.69%** |

Source; *MOEST (www.education.go.ke)*

Between Financial Year (FY) 1999/2000 and 2002/2003, which is the period before FPE, the allocation to primary education as a percentage of the total education budget lay between 1.58% and 6.20%. During the same period, it was lowest (1.58%) as a percentage of the total education budget in FY 2001/2002. The allocation rose appreciably in 2002/2003 to a high of 6.2%, just before the introduction of FPE which began in the second half of the 2002/03 financial year. During the financial year that started after introduction of FPE, the allocation to primary education as a percentage of the total education sector budget rose to 14.69%, reflecting both the importance attached by government to FPE, as well as the soaring demands of the programme. A colossal Kshs. 7.667 billion increase was made in the primary education budget from FY 2002/2003 to 2003/2004. Whereas in the four financial years preceding FPE development expenditure on primary education had never gone beyond the Kshs. 1 billion mark, it rose sharply to Kshs. 5.813 billion in 2003/2004. Evidently, the primary education sub-sector was beginning to consume unprecedented levels of exchequer funds.

According to Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2004, the average Government spending on education and training has ranged between 5 and 7 percent of the GDP and the recurrent Government spending on education has been higher than any other social sector spending. For example, education's recurrent budget rose from 35 percent of public sector recurrent budget in 2000 to 39 percent in 2004. Fifty percent of the total allocation to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOES&T) went to primary education. Most notably however, as a result of the implementation of FPE, development expenditure has increased since 2003, resulting in little allocation being left for other sub-sectors (ROK, 2004b). Figure 1 below presents a comparison of Central Government Expenditure on Social Services for FY 2003/04. As can be observed in the figure, the expenditure by MOES&T by far outweighs that on other social services represented by the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Heritage and Sports (MOHANH&S), Ministry of Health( MOH), and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development




(MOL&HRD).
*Figure 1: GoK Expenditure on Social Services for FY2003/2004*
*Source: Republic of Kenya (2004c). Economic Survey*
In FY 2003/2004, the expenditure by the MOES&T amounted to 73% of the total Government Expenditure on Social Services, followed by the Ministry of Health (MOH), which consumed 19% of the expenditure. The Ministry of Home Affairs ,National Heritage and Sports (MOHANH&S) used up 6% , while the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development (MOL&HRD) took up just 2% of the total government expenditure on social services.
The Director of Policy and Planning indicated that the heavy investment in education that was being borne by the Kenya Government called for strong collaboration and partnership with other stakeholders to mitigate the challenges. He noted that without a working partnership on financing, it would have been hard to address the problems of inadequate access, inequity, low quality and the heavy household financial burden. Thus, to address the challenges that relate to financing education, the government sought to work with partners to mobilize additional resources to finance education. This led to the development of a sector-wide Strategic Plan that gave birth to the Kenya Education Sector Support Programme (KESSP). The KESSP provided mechanisms for collaboration by all stakeholders in programme implementation and financing

The KESSP (2005-2010) was a five-year programme that was structured into 23 Investment Programmes (IP), through which the recurrent costs relating to all levels of the education system in Kenya were outlined. The KESSP presented an overall picture of the resources required for its full implementation, and was used as the vehicle through which the government provided quality education and training, and implementation framework for Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005. The cost scenario over the five-year period was KSh. 543 billion (US$ 7.2 billion), with the bulk of the funding estimated at Kshs. 481 billion (89 %) budgeted to come from the Government (Republic of Kenya, 2005b). Therefore, even with generous amounts proposed to come from donors, the greater financial burden for the programme rested with the government.
An examination of funding for the FPE programme is therefore best seen through the KESSP framework. The KESSP Investment Programmes (IPs) that are directly related to primary education (and thus FPE) are Primary School Infrastructure IP, Primary School Instructional Materials IP, School Health, Nutrition and Feeding IP, Special Needs Education IP, Quality Assurance and Standards IP and the In-Service Primary Teacher Training IP. Several other IPs, such as the Capacity Building IP, touch on primary education, but either in a secondary or peripheral manner.

The senior officer at the Ministry of Education's Directorate of Policy and Planning was asked to indicate the major sources of funding for FPE. It was noted that the several donors who had supported FPE did so through the KESSP pooled fund basket. As such, some of the KESSP funds were channelled to higher levels of education and the different donors channelled the funds at different times and in various independent tranches. It was further clarified that these donors prescribed varying conditions to be met before the release of funds. For example, some of the donors insisted on providing funds for specific components of the KESSP. The major sources of funds mentioned were: The Government of Kenya (GoK), Department for International Development (DFID), International Development Association (IDA), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), United Nations Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF), Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC), The Fast Track Initiative (FTI), World Food Programme (WFP) and USAID

As of mid 2008, the major donors towards KESSP had contributed a total of Kshs. 296,428,804,326 to the programme. Table 3 shows the amounts contributed by individual donors as well the government in support of KESSP.

**Table 3: Support Given by Donors /GOK towards Education in Kenya**

| Source | **Financial Year 2008 contribution** | **Cumulative Contribution to KESSP upto June 2008** |
|---|---|---|
| GOK | 97,131,597,010 | 279,070,116,386 |
| DFID | 1,423,013,760 | 3,926,531,560 |
| IDA(FPESP) | 1,241,000,000 | 2,999,736,670 |
| CIDA | 450,000,000 | 1,330,660,425 |
| VVOB-Belgium | 2,869,493 | 3,699,493 |
| UNICEF | 80,553,018 | 412,373,266 |
| ADB/ADF | 6,000,000 | 6,411,000 |
| OPEC | 223,000,000 | 411,400,000 |
| FTI | 3,093,970,000 | 6,430,870,000 |
| WFP | 403,345,862 | 1,627,005,526 |
| USAID | ----------- | 210,000,000 |
| **Total** | **104,055,349,143** | **296,428,804,326** |

*Source: Republic of Kenya. (2008). KESSP FMR 4$^{th}$ Quarter*

From the year 2005 when KESSP was established, until the end of the 2007/2008 FY, the government of Kenya provided the bulk of the funding for the education sector. Still, a considerable amount of money (Kshs. 17,358,687,940) was received from the donor community to help ease the gap in financing. The most outstanding contributions received from the donor community were from DFID, the Fast Track Initiative (FTI), World Food Programme (WFP), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the International Development Association (IDA) all of whom provided funding support in excess of Kshs.1 billion.

During the period 2005 to 2008 described above, free primary education used up Kshs.16, 521,704, 993. Table 4 summarises the expenditure on education and training during this period vis a vis the expenditure on FPE alone.

**Table 4: GOK Expenditure on Education under KESSP**

| Expenditure item | FinancialYear 2008 ( **Kshs.)** | Cumulative expenditure under KESSP upto June 2008 (Kshs.) |
|---|---|---|
| Total cost of MOE-based IPs | 17,376,695,677 | 37,884,583,193 |
| FPE | ----- | 16,521,704,993 |
| Other MoE costs( administration, construction, equipment) | 86,453,300,730 | 237,756,031,173 |
| Foreign exchange loss/gain | 1,015,974 | 2,510,991 |
| **Total MoE expenditure** | **103,828,980,433** | **292,164,830,350** |
| Total cost of non MoE- based IPs | 1,667,216,266 | 3,057,576,126 |
| **Total expenditure** | **105,496,196,699** | **295,222,406,476** |

*Source: KESSP Secretariat*

The total expenditure on Ministry of Education-based IPs for the KESSP period up to 2008 was Kshs. 37,884,583,193. Money that had been specifically channelled towards FPE over the same period amounted to Kshs. 16,521,704,993. Not all the IPs are Ministry of Education- Based. For example, the TIVET IP and the University Education belong to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. However, all funding for KESSP is channelled through the Ministry of Education account. The total expenditure on non MOE-based IPs was Kshs. 3,057,576,126. It is worth noting that a huge proportion of the expenditure by the Ministry of Education goes to ministry administration, operations, constructions and equipment. This area of expenditure gobbled up Kshs. 237,756,031,173, representing 80.5% of the total expenditure on education over the KESSP period up to year 2008. This is a colossal amount, and cost-cutting measures could explore this area to generate savings.

It was useful for this study to interrogate the distribution of FPE funds and therefore the prioritization of expenditure on primary education. The Director of Policy and Planning explained that the Ministry of Education had placed great emphasis on instructional materials followed by the construction of school infrastructure. For this reason, most of the FPE funds were allocated to the provision of instructional materials such as chalk, exercise books, textbooks, pencils, pens, charts and wall maps to ensure meaningful learning could be undertaken in schools. It was also argued by the Ministry of Education that prior to the introduction of FPE, many pupils were kept out of schools by the inability to afford learning materials. Many others attended school but were greatly disadvantaged by the lack of books. The provision of instructional materials, explained the Director, has had an equalizing effect on primary education, thereby increasing equity and access all at once. The Director revealed that as of mid-2008, the primary school Instructional Materials IP had expended slightly over Kshs. 17 billion since the establishment of KESSP. This is as compared to the next highest expenditure programme, the Primary School Infrastructure IP, which had consumed Ksh. 3 billlion during the same period.

According to information gathered from the Directorate of Policy and Planning, additional funding for construction of school buildings had been secured from donors, namely the USAID, OPEC, the World Bank and the European Union. The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and the Local Authorities Transfer Fund (LATF) were also cited as having been instrumental sources of funding for infrastructural development in primary schools.

Other areas that had expended over Kshs. 1 billion during the same period were Special Needs Education IP and the School Health, Nutrition and Feeding and IP. Special needs was said to be receiving much attention from the Ministry of Education because FPE had attracted many previously excluded learners with special needs into primary schools. Their special requirements such as assessment tools, hearing aids, and braille machines had to be met.

Other than identifying the sources of funding and the general allocation of funds for FPE, it was also important to examine the adequacy of funding as well as to identify any challenges at the ministry level related to funding. The Director of Policy and Planning and the selected IP team leaders were interviewed to shed light on these aspects of funding. These senior officers at the Ministry of Education headquarters unanimously expressed the opinion that whereas funding for the various FPE needs had been impressive so far, it nonetheless fell short of what was required. It was also reported that the level of funding from donors had improved over the years, enabling the government therefore to better cope with the demands of FPE. It was noted nevertheless that the delays that had been perennially experienced in the disbursement of funds to schools were occasioned by delays in donor funding. Some of the donors in the KESSP pool were said to have held up disbursements by as long as five months into the financial year. This in turn led to delay in disbursement of per capita grants to schools. The Ministry of Education always gives priority to school per capita grants, hence other programmes such as capacity building, end up suffering postponement, sometimes being rescheduled by a year. A demonstration of the financial challenges facing the FPE was manifested in the first term of 2009 school year when funds had not been disbursed to schools as late as March, more than ten weeks into the school term.

The IP leaders reported examples to demonstrate the inadequacy of funds. In 2008, for example, the disbursement of phase III funds to schools for infrastructure fell short of target due to inadequacy of financial resources .The planned procurement of equipment for Special Needs Education in regular schools could not be made as no funds for this were made available to the SNE IP. During the same year, only 60 out of the 1500 Teachers' Advisory Centre (TAC) tutors were trained on effective management of TACs. While 1,050 TAC tutors were scheduled for training to enhance their capacity to support teachers in public primary schools, only 193 were trained due to insufficient funds.

The head of the Primary School Infrastructure IP complained that in 2007, not only did the funds arrive late in the financial year, they were also inadequate. Thus, construction targets were not achieved by the Primary School Infrastructure IP. Further, funds for construction in the previous years had been less than anticipated and arrived too late in the last month of the financial year. Due to the low levels of funding, rather than construct new schools in ASAL areas as planned, priority was given to the refurbishment of schools with dilapidated or semi-permanent structures.

As of June 2008 when the Ministry of Education conducted a Financial Monitoring Report (FMR) for its fourth quarter performance under KESSP, a financing gap of Kshs. 7,770.81 million was reported for the 6 months' projections leading to December 2008 (Republic of Kenya, 2008). The FMR further reveals deficits in financing that have been suffered by the education sector since the inception of KESSP. Table 5 summarizes the deficit scenario as of year 2008.

**Table 5: Ministry of Education KESSP Quarterly Financial Monitoring Report for Quarter Ended 30th June 2008**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **a**.Total forecast for IPs expenditure( 6monhts upto Dec,2008) | | 10,611.17 |
| **b.** Total balances available (GoK & Development Partners) | | 141.36 |
| **c.** Total new funds required ***( a-b)*** | | 10,469.81 |
| **d.** (Less) scheduled Dev'pt partner payments | 4,240.12 | |
| Required GOK financing for IPs ***( c -d)*** | | 6,229.69 |
| Available GoK funding | 16,727.19 | |
| KESSP cumulative deficit | 18,268.30 | |
| **Financing gap** | | **7,770.80** |

*Adapted from: Republic of Kenya (2008a) KESSP FMR*

Table 5 summarizes the Financial Monitoring Report for KESSP for the period ended last quarter of 2007/2008 FY as at 30th June 2008. The total forecast for the 6 months up to December 2008 based on original KESSP costings was Kshs. 10,611.17 million. The total fund balances available in the MOE pooled KESSP Account, exchequer and Development Partner Foreign Currency Accounts was Kshs. 141.36million, hence the government required Kshs. 10,469.81million. The scheduled development partner payments (July to December, 2008) amounted to Kshs. 4,240.12 million. Thus, the government was required to finance Kshs.6, 229.69 million. The available Government of Kenya funding for the projected period at this point was Kshs. 16,727.19, but the cumulative KESSP deficit was Kshs. 18,268.30 million. Therefore, as of the end of FY 2008, the government had a net KESSP deficit of Kshs. 7,770.80 million. The KESSP deficit is illustrated below in Table 6 provided by the KESSP Secretariat.

**Table 6: KESSP Cumulative Deficit (Kshs. million)**

| **2005/06** KESSP costings | **2006/07** KESSP costings | **2007/08** KESSP costings | **Total Costings** | **Cumulative expenditure totals(KESSP life up to end of last quarter 2007/2008)** | **Deficit** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A** | **B** | **C** | **D=A+B+C** | **E** | **F=D-E** |
| 18,208.01 | 19,929.22 | 21,073.23 | 59,210.46 | 40,942.16 | 18,268.3 |

*Source: KESSP Secretariat, 2008*

Whereas the total original costing for KESSP between 2005 and 2008 were Kshs. 59,210.46 million, the total expenditure from inception until June, 2008 was Kshs. 40,942.16 million. This indicates a huge deficit of Kshs. 18,268.3 milion. The education sector therefore was unable to meet its targeted activities over this period owing to the deficit indicated. This implies also that government of Kenya, despite having made huge investments in education, was still struggling to secure adequate financing for the sector.

*3.2 Sustainability of FPE*

At the beginning of FPE, criticism was levelled against the government for not giving ample time for stakeholders to prepare for the change. The government maintained its resolve to provide FPE to all children in public schools against all odds. Soon, the challenges became apparent, and this raised concern about the sustainability of the FPE programme. The challenges faced in financing FPE and the reliance on donor funding to supplement government resources give credence to concerns about the sustainability of FPE. The fact that Kenya has in the past experimented with the abolition of fees in public primary schools without success, further justifies some level of pessimism about the sustainability of FPE.

When asked if they thought FPE was sustainable, 87 (49.15%) teachers thought that FPE was not sustainable in the long-term, 80(45.19%) thought it was sustainable, while 10 (5.6%) teachers indicated they could not tell. The almost 50-50 response to this question suggests the kind of uncertainty that many people have regarding the sustainability of FPE. The different reasons given by the 80 teachers for thinking that FPE was sustainable were:

- The drive towards UPE is a global phenomenon that cannot be resisted; the country has to keep to FPE. This reason was cited by 49(61.3 %)* teachers.
- Kenyans, having seen the benefits of giving access to primary children will not accept anything less from the government. This reason was cited by 45(56.3%)* teachers.
- The current or any other government cannot want to take the blame for failing to provide universal access to primary education. This was cited by 36(45%)* teachers.
- The government is capable of paying for FPE .This was cited by 30 (37.5%)* teachers.

*(*NB: figures are as a percentage of the 80 teachers who said YES. Multiple responses were allowed)*

The teachers who felt that FPE was not sustainable gave the following reasons:

- FPE is too expensive for the Kenya government to sustain over the long-term due to the performance of economy. This reason was cited by 80 (92%) ** teachers.
- FPE relies too heavily on donor support.. This reason was cited by 70.1% ** teachers.
- Fee creep is bound to occur. This reason was cited by 44 (50.6%) ** teachers.
- Government capitation grants are inadequate to sustain schools over time. This reason was cited by 45 (51.7 %) ** teachers.
- The lack of community support since introduction of FPE will lead to its collapse. This reason was cited by 35 (40.2%) ** teachers.
- The perennial delays in fund disbursement to schools suggest that the government is struggling to sustain FPE. This reason was cited by 30 (34.5%) ** of teachers.
- FPE collapsed before, and will collapse again. (Cited by 30 (34.5%) ** teachers).

(***NB: figures are as a percentage of the 87 teachers who said NO. Multiple responses were allowed)*

Head teachers gave a more guarded response to the question. When asked whether they thought FPE was sustainable or not, 24(40.7 %) of the headteachers said it was difficult to tell, 21(35.6%) thought it was sustainable, while 14(23.7%) thought it was not sustainable. Headteachers more or less cited the same reasons as had been given by teachers.

Headteachers and teachers gave suggestions on what could be done to ensure sustainability of FPE. From the responses by head teachers and teachers, several thoughts emerged as describing the most prominently proposed circumstances that would guarantee the sustainability of FPE. Firstly, it was proposed that the government should increase the per capita allocation to schools to ensure that there were sufficient funds to cater for infrastructural development and maintenance. Secondly, it was frequently mentioned that the reliance on donor funding to supplement government resources for FPE should be minimized. Thus, the government should find ways of bolstering its own revenue base to be able to fund FPE even without external assistance. Teachers expressed the opinion that it was only when the government could accumulate enough resources of its own to fund FPE that it could be said to be sustainable. Thirdly, it was felt that FPE could be sustainable if parents and communities were made to contribute more towards primary education. Teachers pointed out that many parents had misunderstood the FPE initiative and had thus abdicated their role as important stakeholders and contributors. It was felt that if this insidious indifference is left to go on for long, it will be difficult for the government to provide instructional materials as well as maintain and construct physical infrastructure in all the schools around the country.

Teachers were also particularly perturbed by the heavy workload they had as result of large influx of pupils after FPE was introduced. According to them, an important step in ensuring the sustainability of FPE would be to urgently employ more teachers in schools that had suffered massive enrolments to avoid serious erosion of morale. Such an eventuality could spell doom for teaching and learning in primary schools, thereby lowering quality of schooling. Sawamura and Sifuna (2008) observe that due to the acute teacher shortages that were experienced in primary schools after the introduction of FPE, teachers became less motivated because they felt overworked. It became less possible for teachers to effectively manage the large classes, teacher-pupil interaction was minimised and therefore the slow learners were disadvantaged. They conclude that this led to a decline in the quality of education in many public primary schools. The observations raise the concern that the government might have placed emphasis on attendance and enrolment at the expense of the quality of teaching and learning.

Of the seven officers interviewed at the Ministry of Education headquarters, three categorically cast their doubts about the sustainability of the FPE. The rest preferred to take a more reflective position on the matter. They instead, chose to highlight the kind of conditions that would support the sustainability of FPE. It could be that being senior Ministry of Education officials, these officials felt it was their responsibility to have an optimistic stance towards FPE, or that they felt uncomfortable sounding critical of the government they served. It could also imply that these officers were optimistic that FPE was sustainable. What is more revealing nevertheless is that Ministry of Education officials conceded that the challenge of funding FPE was immense. The officers expressed the opinion that FPE was placing a heavy burden on the education sector, and that the Ministry of Education's financial resources had been stretched to the limits.

Lastly, Ministry of Education officials observed that the current arrangement where the government undertakes the provision of resources for both instructional materials and physical development was not sustainable. Based on concerns expressed with regard to financing of FPE in Kenya, it can be observed that the issue of financial sustainability of fee abolition needs to be addressed seriously. Fee abolition in Kenya evidently occasioned cost complexities that resulted in major budget pressures. The government of Kenya will have to examine how it can better mobilize and manage financial resources and sustain the policy within the strained education and national budgetary provisions beyond the short term. The difficulties encountered in financing FPE demand that the country rethinks and revises its budget strategies so as to balance financing needs firstly, from within its education budget, then from its national budget and finally from external donor funding.

## 4. Conclusion

As noted by teachers and headteachers, many parents have simply stopped providing any support to primary schools. This is in the misguided belief that the government should and will provide for all the needs of schools. Yet, from the data collected in the present study, schools are inadequately resourced, and the grants provided by the government cannot satisfy the development needs of most schools. A study conducted by the Elimu Yetu Coalition found that primary education per child per year should cost KSh 6,154, yet the current government capitation grant is Kshs. 1, 020, which is a shortfall of Kshs 5,134 (Commonwealth Education Fund & Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2003). Even though the government makes provision for parents to contribute towards physical development of schools, there is no requirement that binds parents to fulfil this role. Neither can schools prevail on parents to provide such support. If this state of apathy is left to take root, the prospects of FPE's survival could be doubtful.

The sustainability of FPE in Kenya is not guaranteed. Considering the country's socio-economic situation, the slowed growth of the economy, the financial constraints faced by the government and the fact that reliance on foreign support will be increasingly necessary to finance FPE, the sustainability of FPE needs to be addressed urgently. Donor finance is many times temporary, and has been inadequate; the task of sustaining FPE is daunting. Kenya is still a highly indebted country and a sizeable proportion of its income is diverted to debt repayment. The country's financial outlay for investment in services and infrastructure is thus greatly undermined. As confirmed by Ministry of Education officials and school administrators, there has been inadequate funding for the sector. Therefore, whereas the government has committed huge fraction of its budgetary funds to education, the needs surpass the resources. The inclusion of anticipated donor funding is evidence of constraints faced by the government

Kenya has a good chance of building on what has been learnt and the achievements that have been made so far to ensure sustainability of FPE. However, whether the FPE is sustainable in Kenya will depend on continued political goodwill, improved economic performance, greater parental/community support and enhanced budgetary capacity.

## 5. Recommendation

The current cost of FPE is beyond the normal education budget allocation. For the country to achieve and sustain universal access to basic education there will have to be rapid and sustained economic growth to generate funds for education.

Poorer schools should receive preferential treatment in the disbursement of funds and allocation of other resources. This would help to attract and retain children from poor backgrounds in school, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the FPE endeavour.

There are many children in non-ASAL areas who are food-poor and who either failed to attend school or lacked concentration in the classroom. Providing a meal for such children would contribute to the sustainability of FPE.

Ministry of Education officers asserted that for FPE to succeed, it will be necessary for the government to invest more finances in primary education. To do this, it would be critical to build on the current improvements in revenue collection by widening and diversifying the government's revenue base. It will also call for greater efficiency in resource utilisation across government ministries and departments. This implies that such structures should be put in place that ensure greater fiscal discipline and transparency.

It was proposed that a more sustainable model would be to use to ensure more community participation in provision of some of the facilities, without necessarily disadvantaging the poor parents who cannot afford to pay money.

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