ARE OUR CHILDREN LEARNING?
LITERACY AND NUMERACY ACROSS EAST AFRICA

FACT 1
LESS THAN ONE THIRD OF THE PUPILS IN EAST AFRICA
POSSESS BASIC LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS

FACT 2
20% OF CHILDREN IN STANDARD 7 IN EAST AFRICA DO NOT HAVE
STANDARD 2 LEVEL LITERACY AND NUMERACY COMPETENCIES.

FACT 3
THERE ARE LARGE DIFFERENCES AMONG COUNTRIES IN
EAST AFRICA, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO LITERACY.

FACT 4
THERE ARE MINIMAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BOYS
AND GIRLS IN THEIR LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS.

FACT 5
EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY IS PERSISTENT. CHILDREN FROM SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY
DISADVANTAGED HOUSEHOLDS PERFORM WORSE ON TESTS AT ALL AGES.

FACT 6
STUDENTS IN NON-GOVERNMENT (PRIVATE) SCHOOLS PERFORM BETTER THAN PUPILS IN GOVERNMENT
(PUBLIC) SCHOOLS IN ALL THREE COUNTRIES. THIS DIFFERENCE IS PARTICULARLY MARKED IN TANZANIA.

THE FIGURE SHOWS THAT VERY
FEW CHILDREN ENROLLED IN
STANDARD 3 CAN PASS ANY OF THE
INDIVIDUAL TESTS.

THESE RESULTS IMPLY THAT THE
VAST MAJORITY OF PUPILS ARE
NOT ACQUIRING BASIC
COMPETENCIES DURING THE EARLY
YEARS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL (AS
PER NATIONAL CURRICULA).

AS CHILDREN PROGRESS THROUGH THE SCHOOL SYSTEM
TO HIGHER STANDARDS, PASS RATES CONSISTENTLY
INCREASE ON ALL TESTS. THIS TELLS US THAT CHILDREN
ARE LEARNING SOME BASIC SKILLS, ALBEIT NOT AT THE
EXPECTED TIME AS SET BY THE CURRICULUM.

KENYAN CHILDREN OUTPERFORM CHILDREN FROM
OTHER EAST AFRICAN COUNTRIES ON ALL TESTS.
THIS IS MOST APPARENT IN THE LITERACY TESTS.

THESE RESULTS MAY REFLECT THE EFFECT OF THE
MEDIUMS OF INSTRUCTION AS ENGLISH IS MORE
WIDE USED ACROSS PRIMARY SCHOOL. HOWEVER,
EVEN ON THE KISWAHILI TEST, WHICH IS MORE
WIDELY SPOKEN IN TANZANIA THAN IN KENYA,
KENYANS PERFORM BEST

FOR ALL THREE COUNTRIES, THE FIGURE CONFIRMS THE EXISTENCE OF SOME GENDER DIFFERENCE. IN
FACT, IN WHAT MIGHT BE DEEMED AS A REVERSE ROLE, ON AVERAGE, GIRLS SLIGHTLY OUTPERFORM BOYS

VARIOUS FACTORS MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENCES IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY BETWEEN
CHILDREN IN EAST AFRICA. AMONG THESE, CONDITIONS WITHIN THE CHILD’S HOUSEHOLD, SUCH AS ITS
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, ARE OFTEN CRITICAL. FOR INSTANCE, HIGHER INCOME HOUSEHOLDS MAY BE
BETTER ABLE TO AFFORD ADDITIONAL LEARNING MATERIALS (SUCH AS BOOKS AND PENCILS) AS WELL AS
PUT FEWER DEMANDS ON CHILDREN TO ENGAGE IN INCOME-EARNING ACTIVITIES.

IN ADDITION TO THE DIFFERENCES IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY TEST RESULTS DUE TO LOCATION AND
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS, THERE ARE ALSO LARGE DIFFERENCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TYPE OF SCHOOL
ATTENDED. PRIVATE SCHOOLS GENERATE RELATIVELY HIGHER PASS RATES IN ALL COUNTRIES.

The figure shows the percentage of pupils passing at each level of Standard 4, 5, 6, and 7 in each country. The key indicates the breakdown of performance by subject and type of school.