

A PROFILE OF FLOWER JUBBA REGION

Education

Formal education begins at the age of 4 or 5 with an optional year of pre-school. Elementary school (4 years) and intermediate school (4 years) provide basic education guaranteed to every Somali child. After primary education, students who pass an examination are allowed to attend another 4 years of secondary school. Kindergarten and domestic trainings are both offered at the Kismaayo Family Life Center.

In Kismaayo and Jamaame, the two most densely populated districts of the lower Jubba Region, the school year of 1986-1987 saw 39 elementary schools open, attended by 7,457 students; 5 secondary schools opened as well, attended by 1,624 students. Badhade and Afmadow Districts, which are sparsely populated, and chiefly nomadic, had 10 elementary schools, attended by 1010 students, and 1 secondary school, attended by 122 students.

Though primary education was declared free and compulsory in late 1976, it is estimated that less than 20 percent of children of primary school age are attending class. Indeed, many parents rely on their children to help with domestic chores or farm work, or need them to earn some additional income in regular, casual, or seasonal jobs. Other families cannot meet the expenses for school uniforms and stationery.

While the number of primary schools has remained almost unchanged during the past 5 years, a sad development has been declining interest in education as shown through the number of students in different grades of primary and secondary school. In fact, during the period 1982 to 1987 a drastic decline in enrollment has been observed in the Lower Jubba as well as in the country as a whole, where only 6 percent of girls and 18 percent of boys attend school and less than half of all children entering Grade 1 complete the 8-year primary cycle.

Table 10: Official school enrollment in 1986-1987

	No. of Students	District	No. of schools
Primary	4,756	Kismaayo	15
Kindergarten	150		1
Secondary	1,427		4
Domestic	96		1
Primary	2,701	Jamaame	24
Secondary	200		1
Primary	677	Badhade	6
Primary	233	Afmadow	4

Table 10 shows official figures. In the last five years the number of students enrolled has decreased from 14,867 in 1981-82 to 8,181 in 1986-87. The reality is somewhat different. UNICEF staff saw many schools with less than-one third of those enrolled attending. The presence of girls is very low. In Jamaame District three schools- --Gobanimo, Nyirey, and Honqore -- have been recently closed because of a shortage of teachers and students.

The considerable decrease in the number of students in school is believed to be linked to the change in government policy tarried the automatic provision of jobs for secondary school graduates within the civil service. Additional reasons include poverty. Often families cannot afford to buy uniforms, exercise books, and pens for the children. Instead of sending them to school, they are sent to work in the plantations or to look after the cattle.

In theory the community must care for the maintenance of the primary schools, while the .Ministry of Education provides upkeep for the secondary schools. Yet a great number of schools in this region have almost collapsed. Roofs, windows, and doors are broken; very often there are no chairs, desks, or blackboards. Water and sanitation are very poor.

There are additional reasons for the collapse of the educational system. The salary for a government primary school teacher is So. Shs.600 per month and for a secondary school is So. Shs. 1,200. Often, instead of attending school, teachers take care of their own private business. Teachers are poorly trained, and the absence of teaching materials and supplies is a constraint. The government budget used for education is insufficient to provide these needs.

Finally, cultural and religious beliefs prevent parents from sending their children to government schools. They consider that children, and especially girls, are not in need of of education. It is better for them to stay at home and work for the families. Among the Arabic community, no girls go to public school.

Many children, on the other hand, attend Koranic school, where they learn the Arabic language in order to read and study the Koran.

Conclusion

Although some progress has been made in the health sector since the mid-1980s, the general situation of basic services in the Region remains poor. The infant mortality rate is still very high. A high prevalence of childhood diseases means that about 50 percent of all deaths occur in children under five years. Furthermore, mortality and morbidity among women of childbearing age is also-high. Major health problems are schistosomiasis; malaria, diarrhoeal diseases, tuberculosis and tetanus. All these, combined with lack of

basic health care knowledge, unsafe drinking water, lack of proper waste disposal, and unhygienic food preparation practices combine with chronic nutritional deficiencies and the absence of health care facilities and personnel to put the wellbeing of the nomadic, rural settled and a large part of urban population at high risk. The low educational standard serves to compound these problems.

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