

CORRELATES OF CHILD SCHOOLING IN ETHIOPIA

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Executive summary

The main social indicators (including education) for Ethiopia are among the lowest in the world, even by the standards of Sub-Saharan African countries. The country is characterised by a high rate of child mortality, maternal mortality, poor nutritional status, low school enrolment, low school retention rates and a high illiteracy rate.

There are numerous factors that can affect child literacy and schooling; one of the most important of these being the education of parents. It is expected that parents with some education are more likely to send their children to school than those without any education. On the other hand, while parent's education is important, the relative importance of mothers' education for child's schooling (especially for girl's education) needs closer examination. Available evidence indicates that there is a substantial difference in children's school enrolment between rural and urban areas. Children in rural areas are disadvantaged due to, among others, lack of schools, distance to school, and the requirement to work. The analysis therefore needs to take into account factors such as location of residence (rural or urban), distance from school etc. Quality of education is also among the factors that could affect parent's decision to send their children to school. This is worth investigating although it is likely that alternatives to state schooling are only available to urban and/or wealthier parents. Other issues that are important in determining child schooling may include household income, school fees, household size, age of parents etc.

Information on correlates of child schooling and their relationships is crucial to understand the links between micro-level outcomes and macro-level policy initiatives aimed at reducing poverty. The objective of this paper is

therefore to examine the link between child schooling and the abovementioned factors and investigate their relative importance in determining child schooling in poor households.

The paper uses the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA): a holistic and people-centered approach that helps development policy to address the issues of development, sustainable resource management and poverty alleviation simultaneously (UNDP, 1997). The paper employs descriptive and multivariate analyses to identify the correlates of child schooling and to determine the relative importance of the various factors.

The results from cross tabulation of variables indicate that the sex of child, region, location of residence (rural-urban), poverty status (wealth index), parents' schooling and the occurrence of economic shocks have statistically significant associations with child schooling ($P < 0.05$). The relationship between household size and the schooling of a child was also found to be significant at the 10% level, indicating that household size is negatively associated with child schooling. However, the caregiver being divorced, children's work, and social capital (including cognitive social capital, absolute structural social capital, and citizenship) did not have statistically significant correlations with child schooling.

Since descriptive analysis or cross tabulations do not take into account confounding effects, multivariate analysis, based on linear (OLS), Poisson and probit regression models, were employed for further analysis.

The results from the multivariate analysis robustly indicate that wealth index, mother's level of schooling and cognitive social capital have positive and significant effects, while the occurrence of economic shocks was negatively associated with child's literacy and level of schooling. On the other hand, household size, sex of the child, caregiver being divorced, social support, absolute structural social capital and citizenship do not appear to have significant effects on child literacy and schooling.

The main policy implication of the results is that creation of assets, namely physical, human and social capital, is the key to improving literacy and schooling of children, thereby enhancing their capability to lead a better life in future. Enhancing the household's coping capacity for economic shocks such as natural disaster, livestock death, theft, crime, decrease in food availability and severe illness is likely to make a positive contribution to children's achievement in education.